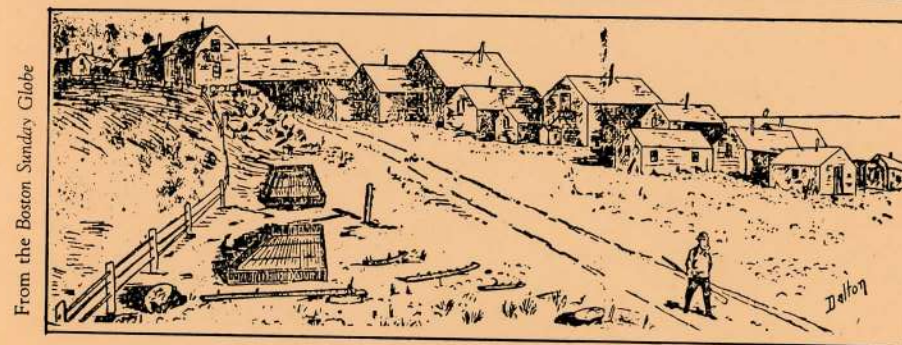




# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 27, NO. 1

AUGUST 1985



From the Boston Sunday Globe

Fishville, Noman's Land, 1896

**Noman's Land Island:**  
**Its History and Legends** by HENRY E.  
SCOTT, JR.

**How Did Noman's Land Get Its Name?**

**The Old Mill River**  
by DIONIS COFFIN RIGGS

**The Great Republic Visits the Vineyard**

Director's Report    Books    Pease Diary    Bits & Pieces

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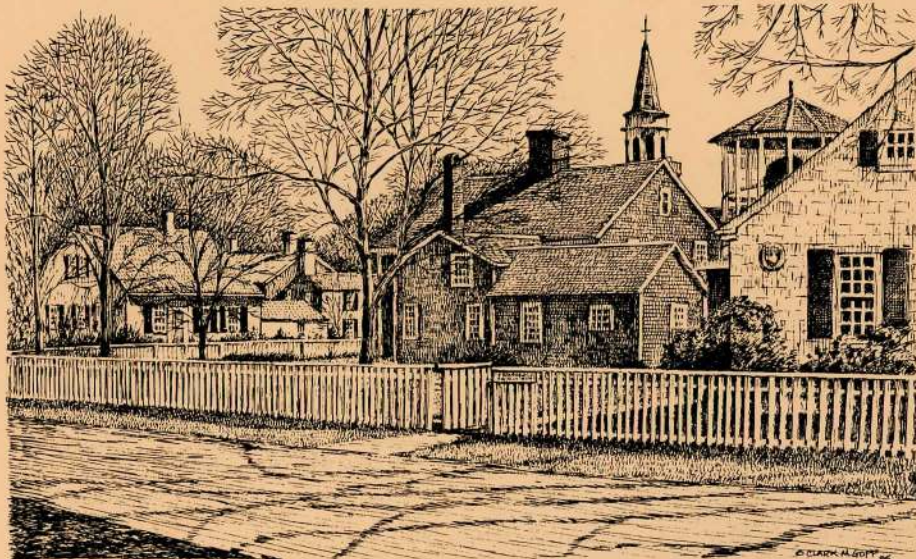
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THE DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY EDGARTOWN, MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MASSACHUSETTS

This lovely drawing by Clark Goff is available at the Library as matted prints as well as on note paper and postcards.

# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

Vol. 27, No. 1

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Editor Emeritus: Gale Huntington

Editor: Arthur R. Railton

Assistant Editor: Janet Holladay

*The Dukes County Intelligencer* is published quarterly by the Dukes County Historical Society, Inc., Cooke and School Streets, Edgartown, MA, 02539. Subscription is through membership in the Society. Back issues are available at cover price.

Manuscripts and other material for publication should be sent to the Editor, *The Dukes County Intelligencer*, Box 827, Edgartown, MA, 02539.

Articles in *The Intelligencer* do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society or its officers.

ISSN 0418-1379

#### 4 INTELLIGENCER

In 1602, six hundred years after Ericksson, Bartholomew Gosnold in his ship *Concord* was exploring the shores of Martha's Vineyard. Two chroniclers, Gabriel Archer and Rev. John Brereton, were with Gosnold and their separate accounts of the voyage were published some years later. Here is how Archer described the period when they were close to Noman's Land:

"The four and twentieth [of May], we set saile and doubled the Cape of another Iland next unto it, which we called Dover Cliffe,<sup>2</sup> and then came into a faire Sound where wee roade [anchored] all night, the next morning wee sent off our Boate to discover another Cape that lay betweene us and the Mayne, from which were a ledge of Rock a mile into the Sea . . . and came to Anchor in eight fadome a quarter of a mile from the shoare in one of the stateliest Sounds that ever I was in. . ."<sup>3</sup>

The shore near which they anchored was of today's Cuttyhunk Island. "This Iland Captaine Gosnoll called Elizabeths Ile, where we determined our abode." The story of the building of their fort on Cuttyhunk within the space of three weeks is well known (see Jonathan Scott's article, *Intelligencer*, Nov. 1984).

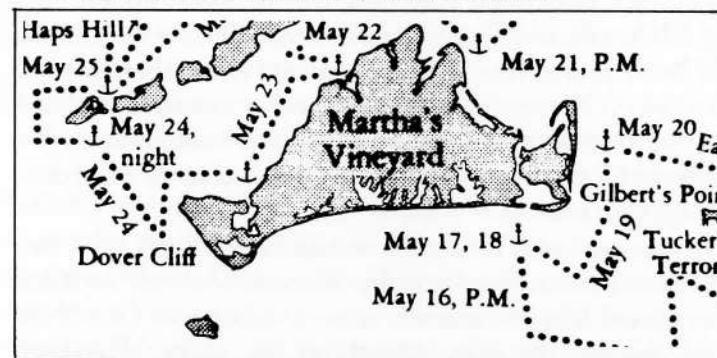
Then on June 17, again quoting Archer, "we set sayle, doubling the Rockes of Elizabeths Iland, and passing by Dover Cliffe, came to anchor at Marthaes Vineyard being five leagues [about 15 miles] distant from our Fort, where we went ashore, and had young Cranes, Herneshowes, and Geese, which now were growne to pretie bignesse." This was the first day of their return voyage to England.

The Quinns, whose recent book is the most thorough to date (David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn, *The English New England Voyages 1602-1608*, The Hakluyt Society, Lon-

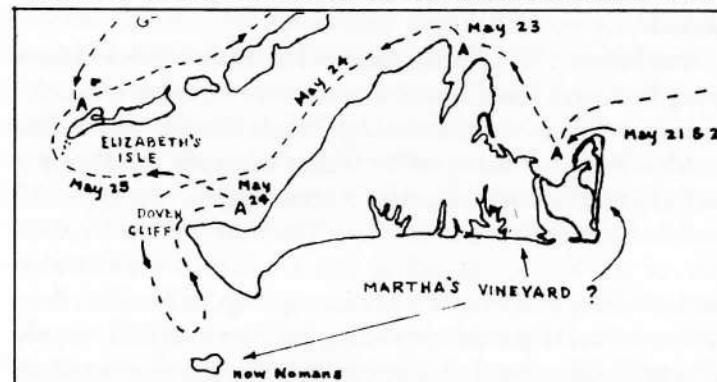
<sup>2</sup>Dover Cliffe is today's Gay Head. Gosnold seeing the opening at Menemsha Creek thought that the western end of the Vineyard, including Gay Head Cliffs, was a separate island from the main Island. The "faire Sound" in which they anchored was probably Menemsha Bight.

<sup>3</sup>They were in Buzzard's Bay, which they named Gosnolls Hope. The rocky ledge was Sow and Pigs Reef.

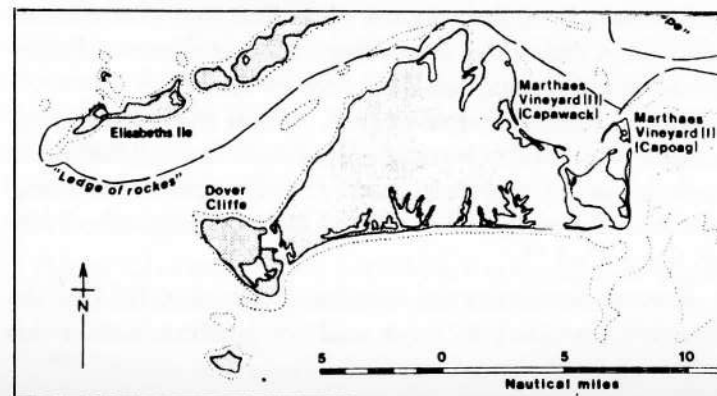
Three views of Gosnold's voyage, all based on Archer's account. None plotted the return voyage to England; however, the Quinns state that they landed near Nashaquitsa Cliffs to hunt waterfowl. Henry Scott believes the landing was on Noman's.



Warner F. Gookin, researcher for the Society, published this in 1948.



Lincoln A. Dexter plotted the voyage this way in 1982.



Most recent analysis is by David B. and Alison M. Quinn, 1983.

don, 1983), believe that the foraging party went ashore along the south side of the Vineyard, east of Nashaquitsa Cliffs, at Chilmark and Tisbury Great Ponds. Historian Charles E. Banks and author Joseph C. Allen believe that Gosnold landed on Noman's Land either on his way to Cuttyhunk or on his return voyage. Allen believes he built his fort there. Whether they landed there or not, they certainly sailed close to Noman's Land.

Some years after Gosnold's voyage, in 1611 and 1614, two Dutch explorers, Hendrick Christiaensen and Adrian Block (for whom Block Island was named) sailed past Gay Head and named the tiny island off its shore, Hendrick Christiaensen Island. That name is shown on a map of the period.

Well before 1700, "the Indians of Martha's Vineyard were using Noman's Land island as a summer camping ground," calling it Cappaquit, meaning "refuge island," according to Mrs. Wood. Fishing off its shores was very good (and is today) and the flocks of geese, cranes, herons, ducks, auks and shoalers provided meaty fare. There were fruits and berries of all kinds, including beach plums, strawberries, huckleberries, grapes and wild peas. Springs and brooks flowed into several ponds, providing an inexhaustible supply of clear, fresh water. It was something of a summer paradise.

Traces of Indian encampments and relics, tools, weapons and pottery have been found. Near East Bend Pond there was a great shell heap, many layers deep, of oyster and clam shells. It also contained the bones of animals.

"The Indians of Noman's Land . . . were the Pokanankets, a subdivision of the Narragansett tribe. They all belonged to the powerful Algonquin nation. . . One of their sachems was from the well-known tribe of Wampanoags who lived on Cape Cod."<sup>4</sup>

Records show that the island was owned in 1674 by the Sachem Cascanabin "who sold the western half to his

<sup>4</sup>Wood, pp. 69-70.

brother, Tackquabin." The brothers didn't know it, but 10 years earlier, after the English had taken Nieuw Amsterdam from the Dutch, the Duke of York, brother of King Charles II, obtained the charter for New York. In 1664, he proclaimed authority over Noman's Land.

Francis Lovelace was made Governor of New York by the Duke and in 1671 he invited the elder Thomas Mayhew and his grandson, Matthew, to meet with him. An agreement was made by which, in return for allegiance to the Duke of York, Thomas Mayhew was made Governor of Martha's Vineyard (and other islands) for life. The settlement of Takemmy, the Indian name, was renamed Tisbury, after Mayhew's home town in England and the other settlement, known by the Indian name, Nashawackamuck, became Chilmark after a village near Tisbury in England. Great Harbour, where Mayhew and his party had first settled, was named Edgartown in honor of the Duke's young son, Edgar.<sup>5</sup> Thomas and Matthew were named Lords of the Manors of Tisbury and Chilmark. For the next twenty years, Martha's Vineyard and adjacent islands were part of New York.

In 1685, after Governor Mayhew's death, Governor Thomas Dongan, successor to Lovelace, reaffirmed Matthew Mayhew as Lord of the Manor of Chilmark and Noman's Land, apparently for the first time, was included in the patent. Shortly after, Matthew returned the compliment by turning ownership of the small island over to the New York Governor. Soon, on May 20, 1689, Governor Dongan sold Noman's Land to William Nichols of Long Island, granting unto him "all that island commonly called Nomans Land . . . in consideration of a certain sum of money and . . . yearly payments of one good fat lamb."

About this time, in 1690, a revolution occurred in England and the Catholic King James II was forced into exile and the Protestant King William from Holland came to the

<sup>5</sup>Who, unknown to the group meeting in New York, had recently died.

throne. William reasserted English claims to Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket and the Elizabeth Islands. In 1691, he united the colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, giving the combined colony jurisdiction over Mayhew's islands. Thus ended the twenty-year fealty of these islands to the Duke of York. Henceforth, they were part of Massachusetts.

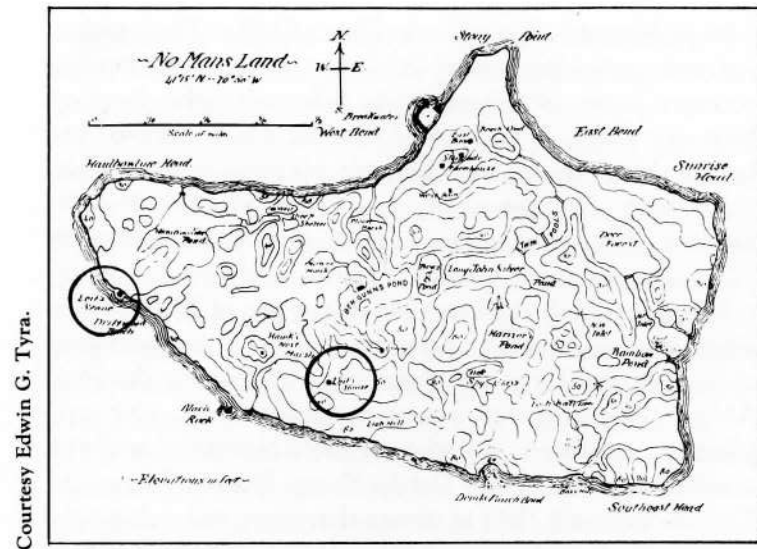
William Nichols' recent purchase of Noman's Land may have seemed less secure under the changed fealty because in August 1692 Matthew Mayhew, as Lord of the Manor of Chilmark, reaffirmed his claim to the island by purchasing property rights from John Phillips, then Sachem of Noman's Land, for the sum of fifty pounds. This took place on "the fifth day of August in the fourth year of their Majesties Reign (William and Mary), Anno Domini 1692." It was followed by an "indenture made the eighth day of November 1692" between Matthew Mayhew and William Nichols, affirming the transfer of ownership of Noman's Land to the New York man.

Matthew Mayhew died in 1714 and soon after, in response to a petition submitted by his nephew, Experience Mayhew, the General Court of Massachusetts Bay incorporated all the lands of the Manor of Chilmark, "including the island called Noman's Land," into the township to be known as Chilmark. From that moment, Noman's has been a part of the town of Chilmark.

William Nichols soon sold "all that certain island called Nomans Land" to Jacob Norton, then of Newport, R.I. Historian Banks describes Norton as "a trader, with residence in Edgartown, who removed to Newport about 1703 where he afterwards lived and was engaged in mercantile and maritime pursuits; he owned vessels which were engaged in West Indian and coastwise trade."<sup>6</sup>

It is possible that after buying the island Jacob Norton and family moved from Newport to Noman's. If so, they

<sup>6</sup>Charles E. Banks, *History of Martha's Vineyard*, v. 3, p. 346.



Courtesy Edwin G. Tyra.

Crane marked Leif's Stone and Leif's House (circled) in the map printed in his prospectus for Noman's Land Colony, Aug. 25, 1946.

would be the first whites to live there. It is also possible, though admittedly conjectural, that he was the builder and first occupant of the one-room thatched house built there in about 1715.<sup>7</sup> Nearly 100 years later, in 1813, the house was moved to the north shore of the Vineyard.

We can find no documents attesting to the building of this house, but there are references in deeds to a "dwelling," and there was an old foundation located on Noman's in 1870 by Sydney Harris, whose father had bought the house years after its move to Chilmark. The old foundation was found on an island in a pond in the southeast section of Noman's Land. Such a pond, Rainbow Pond, with a small island in it, is shown on a map in Joshua Crane's pamphlet *Noman's Land Colony*, published in 1946. It was this house, one must believe, that Joe Allen had in mind when stating that early Vineyarders believed Gosnold had made his settlement there.

<sup>7</sup>See Jonathan Scott's article, *Intelligencer*, Nov. 1984, for a detailed account of this Noman's Land house.

Jacob Norton's first wife was Dinan Coffin. Their second son was named Jacob after the father. Banks describes this younger Jacob as a farmer and fisherman who lived on Noman's Land. It is believed that he was a licensed inn keeper there. He married Bethiah Mayhew and they had three sons. His sister, Mary, married another Norton, Samuel. These two families numbered about 20 persons by 1750, giving Noman's Land a year-round population.

The elder Jacob died in 1743 at the age of 75. The year before he had divided up his property: "in consideration of the Natural Love and Affection . . . [for] my daughter Abigail [she was his youngest child], I do give and grant . . . one-fourth of my island called Noman's Land with one-fourth of the stock -- Cattle, Sheep, Horses, Swine . . ." This document is clear evidence that there was substantial farming on the island by 1742. It was not a mere fishing settlement. The deed was dated on the "27th day of August in the fifteenth year of His Majesty's reign -- George ye Second, King of Great Britain 1742."

The year after her father died, Abigail married Peter Simone (or Simon) of Newport, the Executor of her father's estate. It is possible that they lived on Noman's, but perhaps they spent some time each year in Newport.

The first sale of Noman's Land property outside the Norton family occurred February 23, 1763, when Simon sold the southeast quarter of the island to three prominent Chilmark residents: John Allen, Josiah Tilton and Mayhew Adams. In 1772, Simone sold the northeast section to John Bannister of Kingston, R.I.

After the Revolutionary War, several descendants of the Nortons of Noman's apparently felt it would be a good investment to acquire land on the island, land that had been sold to non-family members. Other Nortons, these from the down-Island branch of the family, also bought on Noman's Land. The Allens and the Bassetts from Chilmark joined in the transactions, along with the Luces. Israel Luce was

a permanent resident there during the 18th century. "His sons, Daniel, Thomas and Ebenezer remained on the island with their families until their deaths."<sup>8</sup>

The third Jacob Norton (1739-1793) was a "sea-faring man" who married Ruth Bassett of Chilmark (Menemsha). Their first child was the Shubael who inherited the Noman's Land house that was moved to the north shore. As Jonathan Scott has written in this journal, Shubael became a pilot and used Noman's Land as a base for sighting and hailing ships from New York and points south. He would offer to pilot them, for a fee, safely through the shoals of Vineyard and Nantucket Sounds as they sailed down east.

He married Love Adams, daughter of Capt. Mayhew Adams of South Road, Chilmark, one of the three Chilmark purchasers of Noman's property in 1763. Shubael and Love lived on the tiny island, raising seven children. It is believed by Sydney Harris, who now owns the old Noman's house built by the first Norton on Rainbow Pond, that Shubael's family never lived in that house, but in a newer dwelling in the settlement then being developed on the northern shore. Probably the Norton children attended school on Noman's. According to Mrs. Woods, the town of Chilmark paid to have a schoolmaster brought over from the mainland. The little church was used as a school house.

Shubael and Love lost their eldest son, the fourth Jacob, in the War of 1812. The following year, Shubael disassembled the ancient family house, numbered the pieces and hauled them in his boat to the north shore of Chilmark where he rebuilt it.<sup>9</sup> They lived in it only four years before migrating to the Ohio Territory. Prior to leaving, Shubael, who had bought his brother's share of their father's property, sold the Noman's Land holdings to Joseph Allen and to Thomas and Ebenezer Luce. Thus, by the mid-1800s, the Nortons of Noman's had been replaced by the Allens, Luces, Tiltens

<sup>8</sup>Banks, v. II, "Annals of Chilmark," p. 74.

<sup>9</sup>The disassembling was known as "flaking" the building, according to Historian-Builder Jonathan Scott.

and Davises.

By the end of the Civil War there had been more changes in ownership on the island. Principal residents included George Butler and family, Otis A. Sisson who had come from New Bedford to start a club for sports fishermen, and Henry B. Davis and family from Chilmark. It was this period after the Civil War that brought the greatest prosperity to the island. Annie Wood describes the period in her book, *No Man's Land: Isle of Romance*:

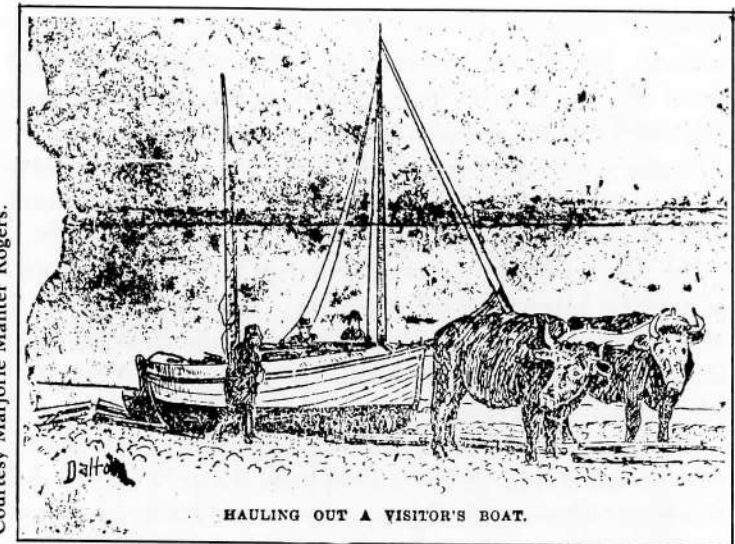
"Here was considered the best locality for sheep raising in the East. The sheep grew to an extremely large size, and the mutton was of superior quality. The wool, too, was of the best grade and always brought the highest prices in the market . . . the portion of the island which was used for pasture would maintain six hundred and fifty sheep the year round . . . The winters then, as now, were so mild that it was not necessary to furnish any shelter or extra feed for the sheep." The proximity of the Gulf Stream to the island is possibly a factor in the weather.

"The settlers [Mrs. Wood continues] raised only crops enough for their own use . . . At one time a mill stood not far from the . . . farmhouse and one of the stones [for grinding the grain] can still be seen.

"From earliest time, the inhabitants of Noman's Land have engaged in fishing. For many years, the codfish caught near the island were considered of superior quality and the name 'Noman's Land codfish' was a guarantee of its excellence. . . . often as many as fifty or sixty boats were engaged. . . . the codfish season lasted from April first to the last of May. . . . the fall season, which was from October to December fifteenth, was not as agreeable. . . ."

There was no natural harbor and boats were beached at a north shore landing area which was protected from the Atlantic surf. Noman's Land boats were designed for the conditions. "They were from 16 to 18 feet long, built of light oak timbers and cedar planking, copper fasten-

Courtesy Marjorie Manter Rogers.



HAULING OUT A VISITOR'S BOAT.

Yellowed clipping from the Boston Globe in 1896 shows George Butler hauling out a Noman's Land boat with his yoke of oxen.

ed . . . sharpened at both ends . . . four thwarts crossed the hull and were kneed into place. They had fairly deep keels but no centerboard and two short masts of equal length carrying sprit sails. . . they could be rowed with comparative ease."

One of these now very rare boats was presented to the Dukes County Historical Society by Ralph W. Wood in 1933 and is on display there.

With no protected harbor, the boats had to be hauled onto the beach when not in use. A ramp that looked like a ladder with three rollers instead of rungs was laid on the sand so the boats could be dragged more easily, usually by a team of oxen. Boats were needed for more than fishing, they carried people, material and foodstuffs to and from Martha's Vineyard. The shortest and most popular route was to Squibnocket landing, three miles away. Squibnocket, at the time, was also a fishing village with shacks along the beach like Noman's.

"Many times," Annie Wood writes, "the fishermen

brought their wives and children with them to the island . . . and were given verbal rights to erect dwellings upon the northern shore. . . Some families remained only during the fishing seasons, while others settled there."<sup>10</sup>

In the seasonal fishing village there were several houses, a store and a combination church and schoolhouse. Fishing was so good in the summer that Otis A. Sisson built a clubhouse for wealthy sports fishermen from New Bedford. When the fishing fell off, the club was discontinued and the building was sold for \$10 to George Butler who had been living on the island since 1850. He used it as a home for his growing family.

A reporter for the *Boston Sunday Globe* visited Mr. Butler and his wife in March 1896. They were the only year-round residents of the island. The reporter quoted Butler as saying:

"When I gave up whaling I began to fish around these shores for cod and decided that it would be a good place for me to live, and I came here with my wife, and on this island we have reared a family of five children, three of whom were boys. My children are all men and women grown now, and they don't spend but little time at their old home. Mother and I have been the only persons living on the island during the winter time for quite a number of years."

He helped support his family by fees charged fishermen for hauling their boats. He charged \$5 a season, using his team of oxen for the work. The couple kept a cow and about 60 hens. "There are plenty of sea fowl on the shores," the reporter wrote, "but there is not a wild animal of any kind on the island." Wild strawberries, however, covered the island in summer. Butler also added to his income by selling vegetables, eggs, milk and other foodstuffs to the fishermen in season.

For fuel, the Butlers used peat and driftwood, both being plentiful. There was not a tree on the island in 1896 and,

<sup>10</sup>Anecdotes about Noman's during this period will be found in Cyril Norton's "Up-Island Tales, Wry and Dry," *Intelligencer*, Nov. 1980 and Feb. 1981.

Courtesy Marjorie Manter Rogers.

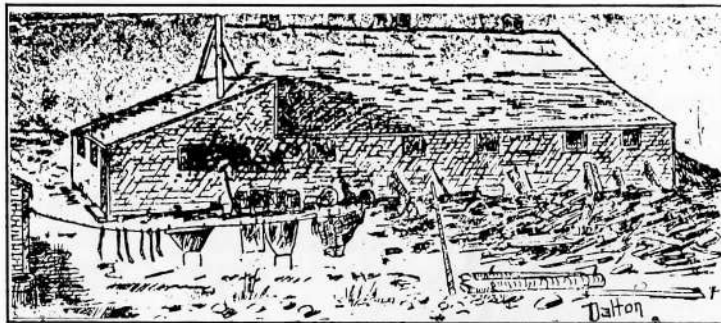


The *Globe* artist sketched Mr. and Mrs. George H. Butler of Noman's Land.

in Butler's memory, there never was but one "and that was blown down" about 1875. Sheep kept the fields closely cropped. Vineyard farmers kept sheep there, coming over only at shearing time. Once a wreck came ashore and provided the Butlers with two years supply of firewood, plus enough hard pine to build a barn.

They apparently had no accurate clock and checked the time once a day by watching to see when the Gay Head Light came on. Mrs. Butler said that the Keeper always lit the lamp at sunset so by referring to an almanac they had she could tell what time it was.

Mrs. Harold (Marjorie Manter) Rogers of West Tisbury has told the author that her grandfather, Henry Davis, lived with his family on Noman's in a farmhouse overlook-



The Butler home had once been the clubhouse for a private fishing club.

ing the north shore village. It is said that he built the first breakwater to the west of Stony Point, hauling the glacial boulders by ox cart. By his first wife, there were four children. His second wife was Grace Hammett who had grown up in the house on Tea Lane, Chilmark, now owned by Clark Goff.<sup>11</sup> Henry and Grace had only one child, Lillian, who spent the first 11 years of her life on Noman's. The Davis family was the only one on the island with children of school age so the town of Chilmark closed the school. Davis brought suit against the town, but lost. In 1912, he moved his family to the Vineyard, into a house on Middle Road (now owned by Briggs). When Lillian grew up she married Daniel Manter.<sup>12</sup> Today, their children and grandchildren are active in the life of West Tisbury.

In 1914, Joshua Crane of London and Dedham, Mass., bought Noman's and used it as a summer residence for his family until the entry of the nation into World War II. Ralph W. Wood served as Mr. Crane's caretaker from 1924 to 1933. His wife, Annie M. Wood, wrote the book about Noman's frequently quoted in this article.

During the years of prohibition there were many stories about Noman's being a base for rumrunners, but there is little evidence that island residents were directly involved.

<sup>11</sup>See *Intelligencer*, Aug. 1982 and Nov. 1982.

<sup>12</sup>Lillian D. Manter sparked the drive to build the present Martha's Vineyard Youth Hostel, which now bears her name.

Courtesy Marjorie Manter Rogers.



Shacks on north shore, c. 1910; small one had been a school and church.

One report stated that a barn was used as a transfer warehouse for the contraband and that running up to it from the shore was a set of tracks to expedite handling of the "goods." The transfers, it was said, were always made on dark, moonless nights with unlighted boats so the mystery remains. Nonetheless, there are persons alive today who state that it was an active base for rumrunners.

The U. S. Navy took possession of the island in World War II, leasing it for \$900 a year from the Crane Properties Trust. The Navy agreed to return it to the Cranes in its original condition after the war. The Navy set up targets on the island for the training of fighter pilots. By this time most of the buildings of the little north shore fishing community had deteriorated or disappeared. After the Navy Seabees came in and bulldozed roads and an airstrip, nothing was left. The sheep had been removed, having been given to the Forbes of Naushon, according to Priscilla Crane, a trustee of the Trust. Only a few stone shelters remained.

That was the condition the island was in when the author visited it as the Navy Officer-in-Charge of Noman's in the



Henry B. Davis's home on Noman's, c. 1910, where Lillian D. Manter grew up.

early spring of 1945.<sup>13</sup> The Navy did put up a dozen or so Quonset huts, which were removed after the war, and also built a sturdy dock inside the breakwater.

Joshua Crane, still expecting to get his island back when the war ended, made elaborate plans for an extraordinary development of Noman's. In August 1946, he circulated an impressive brochure entitled *Noman's Land Colony*. In it he outlined in detail his plan to make the island an exclusive resort with complete facilities for golf, tennis, fishing, boating and other activities. He offered to sell selective memberships or investments in return for which housing and recreational facilities would be made available. Initiation of such an ambitious project indicates that he fully expected to have the island returned to him. It never was, so Joshua Crane's dream was never realized.

The island continues to be held by the federal government under a Joint Management Agreement between the Departments of the Interior and Navy. The Departments "do mutually agree to the use and management of Noman's Land Island to benefit migratory birds and other wildlife

<sup>13</sup>See the author's article, "Navy Combat Pilots Train at the Island Air Base," *Intelligencer*, Feb. 1984.

Courtesy Marjorie Manter Rogers.



Until the Navy took it in World War II, Noman's had flocks of sheep.

to the extent consistent with military requirements. . . ." The island is still being used as a target base for military aircraft.

Many have expressed concern over the bombing. The author can reassure them that the bombing during World War II was not indiscriminate and the island was not devastated as some have claimed. At that time, two specific targets, "Meatball" and "Excelsior," each a circle about 100 feet in diameter, were laid out, one at the east end of the island, the other at the west end. The east target was for fighter planes firing 5-inch rockets. Hellcat, Bearcat or Corsair aircraft from different bases in the New England coastal area would fly over at 6000 feet, go into a 40-degree dive, let loose a non-explosive rocket at 1500 feet and immediately pull out of the dive. Spotters in huts near the target would radio the pilot, informing him of the accuracy of his hit. Because they had plaster heads, the rockets simply plowed into the ground without exploding.

The target at the western end was for strafing by .50-caliber machine guns mounted on the aircraft. Occasional fires did occur which may or may not have been caused by the



Mrs. Davis and daughter, Lillian, pose for snapshot on Noman's in 1910.

shooting. In any case, there was no reckless devastation.

The author has not been on the island since the war, but the Joint Management Agreement does permit periodic inspection of the natural resources of the island by non-military persons. Gus Ben David of the Felix Neck Sanctuary has been the local representative on these inspection trips to see that the unique quality and character of the island are preserved.

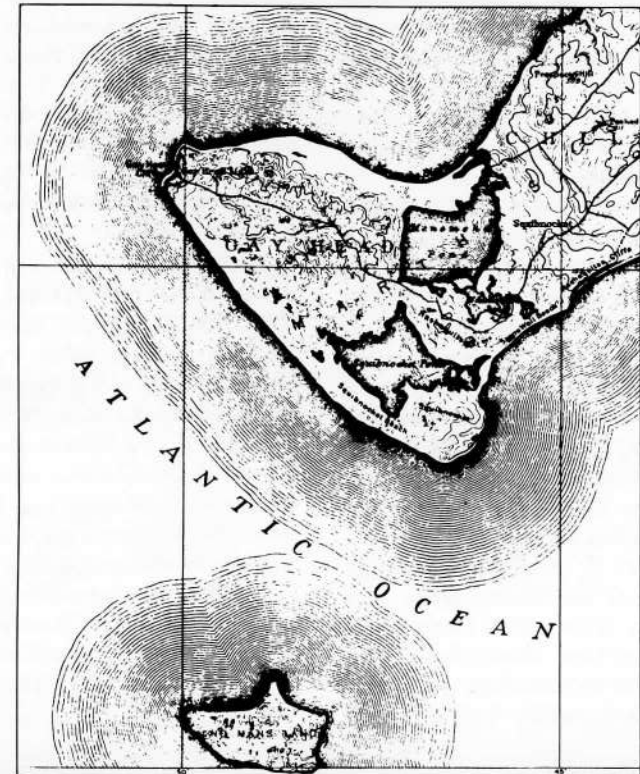
Thus, the Navy continues to control the fate of Noman's Land Island, constrained to some degree by the Department of the Interior. Concerned individuals should ponder the question: Would Noman's Land be better off in the hands of a developer?

Even with the Navy's use, or even misuse, it still remains something of a wildlife sanctuary, an island paradise, off limits to humans.

*Noman's Land lies southeast of Squibnocket Point.*



This tiny shack had been a school and church during its early days.



## How Did Noman's Land Get Its Name?

THE question is often asked: Why the name Noman's Land? There are many theories.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term *no man's land*: "A piece of waste, or unowned, land; in early use as the name of a plot of ground, lying outside the north wall of London, and used as a place of execution."

The second half of the definition is not relevant, but the first is. Noman's Land, our island, was unowned until 1666. It was not included in the original patent to Thomas Mayhew in 1642. So, it would seem, Thomas Mayhew never did own it.

In 1664, Governor Nicolls of New York proclaimed it to be under the jurisdiction of his leader, the Duke of York. Two years later, in 1666, he granted the island, described as "no man's land", to William Reeves, Tristram Dodge, John Williams and William Nightingale, presumably New York men, to establish a fishing station, and to build a harbor within three years. The payment was one barrel of cod fish a year.

Warren F. Gookin, onetime Historian of the Society, wrote that "the terms of the (1666) Patent show plainly that Gov. Nicolls understood the place to be ownerless; that it was extra-jurisdictional, hence called

Noman's Land, according to accepted English usage for border land not within a recognized parish or jurisdiction. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

When the four New Yorkers failed to meet the Governor's requirements within three years, one of them, John Williams, had the patent renewed in his name alone. He did nothing and in 1685 when Governor Dongan, who replaced Nicolls, invested Matthew Mayhew with the Lordship of Martha's Vineyard, he included Noman's Land, by name, in the patent. In a rather irregular move, Mayhew soon sold it to Governor Dongan who then resold it to William Nichols of Islip, Long Island. In both cases, it was called Noman's Land.

With so many mentions of the name in such a short period of time, Noman's Land became official nomenclature and so it remains today.

Historian Charles E. Banks does not accept this explanation: "It is usual to attribute it to a combination of two words, No Man's Land, as descriptive of its ownerless condition, but while this is the easiest conclusion it does not seem to be the correct one."

He offers another explanation:

"There was a great Powwow on the Vineyard called Tequenoman residing here when the English came and it is

<sup>1</sup>Warner F. Gookin papers, D.C.H.S.

Courtesy Edwin G. Tyra.



Noman's in World War II. White patch in foreground is a target area.

possible that he had jurisdiction over, or ownership of, this small island which came to bear the last half of his name, (Teque) nomans Land."

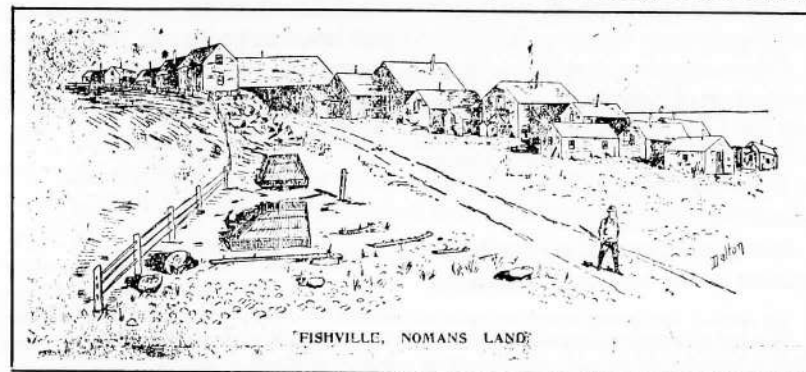
Banks was careful to write only that "it is possible that he had jurisdiction."

Warner Gookin rebuts Banks:

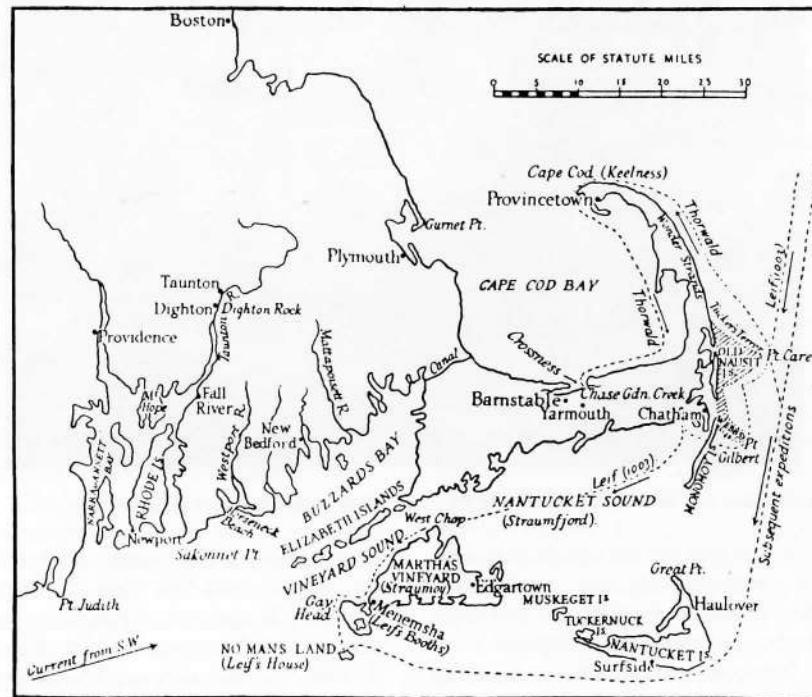
"Governor Nicolls certainly could not have been informed that an Indian

named Noman had owned it [and it was Nicolls who first used Noman's Land]. . . Te-quen-oman [Gookin continues] would be pronounced as indicated, the last two syllables being unaccented, as in Solomon."

Thus, Gookin suggests, if named for the Indian, it would have to be Oman's Land, or more likely, Oman's Island.



North shore fishing settlement, drawn by Globe's artist in 1896.



MAP OF VINLAND

Edward F. Gray used this map in his 1930 book to support claim that Leif Ericksson's Vinland was today's Noman's Land.

No other island, he points out, is called "Land."<sup>2</sup>

Others speculate that Noman's is a corruption of Norman's Land, honoring the Leif Eriksson discovery. The evidence for that theory is as feeble as it is for the Viking discovery of the island.<sup>3</sup>

So it would seem, despite Dr. Banks' opinion to the contrary, "the easiest

conclusion" is the correct one. It simply was an island that in 1666, when Governor Nicolls first called it Noman's Land, did in fact belong to no man.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Hale of Vineyard Haven has another theory. On a trip to England he discovered a tiny hamlet called Nomansland located about 20 miles from the towns of Chilmark and Tisbury, thus in the old Mayhew area. He suggests that the name could have been "brought here from England probably by a resident of either Wiltshire or from Devon sometime in the 17th Century."

<sup>3</sup>The Indian name for Noman's was Cappaquit, a name that did not stick, perhaps because few early Vineyarders had any reason to talk about the tiny, remote island, far from any English settlement.



## The Old Mill River

by DIONIS COFFIN RIGGS

**M**Y first experience with the Old Mill River that I remember was on a day with a vigorous wind blowing over the road that crossed the Mill Dam in the center of West Tisbury. I had been prepared for it. Aunt checked my long-legged drawers to see that they were properly fastened and buttoned to my Ferris waist; she helped my sweated arms into the sleeves of a warm wool coat; she wrapped a knitted scarf around my neck, passed me the red, tasseled stocking cap that I pulled down over my ears, then said: "Now be careful, little dear. Don't let the wind blow you over the Mill Dam."

Then there were the Spring noons when the Luce children, the Gifford boys and I, walking home from school for our dinner (we now would call it lunch), with little time to spare, would nevertheless stop to throw sticks into the waterfall on the north side of the road and run across to see the treasures come through, having passed under the road to come out tumbling in the foamy water that gurgled over the stones at the other side.

And on fall evenings in October, we would take our jack-o-lanterns to the roof of the factory el, hiding from the road on the back side. When Mr. Adadourian, our minister, came over the brook to get his mail we would line up our lanterns on the ridge and make scary noises. He always played up to us.

DIONIS COFFIN RIGGS was born on the Island and spent most of her youth in the 18th Century house in West Tisbury where she lives today, a short walk from Old Mill River. Her husband, the late Dr. Sidney N. Riggs, was President of the Society when this journal was started in August 1959. In that first issue, one of the articles, "Two Beaver Hatts," was written by Mrs. Riggs. Her current article is adapted from a talk before the Want to Know Club.

The Old Mill River, or as we called it, "the brook," was an important element in my childhood. It was a definite boundary in the village of West Tisbury. The postoffice used to be "this side of the brook." We went "over the brook" for church or school and those on the other side of town came "over the brook" for their mail. Mayhew's Store (now Alley's) was "over the brook" to us; Gifford's Store and the postoffice on our side.

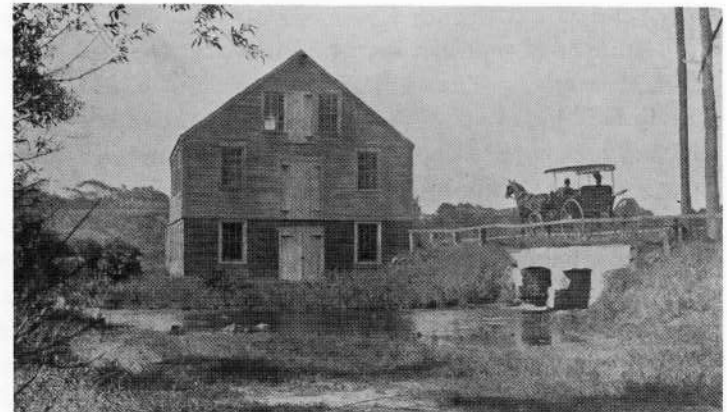
Much later, after I was married, when we felt it wasn't quite civilized to bathe with only a basin and pitcher, the Old Mill River was our bathtub. We would walk across George Hunt's pasture, avoiding the cows and their droppings, to the Stepping Stones, then walk downstream to a nice secluded spot where we would hang our clothes on branches of the maple that over-arched a pool. Swamp azalea perfumed our ablutions and catbirds sang to us.

Later still, my granddaughter Debbie and I waded upstream from the Stepping Stones, through swamp honeysuckle, wild rose, watercress and spotted jewel-weed that snapped its seedpods at us, until we came to the neatly trimmed banks of the Garden Club, successor to the Old Mill.

The brook was also a fascination to earlier generations. My mother and her sisters used to wade at the Stepping Stones. They didn't mind if leeches clung to their legs, for their uncle, Dr. Daniel Cleaveland, gave them five cents for each one they delivered to him.

The Stepping Stones were downstream from the Old Mill. In lieu of a bridge, big flat stones had been placed across the stream so Capt. James Cleaveland could take a short cut to his cranberry bog through George Hunt's pasture. To-day, the bog is Tom Maley's pond, but in earlier days it was a real, traditional cranberry bog, with ditches separating the beds and dikes that held water when the bog was flooded to protect the cranberry vines from freezing.

Each winter the captain would get permission from his sister Mathilda Campbell to open the sluice-gate at the



*Abandoned Satinet factory as shown on a postcard mailed in 1909.*

western side of the Mill Pond. Water would rush along the ditch, through a pipe under the road, flooding his bog for the winter. The kids sometimes skated there if the Mill Pond ice was too rough. The bog, sheltered from the winds, was usually smoother and it was bigger than the Parsonage Pond up the road. In the fall, school would close for a couple of days so children could help the captain harvest his cranberries. Later, he sold the bog to Antone Alley. Overflow from the bog pond went back into the Old Mill River and continued downstream from the Stepping Stones, past our bathing pool, before spreading out among cattail reeds into Town Cove, the river's final object, Tisbury Great Pond.

When did the Old Mill River get its name? It must have been simply Mill River before 1668 when Benjamin Church built his grist mill on the Tiasquin River, which was henceforth called New Mill River.

The road from Edgartown to the Old Mill was called Takemmy Trail at an early date. Takemmy, according to authorities on the Algonquin language, is supposed to mean "the place where one goes to grind corn." As Great Harbour (now Edgartown) grew, it became necessary to locate an energy source. As Thomas Mayhew wrote in 1651,

"we have greate want of a mill." Edgartown was streamless so Tisbury was founded in the center of the Island as the closest source of water power.

The first mill remains a mystery. Exactly where it was located and what it looked like are not known. Probably it was similar to the one pictured in the Banks History in the Annals of West Tisbury (p. 101). In 1809 it underwent a most interesting transformation when it was bought by David Look. He already owned the grist mill on the Tiasquin River, about a half mile to the west, so he converted the Old Mill to a factory for carding wool and weaving cloth. Quantities of sheep were raised on the Island and the wool was made into an especially good cloth called Satinet in this mill.

When Capt. Henry Cleaveland was thrown from his carriage and broke his leg as he was preparing for a voyage, he had to give up the sea. So he bought the factory. Financially the trouble with the factory was that it made such sturdy cloth that the jackets made from it would last a seaman for several voyages. If a suit was made from the material it would last a man's lifetime. Vineyard Satinet was advertised in the *Gazette* as late as 1873 at \$1.25 a yard. The factory closed not many years after.

In my childhood, the mill was deserted except in summer when Barbara Look and the Strater girls, and later Alice Mathewson, had a tearoom there. Tea with thin-sliced lemon, or cream, dainty sandwiches and cookies or cake. What a nice institution that was for a summer afternoon after a spin along the dusty roads!

Old Mill River is not very long, it being only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles from its source to where it empties into Town Cove, but there are four ponds, all manmade, along the way. Land on each side of the stream was considered choice property by the early settlers. Historian Banks mentions the river 24 times in the "Annals of West Tisbury" in describing property lines and mill rights. It is still choice property, as my



Banks, History of Martha's Vineyard.

*Drawing by Banks of an undershot wheel like the one on the Old Mill.*

walk back to its source made clear. In several spots the river, more accurately the brook, has been widened to enhance the views from the houses along Old County Road. Charles Foote used to keep a couple of decoys in his little pond.

Turning west from Old County Road I crossed Scotchman's Bridge over Old Mill River. This bridge was probably named for Robert Cathcart who came from Scotland some time before 1690. I headed towards North Tisbury, turning off shortly onto a farm road between two of Farmer Greene's fields. The road took me to the ridge which I walked along, overlooking the valley where Old Mill River went purling along, twisting through black alder bushes that were red with berries. The valley opens out wide with a view clear back to the Weiss house, where Sam Thompson used to live.

Upstream, the Littlefields have dammed the river to create



*Postcard mailed in 1912 shows the Old Mill Pond, West Tisbury.*

a beautiful pond as a lovely setting for their new home on the west bank. Farther upstream is Virginia Berresford's pond, which has been there for a long time, visible from her house off Old Courthouse Road. It is there that the stream turns to form a ford beside the road where we always stopped to let the horse have a drink.

Now, of course, there is a bridge there and Old Mill River runs under the road and into Betsy Anderson's historic place. It once belonged to Simon Athearn, who is described by Banks as "Tisbury's first great citizen." His son Ephraim had a mill. The large pond there is known as Priester's Pond and it has a waterfall.

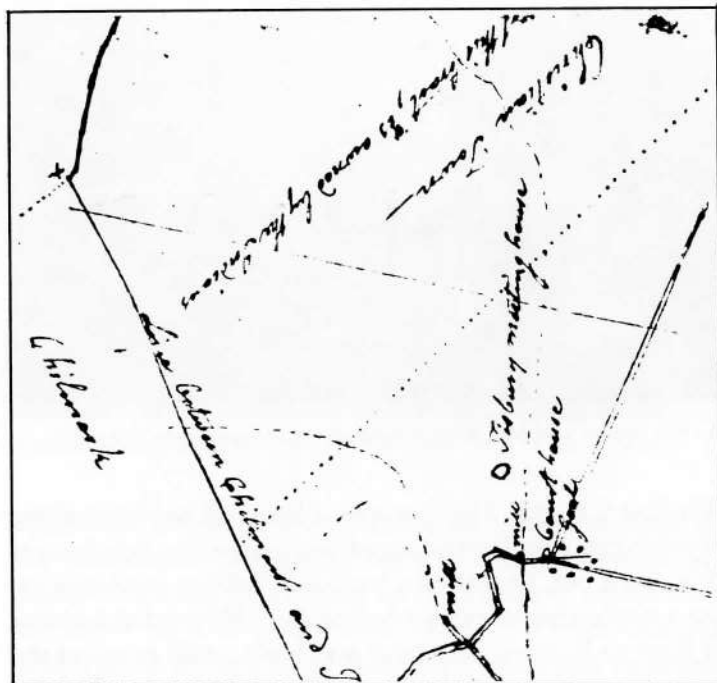
Two more good-sized ponds are upstream not far from North Road which runs just north of the river and parallel to it. According to the U. S. Geological Survey, Crocker's Pond is next and then comes Fisher's Pond. All these ponds seem to have furnished water power for mills at one time or another. The best known of these mills belonged to Dr. Daniel Fisher from Edgartown. Trained in medicine, his greatest financial success came in business, being based on the wealth of oil brought in by the whalers. He built the elegant house on Main Street, next to the Edgartown Old



*A 1916 view of Old Mill River going under road near North Tisbury.*

Whaling Church. He operated a large oil works, making spermacetti candles and supplying oil for the lighthouses. Branching out, he started a hard-tack bakery, hard-tack being a staple aboard every whaling ship. He needed a source of flour so he went up-Island and built a mill to grind the grain. He even made a direct road across the scrub-oak plains from Edgartown to North Tisbury to shorten the wagon trip. Most of the road is obliterated, but a few sections remain visible. Daniel Webster, in his account of his visit to the Vineyard, tells of driving over the road to the mill with Dr. Fisher and shooting plover from the carriage. Dr. Fisher was an excellent shot, it seems. The hard-tack project, however, was not successful financially. Vineyard farmers never took up wheat farming and the doctor had to import his grain from off-Island.

I walk down to the pond, Fisher's Pond, the map says. A flock of wild ducks flies up and circles; seeing I pose no threat they come back and splash down on the pond. Two white swans seem unconcerned. I walk along the firm old dike to the cut, outlined in well-kept stonework. Water is rushing over it, down the steep decline, forming a waterfall on its way through swamps and fields and other ponds, all



Map drawn in 1795 locates both Tisbury mills, but shows no mill ponds.

without any mill-wheels to turn these days.

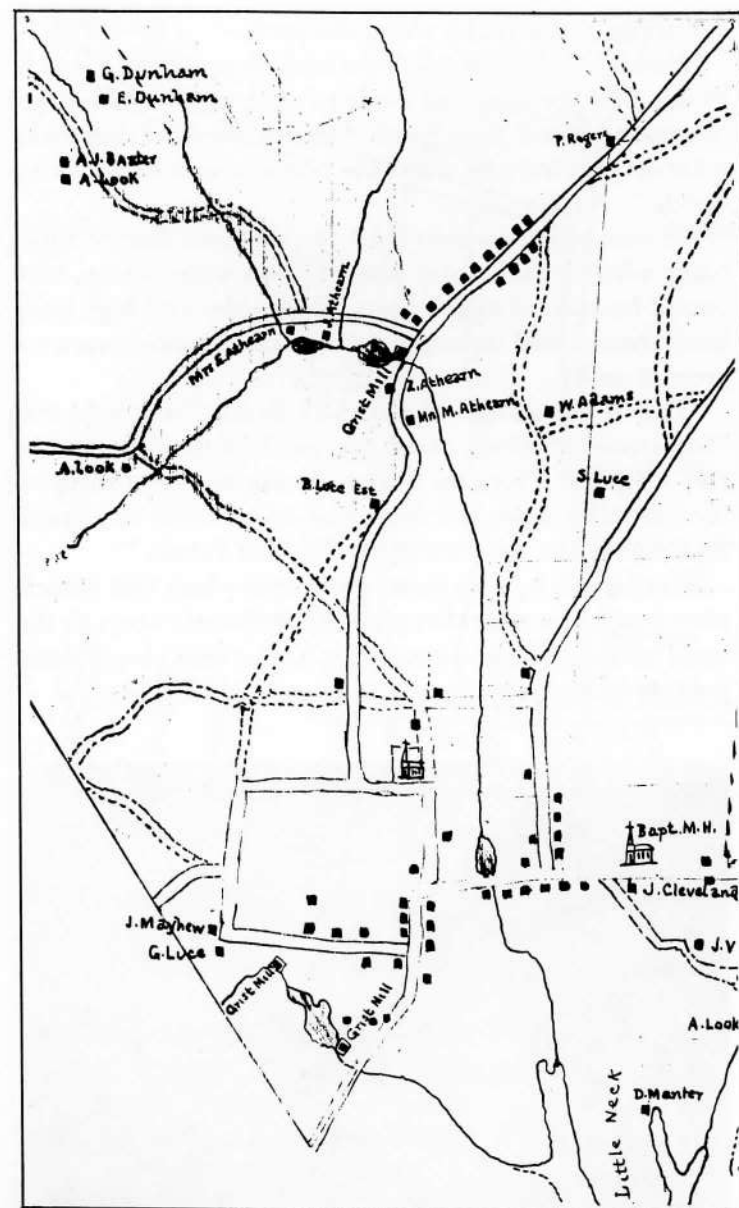
Back on North Road I head upstream again. The Old Mill River is invisible in the valley, a narrow stream that people call a brook. In several places culverts run under the road carrying water to add to the run of the Mill River.

Coming to Blueberry Inn, I decide to ask for directions of Lewis King.

"Mr. King, you'll think I'm a nut, but could you tell me where is the source of Old Mill . . ." I hesitate, then say, "Brook?"

"It's way up in the woods and swamps. My neighbor, Frank Dunkel, can tell you exactly where."

The Dunkel house is like a little Swiss chalet hidden in the woods. Mrs. Dunkel came to meet me. She had been



Rough map of West Tisbury by Banks is undated; seems circa 1850.

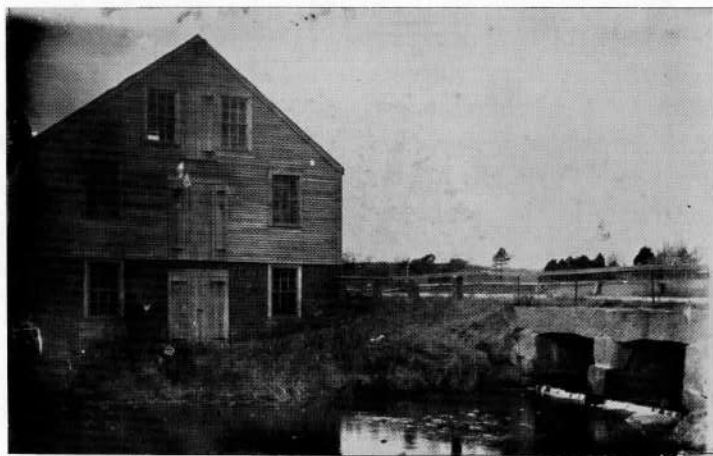
spreading pine needles along the path.

"Here's Old Mill Brook," she said, showing me a sturdy bridge that her sons had made to span it. "We had to get 'greenheart wood' from South America, the kind they make wharves of. Pine rots when the brook overflows in spring floods."

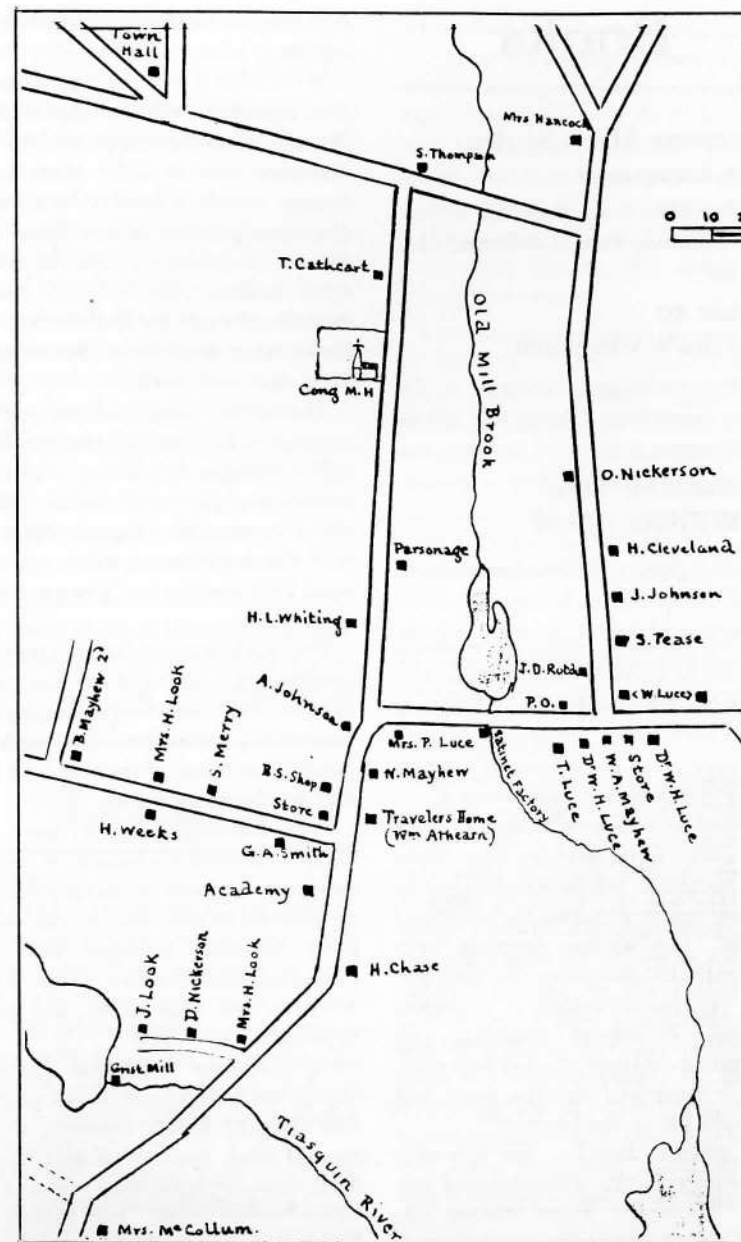
We went along the next road into the Roth Nature Sanctuary where Mrs. Dunkel pointed out a wide swamp, bare except for tufts of marsh grass. Black alder and high bush huckleberry lined the edges and a stand of beetlebung trees grew close by.

"This is the source of Old Mill Brook," she told me. "Sometimes it's like a pond, but much of the time it's like this, a swamp. There are springs feeding it, one of them on the old Allen place just southwest of here. My son Frank says that is the real source of Old Mill Brook."

Whichever it is, it is a quiet, restful spot where that historic river begins -- a river that provided essential energy in the years before steam and electricity, a river that played a major role in the settlement and growth of Tisbury.



Stone bridge at the dam of Old Mill Pond was built in 1882.



Bank's 1850 map as finished, with all buildings precisely labelled.

## Books

### Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language

By Nora Ellen Groce. Published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. 169 pp.

### Guide to Martha's Vineyard

By Polly Burroughs. Published by The Globe Pequot Press, Chester, CT. 208 pp. \$8.95 paper.

### A Walking Tour of William Street

By James Norton. Published privately. 45 pp. \$5. paper.

THESE three books are evidence of the value of the Society and its Archives. Each author made frequent use of our Library. While none of them is a pure book of history, all contain many pages of historical material.

The most scholarly is Nora Groce's impressive work, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language*, but its scholarly nature in no way lessens its appeal to the general reader. The author discusses with thorough documentation the history of that no-longer-extant "Vineyard disease," hereditary deafness, and describes how those afflicted were completely integrated into the social and business life of the Island.

A genetic disorder, the affliction came early to the Vineyard and was most frequently found among up-Island residents where, as the somewhat overstated title indicates, most in-

habitants had a working knowledge of signing.

Ms. Groce traces the beginnings of the disorder back to the Kentish Weald. Its earliest mention on the Vineyard was in 1714 when Judge Samuel Sewell of Boston, on a trip to the Island, noted in his diary that among his guides was one fisherman who nearly offended his honor because, though an Englishman, "he spoke not a word to us. But it seems he is deaf and dumb."

The author conducted scores of interviews with Vineyard residents who still remember the last of the non-hearing population. (By the late 1880s, children were no longer being born with the impairment, but it was not until 1945 that the last Vineyard deaf-mute died.)

This work provides testimony of the enlightened treatment of the non-hearing, and thus non-speaking, by the community, treatment that made it possible for many of them to lead full and satisfying lives.

Polly Burrough's latest book, *A Guide to Martha's Vineyard*, is totally new with a wealth of useful information for those who live or visit here. Even long-time residents will find valued suggestions about where to go, whom to call, what to see, and what to avoid.

Her coverage of Island history, though necessarily brief, is well written and carefully avoids repeating those oft-told tales, apocryphal and legendary, that so many times are used to "spice" guide books. Her history is history.

But most of the book is not history.

It is an encyclopedia of information that many will find useful as well as interesting.

Although entitled *A Walking Tour of William Street*, James Norton's book is much more than that. He recites the life stories of 45 of Vineyard Haven's old buildings and in doing so gives us many previously unpublished details about the history of the village. Most of the homes (not all are on William Street) were built for important people of the town and their life stories bring village history to life.

The book is illustrated with maps and many excellent photographs of the houses as they look today, arranged in the order you will pass them when you take the author's walking tour.

Vineyard Haven, once Holmes Hole, is a young town, as Vineyard towns go, and this book is an important contribution to our knowledge of its history.

## Letters

Editor:

I read with enormous interest the [May] issue of the *Intelligencer*, which came today. You place parson Thaxter in the context which I feel is needed. My earliest impressions of religion came in the Edgartown Congregational Church, which I attended regularly with my mother and sister (father preaching).

This was between 1920 and 1925, with summer attendance for a good many years afterwards. At first, I was a total pantheist. God was in the elm

trees which the clear windows allowed one to see. The rather spartan elegance of the meeting house was also a reflection of the spiritual reality which was very real, almost as real as the surf at South Beach, or the harbor water on a summer day. What my father was up to I was not at all clear. The music was profoundly moving. We didn't sing evangelical hymns. . . .

I was conscious that Unitarians such as Katharine Foote, Abner Braley's wife and, I think, Genevieve Middleton were quite at home in this atmosphere. I joined the Edgartown church in 1937, I think, but I made it clear that I did not subscribe to any Christian doctrines. In 1942, I resigned to devote all my religious energies to Quakerism (that meant that, now, after 30 years as a Friend I have attended over 2000 meetings and perhaps spoken in half of them). So in a way I was something like Jeremiah Pease, but in another way totally other. For I have never assented to a "Hell-fire"-rewards-and-punishments religion, which I feel is basically immoral. For me, good is good, not because of lollipops or any future life. In other words, I kept the Unitarian "cool," and the spirituality of a "pagan nature" which I first felt in the Edgartown church. Somehow I have always felt I was being true to the religion of Edgartown as it was expressed at the beginning of the 19th Century. This comes out to be very true in your article. So you have articulated the intuition which I felt as a child. I am thus very grateful. . . . ROBERT J. LEACH  
Geneva, Switzerland

## In Memoriam

### Henry Beetle Hough

The death of Henry Beetle Hough on June 6, 1985, has brought a deep sense of loss to members of the Dukes County Historical Society and to all others who cherish Island history. He, more than any other person, taught us to respect and to preserve our history, both its facts and its artifacts. He, more than any other person, brought history to life by his graceful words, written and oral.

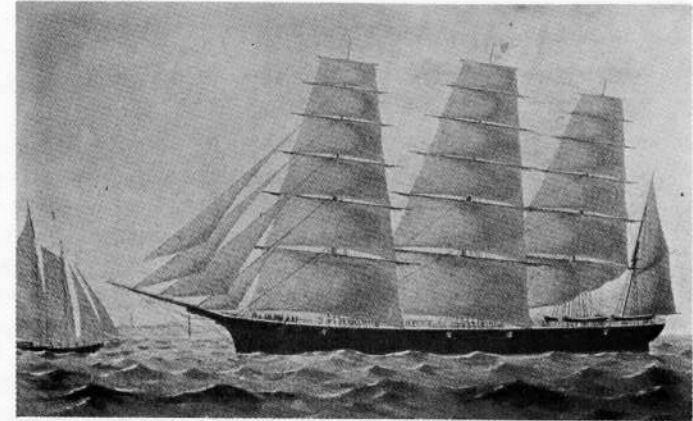
Mr. Hough and his wife Betty joined the Society in January 1927, nearly 60 years ago, and were members throughout their lives. His first book, *Martha's Vineyard: Summer Resort*, published in 1936, remains the most authoritative history of the evolution of our Island from an isolated rural community into the famed resort it is today.

He served the Society in many official capacities, having been President, Vice President, Historian, Member of the Council and head of many committees. He donated to our Archives many documents and photographs that will serve researchers for years to come.

He did much to build community support for the purchase by the Society of the Thomas Cooke House and for the construction of the tower in which the historic Fresnel lens from Gay Head Lighthouse is preserved and displayed. His contributions to this journal were many. He was on our Advisory Council at the time of his death.

His wisdom, his profound knowledge of history, his warmth and fellowship will long be missed. The Society will be forever indebted to him. We pledge ourselves to do our utmost to live up to the high standards he constantly demanded of us.

### Moments in History



TALL ships were no strangers to Holmes Hole in the 1850s. The harbor was often crowded with vessels awaiting a fair wind and tide. But on November 26, 1853, the arrival of the brand-new 320-foot clipper ship *Great Republic* excited even staid Vineyarders (see p. 43).

The Gazette covered the story and told of "a company of ladies and gentlemen" from Edgartown going out to meet her aboard the sloop *Passport*, an Island packet. The clipper, built by Donald McKay in East Boston at a cost of \$300,000, was being towed to New York to be outfitted and loaded for her maiden voyage.

But like hundreds of vessels before, the steam tug *R. B. Forbes* was "unable to make much progress against a strong wind and tide" and towed the clipper into Holmes Hole for the night, affording Vineyarders a once-in-a-lifetime sight.

The story has a sad ending. Exactly one month later, loaded and ready to sail on her first voyage, she was badly damaged by fire at her New York berth and had to be totally rebuilt. In the rebuilding (not by McKay) her sail plan and tonnage were sharply reduced so she never sailed as her designer had intended. But even so, she remained the largest wooden sailing ship for 40 years and her maiden trans-Atlantic voyage set a record of 13 days.

## Documents

The period in this installment is a difficult one for diarist Jeremiah Pease (1792-1857). His eldest son, Joseph Thaxter Pease, has gone to Washington (Jeremiah fails to mention that he left) to talk to the new Democratic administration about being named Collector of Customs for the Edgartown district. Father and son are strong Democrats and Joseph hoped for something from Democrat Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, the new President.

At the end of May Jeremiah records (in handwriting that indicates it was written some time later) that Joseph got the post "under peculiar circumstances." A week later, in similar handwriting, he notes that he has received some information, but, being Jeremiah, he doesn't tell us what!

In mid-July he writes that Joseph has nominated another man, Constant Norton, to take his job as Inspector of Customs, a most distressing action for the father to accept.

Jeremiah, with help from heaven and earth, is able to block the appointment. It was a mysterious series of events and must have caused a break in the relations between father and son.

Exciting was the overnight anchorage at Holmes Hole of the Great Republic the largest clipper ship ever built. She was being towed from Boston to New York for her maiden voyage (see page 39).

• • •

### April 1853

6th. WSW, squally, engaged surveying land at E'Ville for R. H. & S. Davis.

7th. W to SW. Fast day.

8th. SW, pleasant. Another year of my short life has flown rapidly away.

10th. NW, cool. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

13th. SSW, rains a little. Court of County Commissioners sets today at Middle District school house on acc't. of the jury in the case Aemes (?) Wilber for damage of land in laying out the new Road to H. Hole. Our term ends at the Court.

14th. N to NNE, cold. Mr. G. Cleveland plowes for me today.

16th. N to SE. Ship *Champion*, Capt. T. P. Ripley, arrives from the Pacific with 2000 bls. Whale oil.

17th. NE, Gale with rain. Did not attend Meetings at E'Ville.

23rd. WSE to NNW, light. Ship *Chas. Carroll* sails for San Francisco.

26th NE stormy, PM SSW light. Uriah Morse's Wife dies.

29th. SW, pleasant. Funeral of U. Morse's Wife, service by Revd. Goold. She died a Christian, as we trust.

### May 1843

1st. NW, light AM, PM N, fresh breeze, cold. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

2nd. Nly, PM SW. Scho. *Monterey*, Capt. Cons. Fisher, sails for Atlantic Ocean Whaling.

3rd. ESE, light. Planted corn.

4th. NE. Planted Potatoes.

6th. NE, gale. Bot a Cow of Seth Cleveland.

8th. SE, attended meetings at E'Ville. Bark *Alfred Tyler* arrives from Pacific Ocean, 1300 bls. Whale oil, 100 Spermo., Capt. Geo. Luce master. Rains at

night.

15th. SW, pleasant. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

28th. SW. Jeremiah and Frederick arrive from Boston on a short visit. Jeremiah from the Convention and Frederick from E. Boston.<sup>1</sup>

29th. SW. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Br. Geo. Weeks was there and preached.

30th. SW. Jeremiah returns to the Convention and Frederick to E. Boston. Bot. a Cow of S. M. Vincent of Chilmark. Sold the Cow I Bot. of Seth Cleveland (to him).

31st. NE, cold. Joseph is appointed Collector of the Customs some time this month under peculiar circumstances.

### June 1853

2nd SW. Widow Mary Smith dies at New Bedford on the 1st. Wid. Smith's corps is brot. to E'Ville where she had lived and brot. up a numerous family. She was a pious Woman and died a very peaceful death. She was a worthy member of the M. E. Church. Funeral of Sister Smith at 5 PM, service by Revd. J. Goold. It was a solemn and deeply interesting season. She manifested a great degree of friendship for me for many years past. Bot. a cow of B.

5th. SW, light. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

7th. Sw. Recd. Infm.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Young Jeremiah is a delegate from the Island to the convention to revise the State Constitution. Frederick, another son, is working as a tailor in East Boston.

<sup>2</sup>For certain rare entries Jeremiah makes a mark like an asterisk, apparently denoting that the relevant material is personal and confidential and is kept somewhere else. We have never located any such material unfortunately.

9th. N to SE, foggy. Joseph arrives from Washington.

11th. SW, light, foggy. Mrs. Lydia Ann Pease dies.

12th. ENE, light. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Br. G. Weeks preached.

15th. SW. Funeral of Mrs. Lydia Ann Pease, Wife of Capt. Thos. M. Pease. Service by Revd. Mr. Crocker. She was esteemed a pious member of the Baptist Church.

19th. SW, pleasant. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

20th. SW, warm. Engaged in surveying and dividing land for Rufus H. Davis and Samuel N. Davis at E'Ville.

22nd. SW to NE, light, very warm. Engaged surveying and dividing land for SND & R. H. Davis.

23rd. SW, fresh breeze. Commenced mowing.

25th. W to WNW. Got in the hay from near the house and the field.

26th. NW, very cool for the season. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

24th. S, rains very pleasantly, it having been dry.

### July 1853

1st. W, light, very warm. Schr. from the Lt. House Board arrives, Lieut. Knox Commd., & sails.

3rd. W, light. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

5th. SW, clear, warm. Engaged with hay.

6th. SW, clear, warm. Engaged with hay.

7th. NW to SW, warm. Engaged with hay.

10th. NW, light, squally, rains a little. Attended Meetings at E'Ville A.M.

P.M. at the Grove near Chas. Kidd.<sup>3</sup>  
12th. NE to E, light. William arrives from California.

14th. NW to SW, light. William leaves town for Washington.

17th. SWly. Attended Meetings in the Grove near Br. C. Kidd. Br. G. Weeks was there.

18th. SWly, warm. Joseph nominates Constant Noton (*sic*) to take my place as Inspector and Dep. Coll. of the Customs.

20th. SW. William returns from Washington. Rains a little, A.M.

24th. W to SW. Attended Meetings in the Grove above mentioned. Br. Geo. Weeks was there.

25th. SW. A Daut. of Wid. Lucy Danforth dies of mortification, having been sick for a long time with a painful disorder. Funeral of the above named Daut. Service by Revd. J. Goold.

The nomination of Constant Norton for the office which I now hold is rejected. The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice -- I have great reason for gratitude to my Heavenly Father for his many mercies and especially at this time for the good feelings manifested by almost all the citizens of this and the other Towns towards me in relation to my removal from office.

29th. SSW, light AM. PM S. light, pleasant. A Company of artillery from Bristol, R.I., which have been here on

<sup>3</sup>The fact there were meetings held in this grove in the same period that the Campground existed seems unknown to history. This grove, at Mr. Kidd's, was near the intersection of the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road and the road to Oak Bluffs that runs past the Oak Bluffs Airport. It must have been close to the entrance to what is now Major's Cove development.

an excursion, leave for their home, having had a very pleasant visit.

31st. SW, light. Attended Meetings in the Grove.

### August 1853

1st. Sly. Br. Rufus Davis dies, aged 86. He was a worthy citizen, a man of excellent understanding, a pious Christian, very punctual in attending religious meetings of all denominations, he was one of my firm friends, and manifested his attachment to me for more than 19 years past, his death was exceeding triumphant.

3rd. E to SSE, light, cloudy. Attended the Funeral of Br. Rufus Davis at E'Ville, service by Br. Frederick Upham from New Bedford, it was a solemn time, particularly so to me.

5th. SW, light. Went to the Camp Ground & put up my Tent.

7th. Ely, cloudy. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

8th. SSW. Carried my things to the Camp Ground.

10th. Sly, very warm. Went to Camp Meeting. The weather was extremely warm for 3 or 4 days. The meetings were very interesting and profitable. A number embraced Religion there, excellent order was maintained during the meeting. Br. Hobers, a Methodist Preacher, my Son Rodolphus and myself found 19 bottles of Gin & Brandy one day during the meeting (Sunday) which I destroyed by standing them upon a stump and knocking them in pieces on the day the Meeting broke up.

17th. S, light, cloudy AM, PM a little rain. Returned from Camp Meeting.

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

28th. SW. Bark *Alfred Tyler*, Wm. Ripley Master, sails for Pacific Ocean.

### September 1853

4th. SW, fresh breeze. Attended meetings at E'Ville.

7th. SW, foggy. Frederick leaves us today for Boston, he and his Wife having visited us for some days past.

8th. SW. Went to Tisbury to attend an Auction. Funeral of Capt. Alfred Morse's Wife. Service by Rev. Mr. Helmes. She died of consumption. A happy death.

11th. NW, clear. Attended Meetings at North Shore. Br. Tolman Stewart went with me and preached there.

14th. SW. Commenced shingling the roof of the house. Rains at night.

18th. SW to NE, rainy. Br. Upham from New Bedford preached here. Did not attend meeting at Chilmark on acc't. of rain.

24th. NNE. William arrives from N. York.

25th. NW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

26th. NW to WSW. William sets out for N. York.<sup>4</sup>

### October 1853

2nd. Wly. Attended meeting at Chilmark. Br. McGonecal preached. Br. Blake went with me.

4th. NW to SW. Ship *Europa*, Capt. John H. Pease, sails for the Pacific Ocean.

8th. SW. Surveyed land at H. Hole for U. S. Lt. Houses.

9th. SW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

<sup>4</sup>William's quick trip to the Island must have been for the purpose of buying his house on Main Street from Frederick Baylies. He bought it in September 1853 for \$1875

12th. NW. Went to N.B. in Steamer *Mass*.

13th. NW. Returned in Steamer *Mass*.

16th. SW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville. Br. Weeks was there.

23rd. W. Attended Meetings at North Shore.

30th. NNW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

### November 1853

1st. SW, pleasant. Engaged in painting my office.

2nd. Ditto.

5th. N, light. Capt. Benjamin Kidder dies about noon today.

6th. NNE, squally. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

7th. NNW. Funeral of Capt. Benjamin Kidder. He died on the 5th. at about 12 M. Service by Revd. Jesse Pease.

13th. SE rains. Attended Meeting AM at E'Ville, ret. PM.

20th. SW to SSW. Attended meetings at E'Ville, rains at night.

26th. NNW. The 4-masted Ship *Great Republic* from Boston for N.Y. passed up the Sound to Holmes Hole. Called the largest in the World.

27th. NNE. Attended Meetings at E'Ville. Ship *Great Republic* goes to N. York from H. Hole, being towed by a Steamer.

### December 1853

*One of the few mutilations of the Pease diaries occurs here. Entries from December 1 through 17 have been torn out along with, on the reverse side of the page, entries from December 24 to January 4, 1854. It is not known if the removal was deliberate, although it seems likely since*

the rest of the books are well preserved.

### January 1854

9th. NW, cold. Did not attend Meeting at E'Ville.

15th. E to NE, light. Attended Meetings at E'Ville. Visited Mr. Silas Luce, he being very sick with the drop-sy. Had a very pleasant visit with him and his family and several neighbours who were there.

18th. NE, snows PM. Mr. Luce dies, aged 73.

19th. SW to WNW, pleasant for winter. Snow is all gone.

21st. SE, little rain. Mr. Thomas Smith's Wife dies, aged 78.

22nd. NW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

28th. NNW, very cold, harbor frozen over below the Lt. House.

29th. NNW, cold. Did not attend meetings at E'Ville. News of Joseph confirmed by the Senate.<sup>5</sup>

30th. SW, cold, moderate wind. Ice breaks up and gone out of the harbor. Snows & rains a little at nt.

### February 1854

2nd. S to E, light, pleasant. Letter of the Sect. respecting my situation as Insp.<sup>6</sup>

5th. NW to N, snows a little, light wind. Did not attend meetings at E'Ville.

7th. NW, light, pleasant. Harbor frozen over. Did not to E'Ville.

<sup>5</sup>It is speculation, of course, but the torn-out entries could have included something about Joseph's confirmation and its "peculiar circumstances." No doubt, Joseph had possession of the diaries after his father's death.

<sup>6</sup>The letter must have been from the Secretary of the Treasury and probably was the reason for the Washington trip from the 9th to the 16th.

9th. W, light foggy. Set out for the City of Washington. Arrived there on the 11th. at 6 AM, remained there until the 13th. at 6 PM, arrived in Boston on the 14th. at 7 PM, came home on the 16th.

18th. W, moderate. News of the death of Mr. Peter Norton. He died in the State of Maine.

19th. W. Attended Meetings at E'Ville. Br. Weeks was there.

26th. SE, rainstorm. Did not attend Meetings at E'Ville.

### March 1854

5th. NWly. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

12th. SW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville. Br. Weeks was there.

21st. NW. Funeral of Br. Henry Ripley's Wife. She died suddenly. Engaged surveying Road near the Mill.

24th. West. Engaged Surveying Road near M.D. Schoolhouse.

26th. NW, fresh wind, very cold. Did not go to E'Ville.

30th. N, light, moderate, PM SW to S snow squalls. Wid. Lucinda Smith dies at about 12 M, aged .

### April 1854

2nd. NW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

5th. SW, pleasant. Conference of the M.E. Church commences their annual session today.

8th. SW, pleasant. Another Year of my short life is past. Many afflictions have awaited me this year, yet the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. I have much reason for gratitude notwithstanding. I feel my trust to still be in the

Blessed Lord.<sup>7</sup>

9th. W. Dr. Peck from Washington preached today. I formed a short acquaintance with him when I was in Washington a few weeks ago. He is an eminent Preacher. Did not attend Meetings at E'Ville.

12th. SW, very pleasant. Conference closes this morning. All the Ministers, etc., leave in the steamer *Massachusetts* for N. Bedford. They had a very pleasant session. It was a very interesting and harmonious time. It is said they were never better entertained.

13th. NE, cold. Engaged in surveying the newly laid out road to Tisbury by request of the County Commissioners.

14th. NE, very cold. Engaged as above.

15th. NE, heavy snowstorm. The snow is at the top of the fences in many places.

16th. NE, storm continues. Did not attend Meetings at E'Ville on account of the snow.

20th. SW, pleasant. Wid. Lucy

<sup>7</sup>The length of this entry on his birthday and its content make it clear that the action of his son, Joseph, had distressed him greatly.

Danforth dies at about 3 AM. Capt. Valentine Pease<sup>8</sup> dies at about ½ 2 PM, aged 90 years. Funeral of Wid. Danforth this afternoon.

21st. SW, very pleasant. Some snow still remains on the ground which fell the 15th at nt. Finished plowing. Capt. Ichabod Norton's Wife dies at about 2 PM. She was the Daught. of Joseph & Nancy Mayhew and a amiable and pious Woman. Died in Christian faith and hope.

22nd. NE. Br. Kellen arrives, being appointed by Conference to Preach here this year. Funeral of Capt. V. Pease, service by

24th. SSW. Engaged surveying the road to Tisbury.

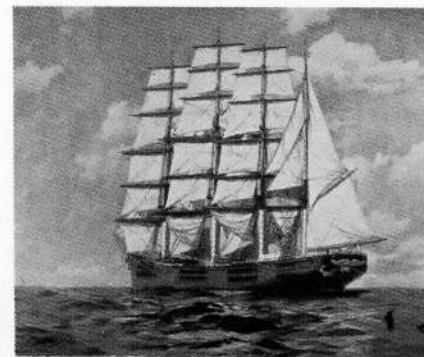
25th. SW, pleasant. Funeral of Sarah Norton. Service by Congl. Minister.

27th. SW, foggy. Recd. a letter from Wm. at Riogenaro.<sup>9</sup>

30th. SSE, rainy. Attended Meetings at E'Ville.

<sup>8</sup>This is the father of the famed Capt. Valentine Pease, master of the *Acushnet* on which Herman Melville served.

<sup>9</sup>Rio De Janeiro, no doubt.



Clipper Great Republic

## Director's Report

ATTENDANCE during the early summer following the opening of the Thomas Cooke House on June 18th has been encouraging, and it has been a pleasure to hear so many favorable comments about the new arrangements as well as appreciation for the guides. Returning this year are Hilda Gilluly, Pauline Berube, Gladys Goud, Mary McLean, and Andrew Thomas, with Elizabeth Berube an able new addition.

My special thanks go to David Dandridge, Dorothea Morgan, Florence Kern, and especially Natalie Huntington, for their help in getting the Cooke House open. Kathryn and Tony Bettencourt are once again operating the Fresnel lens Sunday nights during July and August, and Bailey Norton's gift of an antique bench has provided a very welcome outdoor resting spot. Long hours of planning and work by Martha's Vineyard Garden Club members Barbara Rowe and Elizabeth Chapin have made the herb garden a much admired corner. Architect Craig Whitaker gave time to examine the Cooke House for structural problems and confirmed that the contrast between the very solid chimney foundation and the shallow exterior wall foundations, over more than 200 years, has resulted in the marked slope away from the chimney that resulted in the "made like a cambered ship deck" legend.

For contributing to the refurbishing of the Gate House, the Society is grateful to Vineyard Vignettes for framing a mirror, to Vineyard Decorators for the labor costs of reupholstering a chair, and to Linda Carnegie Cabassa for applying a faux finish to a table, in honor of Doris Stoddard, Council member, genealogist, and former president of the Society.

The Sheep-to-Shawl demonstration anticipated in my last report was such a success that we hope it will become an annual event. The Noepe Fiber Fellowship members, under the leadership of Mary Stevens, set up their spinning wheels and looms on the lawn not far from the tree where Amy, a most cooperative sheep, was shorn of her winter growth of wool. The Fellowship also contributed a handwoven shawl which was sold at a silent auction for the benefit of the Society. Our young neighbors, Allison and Jeremy Pratt, Victoria Strimel, and Laura Jackson tended the lemonade stand, a busy spot as the afternoon warmed.

Several ambitious and much-needed projects have been possible because of generous contributions to the Preservation Fund during this and previous years. Almost \$16,500 has been spent to paint the hallway and four rooms in the Cooke House, the exterior trim, and the tryworks and lighthouse; to replace the original and very tattered horsehair on a Victorian sofa and three matching chairs with new horsehair; and to mat and frame a number of valuable prints and documents, plus many smaller projects. Much of this can be appreciated because it shows, but an equally important project we hope to begin shortly will not be so visible as it involves new storage materials for a variety of collections. And, just like home, the newly painted rooms make the others look even more needy. So, as always, thank you for your past generosity, and please keep the Preservation Fund in mind for the future.

The Society was the recipient of the Edgartown Arts Lottery Council grant of \$500 this year as a result of a proposal to reissue a revised and illustrated walking tour of Edgartown, to be available to the public next summer.

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 17, from 5:00 to 7:30 on the Society's grounds. As last year, a brief meeting will be followed by tours of the Cooke House, Carriage Shed, Lighthouse, and Francis Foster Museum. Refreshments will be served.

MARIAN R. HALPERIN

## Bits & Pieces

THANKS to research by Henry Scott we know a lot more about Noman's. He got some help from Mrs. Marjorie Manter Rogers of West Tisbury, whose grandfather lived there.

Mrs. Rogers has a clipping from the *Boston Globe*, March 15, 1896, that gives us a view of life on the tiny island. As Henry Scott mentions, George H. Butler and his wife were the only year-round residents. When the *Globe* reporter arrived, having been rowed over from Squibnocket by William Mayhew of Chilmark, he was asked to resolve a long-running dispute: What day of the month was it?

In December they had become mixed up about the date, George claiming one, his wife another. They had no way to find out, so men being what they were in those days (and still are) they used George's date.

The reporter set them right -- George was wrong, a day early. They had been a day ahead all winter, celebrating Christmas 24 hours early.

They both considered themselves spiritualists. George was "visited once in a while by spirits, and . . . even held conversations with the departed." One of their daughters went into a trance as a child and called for feathers. Her parents provided them and she, still in the trance, trimmed all the old hats in the house. When she came out of the trance, she said she had been under the influence of the spirit of a Boston milliner, whose influence was passed

along to Mrs. Butler and "to this day Mrs. Butler has been a skilled milliner."

Mrs. Butler guessed as how she might make a living with her skill "if we lived anywhere near civilization," but her husband wasn't sure. "I don't know whether the spirits would help you or not . . . on the main island," he said.

Earlier, they had a neighbor-- Israel Luce, a deaf mute born on Noman's, the last of a family of early settlers, and now "an inmate of the poorhouse at Vineyard Haven."

The 1946 proposal by Joshua Crane, then owner of Noman's, to build a colony there was ambitious. He planned 100 houses on 3-acre lots, a Casino, an 18-hole golf course and tennis courts with a clubhouse to accommodate 30 guests.

Memberships would sell for \$5000, with no dues. Fees would be charged for the use of the sports facilities, for electricity, water (fresh and salt-water plumbing), ferry service and the use of the air strip. Members must build houses costing at least \$10,000 within 5 years.

Maybe, as Henry Scott suggests, today's use isn't so bad after all!

WHEN the *Great Republic* (see p. 39) was launched, Builder McKay, responding to demands of temperance societies, used Cochituate water instead of champagne at the christening. "Old sea salts wagged their heads . . . and foretold bad luck," according to one historian.

The vessel was plagued with misfortune during her life and never made a profit.

A.R.R.

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