

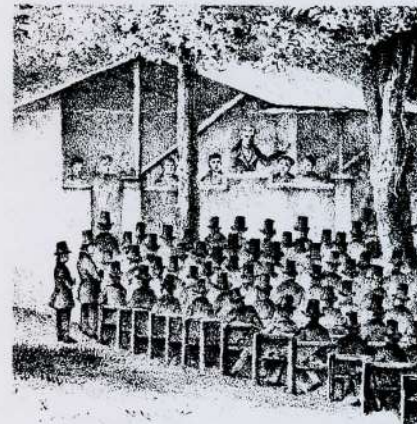
Campground Sesquicentennial Issue



THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 26, NO. 4

MAY 1985



Camp Meeting, c. 1853

Setting the Stage
For the
Camp Meeting

Eastville:
Where It All Began
History Told by Maps

How We Approved the Site

Eyewitness Account by the Last Survivor

That First Camp Meeting

A Night to Remember

Moments of Rapture

Director's Report

Books

Pease Diary

Bits & Pieces

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(Includes four guest admissions)	
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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

The Thomas Cooke House
is not open in the winter.
All other exhibits and
facilities remain open.

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

Our thanks to those members who have sent in their dues for this year and our added thanks to those who have upgraded their memberships to the sustaining category. We urge all who can to do so.

Even more thanks go to those who included a contribution to the much-needed Preservation Fund.

We remind any member who may have put the dues notice aside when it came and by now has forgotten about it that the Society and this journal depend upon your support.

THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

Vol. 26, No. 4

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May 1985

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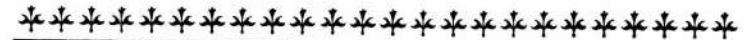
The Dukes County Historical Society was founded in 1922 to preserve the history of Dukes County for the public benefit. It is a nonprofit institution supported entirely by membership dues, contributions and bequests, which are tax deductible. Its annual meeting is held in August of each year in Edgartown.

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 round. 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.



Setting the Stage For the Camp Meeting

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

As many have written, it was Jeremiah Pease who selected the site for what became the Wesleyan Grove Campground, now celebrating its 150th year. But Jeremiah, an Edgartown resident who lived on North Water Street opposite the lighthouse, did much more than that. He was the driving force behind the first meeting in 1835, being the Methodist class leader and lay-preacher at the Eastville Society, the "church" closest to the camp-meeting site.

Unpaid, his motivation came totally from his religious faith, his dedication to converting souls to Methodism at a time when it was considered by many to be a strange cult. His fervency during the early years of Methodism on the Island brought some unpleasant treatment by his Edgartown neighbors.

In 1848, Jeremiah delivered a eulogy at the funeral of his Eastville friend and Methodist brother, Joseph Linton, stating that "in the early days of Methodism, he showed a decision of character . . . disregarding the scorn and reproach of the ungodly." We don't know what was said at Jeremiah's funeral, but his eulogizer, if there was one, could have used his own words. Jeremiah knew the scorn of neighbors, godly and otherwise. Only a few months before his death, he discussed that in a letter to a Holmes Hole friend:

As relates to the persecution with which I have been assailed, I

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is Editor of this journal.

am induced to say . . . I still feel strength through divine mercy . . . and determined to strive to serve the Lord thro good report or evil report . . . I think I have been called to contend with the rulers of the darkness of this world, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. . . . I feel indignant at the course pursued by some for whom I had reason to expect better things. It affords me many pleasant reflections to know that I have loving friends in Holmes Hole who take a sympathetic part in my affliction and would render any assistance in their power.

Jeremiah was not a complainer. His diary, which we have published since 1974, gives no hint of "persecution," but clearly there was some. In those early days, Methodism was not a faith that proper people adopted, especially not with the intensity of a Jeremiah.

The sect began in England as a "society" within the Church of England. New England Methodists were thought of as Tories during the Revolution and with some justification. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, had "called John Hancock a felon and urged the Americans to lay down their arms" in 1776.¹ After the war, the Methodists broke away from the Anglicans and set up a system of circuit riders, preachers who travelled around the new nation, holding meetings in barns, taverns, private homes, anywhere they could find future converts. By 1800, they had made inroads in New England, mainly as a result of Jesse Lee, who had found time in 1795 to spend a few days on Martha's Vineyard. Writing in 1810, he described his Vineyard visit this way:

The first of our going on to Martha's Vineyard to preach was on the 5th day of February, 1795. Some of our preachers had preached on the Island before, having put in there as they were passing and re-passing from New York to Nova-Scotia. But this was the first time that a Methodist preacher ever went to the Island with express intention to preach to the inhabitants. Some time after, we had a preacher stationed there, a small society was raised, and things went on well for a season. But at last

¹Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1960, p.205.

there was an unfavourable change, and we gave up the Island, and have not sent them a preacher since.²

It was also in 1810 that the established church, the Congregationalist, first began to show concern about the inroads being made by the circuit riders, both Methodist and Baptist. The itinerants were purveyors of "experimental religions," according to the establishment. Orthodox Congregational ministers were usually Harvard educated, their sermons "studded with gems of philosophical and theological speculation . . . how much they penetrated the minds of the listeners is conjectural," is how one historian described them.³ Intellectual or not, the Congregational ministers had status and they also had money. In Massachusetts they were supported by taxes levied on all citizens. Proud of being direct descendants of the Puritans and in some cases Revolutionary War heroes, they "had grown prosperous and comfortable, and prosperity had proved, as always, an enemy to zeal."⁴

On the Vineyard Reverend Joseph Thaxter, minister of the Edgartown church, fit the description exactly. Into this environment, the evangelists came; in this environment, the Camp Meeting was to spring forth.

Rev. Joseph Thaxter was the person with the most to lose by the invasion. Harvard educated, he came to the Vineyard in 1780 after serving as a Chaplain in the Revolutionary Army. He was minister of the Edgartown church until his death in 1827. His last years were not happy. The non-stop proselytizing by the evangelicals made him paranoid. He saw enemies everywhere.

There was another reason for his unhappiness. The Congregational church was split apart in argument over Unitarianism and Trinitarianism. Like most Harvard graduates, he was a Unitarian and used many of his

²Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America*, Magill and Chine, Baltimore, 1810, pp. 201-2.

³Olmstead, p. 76.

⁴Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, Harper & Row, N.Y., 1944, p. 186.

sermons to explain theological philosophy in intellectual language at a time when his competitors, the evangelicals, were working on the emotions.

It was another Congregationalist, not a Methodist or Baptist, who most upset the Reverend Thaxter. In 1809, one Rev. James Davis, who described himself as an evangelical Congregationalist, arrived on the Vineyard. He began his crusade in Holmes Hole, but soon had made his way to Edgartown. His work upset Thaxter so much that he wrote a 12-page letter to the Massachusetts Historical Society in July 1810 asking that it be put in their Archives so that the true story of the invasion would be known to history. Thaxter's letter makes it clear that a strong force, a new fervor, had arrived:

A certain James Davis . . . some time in July (1809) came to the Island and began his goodly work among the Baptists at Holmes' Hole. Davis professed himself a Congregationalist and said he was ordained an Evangelist. Yet he courted the Baptists, and they courted him. . . . They made great confusion wherever they went. It was their practice to pray, preach & sing, Day and Night, and generally, very late.

When Davis arrived in Edgartown, he and Reverend Thaxter had a meeting. It was agreed that he could use the Meeting House, but with certain restrictions, as Thaxter explained:

I was convinced that if I could keep him from private houses & Night Meetings he would do no mischief, but this was out of my power. That night he carried on . . . at a Baptist house The next day, all Day & late at Night, at the house of a leading Democrat. . . . This had great Effect upon the ignorant and. . . filled their heads with vain imaginations. . . . They were attended with great outcries, groaning, screaming, falling down, etc. These were called the powerful operations of the spirit of God and expressed in such blasphemous language as is not fit to be repeated.

The persons who attended these meetings began to harass the Reverend Thaxter:

Once at twelve at night, a number passed the streets, singing and clapping their hands and awakened people out of their

sleep. They threw stones against my house.

They even tried to take over his meetings:

The day of my stated lecture . . . my steady people were much concerned. . . . I passed through them and went into the Pulpit and after some time got them to take their seats and be still. I went thro my Service without interruption. No sooner had I closed than they burst out in singing most vociferously. I took no notice of them but left the House. . . . They continued till after Sunset when they were put out of the House by the high Sheriff. They went to Dr. Whelden's and a dreadful scene ensued; some praying, some exhorting; some crying that our Church was built upon the sand. It must fall . . . that I was unconverted and leading my People blindfolded to Hell.

The good Reverend was unable to understand how these people, some of them members of his flock for many years, could turn against him. But he remained hopeful, as he wrote in an addendum to the letter, dated July 26, 1810:

My friends are firm, some of them too warm. I fear violence will take place, but I retain my spirits and my resolution is unshaken. About twelve or fourteen men have left my meeting and twenty-five or thirty women, but not a single person of any consequence.

Those others, the people of consequence, came to the assistance of the beleaguered minister. Twenty-five of them petitioned the Edgartown Selectmen to throw James Davis and his Exhorter out of town. Their petition stated:

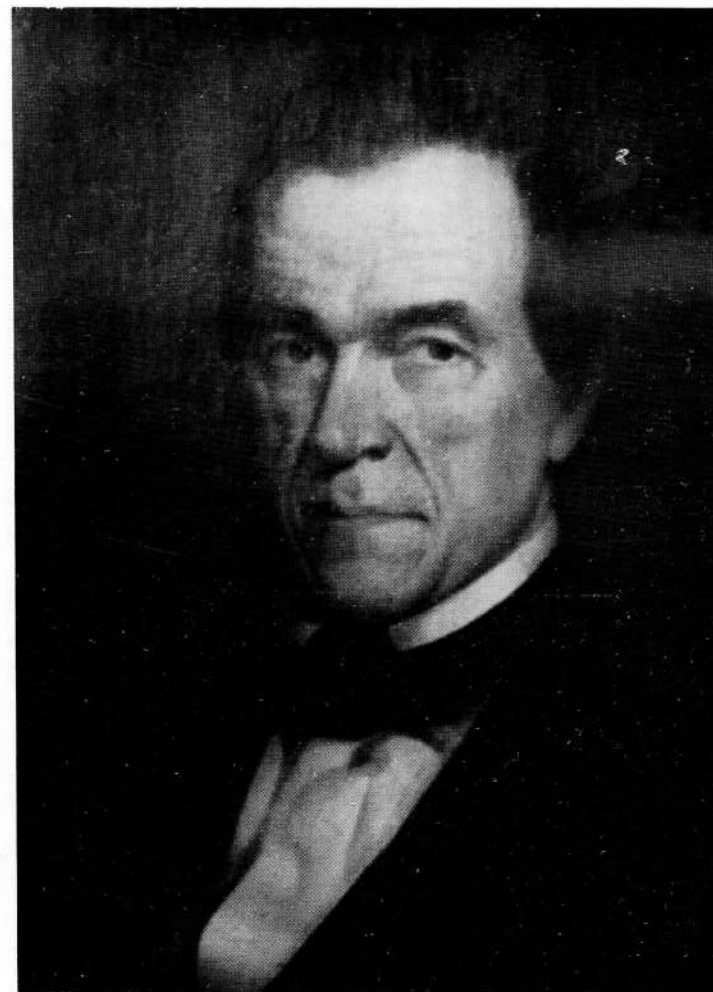
There are several vague, loose and disorderly persons, by the name of Davis and Whitemore, who, under the pretense of a Divine Mission, without the consent of the Town or the approbation of the Authority thereof, have lately entered into the said Town and . . . have made it their Constant Practice to go from House to House, inducing Persons to abandon their several occupations by which they might support themselves and Families, and suffering their interests, in a great Measure to go to Waste, who creep into Houses by day and by night and there continue till late . . . Exhorting the People, and teaching them Doctrines Contrary to the Scriptures, and Subversive of good order, and the Peace of the Society, with an evident intention to Break up and Destroy the Order and Peace of Churches . . . using a degree of incantation, calling upon Children, and Weak minded Persons to request their Prayers,

threatening them that if they did not, they would immediately go to Hell and be Eternally damned, and suggesting . . . it is in their Power, by their Prayers, to save People from that Condemnation . . . and in consequence of their Nocturnal meetings, the Loose, Profane, and Inconsiderate, are led to attend and follow them and to Patrol the Streets until very Late Hours in the Night, to the great disturbance of the Peace and Tranquility of the orderly and quiet inhabitants.

Among the signers were Thomas Cooke, Peter Pease, Noah Pease (Jeremiah's father), Jethro Worth, and other prestigious men of Edgartown. The "persons of consequence" had come to the aid of their pastor and the "incendiarys and Vagabonds" were forced to leave. But it was only a temporary victory for the embattled Reverend Thaxter. It didn't stop the invasion. The Methodists and Baptists began sending more missionaries, assigning them to the Vineyard for a year at a time. Within a year, a Methodist Society was formed in Edgartown and among its founding members were persons of consequence.

We have in our Archives the original contract setting up the first Methodist Society in Edgartown. Among its 19 signatures are such important names as Thomas Butler, Lot Norton, Abraham Fisher, Valentine Pease and Thomas Stewart, Jr.

But Jeremiah Pease was not among them. He remained firm in his support of Reverend Thaxter, from whom he was learning the skill of bone setting (Thaxter had studied medicine at Harvard). Jeremiah was so opposed to the revivalists that one night in 1819 or 1820 he attempted to break up a meeting of Methodists. It was during the period when Rev. Eleazer Steele was assigned to the Vineyard. Services were held in Edgartown in a small building behind the home of Chase Pease, Jeremiah's uncle (the building still exists, now being an ell on the rear of the so-called Yellow House at the corner of Main Street and South Summer in Edgartown and used as a shop). Here is how Jeremiah explained what happened, in a talk he gave



Portrait owned by Edna Vose Weston

It is difficult to imagine Jeremiah Pease as an effective Exhorter, but he was. Portrait is by his son Cyrus.

to the Methodist Society many years later:

One evening while [Brother Steele] was preaching, he was seized with a trembling in consequence of which the house [not being finished] shook and caused a great alarm among many of the Congregation. I heard the sound and hastened to the Meeting

House, went into the Pulpit, took hold of the Preacher and offered to bring him out if any one would help me. But as none seemed disposed to assist, I retired, much enraged at what had taken place. This rash act of mine, I have always regretted.

According to Hebron Vincent, "this scene was long characterized by Jeremiah Pease and others of his class, as the 'Homemade Earthquake.'" That may have been true, but within two years, this same Jeremiah had joined the Methodist Church and had begun to regret his "rash act." What brought about his conversion was the arrival on the Vineyard of a remarkable evangelist, Rev. John Adams.

John Adams, later called Reformation John Adams, came to the Island in 1821, assigned here for two years. He was a man of unbounded energy and persuasive power. According to Vincent, he had a "stammering manner in public," but he was a great preacher. He was also a splendid singer of hymns, many of which, Vincent says, he composed himself. Untiring, he would go from house to house, never satisfied unless he could "see souls converted." He made the entire Island his territory and would often ride for hours to attend a small prayer service in Chilmark. To those whom he converted, men like Jeremiah Pease and Hebron Vincent among hundreds, he was a saintly figure, but to Reverend Thaxter, now 77 years old and watching his flock being decimated, Adams was no saint. In his journal, parts of which are in our Archives, Thaxter devotes much space to decrying the tactics of Adams and the other evangelicals. Here are some excerpts dated April 1822:

Adams required a daughter of _____ to kneel before him. She refused. He then prostrated himself at her feet, laid his arms across on the floor and his head in his arms and prayed vociferously in language which I will not write. She joined the class. She is by no means a good character. 21st. At the Hall all day & night, Adams acted more like a mad man than a sober Christian. He did nothing [but] bawl out with all his might broken sentences, slap his hands and stamp. There was an awful scene of confusion till near 12 o'clock. When Adams &



Rev. John Adams was a hell-fire preacher who didn't hesitate to use the specter of damnation to win converts to Methodism.

Thos. Stewart failed at making Nancy Bailies kneel before him, Adams said, pointing to a young daughter of Timothy Pease, "She kneeled down even with her father present, but you will go to Hell first."

But in April 1822, Jeremiah Pease would have nothing to do with the evangelicals. His diary mentions nothing about them. He writes little about his church activities, simply mentioning an occasional funeral or wedding. Church, to him, clearly is a Sabbath activity and little

more. In May 1822, he first mentions John Adams:

May 31, 1822. Attended the funeral of Mr. Vincent. Service by Rev'd. Mr. Henderson of Newtown and Rev'd. Mr. Adams, a Missionary.⁵

It was the beginning of an association that 13 years later resulted in the first Camp Meeting on East Chop.

Two days after the funeral, Jeremiah attended a joint Methodist-Baptist meeting, as he explained it, "Mr. Thaxter being absent." One of the preachers would have been John Adams. Within four months, Jeremiah had become a convert to Methodism, a dedicated disciple of the Rev. Adams. It must have been a blow to Reverend Thaxter, who only a few months earlier had lost his wife, a woman Jeremiah described in his diary as "a kind wife, a loving Mother, and a sincere friend of all Mankind."

Jeremiah's decision to leave the established church was made in the early morning hours of October 1, 1822, the day he recorded in his diary: "This day I hope will never be forgotten by me."⁶

We don't know much about Jeremiah's activities in the years immediately following his conversion. He stopped keeping a journal, as he explained later, "owing to my peculiar circumstances." No doubt a major part of the circumstances was the intensity of his religious experience. Because we have no record of Jeremiah's activities from 1823 until 1829, we do not know if he took part in the Island's first camp meeting, the one organized by Reverend Adams on West Chop in August 1827, eight years before the first East Chop meeting. It would seem likely that he was there. Reverend Adams described it this way:

The next object was to prepare the ground for camp-meeting at the west side of Holmes Hole. This has required labor and fatigue.

⁵It is interesting that Jeremiah describes Adams as "a missionary," rather than a Methodist preacher. Newtown, incidentally, was what is now West Tisbury.

⁶For the full story of Jeremiah's conversion see *Intelligencer*, Nov. 1980, pp. 43-57.

July 28th, I preached on the camp-ground, in company with Brs. L. and W. About one hundred and fifty were present, and we had the shout of a king in the camp.⁷

August 1st, our camp-meeting commenced, and more than twenty preachers were present, and not far from thirty tents were on the ground. The people came from different islands, and many from the Cape, New Bedford and Boston. All parts of the Vineyard were represented. There was but little disturbance. Good order was generally observed. In the first part of the meeting but few were converted, but the meeting grew more powerful and interesting and it was hoped more than forty experienced religion. . . . Our meeting continued a week.

Thus, this West Chop meeting was larger than the one on East Chop eight years later, thirty tents compared with nine. It was, no doubt, due to the great preaching reputation Adams had in New England. It was apparently the only time the West Chop site was used for a camp meeting.

It is interesting to speculate what might have developed if Adams had remained on the Vineyard for a few years (he was reassigned the following year). Had he stayed, he might have held another meeting on West Chop the next summer and, who knows, Cottage City and Oak Bluffs may have grown up there rather than on East Chop!

Adams didn't stay, but Jeremiah Pease did and at about this time he became a licensed Exhorter in the Methodist Church. In 1833, he began to conduct services, as a layman, at the East Side of Holmes Hole or Eastville.⁸

Eastville was a tiny settlement, a part of Edgartown. Although much closer to Holmes Hole village, it belonged to Edgartown. Even Holmes Hole was not easy to get to, being separated from it by the Lagoon Pond and the as-yet-unbridged opening into it. Eastville is rich in Vineyard

⁷This expression seems to have been used to describe meetings in which many were converted.

⁸Jeremiah never calls it "Eastville" until the 1850s and then it is always written "E'ville." Before that it is always "East Side Holmes Hole." Nor does he ever call Rev. Joseph Thaxter, "Parson" Thaxter, as historians tell us he was known.

history. Along with Chappaquiddick, Charles E. Banks tells us, it was the last stand of the Edgartown Indians. There were many wigwams there in the late 1700s.

It is also rich in religious history. John Saunders, a black freed slave from Virginia and a Methodist lay-preacher, settled there in 1787, holding services among the Indians and other "people of color." Jesse Lee, the famed Methodist evangelist mentioned earlier, is said to have preached there in 1795, although he only mentions the home of Shubael Davis, which was on Farm Neck, a few miles away.

A favorite spot for sailors from vessels anchored in the harbor awaiting a fair wind and tide, Eastville had several taverns along with a small collection of houses. Both Methodists and Baptists were active there.

It had no regularly assigned preacher and Jeremiah took over as the unpaid lay-preacher and Class Leader, holding meetings in the home of Joseph Linton.⁹

During the two years preceding the first East Chop Camp Meeting, Jeremiah conducted services in Eastville three times a week, travelling there from Edgartown in his buggy (in February 1835, he bought a chaise). It was nearly eight miles each way, a long trip behind a horse. The meetings usually took place in the afternoon, enabling him to get back in time to light the Edgartown lighthouse. On those occasions that he stayed into the night, we assume his son, Joseph, took care of his lighthouse duties.

His exhorting had started, to use his term, a Reformation in Eastville. On June 14, 1834, he wrote in his diary:

Went to E.S.H.Hole. Attended Prayer Meeting in company with Br. T. L. Baylies -- stayed all night. Attended prayer meeting at sunrise next morning, attended prayer meetings during the day and evening. Returned to Edgartown. This was one of the most solemn and interesting days of my life.

⁹The same Joseph Linton that Jeremiah Pease eulogized in 1848, as mentioned earlier in this article. Incidentally, Linton had been a Baptist before joining the Methodists.

During that month, he went to meetings in Eastville on 14 days -- almost every other day. In July, his visits were less frequent, with reason: July 17, his wife had a baby. "At about ½ past 10 o'clock A.M., another daughter was born. Blessed be the Lord (Velina B.)." He missed two more meetings the next week "on account of sickness of my wife."

By August he was back on schedule, attending 13 meetings. At one of them he baptized four of his converts as the Reformation continued. It lasted through the winter.

Among his many occupations, Jeremiah was a surveyor and on December 1, 1834, he "surveyed land for James Beetle at E.S.H.H." Grafton Norton went with him and they were met there by Thomas Bradley for reasons he does not explain in his diary. He stayed overnight at Eastville, probably with his friend Joseph Linton.

The following three days he worked for Mr. Beetle surveying his East Chop land. It could have been at that time that he discovered the particular oak grove which some months later he chose as the site of the new Camp Meeting.

We know of no contemporaneous record of the date the decision was made to hold the first Camp Meeting on East Chop. It probably was not made until July. Jeremiah makes no mention of it in his diary. The first public announcement of the meeting appeared in *Zion's Herald*, August 19, 1835. Hebron Vincent, writing many years later, tells us that the site was approved in the summer, but he doesn't state when it was decided to go ahead with the meeting.¹⁰

Into this then somewhat dense wood, in the summer of the year before named [1835], some five or six men, partly ministers and partly laymen, members of the M.E. Church of Edgartown, upon the recommendation of the late Jeremiah Pease, Esq., wended their way, entering through a simple cart-path from the

¹⁰See p. 155-8 for more about the site approval.

southwest, and selected the place for what was called the 'preachers' stand,' the seating, and the area, or the 'circle.' On returning to the outskirts of the woodland, a lease of the grove selected was agreed upon between the laymen alluded to and the owner, the venerable William Butler, Esq. The lessees were Thomas M. Coffin, Jeremiah Pease, and Frederick Baylies.

Although listed as a lessee, Jeremiah was not present on that memorable day. Hebron Vincent tells us that "he was not of the company." A more recent historian, Ira W. LeBaron, writes that Jeremiah was ill "and unable to go with them."¹¹ According to his diary, Jeremiah was "unwell" on July 15 and could not go to the East Side of Holmes Hole to conduct the Class Meeting. He seems to have stayed home on the following two days, so it may have been during this period that the group examined the site, a site he had selected and marked for their approval. Modest Jeremiah doesn't mention any of that in his diary, the first reference to the Campground being on August 20, 1835:

Went to E. Chop to clear the ground and erect our Tents for Camp Meeting.

21st. Engaged in Erecting Tents, etc., returned at night.

Sunday, the day before the meeting started, Jeremiah was still exhorting his tiny flock at Eastville:

Went to E.S.H.H., attended prayer meeting. C.S. & C.N. very serious, returned at evening.¹²

His description of the first Camp Meeting is short and provides almost no details:

Went to Camp Meeting and remained there during the Meeting which continued until Friday morning, the 28th. It was a time of God's power and great mercy, very many Souls were awakened and a great number happily converted. A full account will be published in *Zion's Herald*. Bless the Lord, oh my Soul.

As he promised, there was an article, three weeks later, in the *Herald*, the newspaper of the New England

¹¹Ira W. LeBaron, *The Campmeeting at Martha's Vineyard*, sponsored by M. V. Campmeeting Assoc., Oak Bluffs, 1958, p. 7.

¹²The initials are for Capt. Charles Smith and Constant Norton. Mr. Norton became Collector of Customs, twenty years later.

Methodists. The account, written by Hebron Vincent, states that "rules were adopted on Tuesday." On Wednesday, he wrote, "the exercises of the public prayer meeting . . . were prevented by the rain. . . . The public prayer meeting on Thursday afternoon was powerful and glorious. . . . Friday was emphatically 'the great day of the feast.' . . . It was unanimously voted to adopt measures to purchase the lumber of which the seats, preachers' tent, stand, etc., were built that it might remain upon the ground with a view to make this a permanent place for camp meetings for several years to come."

The Vincent article concludes: "The number converted . . . 65. On the morning of the close some two or three hundred . . . arose from their seats. . . . Six souls were reclaimed."

So ended that first Camp Meeting, 150 years ago this summer. But the Reformation at Eastville continued. The Sunday after the meeting ended, Jeremiah wrote:

Went to E.S.H.H. with Br. F. Fisk, attended prayer meeting. Capt. Chas. Smith, Mr. Constant Norton and several others who had found the Lord to be precious to their Souls at Camp Meeting, spoke the feelings of their hearts. It was a solemn and interesting time. Br. Lumbert, a Baptist preacher, attended meeting with us. We returned in time to witness the display of God's power in the vestry of the Methodist Meetinghouse [in Edgartown]. There were a great number bowing around the altar for prayers when we came in.

Those 15 years from 1820 to 1835 surely were a high water mark in the Island's religious fervor. Religion was, for many Islanders, their most important activity. It was not unusual for them to attend three or four meetings a week, in daytime and at night. As the petition had stated back in 1810, people seemed "to abandon their occupations" to attend these meetings. No wonder, then, that the Calvinists with their work ethic were upset.

It was during this 15-year crusade of evangelism that the first Camp Meeting came to be. With his exhorting at

Eastville, Jeremiah Pease had played a major role in that crusade.

But Jeremiah never could have imagined what he was starting. He did live long enough to see the Camp Meeting become a permanent event on the Methodist calendar, attended by thousands. But he died too soon to see a President of the United States attend; too soon to see the change from a city of tents to Cottage City;¹³ too soon to see the hotels, the summer mansions, the croquet courts, the skating rink. Too soon to see the oak grove develop into the Island's first summer resort.

Perhaps it was just as well.

He died, suddenly, on June 5, 1857, at his home in Edgartown. He had made his usual diary entry that morning. It read:

5th. SEly, light. Cloudy, a little rain A.M.

Someone, we don't know who or when, has pencilled beneath the entry: "(He died this date.)"

The *Vineyard Gazette* paid little attention to the death of one of its best known residents. It had only this to say:

Died: In this town, on Friday evening last, very suddenly, Jeremiah Pease, Esq., aged 65 years.

Perhaps the establishment still hadn't forgiven him.

¹³He did, however, help Br. F. Upham build the first "cottage" on the Campground in 1851 (see Bits & Pieces).

How We Approved the Site

by HEBRON VINCENT
The Last Survivor

When Frederick Baylies, Jr., died, the Vineyard Gazette of December 5, 1884 stated, correctly, that he was the last survivor of the original lessees of the Martha's Vineyard Campground. Some Boston papers reprinted it with a change that to Campground historian Hebron Vincent was important enough to be corrected. We have in our Archives a draft of his correction (we don't know if he mailed it to any newspaper - the Gazette did not publish it, to our knowledge). The error was of minor importance (except to Hebron), but it caused him to record in greater detail than we have seen elsewhere the events of that historic day when Samuel Butler's grove was approved for the 1835 Camp Meeting. Here is Hebron's self-serving account:

The obituary of our late fellow citizen, Frederick Baylies, as published in the *Vineyard Gazette* of the 5th. inst., pays a well-deserved tribute to his memory. He was a worthy citizen, and a faithful and useful member of the church of his choice. ~~He was, indeed, as represented, the last survivor of the "original lessees" of the Martha's Vineyard Camp Ground.~~¹

But in the obituary of Mr. Baylies in a condensed form, apparently by the same hand as the above-named, published in the *Boston Journal* and some other papers, the statement is made that he was the last surviving "founder" of the Martha's Vineyard Campmeeting. This is not as known here by those intimately acquainted with the facts. There is yet a "survivor."

The site of this famous Camp-Meeting was first brought

¹Hebron had crossed out this last sentence in the draft.

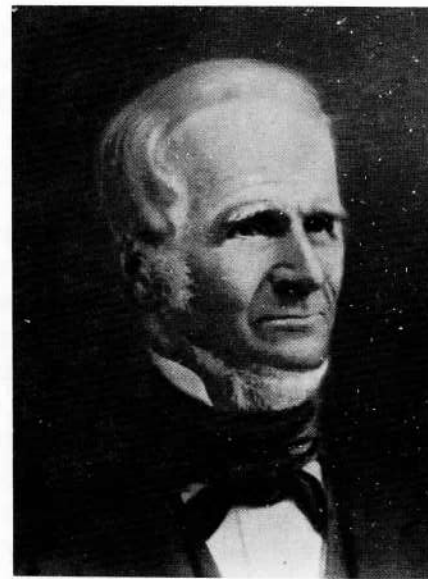
to the attention of members of the Edgartown Methodist Church as a good place for such a meeting, by the late Jeremiah Pease, Esq. -- himself a member of the same -- who was accustomed to hold religious meetings at Eastville, about a mile distant. He had examined the grove, and marked a tree at a place he thought appropriate for the Stand. He so repeatedly spoke to his brethren upon the subject, that sometime in the summer of 1835, it was informally decided that a number of them should visit the Grove together, decide upon its eligibility for the purpose named, and, if satisfactory, to adopt it, and to fix upon the place for Stand.

Six men made the trip together in carriages, a distance of about 7½ miles. Besides those who were permanent residents of the town, viz., Thomas M. Coffin, Chase Pease, Frederick Baylies, and Hebron Vincent, there were the Rev. Daniel Webb, Presiding Elder of the District, who happened to be in town, and Rev. James C. Boutecou, the Pastor of the Edgartown M. E. Church at the time.

The six went to and examined the place, and, all agreeing that it was an excellent one for the purpose named, decided upon it as such, and finding the tree marked by Mr. J. Pease (for he was not of the company) adopted it as the place for the Stand.

Returning together by the cart path through which they had entered the grove, they came to a place near the dwelling house of the late Samuel Butler, where was a clear spot by the side of the road, on which they all sat down, in company with the late William Butler Esquire, the owner of the Grove.

Here the subject of a lease was named, its importance, and its conditions freely discussed and agreed upon between them, all assenting, and it was decided by the Edgartown company who should be the lessees -- they consenting to be such, but, of course, having no conveniences for writing there, the document was made



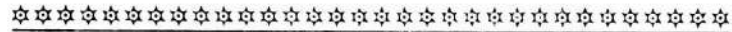
Hebron Vincent

afterwards. ~~The three who signed it were~~² Whoever may have been the lessees, no record of the lease appears upon the County Land Records.

With these facts, we leave it to the impartial reader to say (without diminishing in the least the honor due to our esteemed departed brother and friend) whether, all thus having an equal voice in determining the whole matter, the only survivor of all the parties to this transaction -- H. Vincent -- who was the first secretary of the Camp Meeting, and who, during the first thirty years of its history, was, by his pen, one of the chief promoters of its growth, is not the last surviving founder of the Martha's Vineyard Camp-Meeting.

Hebron, in his convoluted style, had set the record straight: he was the last survivor.

²Again, Hebron had crossed out some words. He perhaps didn't want to admit that he wasn't one of them. He knew who they were because elsewhere he had written that they were Thomas M. Coffin, Frederick Baylies and Jeremiah Pease.



That First Camp Meeting

WHAT did that first Camp Meeting look like? Nobody knows, of course, and few facts were set down about the layout at the time. Hebron Vincent, Campground historian, did report on the meeting for *Zion's Herald*, but he gave no general description of the grounds, stating only that there were "seats, a preachers' tent, stand, etc.," made of lumber.

In the first volume of his history of the camp meetings, published in 1858, twenty-three years after the first meeting, Vincent described the Preachers' Tent as a small rough shed with an elevated seat and stand in front. Directly in front of it, he wrote, was "the usual arrangement of a temporary altar, consisting of a railing enclosing about twenty-five feet by twelve, of ground, with seats to be used, mainly, by the singers in time of the public preaching service, and as a place for penitent sinners to come into" during the prayer meetings.

"Only nine tents," he wrote, "graced this first circle." His memory, twenty-three years after the event, was faulty. There apparently was no circle of tents at the first two meetings. Rev. Phineas Crandall, in *Zion's Herald* of August 1837, wrote that the committee should be "more particular in the arrangement of the tents; that is, to have them pitched as nearly as can be in a circle." It is obvious that he would not have written that if there already had been a circle.

The only other contemporary account of that first meeting is in Jeremiah Pease's diary and he tells us nothing about the layout.

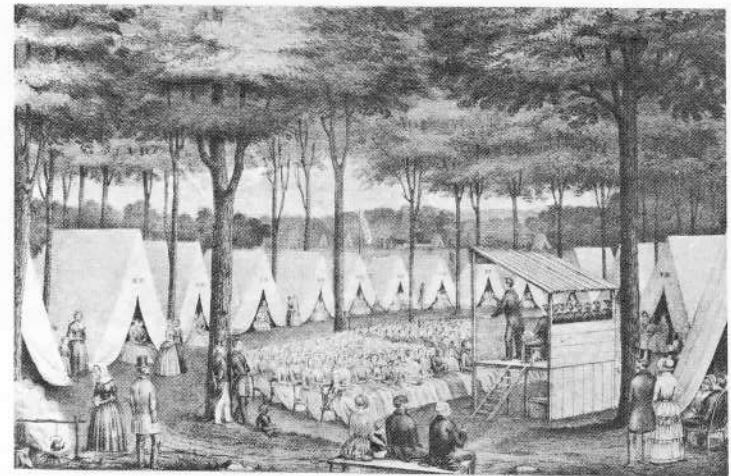
In 1844, the stand and congregational seating were torn

down, the lumber sold and the meeting disbanded, to be held the following year on the mainland. In 1846, the meeting returned to East Chop, new lumber was purchased, new seating and a new stand were built with, according to one report, some minor changes in place and layout.

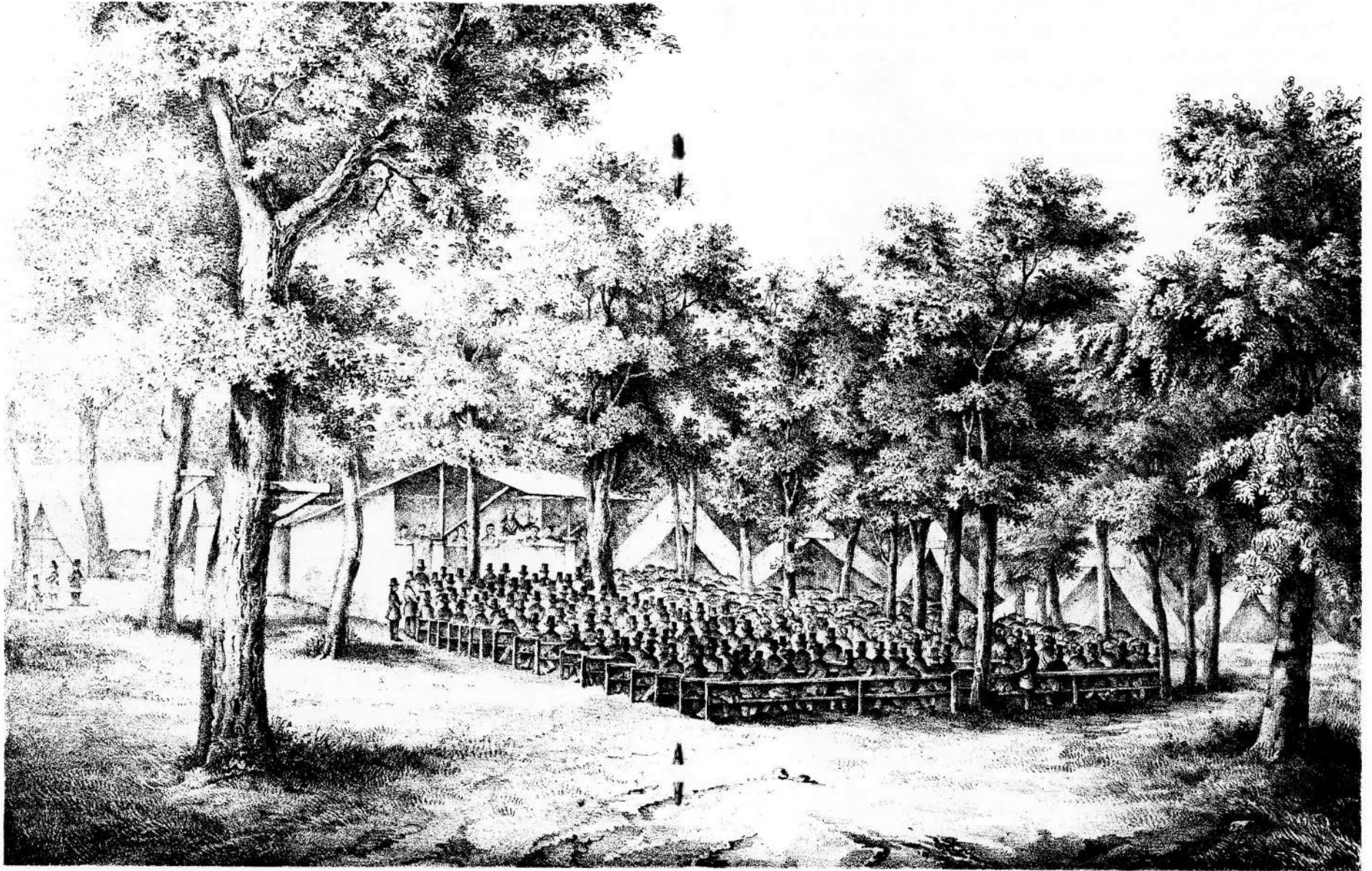
There is no drawing of the first campground layout that we know of. There is one of the second, the post-1846 arrangement. It was done a few years later by artist C. Bouton Coffin and copyrighted by Hebron Vincent in 1853. The Coffin sketch is shown on the two following pages.

A quite different sketch has been widely circulated as representing an early Wesleyan Grove meeting, even being used by the Camp Meeting Association in some of its programs. A 1941 program, for instance, has the sketch on its cover with the title "Wesleyan Grove Camp-Meeting 1855. Photo by Charles B. Coffin."

The same sketch, printed below, was published in the



This drawing of an unknown camp meeting is often represented as being a view of Wesleyan Grove. It is not.



C. Bouton Coffin made this sketch of Wesleyan Grove in the 1850s. Copyrighted by Hebron Vincent in 1853 it is, we

believe, an authentic view of our Camp Meeting during that period.

Vineyard Gazette, August 3, 1979, this time entitled "Camp Meeting Wesleyan Grove 1846." It also appears in the 1980 centennial history of Cottage City with the caption: "Hebron Vincent's woodcut of the campmeeting, c.1840."

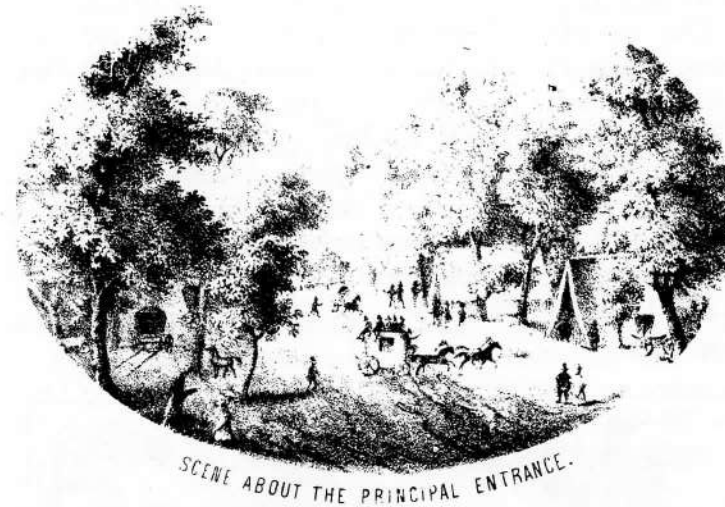
Here at the Society we have a tinted copy of the same drawing. Our version has the legend: "Methodist Camp Meeting -- Martha's Vineyard, 1851."

The voluminous *History of Methodism in Great Britain and America* by Rev. W. H. Daniels (1880) prints the same drawing to head a chapter entitled "Progress Under Difficulties." The sketch is not identified and the book does not mention Martha's Vineyard. The same sketch is also used in *Camp Meeting Manual* by Rev. B. W. Gorham, published in 1854. Again, it is not identified and no mention is made of Martha's Vineyard.

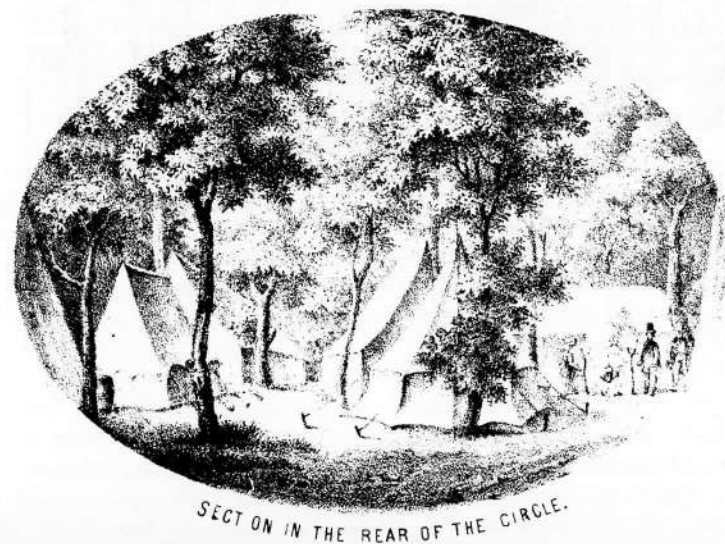
That drawing, which has been given so many dates, is not of Wesleyan Grove. In the background two very large hills are visible and the congregants are dressed more like Shakers than Vineyarders. The Preachers' Stand does not match contemporary descriptions.

On the other hand, the C. Bouton Coffin sketch was copyrighted by Hebron Vincent and printed, no doubt, for sale to visitors to the Campground. The Vincent imprimatur is adequate evidence that it accurately depicts our Camp Meeting during the 1850s.

In another publication, a brief history of the Camp Meeting, dated July 1853 and signed "H.V." of Edgartown, Reverend Vincent adds this note: "The individual represented as preaching upon the stand, in the Picture of the Meeting accompanying this Sketch, is the Rev. Daniel Webb, of the Providence Conference, the oldest effective Methodist Minister in the United States." Unfortunately, there is no drawing with our copy of the eight-page pamphlet, but it seems likely that it would be



Two sketches made by Coffin at the same time (c.1853) show the original Clinton Avenue entrance as well as the tent arrangement.

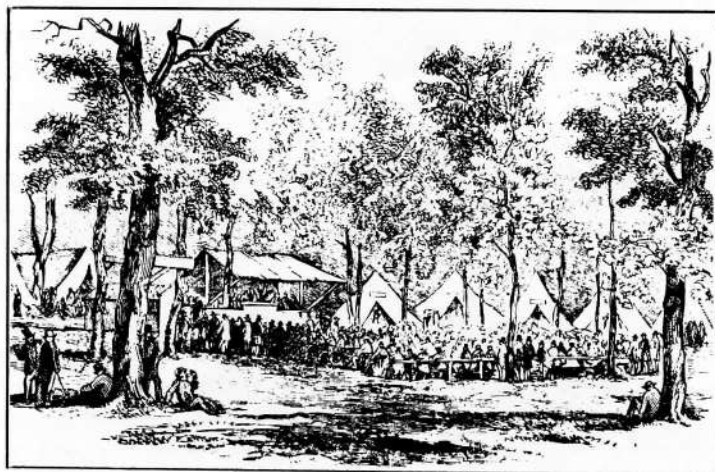


the same one used in his larger history published the same year.

Our records indicate that Reverend Webb did not preach here in 1851, 1852 or 1853, but did in 1850. The previous year, 1849, he was the featured preacher, celebrating 50 years as a preacher.

So it would seem that the C. Bouton Coffin sketch and the very similar engraving in Vincent's history were made about 1850, making them the earliest (and most authentic) views we have of the Campground.

But we still don't know what that first Camp Meeting looked like.



Hebron Vincent used this engraving as the Frontispiece of his history of Wesleyan Grove, published in 1858. It is similar to Coffin's sketch, but has a slightly different perspective. There are fewer trees and they appear less healthy (one tree at the Preacher's Stand floats in air!).

Eastville: Where It All Began

History with Maps

IT doesn't seem possible today, but in the days of those first camp meetings, Eastville was Martha's Vineyard. Those first summer folk who came to camp meetings beginning in 1835 landed at Eastville, rode wagons or walked along a sandy path to the grove south of Squash Meadow Pond and, to them, that was Martha's Vineyard.

Crowds were no problem at first. Even by 1845, when the Wesleyan Grove location was discontinued because "it had become 'an old story,'" there were only 40 tents and fewer than 1000 campers. The sandy path from Eastville to Squash Meadow may have been widening, but it still was just a wagon trail.

The camp meeting's off-Island hiatus lasted only a year and in 1846 the worshippers returned to a "leafy sanctuary enlarged and furnished with new seats and with a new and nicely finished stand located more eligibly than in former years for the comfort and convenience of the audience."

And the audiences poured in. By 1852, 5000 day-trippers came through Eastville for the Sunday meetings. Steamers from Providence and New Bedford unloaded the crowds at Norris wharf.

Eastville's moment was to be brief. In 1867, a larger dock was built at Oak Bluffs and the New Bedford

steamers began unloading there. It was the beginning of the end for Eastville's Norris wharf.

Next came the Highland wharf, just north of the Oak Bluffs site, designed to isolate camp-meeting visitors from the temptations of Oak Bluffs. A long board walk from the dock to the camp ground took them there in safety. To make it even safer, a horse trolley was set up in 1870 to carry them into the pure confines of Wesleyan Grove.

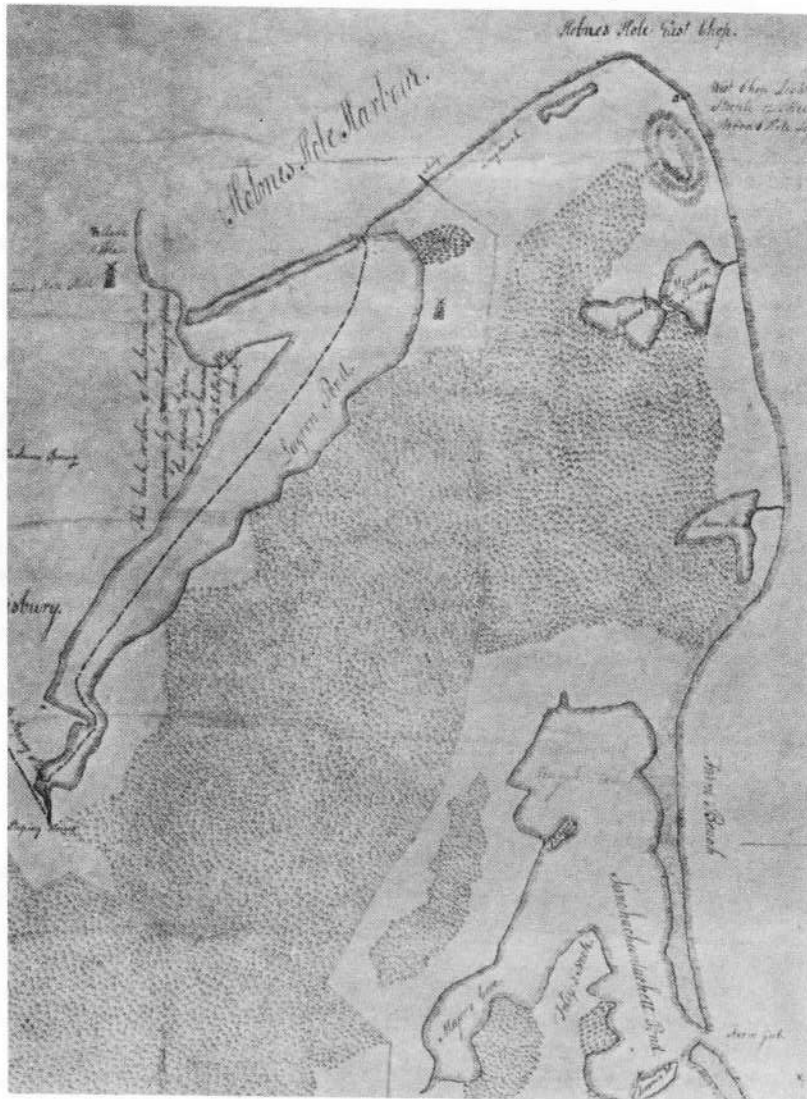
Faraway Eastville didn't give up without a struggle. A new and larger wharf was built to accommodate the Providence steamers and the boat from New York that stopped twice a week en route to and from Portland, Maine. The Eastville road, once Kedron Avenue, was renamed New York Avenue in the new wharf's honor and soon the horse trolley line was extended to Eastville.

But Eastville was doomed. Even the advent of the electric trolley (which got its power from a plant next to the old and now little-used Norris wharf) couldn't overcome the advantage the Oak Bluffs wharf had: it was closer to the action.

By the early 1900s, Eastville had fallen back into its quiet isolation. No longer did the crowds pour in on Sundays. It isn't known whether the residents missed them or not.

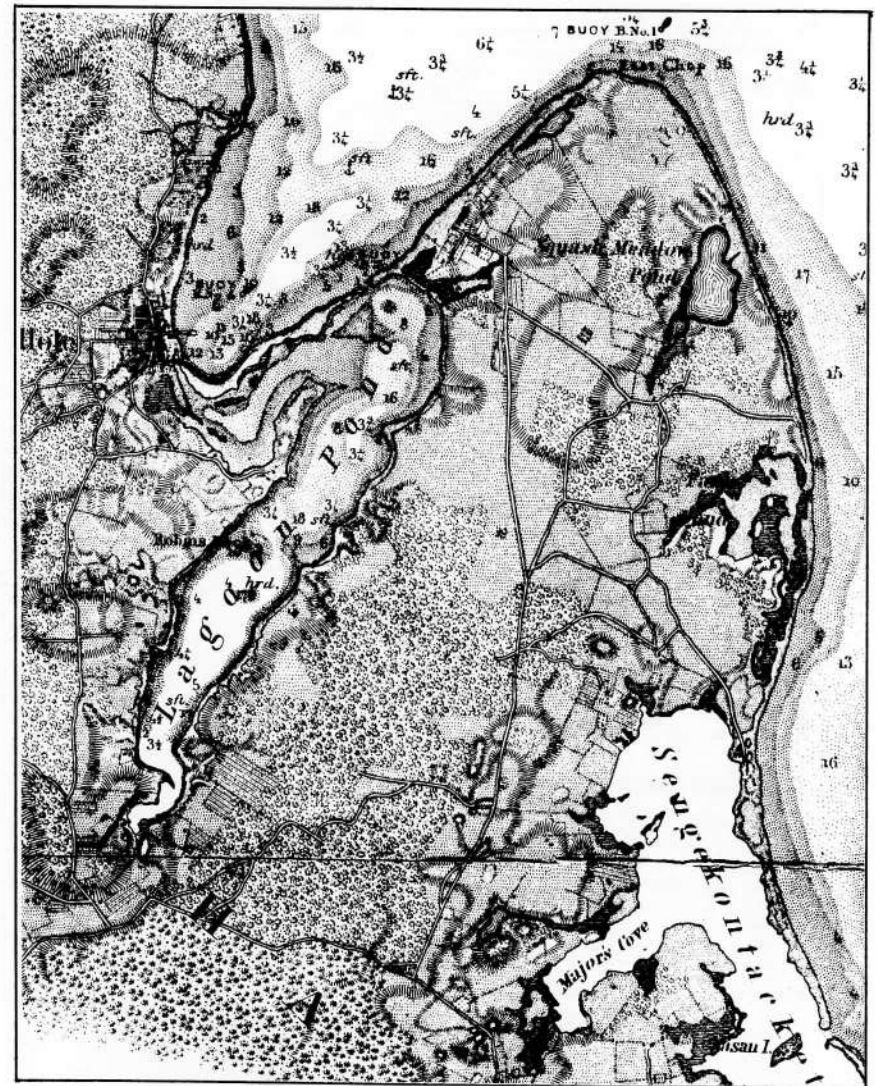
The following maps tell the story.

East Side Holmes Hole to Farm Gut, 1830



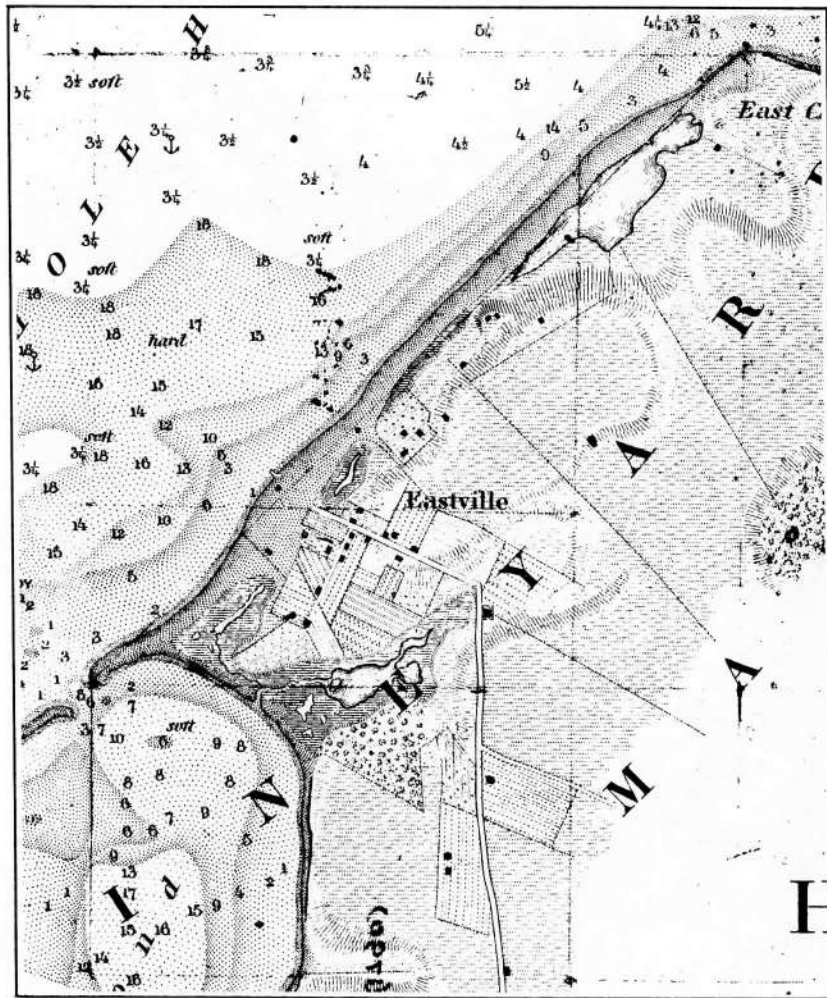
Road from Edgartown ended at Norris Wharf on the east side of Holmes Hole Harbor. Five years after this map was drawn, the first Camp Meeting was held just south of the two Squash Meadow Ponds, shown at upper right. No road went that way in 1830.

Holmes Hole and East Chop, 1846



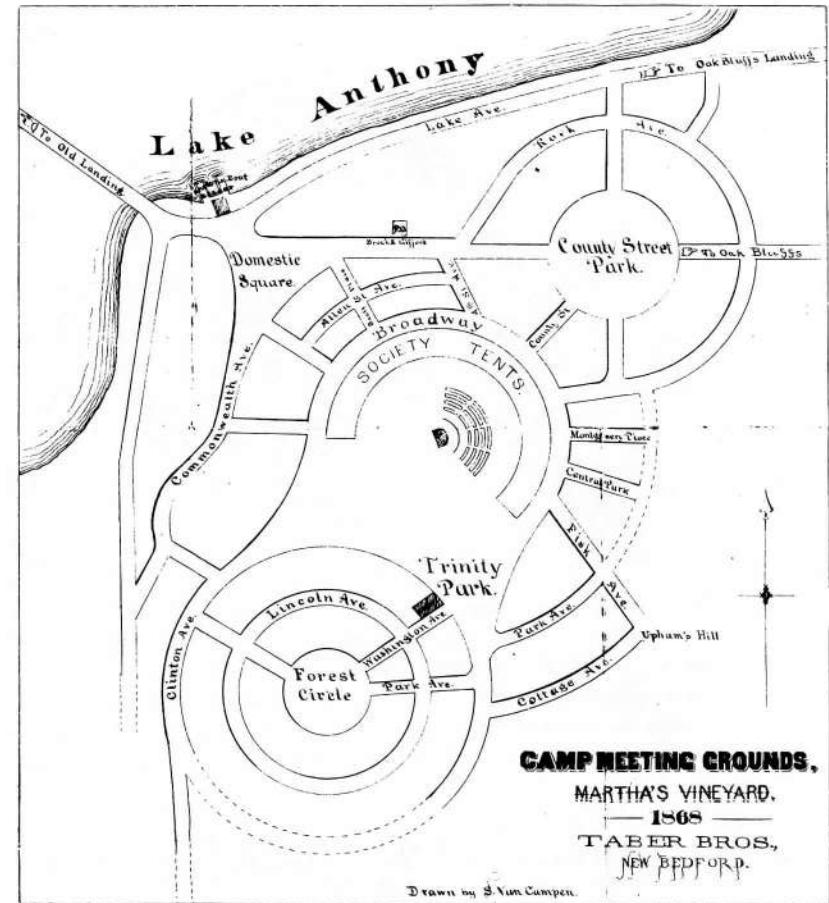
By 1846, the road network to Squash Meadow Pond had expanded to handle the Camp Meeting traffic. Tiny square in upper center is site of today's Oak Bluffs cemetery, just north of the road from Eastville to Wesleyan Grove.

Village of Eastville, 1847



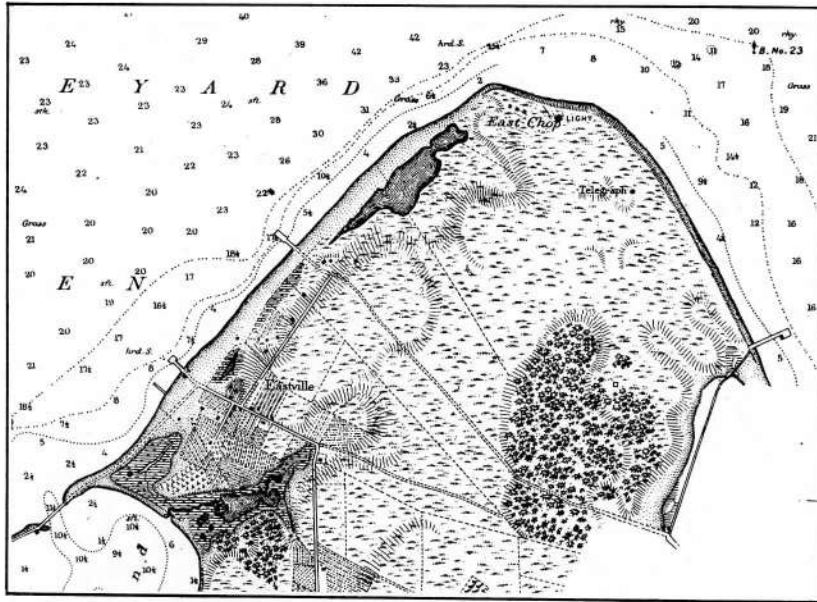
Camp Meeting visitors from the mainland landed at Eastville and rode or walked a mile to Wesleyan Grove along a wagon trail that runs into the capital "M" on this map.

Camp Meeting Grounds, 1868



The Eastville wharf is called "Old Landing" on this 1868 plan of Campground. Most visitors now arrive at the Oak Bluffs wharf and enter Campground from the east. Before 1866, the traffic from Eastville entered from the south, skirting the wetland below Squash Meadow Pond, making the lower end of Clinton Avenue the main entrance. In 1869, Domestic Square became the main entrance.

Eastville and the Highlands Wharf, 1871



Eastville kept some Campground business with its new deep-water dock for the New York boat (upper left) and a more direct road to Wesleyan Grove. The road, originally Kedron Avenue, was renamed New York Avenue. Highlands Wharf and its boardwalk to the Campground are at right. It and Oak Bluffs Wharf handled most of the boat traffic.

New York & Portland

STEAMERS.

The steamers of this line leave New York, Pier 38, East River, at 4 p.m. on WEDNESDAYS and SATURDAYS, touching at Cottage City at about 10 a.m. next day.

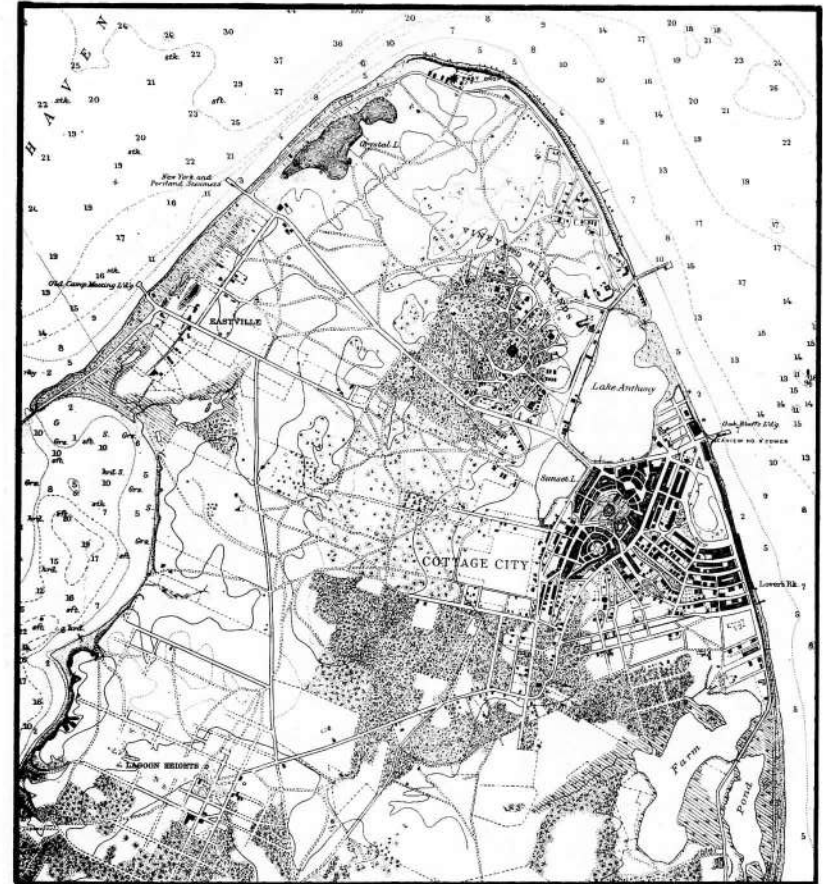
Leave Portland on WEDNESDAYS and SATURDAYS at 6 p.m. touching at Cottage City about 11 a.m. next day. Fare from Portland or

New York to Cottage City, \$4,

Round Trip, \$7.

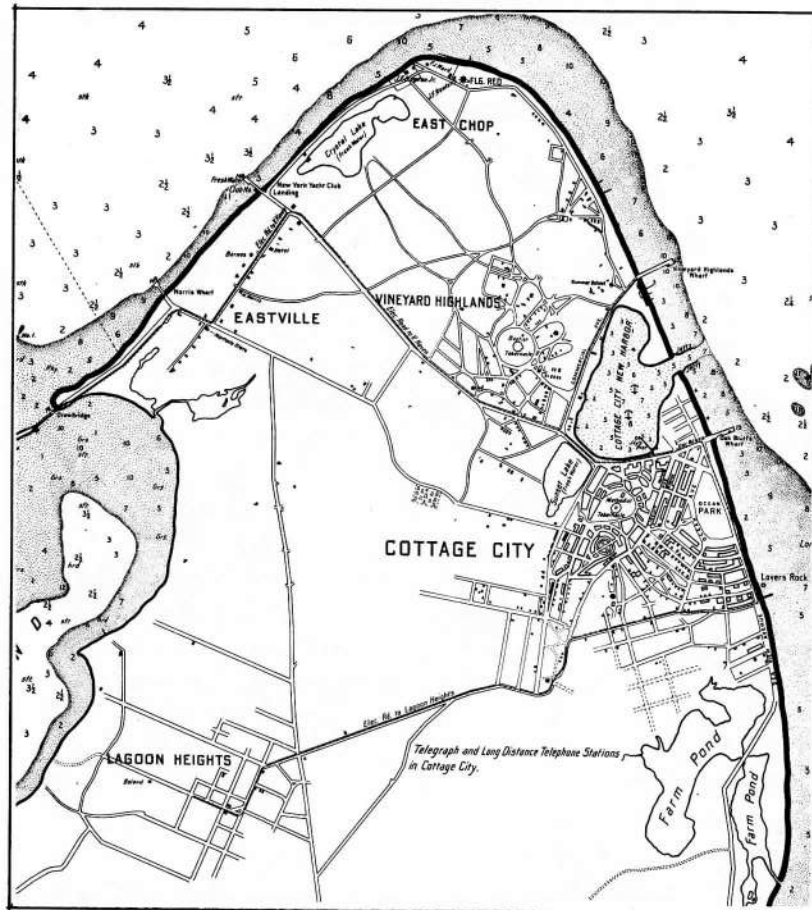
For Freight or Passage apply to
CHARLES BATES,
 Agent for the Company.
 Address P.O. Box 92, Cottage City, Mass.

Cottage City, the Highlands and Eastville, 1887



Cottage City was a bustling community by 1887. The older Butler forest of scrub oak was no more. Macadam roadways and a horse-drawn trolley had replaced sandy wagon trails. On the Highlands, the Baptists built their own Tabernacle, adding to the expansion. Eastville is little changed, although the horse trolley now runs there to meet the New York boat.

Eastville, a Stop on the Trolley Line, 1900



The horse trolley was electrified in 1896, shuttling between Oak Bluffs and Vineyard Haven, with a stop at Eastville, where its powerplant was built near the first Camp Meeting wharf. Trolley circled Ocean Park, Waban Park and the Campground before returning to Vineyard Haven. It never went to Lagoon Heights, as this over-optimistic map indicates. Lake Anthony has a jettied opening and is now Oak Bluffs Harbor. The New York boat no longer stops at Eastville, whose quiet is now broken only by the annual visit of the New York Yacht Club which has taken over the deep-water dock.

Moments in History

A Night to Remember

It is not easy for us, 150 years later, to sense the mood, the ambiance, of those first camp meetings. We know only today's Campground filled chockablock with neat cottages, surrounded by busy streets and souvenir shops.

But in August 1835 and for some years thereafter, it was a dense woodland. The only evidence of man's workings was a hurriedly built preachers' stand, in front of which were some board benches with no backrests. The only access was along a wagon trail through the woods from the southwest.

Methodists coming to those first Camp Meetings from off-Island came ashore at Eastville on the east side of Holmes Hole, walked along the sandy trail past what is now the Martha's Vineyard Hospital, through woods for nearly a mile. Coming to the grove in which the underbrush had been freshly cleared, they pitched their tents. The only sounds, except their own voices, were those of the birds. They must have known that they truly were in God's country.

For several meetings, it remained that way with few changes. There was not even an organized circle of tents for some time, as we learn from an article in *Zion's Herald*, August 1, 1838. The writer, Rev. Phineas A. Crandall, urges Methodists to attend the upcoming meeting at the most beautiful Campground of all, adding:

I would also take the liberty of throwing out a hint for the consideration of the committee . . . It is the propriety of being more particular in the arrangement of the tents; that is, to have them pitched as nearly as can be in a circle, and to have them face the centre of the ground from every part of

the circle. . . . A little regard to taste, I presume, in the arrangement of a camp will not disturb, but aid our devotions.

Mr. Crandall, minister of the First M. E. Church in Fall River, was elected Secretary of the Camp Meeting in 1837, replacing Hebron Vincent. He wrote to Sylvanus Pease, the Agent for the grounds, in August 1839:

We shall have a small company to attend the Camp Meeting from this place, but none I expect from Providence. From other places this way I have not heard expressly. We wish to "pitch our tent on new ground" this year -- the old place is too much exposed to the sun. And furthermore our people will board with the New Bedford people, which will make it much more convenient for us to be on the other side of the ground. There was last year a vacant spot next to the Fourth Street New Bedford tent. We should like that if it can be reserved for us.

But such minor matters as too much sun and the haphazard placement of tents didn't interfere with the rapture, at least not for Rev. Franklin Fisk of Yarmouth Port, who brought a group of his parishioners to the 1838 meeting aboard a packet. After returning home, he wrote to Agent Pease, extolling the place and the wondrous nature of the meeting.

To feel that wonderment, that special quality of Squash Meadow in 1838, one need only read the Reverend's letter:*

The Camp Meeting [for us] broke up at 12 o'clock on Tuesday night -- i.e., our company did not leave till that time and we continued the meetings. [The camp meeting had ended on Monday, but the Yarmouth group stayed over to await the arrival of their boat.]

I preached in the afternoon and Joel Steele in the evening; and we had the most glorious season that we enjoyed while on the ground! While engaged in a prayer-meeting, after Br. S. had preached, orders came from the Captain to have

the tent struck and get on board as soon as convenient; and at midnight, under the exhilarating influence of the full moon, then in her meridian glory, beaming down among the trees and lighting up the sites of the departed tabernacles, the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, and the desolated seats -- under these circumstances, I say, we left the ground.

O lovely spot! Shall I ever visit it again?

There is something peculiarly dear to me about the Vineyard. There is not another place on earth which ever seemed to me so much like *paradise* as that. How often have I said, "O that I could hear one tune from the Edgartown singers!" God bless the sweet singers -- and may they sing more sweetly still, that holier song around the throne, which none can learn save the hundred & forty & four thousand, and such as are redeemed. . . .

. . . Well, go on -- storm the island -- give the devil no quarters -- and may you dwell beneath the covert of the Almighty evermore, Amen! Please give my love to your father, Uncle Jeremiah, the Brs. Vincent, Br. Richard and everybody.

Who of us today can imagine the emotional impact of that experience on this small band of Yarmouth Methodists? Walking at midnight along the sandy wagon path for nearly a mile to Eastville, coming out of the woods to see spread out in front of them the glorious vista of Holmes Hole harbor in the moonlight, boarding the packet from the sands of Eastville beach, sailing off under a fair wind and tide to the east -- the full moon illumining the August night, the waters of the Sound sparkling. Doubtless, they broke out in song, praising the Lord, as they sailed home.

Surely, they must have known, God was in his heaven that night and they were his favored people.

*The letters quoted in this article are in the Archives of the New England Methodist Library at Boston University School of Theology. We are grateful for the assistance given us by Elizabeth Swayne, Reference Librarian.

Documents

This diary, excerpts of which we have been publishing since 1974, was kept by Jeremiah Pease (1792-1857) of Edgartown. It is our most complete record of Island events during the period.

Jeremiah is of particular interest on this the 150th birthday of the Camp Meeting. It was he who chose the site in the grove near Squash Meadow and is thus the person who put Oak Bluffs where it is.

In this installment, the diary tells of a renewal of religious fervor, another "reformation." Jeremiah was pleased, religion being the most important part of his life. This installment includes the Camp Meeting of 1852.

Not mentioned is the death of Daniel Webster, ex-Senator and Secretary of State. Jeremiah, being of a different political party, did not seem moved. He does mention that Democrat Franklin Pierce, one of his party, was elected President (although he spells the name wrong).

In 1852, Massachusetts passed the country's first law making school attendance compulsory. Jeremiah doesn't mention that either.

July 1852

4th. SW. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

5th. SW. Engaged with hay.

11th. SW, warm. Attended meeting at E'Ville A.M., P.M. in the Grove at M.D.¹

¹M.D. stands for Middle District, the area around Major's Cove. This is the first mention of outdoor meetings in a grove there.

15th. Sly, light. Went to Nantucket on business of L. C. Wimpenney, received \$293.10 on account of a voyage of _____ in the Ship 3 Brothers for which L.C.W. had an order to receive.²

18th. SW to S. Attended meetings in the Grove at M.D. Br. G. Weeks was there and Preached.

21st. SW, very warm. Thermometer 88 in the shade.

25th. Ely to SSW. Attended meetings in the Grove at M.D. Br. Geo. Weeks attended also.

August 1852

2nd. W to SW. Went to the Camp Ground at E'Ville.

5th. SW. Went to Camp Ground, rains a little at night.

8th. SW. Attended Meetings in the Grove at M.D. Br. G. Weeks & Thos. Stewart were there.

10th. NNW, light A.M. P.M. NE. Went to Camp Ground. Put on the tent covering, rains at night.

14th. SW. Frederick & his Wife visit us from Boston.

15th. SW. Attended meetings in the Grove at M.D. Brs. Weeks and Stewart were there.

17th. SW. Went to Camp Meeting at E. Chop, remained there until the 26th. Returned. It was a very excellent meeting, a great number were converted as we trust and many experienced a great blessing of the Lord. There were 151 tents, great and small. On the third night of the meeting Wid. Sophronia Norton died very suddenly. She lived about 20 minutes after she was first complaining of distress. She had

²L. C. Wimpenney is Jeremiah's son-in-law.

attended meeting that evening and returned to her house and died soon after. She was a member of the Baptist Church for many years.³

September 1852

1st. SW. Frederick and his Wife leave for Boston.

5th. SEly, clear. Attended meetings in the Grove at M.D.

6th. SW. Surveyed land at Chapqd. for Indians.

8th. SW. I was taken sick of Diarrhea at night.

9th. SW. Through mercy I am much better today.

12th. SE, storm. Did attend meeting at E'Ville.⁴

14th. SW. Court of Co. Commissioners sets.

20th. NE, light. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

27th. SE, rainy. Attended meeting at E'Ville.

28th. SW, clear, pleasant. Went to Boston on business relating to the Custom House.

29th. Attended United States District Court as a witness in the case of the U.S. against Hezekiah Galecar of the Schr. Baltic from Port au Prince which did not enter his vessel according to law.

October 1852

2nd. Ely to SW. Returned from Boston via N. Bedford.

³Mrs. Norton being a Baptist provides us with evidence that more than Methodists attended the Camp Meeting, even in the early years.

⁴He probably meant to write "did not attend."

3rd. SSW To E, light. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

7th. SEly, light, warm. The Steamer Massachusetts on her passage from New Bedford to Nantucket, ran afoul of a sail boat, stove her in pieces and drowned a man by the name of Thed. Howland of N.Bedford. He has left a Wife and 4 children.

9th. NE, light. My Brother Isaiah D. Pease's Daughter Eliza F. dies about 3 A.M. aged 21 years. A very pious girl & died a very happy death.

13th. NE, little rain. Funeral of Eliza F. Pease, daughter of my Brother I.D. Pease. Service by Rev. Hebron Vincent and Rev. Mr. Crocker. It was an affecting funeral. She was a pleasant child and was most esteemed by all her acquaintances. Her death was peaceful and triumphant.

17th. NE to SW. Went to W. Tisbury A.M. to see the wife of Mr. Prince Rogers who had been upset in a Waggon and hurt her hip and ancle. Attended meeting at E'Ville P.M.

18th. NEly. Attended Comm. Court at Holmeshole at the Capawock Hall and viewed the route for a new Road from the Village to the house of Mr. Claghorn near the West Chop.⁵ Adjourned to the 28th.

24th. SW. Attended Court County Commissioners at Holmes H.

29th. SW to NE. Engaged at Holmes Hole in lay out a highway through the village to near the house of _____ Claghorn at the West Chop so called.

30th. SW Funeral of Mr. David Coffin who died the 28th.

⁵Claghorn lived about a half mile south of the West Chop lighthouse.

November 1852

2nd. SSW, foggy, little rain in squalls. Town Meeting today.

3rd. NE, fresh breeze. Engaged at H. Hole on ac't. road.

4th. NW, light. News of the Election of Gen. F. Pearce as President. Engaged as above.

6th. N to E. Went to H. Hole to make some alterations in the road which the Commrs. have recently layed out.

7th. SSW, foggy, rains a little. Went to E'Ville attended meeting. Br. Rose, master of a vessel from Phila. preached.

8th. SW, pleasant. Town Meeting for choice of Gov. Lieut. Gov., Representatives, etc.

14th. NELY. Attended meetings at North Shore.

16th. W, gale or high wind. Attended the Funeral of Miss Depsey Luce, sister of Mr. West Luce. She died on Sunday night or Monday morning, aged 68. Service by Rev. Jesse Pease. She was esteemed pious.

21st. NNW. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

23rd. NE to N, rainy. This day I bo't the 1/8 part of the saltworks and land belonging to the heirs of Thos. Jernegan.⁶

25th. NNW to NE. This day is set apart by the Gov'r. and counsel as a day of Thanksgiving and praise to God for the innumerable mercies we enjoy from his bountiful hand.

29th. SW. Funeral of Mr. Tristram P. Fisher who died at the Hospital at Boston and bro't. home yesterday. He died of the dropsy. Funeral service by

⁶This may have been the saltworks that Jeremiah often worked on, the one belonging principally to Thomas Cooke, Jr.

Rev. Mr. Crocker & Mr. Gould.

December 1852

2nd. SW, pleasant. Watched with Thos. Cooke Esq. he being very sick and nigh unto death.

4th. SE gale with rain. Thos. Cooke Esq. dies about 3 o'clock this morning.

6th. WNW, light, pleasant. Funeral of Esq. Cooke. Service by Rev. J. Gould & Rev. Mr. Crocker.

12th. NW. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

20th. SW. Perambulated a part of the road from West Tisbury Village to Edg't. bound.

26th. W to WSW, foggy. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Mr. _____ Thomas who lately returned from California died there this evening.

27th. NE cold. Engaged in running lines for T. Bradley and others near the Little Pond so called.

January 1853

1st. SSW to NE, rainy & foggy. This evening there was a very remarkable meeting at the Methodist Vestry, a great number of men and women were awakened to a sense of their situation as related to eternal things.⁷

2nd. W to NE. Attended meetings at E'Ville. At the vestry at evening there were more people present than ever

⁷The Reformation of 1853 was so remarkable that it warranted an article in the *Souvenir History of the New England Southern Conference*, v. 2, published in 1897. The author, the Reverend Gould that Jeremiah mentions, states "we held services in the [Edgartown] church one hundred nights in succession." We have the volume in our Library.

seen there before and the meeting was excellent.

3rd. NE. Surveyed a new road for the Town near Henry Dunham's dwelling house.

8th. SW, calm. Frederick visits us from Boston.

9th. SSW, very pleasant day for winter. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

16th. NNW, very cold. Did not attend meeting at E'Ville.

23rd. SE, storm with rain. Did not attend meeting at E'Ville.

February 1853

6th. SW, light. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Ichabod Luce having lately professed Religion went with me. He attended meeting P.M. and spoke upon the importance of a preparation for eternity.

13th. NELY. Attended meeting at E'Ville.

17th. SE, rainy. Engaged surveying land for Thos. Bradley & others at Little Pond so-called.

28th. SE gale, with rain. This has been one of the most moderate or pleasant winters that I ever knew.

March 1853

2nd. NW, pleasant. Went to Pohogonut on business.

3rd. SSW to W. Went to Chilmark on business.

6th. WSW, pleasant. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

7th. SW, pleasant. Jeremiah is elected a Delegate to the State Convention to revise the Constitution by a handsome majority over all other candidates at the first ballot.⁸

⁸Jeremiah is the diarist's son.

8th. W to WSW. Mrs. Sarah Barrett dies at E'Ville. She lived with Br. Joseph Linton about 20 years ago, embraced religion in early life, married Capt. Barrett of Thomaston and lived there until about a year [ago] when they moved to E'Ville. She died suddenly, leaving a husband and 5 or 6 children. She was esteemed a pious woman.

10th. NNE. Attended the funeral of sister Barrett at E'Ville, service by Br. Sterms of H. Hole station.

13th. NW. Attended meetings at E'Ville. It was a solemn time, the death of Sister Barrett was sensibly felt.

14th. N.W. Ship *Vineyard*, Capt. Edwin Coffin, arrives from the Pacific Ocean with a full cargo. 600 Sperm and 1600 Bls. Whale oil.

17th. SSW, pleasant A.M., rainy with snow squalls P.M. Engaged in dividing land between Saml. and Rufus H. Davis at E'Ville.

24th. NW to W, cold. Engaged surveying land, etc., at E'Ville for Saml. & Rufus H. Davis. Capt. Silvanus Crocker dies.

31st. NNW cold. Reformation commenced about the middle of last December and continued several months in the most remarkable manner, a great number have embraced Religion in this Town since that period.

Books

Tom Tilton: Coaster and Fisherman

Narrated by Tom Tilton. Edited by Gale Huntington. Published by The Northeast Folklore Society, Orono, Maine. Illus. 68 pp. \$6. paper.

WHEN Tom Tilton died last year, he was almost 100 years old. He was a Vineyarder through and through, born in Chilmark because his mother was afraid the doctor might not make it in time to Nomansland, where they lived year-round. His father lived by codfishing and lobstering. Tom himself would never be far from the sea.

This book is based for the most part on a series of interviews recorded in 1973 and 1979 by Gale Huntington, Tom Tilton's son-in-law, with the help of Nora Groce, Nancy Safford and others. The setting was ideal for an oral history.* At home among friends, Tom Tilton is natural and relaxed. As he moves along through the years, he pauses from time to time on technical details, as to describe what trap fishing was like, or to define a "h'ister" or the "well" on a fishing boat or a "waif." He airs an old grievance: it's "no'theaster," not "nor'easter." But he doesn't wander

far from the point. All along, he is helped and encouraged by questions, especially by those from Huntington, himself a coaster and fisherman of some experience.

Tilton went to schools on Nomansland, in Gay Head (where he and his sisters were the only white children), and finally at Caphigon. Joseph Chase Allen was a classmate. Tilton made it through the eighth grade. "You learned a lot more, I think, by the eighth grade than than some does that goes a lot higher today." There was never a question of farming. He hated milking cows.

"Coasters" were the trucks of yesterday. They hauled freight of every sort in and out of New Bedford and up and down the coast. There were oysters, oyster seed and oyster shells, barrels of road oil, coal, lumber, produce, and fish. There were no stevedores even at the Woods Hole railroad terminal. The small crews of the small boats had to do the loading and unloading as well. The coastal vessels were vital to the islands, since New Bedford steamers could not load freight. Whole houses were brought over in sections. Cobblestones, one of the more irritating features of Nantucket's quaintness, were gathered on Vineyard beaches and transported there by coastal vessel. Then the ferries, and most of all the trucks, brought an end to the enterprise. When Tom Tilton's Uncle Zeb saw the first automobiles on the Vineyard, he said, "The world's gone to hell now."

So Tom Tilton turned to fishing, and he was a fisherman until he

retired at the age of seventy-six. There is a roster here of Island names, not only the Tilttons--Welcome, Zeb, even Cap'n George Fred--but Butlers and Pooles and Larsens as well. There is a full account of the changes in Island fishing over the years, from pound fishing to trap fishing to dragging to swordfishing (the man with the spear was always called the "striker," never the "harpooner"). There are storms and shipwrecks and salvage, and the loss of men at sea. One of these whom he does not mention was his own son. There is even a glimpse of rumrunning--though never, Tilton says, by Tom Tilton.

Coasting and fishing were tough work. Men's work; women are scarcely mentioned. Days were long and nights were short, interrupted by

turns at watch for the steamers. The sea provided a living, comfort if not wealth, but it was not really a friend. Radio, the telephone, and loran came one by one, and they helped. But life was never easy or safe. It was the life that Tom Tilton chose, and the only life he ever knew.

Tom Tilton was a typical Islander of the older generation with few sightings over the horizon. New York City was exciting because he remembered a trip--under sail!--up and down the East River. Two World Wars came and went with no more notice than the dimout of a lantern. Fishes disappeared because migration patterns changed, not from overfishing. Tom Tilton was a plain, strong man, a survivor.

ALVIN J. GOLDWYN
Society Archivist



All That Preaching Didn't Convince This Man

In our Archives there is a scrap of yellowed paper, unsigned and undated, with the following comment on the revivalists.

When I was a little boy, say 45 years ago, and followed my father to Rev. J. Thaxter's meeting every Sunday & some times cold enough to freeze cats, at that time I think my father would have trusted 19 out of 20 of the congregation with untold Gould (sic), now that congregation is split up and nearly gone, and a new race have sprang up which knows not Joseph. Now, at the present time I would not trust more than one out of twenty with untold Gold.

Consequently by the above analogy the people have grown 18/20 worse than they were 45 years ago. How is all this when we have so much more preaching, etc.?

*The tapes have been deposited in the Dukes County Historical Society Archives and at the Northeast Folklore Society.

Director's Report

BY the time this reaches you many members of the Council and volunteers will have spent countless hours working toward getting the Thomas Cooke House ready for its mid-June opening. Much of the first floor has been freshly painted along with the exterior trim of the house and the lighthouse, inside and out. New arrangements of both rooms and exhibitions have been planned by Council member Miriam Richardson. This work would not have been possible without the generous contributions made to the Preservation Fund (but, I must add, we can use more!). My next report will include details of what has been accomplished, but for here and now, special thanks to all those who have helped, especially Mim Richardson, Shirley K. Erickson, Natalie Huntington, Elmer Athearn and Bailey Norton. Thanks also to Eleanor Olsen for her work polishing the 1008 prisms and lenses of the Fresnel lens in the lighthouse and to Bud Haven for cleaning and lubricating its clockwork. I invite you all to admire its jewel-like beauty.

Membership has set a record, passing that long-sought goal of 1000. In addition to a very encouraging number of new Life Members there have been several matching contributions from employers. If it is possible for you to double our money through a matching program where you work or the company you have retired from, please keep us in mind.

The Council recorded with a great sense of loss the death of its former member Edith Morris. Her service and contributions are remembered with special appreciation.

We thank the *Vineyard Gazette* for the article which attracted visitors to our exhibition of Vineyard decoys and

the *Martha's Vineyard Times* for drawing attention to one of our distinguished researchers, Richard Reeves. Through references in old logs to various species of whales, he is able to compare present-day populations and contribute to their conservation.

Circle your calendars for Saturday, May 18 (rain date June 1) for a very special event. Members of the Noepe Fiber Guild will be out on our lawn from 11:00 to 3:00 doing a "Sheep to Shawl" demonstration. It will begin with the shearing of a live sheep and continue through all the processes necessary -- carding, dyeing, spinning, weaving -- to make a shawl which will be ready for auction at the end of the afternoon.

The lawn will be the scene of another event when on August 19 the Annual Meeting will be held, as it was last year, on the Society's grounds.

A number of welcome and interesting additions have been made to the Society's collections recently. Largest and most unusual was a 19-century hearse, used in Edgartown before it was relegated to Chappaquiddick. It was given by Elva Stuart Hoar. It is high on the list for restoration work, especially needed as it stands in the shed near the recently refurbished Button Fire Engine.

I look forward to meeting all of you after June 15, when you come to see the results of the changes in the Cooke House and elsewhere around the Society's premises.

MARIAN R. HALPERIN

Bits & Pieces

MOST of you may not believe it, but working with history can be exciting. It is akin to exploration.

The research on the Camp Meeting history is an example. Among some old letters in the New England Methodist Library in Boston there is one written in 1823 by Ebenezer Skiff, keeper of Gay Head Light. He was writing to Rev. Frederick Baylies about the commercial worth of the cliffs, an unlikely topic to find in a religious library.

Skiff had "dug 25 feet below the surface of the sea but no bitumen could be found. . . . The most valuable article in the Cliffs is white clay, of which yearly there is 150 tons, more or less, conveyed to Salem.

" . . . The whole Gay Head tribe of male and female is employed digging clay . . . for which the people of color receive from the [Salem] Laboratory \$2.75 per ton put on board of any vessel sent by the Company . . . others pay \$3. per ton."

Skiff then tells us something we hear little about today:

"I have been of counsel to the Gay Head people nearly 40 years during which I have endured bitter reproaches."

He explains why:

"In the year 1810, I obtained final judgement . . . against a white man over a tract of the best grassland of

any of that size on Martha's Vineyard."

There are several stories about the first "cottage" on the Camp Ground and when it was built. An article in *Zion's Herald*, Sept. 2, 1869, gives us a clue:

"Cottage Park is an oblong full of trees and lined with dainty cottages . . . Family tents had become somewhat common when Rev. Frederic Upham changed his tent to wood. A storm came and wet through and blew down the cloth tabernacles. Out of his box he walked serene in the morning and rubbing his hands in his humorous and devout style, dryly remarked, 'Bless God for shingles.' Since then, 'shingles' have become the fashion."

That "box" (it was only 7 by 10 feet) was built with the help of the ubiquitous Jeremiah Pease in July 1851, six years before any of our historians had dated it (see *Intelligencer*, Nov. 1984, p. 85).

How do we know it was the same "box" that Jeremiah describes in his *Diary*? Well, during the Camp Meeting a month later, an exceptionally violent thunderstorm drenched the Campground, prompting Upham's blessing of the shingles.

Before reading *Zion's Herald*, we thought it was merely a wooden frame for the Upham tent that Jeremiah described. Now, thanks to the 150th anniversary we know better. It was the first "cottage" and built in 1851.

That's the fun of history.

A.R.R.

Camp Meeting at Martha's Vineyard GO AND RETURN DAILY.

The new and commodious sea-going Steamer Monohansett, Capt. Benj. G. Cromwell, will run during the continuance of the Camp Meeting to be held at Wesleyan Grove, Martha's Vineyard, leaving her wharf, foot of School Street, New Bedford, as follows:

FOR THE CAMP GROUND.			
Tuesday,	Aug. 5,	at 8 1-2 A. M. and 2 P. M.	
Wednesday,	" 6,	" " " " " "	2 "
Thursday,	" 7,	" " " " " "	2 "
Friday,	" 8,	" " " " " "	2 "
Saturday,	" 9,	" " " " " "	2 "
Monday,	" 11,	" " " " " "	2 "
Tuesday,	" 12,	" " " " " "	2 "

RETURNING, LEAVE THE CAMP GROUND.			
Tuesday,	Aug. 5,	at 10.30 A. M., and 5 o'clock, P. M.	
Wednesday,	" 6,	do. do. do.	
Thursday,	" 7,	do. do. do.	
Friday,	" 8,	do. do. do.	
Saturday,	" 9,	do. do. do.	
Monday,	" 11,	do. do. do.	
Tuesday,	" 12,	do. do. do.	
Wednesday,	" 13,	6 A. M., and 11 A. M.	

Thus giving persons an opportunity of leaving New Bedford every morning, attending the daily meetings, and return every night.

Fare to and from New Bedford, 80 cents.

For any information relative to accommodations at the Encampment, inquire of A. D. HATCH, Esq., of New Bedford.

ANDREW G. PIERCE, Agent.

New Bedford and Taunton Railroad.

CAMP MEETING AT MARTHA'S VINEYARD, commencing Aug. 5th, 1862.

Trains leave Boston and Providence Railroad Station, Pleasant Street, at 7.25 and 10.30 A. M. and 4.30 P. M.

Returning, leave New Bedford at 7.10 and 10.10 A. M., and 3.40 P. M.

Steamer Monohansett leaves New Bedford for Camp Ground at 8 A. M. and 2 P. M.

Tickets for the Excursion from Boston, \$2.25; from Providence, \$1.75. Good to return any time during the meeting.

WARREN LADD, Superintendent.

HARVEY BARTLETT,

Of New Bedford, has two boats, Nonantum and Stag, running between Eastville and Holmes Hole. I have two experienced boatmen, who will take parties to Gay Head, or Edgartown.

NOTICE.

From and after 5th inst., the transportation of stray baggage from the Landing to the Baggage House will not be paid for by the undersigned.

S. P. COFFIN, Ag't.

Camp Ground, Aug. 6, 1862.

OPHTHALMIC & MEDICAL INSTITUTE,

Nos. 2 & 3 Ricketson's Block.

DR. HARR,

Optician, Oculist, Aurist, and Electropathist, from the above Institute, may be consulted at

S. B. Norton's, Eastville,

(Near the Steamboat Landing) for all diseases of the Eye, Ear, Throat, Lungs, and Chronic Diseases, Consumption, &c., all of which are treated upon a new and improved method of vitalizing without pain. Dr. H. is sole agent for the improved French Crystal Spectacles and Eye-Glasses, one pair of which lasts from 10 to 30 years.

Headache, Nervous Pains, Earache, Toothache, &c., cured in three minutes. Call and see. Advice free. Refer to Dr. Sawyer, New Bedford, Mass.

E. R. DUNHAM,

At the Edgartown Boarding Tent,

Is prepared to furnish meals, at all hours of the day, to all who may be in want. His tables will be filled with every luxury and delicacy that the market affords, and no pains will be spared to give entire satisfaction to all who may favor him with their patronage.

Camp Meeting Melodist,

By ASA HULL, author of the "SCARED HART," "STAR OF THE EAST," &c. Published by the author, 21 Cornhill, Boston. Price 15 cents, or \$1.50 per dozen. Orders by mail will receive prompt attention.

They are for sale at TABER & LAMBERT'S Refreshment Stand, next to Menage's Saloon, on direct footpath from the Steamboat Landing to the Grove. Call and get a copy.

Harrison Eating Tent.

ON BOSTON AVENUE.

By calling at Harrison Eating Tent, you will find every variety that is substantial. Boarding by the week. Remember, on Boston Avenue.

THE HAIR.

There is one thing with which the old and young are as unwilling to part as with life itself—the Hair. For many have met their death without sorrow or fear, but none ever lost their hair without sorrow or regret. The celebrated professor for curing diseases of the scalp and hair, A. G. Jourdain, is on the grounds to superintend the tonsorial arrangements, and may be found at the barbers' tent.

PRAIRIE

Dining Room, At the Vineyard Camp Ground.

The above establishment is situated at the main entrance of New Bedford Avenues.

The proprietor, having been engaged for the past ten years in catering to the appetites of those attending the camp meeting, feels assured that at the present meeting he can more than satisfy all who may favor him with a call. The tables will be provided with all the varieties of Bread, Pies, Cakes, Puddings, Roast Beef, Broiled Steak and Tripe, Fried Ham and Eggs, Fish, &c., cooked upon the grounds. Considering the liberal provision he has made in the above arrangements, he solicits a share of the public patronage.

Every preparation has been made for the accommodation of weekly and transient boarders.

Meals can be obtained at all hours of the day at short notice.

REUBEN WASHBURN.

A RARE CHANCE.—Prof. Jourdain, so well known throughout the New England States for his hair-renovating remedies is now in Camp to attend to the afflicted. It is a rare chance, as Mr. Jourdain leaves for Philadelphia at the close of the meeting.

DR. J. R. DILLINGHAM,

From 12 Winter Street, Boston,

Will be at the Camp Ground, on SATURDAY. Those wishing his services will leave orders

AT THE TENT OF S. L. PEASE, BROADWAY.

Dr. Dillingham will be at Edgartown on MONDAY and TUESDAY, Aug. 11th and 12th.

Advertisements from the Camp
Meeting Herald, August 11, 1862

CAMP MEETING HERALD.

MONDAY MORNING, AUG. 11, 1862.

E. MARCHANT, Editor.

OFFICE OF PUBLICATION.

The office of publication for the "Camp Meeting Herald" is in the Business building of the Camp Meeting Association, and a clerk will be in attendance at all times to answer and attend to the calls of the public.

TWO CENTS

Will hereafter be received for copies of the Camp Meeting Herald.

J. F. ROBINSON, Holmes' Hole.

May be found at the store opposite the Mansion House, a general assortment of Groceries, Provisions, Flour, &c., of good quality and at reasonable terms.

NOTICE.

The subscriber has on hand a large and desirable stock of choice Family Groceries, Provisions, &c., which will be furnished to all who wish on very reasonable terms. All orders received at the Refreshment Tent of Porter & Lambert, will be promptly attended to and delivered on the Camp Ground free of charge for transportation. Next tent to Mennaes Ice Cream Saloon, just below the bridge.

J. M. TABER.

Holmes Hole, Aug. 5, 1862.

A. W. Snow,

Has opened a Saloon by the pier at Steamboat Landing, Eastville, where he has been located for three years during Camp-meeting week. Refreshments of all kinds can be had at a short notice. Give us a call, and we will serve you in good shape. We shall keep open evenings till the meetings close at the Grove, to accommodate passengers crossing to Holmes Hole.

Camp Ground Accommodations.

JOHN ALDEN takes this method to inform those in the Camp wishing carriages for pleasure excursions that he is provided with double and single teams, which we will let at a fair price. Also, those who wish trucking or baggage conveyed that his facilities are as good as any on the ground. He hopes by attention to the wants of the assembly to merit a share of their patronage.

N. B. Passengers conveyed to Edgartown day or night.

STEAMER J. C. GIBBS.

The steam-tug J. C. Gibbs, Capt. J. C. Gibbs, will run between the Camp Ground and Holmes' Hole, every half hour through the day.

J. NORTON,
PERIODICAL DEPOT AT HOLMES HOLE VILLAGE.

The Boston Morning Journal supplied daily on the Camp Ground, at 2 o'clock, P. M.

Ho! for the Mammoth Tent

OF
FISHER, GRACE & CO.,
BEING THE ONLY REFRESHMENT TENT
WITHIN THE CIRCLE.

The Grand Consolidation Refreshment Saloon supplied with every delicacy from the Domestic Bakery of H. H. Fisher, 173 Union street, and from the celebrated Fruit and Variety Store of I. W. Grace & Co., William street, New Bedford, Mass.

The Tables will be filled at all hours with every variety of

CAKES AND PASTRY,

As well as every delicacy of FRUIT which the market affords; nice cool SODA WATER, with the choicest Fruit Syrups. Also,—Coffee and Cream Syrups fresh every day. The more simple drinks will also be supplied, viz: Ice Cold Lemonade, Mineral and Congress Waters, Sarsaparilla, &c., &c.

Those wishing Refreshments of the nicest order will bear in mind that this is the only Refreshment Tent within the Circle, and no pains will be spared to make this in every respect a pleasant and attractive resort.

WM. VINSON,

AT HIS BOARDING TENT, gives notice to his old friends and the public in general that he "still lives" and may be found near the entrance of the Camp Ground, opposite the boarding tent of E. R. Dunham, where he is prepared to furnish all who will give him a call, with meals at all hours of the day. His tables will be spread with every thing suitable to satisfy the wants of all who will favor him with their patronage.

HORSES AND CARRIAGES TO LET ON THE GROUNDS.

Teams run from Eastville to the Camp Ground. J. P. WHITE.

Holmes' Hole Boarding Tent.

As much as has been said in times past of the exorbitant charges made by dealers in different commodities on the camp ground, we propose in our particular line of business to remedy the evil, and can with all confidence recommend the travelling public visiting the ground to call at the Boarding Tent kept by the subscriber, where everything in his particular line will be served to their entire satisfaction, as hundreds can truly testify. BENJ. MERRY.

MENAGE'S REFRESHMENT TENT

On direct footpath from Grove to Steamboat Landing, where may be found from 7 A. M. to 10 P. M. OYSTERS, ROAST BEEF, BEEF STEAKS, TONGUES, HAM AND EGGS cooked to order, ICE CREAMS, CAKES, PIES, HOT COFFEE, TEA, and SODA WATER.

Hayward's Eating House.

This well known and popular establishment is prepared to furnish meals at all hours of the day, and would extend an invitation to those who are in want of a good meal to give them a call, where they will find everything to their entire satisfaction.

Carriages in readiness to convey passengers to and from the steamboat landing.

J. Mayhew, NEW BEDFORD AND VINE- YARD EXPRESS.

Particular attention paid to the transportation of Merchandise, Cash, &c.

Camp Meeting Orders promptly attended to.

Office on board steamboat Monohansett.