

*The Journal of Martha's Vineyard and Elizabeth Islands History*



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL. 27, NO. 2

NOVEMBER 1985

From Joe Allen's Fireside Tales



Illustration by Floyd Cary

## The Other Nathan Mayhew and the West Tisbury General Store

by CHARLES W. PARTON

## My Dig Under Alley's Store

## East Chop in World War I

by ROBERT M. FERRIS III

## Indian Bondage

by CHARLES E. BANKS

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10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
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(Continued)

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Our thanks to these and to those named earlier for their help in the continuous work of preserving our buildings and historical material.

# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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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 Other Nathan Mayhew and the West Tisbury General Store

by CHARLES W. PARTON

EVERYONE on the Vineyard has heard of Nathan Mayhew, but who was he? Indeed, who were they? Because, in fact, there were at least seven Nathan Mayhews in history, all descendants of two brothers, John Mayhew and Experience Mayhew, great great grandsons of the first settler, Thomas Mayhew.

Two of these seven Nathans are memorialized, their work remembered, but in much different ways. One Nathan, the better known, was a teacher, the second teacher on the Island. He taught in the Old South School in Tisbury, at the corner of Beach Street and County Highway, from 1825 until 1829 when he moved his school into what is now the DAR Building on Main Street, Vineyard Haven. He taught there until 1853 when he moved to Boston.

It is this Nathan who has been memorialized by the Nathan Mayhew Seminars, a tribute to his teaching.<sup>1</sup>

The second Nathan, and the one who most interests me, was 19 years younger than the teacher. He was born in Chilmark on July 24, 1814, the eighth of ten children of William and Phoebe Mayhew. He learned the craft of

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Claghorn was Tisbury's first schoolmaster, 1788 to 1805. Nathan Mayhew did not start teaching until 1825. There may have been others between them, but Banks, in his *History*, calls Mayhew "the next school-teacher of note." The author inquired why the first teacher had not been chosen to be memorialized. The response was that somehow "The Joseph Claghorn Seminars" didn't have the right ring to it.

CHARLES W. PARTON's first career was as a pediatric surgeon in Hartford, Conn. He grew up in Bronxville, N.Y., and was graduated from Kenyon College, Ohio, taking his medical degree at Cornell. From 1963 to 1965, he was Director of the Peace Corps program in North Borneo. After summering here for some years, he and his wife, Teena, became Islanders in 1980 when they took over the West Tisbury general store, the history of which has been his hobby ever since. This article is from a larger work exploring the joys and other emotions that are the stock in trade of small-town storekeeping.



blacksmithing and about 1840 he moved to what is now West Tisbury and set up his own smithy near the site of today's Alley's General Store, the subject of this article. He was to become the founder of that store which has become a true living memorial to this "other" Nathan Mayhew. My wife, Teena, and I now own and operate the store he founded.

But in 1839 he was still a blacksmith when, at 24 years of age, he married Rebecca Smith of Edgartown. They had five children.

West Tisbury was a part of Tisbury in those days, the main part. It was primarily an agricultural town. It did have a Satinet Factory, established first as a grist mill about 1760 and converted to a woolen mill by David Look in 1809. For 75 years it produced a high quality, heavy, close woven woolen cloth.

By 1845, Dr. Philbrick was practicing medicine across the road from the site of today's Agricultural Hall. A few years earlier, Dr. W. H. Luce had started to practice and run an apothecary shop at the intersection of Edgartown Road and Old County Road. His son soon joined him in practice.

James Athearn Jones, a novelist and sometime poet, had published his third book, *Traditions of the North American Indians*, in 1830 and ten years later was trying his luck at running a general store on the north side of the Edgartown Road between New Lane and Old County Road. The store failed early on and the building burned down about 1910.

In the 1840s, John Norton is believed to have started the Union Store in a three-story building at the junction of Edgartown Road and Old County Road, the site of the present Kernick house. There was another store in town on the approximate site of today's Congregational Church. It was run by William A. Mayhew and was later moved across the Mill Brook to the south side of Edgartown Road next to his home. For a few year starting in 1851, Mayhew was



A note on this postcard says "West Tisbury Postoffice." Can anyone date it? Is the lane we see Old County Road?

postmaster and the postoffice was probably in his store.<sup>2</sup>

Nancy Luce, who was to become the town's first celebrity, was as yet unknown, her first book not to be published until after the Civil War.

Thus the village, which officially became West Tisbury in 1829 when it was given a postoffice under that name, was well established. It even had an Academy, the Dukes County Academy, founded in 1833 through the efforts of David Look in getting a \$3000 appropriation for a County Academy while serving as Representative to the Massachusetts General Court.

Nathan, the blacksmith in this active village, might well have continued his trade but for the discovery of gold at Sutter's Camp in California in January 1848. The lure of gold and adventure drew thousands of men from all over the world to the nondescript and crude port of San Francisco. Martha's Vineyard, to the consternation of the editor of the *Gazette*, lost the services of many of its finest whaling captains to the Eldorado. Non-captains went also, among them Nathan Mayhew, who sailed on the whaling ship *Splendid*, which was chartered to carry the members of the Dukes County Mining Association to California.

<sup>2</sup>The building which housed the store still stands just east of Old County Road, on the south side of Edgartown Road.



Nathan was a director of the Association.

The *Splendid* left Edgartown on September 20, 1849, carrying Islanders eager to strike it rich in California. Nathan returned home October 24, 1850, disillusioned. The Association had been dissolved and no members ever made any significant gain from the adventure. Many became sick and some died. Nathan and Priam Luce both very nearly lost their eyesight from being sick unto death. This most unusual result of disease is in itself a significant curiosity and may have stemmed from drinking adulterated alcohol.

When Nathan arrived home, his eyesight was so poor as to force him out of his blacksmith trade. He converted his smithy into a store, the third in the tiny village. In December 1857, he made the first sale we have any record of. It consisted of two brooms and a clock to the Dukes County Academy. From then on, and perhaps earlier, the general store owned by Nathan Mayhew was in business. It has continued ever since, making it the longest-lived, continuously operated store on the Island.

Nathan's eye ailment certainly did not disable him for long. In 1856, he was elected Senator, representing Dukes County in the Massachusetts General Court. With his sons, he ran the store and his political career until he retired in 1875. He died at his home across the road from the store (the Thomas and Eleanor Waldron home today) on January 31, 1907, aged 93.

Close to his retirement, Nathan transferred half ownership of the land and store to his eldest son, Sanderson. Down through the years, the store became known as Sanderson's and to many it so continued through the 1950s.

Sanderson Manter Mayhew was born in 1846, the second of Nathan's sons to be so named. The first had died in 1844 at the age of two of scrofula, tuberculosis of the lymph glands. The second Sanderson attended the Dukes County Academy. After graduation, eager for adventure, he enlisted in the United States Revenue Service and was



*Sanderson and Avis Tilton Mayhew in the 1911 West Tisbury Pageant as Myles Standish and Priscilla Alden. His mustache is real.*

assigned in 1864 to the *Kewanee*, under the command of Capt. William Cooke Pease of Edgartown. When he left the service in 1866, he attended Comer's Commercial College in Boston where he studied bookkeeping.

After Comer's, Sanderson went to work in his father's store. On the last day of 1875, he married Avis Tilton and by 1880 they were comfortably settled in a new house built by Moses C. Vincent across from the Academy.

The store Nathan had started was doing well and by 1865 it was said to be the largest and best stocked store on the Cape. He had moved the original old smithy and shed back and attached to it an entirely new two-story building closer to the road. The new building had its gable end facing the road. A center door was flanked by two windows and was locked with a large brass key, an artifact now owned by Bobby Cronig, whose wife, the late Betty Turner Cronig, was the daughter of Charlie Turner, who later owned the store (a reproduction of the key is displayed in the store).

By 1873, business had increased so much that Nathan and Sanderson built a nearly identical building adjacent to and integral with the south side of the first building. The two



were connected by a wide doorway about two-thirds back. A front door and two windows matched those of the earlier building and a porch was built across the entire front, the same porch that is so popular today. Opposite each of the two doors was (and still is) a wide granite step. Close to the road were stone hitching posts near three large elm trees.

About the time the second building was erected, a cellar hole was dug under the original store, occupying about a third of the floor area. Today, on one of its brick and cement walls one can read: "Adams 1871." The final digit is somewhat eroded, but it appears to be a "1." Adams, apparently, did the masonry work.

Young Sanderson quickly became a leading citizen of town, being Town Treasurer for 44 years. He retired in 1929 at the age of 83. During this period, the town was cited through the state as being the most fiscally responsible town in Massachusetts.

He served on the Board of the Academy, his alma mater, and was Vice President of the Dukes County Library Association, forerunner of the West Tisbury Free Public Library. The Association resulted from the joint effort of Prof. Nathaniel Shaler and the Rev. Caleb Rotch in 1891. The Library was originally housed in the Academy. In 1892, the Association bought that part of Principal Moses C. Mitchell's home in which non-resident students of the Academy lived. Moved to its present site on Music Street, it became the West Tisbury Free Public Library, its exterior unchanged. Sanderson was its second president, Reverend Rotch having been the first.

When Nathan retired in 1875, another son, Ulysses, became a partner to Sanderson, buying out his father's share. Ulysses, two years younger than Sanderson, had gone to sea in his youth and later worked as a clerk in a furniture factory in Minneapolis. In 1876 he married Euseba Norton from Middletown (today's North Tisbury) and the newlyweds moved into the house next to the store on the



Courtesy Dorothy Jenney McIntire

*Earliest known photograph of the store, probably about 1890.*

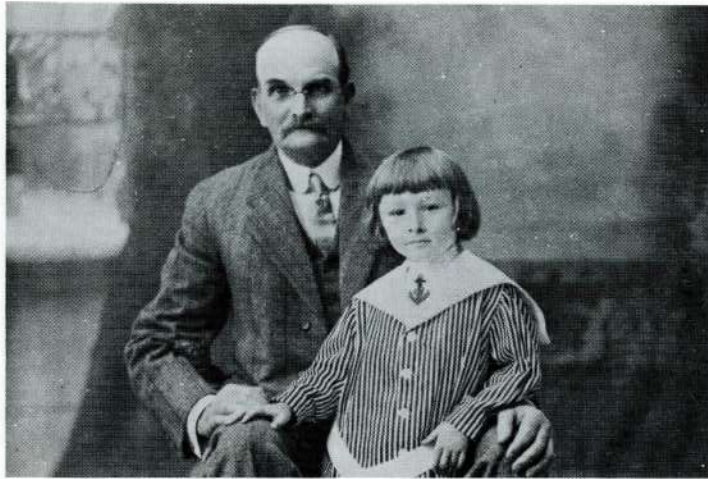
south. It had been built in 1855 for James Mayhew by Shubael Davis.

Like his older brother, Ulysses devoted much time to community service, being Chairman of the School Committee of West Tisbury and, in 1922, was one of the five founders of the Dukes County Historical Society. He was a member of the House of Representatives in Boston for several terms.

"Ulyss" or "UE", as he was alternately called, was a popular figure in the busy store, sitting on an elevated platform overlooking the several aisles which were jammed with "everything under the sun," as he described it. A dedicated shopkeeper, he worked from 7 in the morning until 10 at night for 39 years.

Sanderson and Ulysses were both good storekeepers. Good storekeepers pay attention to details, especially those dealing with payment. Albion Alley, who later was to own the store, remembered when, while clerking in the store, he was so busy he delayed charging a customer's purchase to his account. UE, sitting on his platform, noticed the delay and reprimanded Beanie, as Albion was called by his friends. "Listen, boy, if the store is on fire you charge the customer first, then run."





*Ulysses Mayhew and daughter, Emma, his only descendant.*

About 1886, the Mayhew brothers decided to add a peddle cart to their operation so they could expand their trade along the north and south shores. A driver was hired and a cart purchased from off-Island. It was loaded with dry goods, clothing, small wares, washtubs, brooms and hardware as well as groceries. Being cumbersome and heavy, it couldn't cover much territory in a day and often remained overnight away from the store. That cart is now owned by the Historical Society and displayed in its carriage shed.

While it was known to all as Sanderson's, the store was officially called the S. M. Mayhew Company. No plans exist to show what the store interior was like in those days, but some persons can recall how it was arranged at the turn of the century.

Two stoves warmed the store, one heating each of the two connected buildings. The stove in the grocery section was the village gathering place, the local social center where news and stories were exchanged. It was far from the chimney and a stovepipe ran along the ceiling to the other stove in the dry goods section. Both stoves then vented into the chimney which went up through the upstairs apart-



*Library on Music Street soon after it was moved to present location.*

ment before going out the roof.

Joseph Chase Allen, premier Vineyard story teller, wrote about the seating arrangement around the stoves at Sanderson's:

"It was found after much research that the boxes that (E. Stout's Patented Men's Boots) came in made admirable seats for the evening. They were about three feet long, two feet wide and two feet high. Two men could sit on one box unless one man was an oversized model. . . .

"The boxes were arranged in groups. The whalers sat on one side of the store, the gunners on the other. The young folks near the middle."

Elliott Mayhew, grandson of E. E. Mayhew, owner of the Chilmark General Store, recalls sitting on these rubber boot boxes as a child. Recently, he spotted them in our second-floor store room. All of a sudden, they took on a historical majesty, like old church pews.

Sometime around 1910 a young man named Charles Alma Turner began clerking for Sanderson and Ulysses. It is not known what brought him here from his hometown near Boston, but he had gone to Comer's Commercial Col-



lege in Boston, as had both store owners. He boarded with Mrs. Nancy Adams on Music Street, along with others. He obviously impressed the Mayhew brothers because in 1914 when they decided to give up the store, they sold it to Charlie and a newly arrived partner from Nova Scotia, Benjamin Woodaman. Sanderson retained some ownership so it would be financially possible for the two young men to take over. A quit claim deed of the transaction was not registered until 1930, twenty years later, stating that Charlie was to pay \$2000 the first year plus 5 percent simple interest annually on an undisclosed balance.

Ben Woodaman, the Nova Scotian, had migrated to California in his youth where he was trained as a chef. He soon returned to the east, living in New Hampshire and Boston. It was probably his association in Boston, where he worked in the fish market, that made him interested in the Vineyard. In 1914, he joined Charlie Turner as a part owner of Sanderson's, the S. M. Mayhew Co. He and his wife, Bertha, moved into the Coffin house with their four sons.

The boys all attended the Academy. One of their teachers was Harleigh B. Schultz, a former Boston newspaperman who had left the city for health reasons. Fred, the oldest, remembers Mr. Schultz well and feels greatly indebted to this fine teacher. Fred had suffered from polio and when the others went out for recess, he received some special attention from the teacher.

Fred remembers his father, Ben, as being very musical, playing the cornet and flute. His mother, Bertha, played the piano and was the organist in the Congregational Church. Encouraged by his father, Fred took cornet lessons from George C. Gifford, another West Tisbury storekeeper. George was a fine cornetist and, it seems, a good teacher because Fred went on to play with several well-known orchestras during the big-band era of the '20s and '30s.

Charlie Turner, the other partner, married Gertrude



Courtesy Edward S. Farras

Charlie Turner in the 1940s. Shed behind him was the old smithy.

Adams, daughter of Capt. David Adams and his wife, Alice. Gertrude had studied at the Boston Museum of Art and had worked off-Island as a nurse. Returning to West Tisbury she bought the Capt. Cyrus Manter house. In October 1918 she married Charlie and they set up housekeeping in her house. They had two daughters, Betty (later Cronig) and Alma (later Stamm).

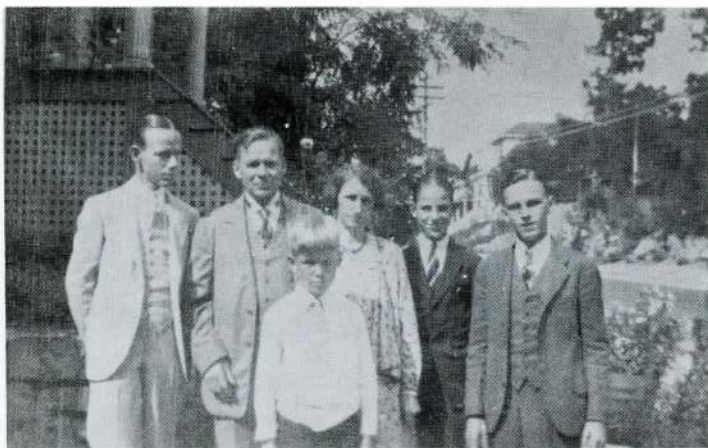
During his years on Music Street, Charlie, in the tradition of small-town storekeepers, served in many civic positions. He was Treasurer of the Academy, first president of the Martha's Vineyard Association, a member of the Agricultural Society, the select Barnacle Club of Vineyard Haven and the West Tisbury Grange. He retired from the store in 1945, nine years before he died in 1955 at the age of 74.

Ben Woodaman left the Island in 1925, having sold his share of the store to Charlie. He moved to Somerville, Mass., where he ran a bakery, later moving to Medford to operate a grocery store. He died in 1935 at 64 years of age.

The two men, Charlie and Ben, made many changes in



Courtesy Dorothy Jenney McIntire



*Ben Woodaman and family at the family home in Medford about 1930.*

the store. Ben was considered to be the "store" man, while Charlie was the financial brains behind the operation. When Ben sold his share to Charlie, the accountant working on the transfer told the young clerk, David Correllus, that Charlie's books were the most detailed and best kept he had ever seen.

The partners added the Chilmark General Store to their operation in 1923. It had, for many years, been run by Edward Elliott Mayhew, a farmer and stock trader and a most influential Chilmark resident. Besides being storekeeper and postmaster, he was active in town and church affairs. He was a major influence on the decision to locate the Town Hall in its present spot and to move the Methodist Church from Middle Road, near Tea Lane, to its present site. Thus he was important in the creation of a town center around Beetlebung Corner.

In July 1882, E. Elliot Mayhew married Miss Florence Blackwell, a member of one of America's outstanding families and a summer resident in the Nashaquitsa area. Her aunts, Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell, were both women doctors, Elizabeth being the first such in the country. Together,



*E. Elliott Mayhew, originator of "Dealers in Almost Everything."*

the sisters founded the New Infirmary for Women in New York City.

Florence was an active woman herself, being founder of the Chilmark Public Library.

It was E. E. Mayhew who first used the slogan "Dealers in Almost Everything," a slogan that is now used and, incorrectly, credited to the West Tisbury store. The Chilmark store was the center of the town's social life, containing, as it did, the local postoffice. Some years before 1923, E. Elliott had sold the store to Ernest James Dean, who ran it until it was bought by Charlie and Ben.

Ben spent more time in the Chilmark Store than Charlie, but the daily operation was carried out by Walter Jenney, who was also assistant postmaster (Charlie was postmaster), and by Frank Woods, by a man named Hallowell, and by



Karl Witkop, who later bought the store. After Charlie bought out Ben's share of the S. M. Mayhew Co., in 1925, he sold the Chilmark store, leaving him with more time to devote to changes at West Tisbury.

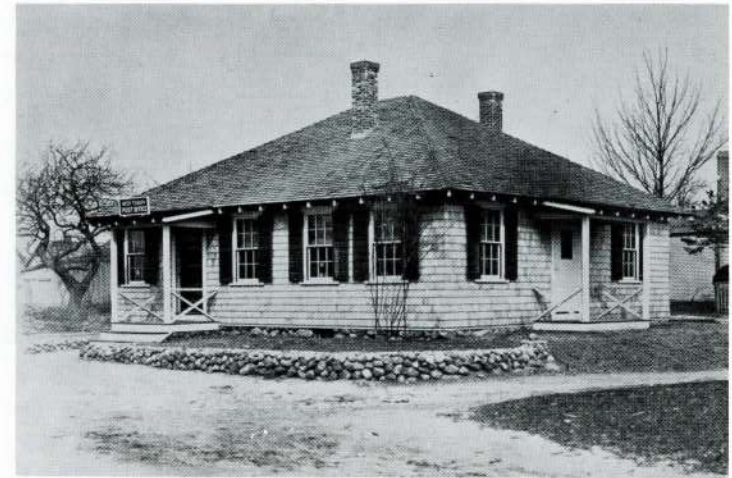
One change involved the West Tisbury Postoffice, which was in the building (now Florence Kernick's house) at the intersection of Old County Road and Edgartown Road. Built in 1909 as a combination residence and Postoffice for Postmistress Phoebe Cleveland, it had green shingles on the roof, soft pink painted shingles for siding and black shutters. The trim was white. A sign above the entrance on Edgartown Road read "West Tisbury Post Office." Another entrance on the Old County Road side was for the living quarters. Both entrances remain on the Kernick house today. The old Postoffice entrance was, for many years, an observation post for the late Frank Kernick, who could usually be seen with an elbow on the railing and a foot on a stone, welcoming people to West Tisbury.

But in 1927 the Postal Department named Charlie Turner to replace Phoebe Cleveland as postmaster. He announced that the Postoffice would be moved to his store, which, of course, was across Mill Brook. The *Gazette* explained it this way:

"It is the present plan of Mr. Turner to move the Post Office from the building where it is now located to the Store building of the S. M. Mayhew Co., of which he is the proprietor. This plan, if carried out, will put the Post Office on the bus line and it will no longer be necessary for the carrier to drive off the through highway to deliver mail for West Tisbury."

The article stated that "residents who live south of Mill Brook in the vicinity of the present Post Office object to this procedure on the grounds that they will have to travel further for the mail."

But Charlie was the new postmaster and it was his store, so the move was made.



*Postoffice and residence of Postmaster Phoebe Cleveland, about 1910.*

Some readers may remember the Postoffice after it was moved into Charlie's store in 1927. You entered the left-hand door, and there it was. Made of straight grain oak, it (the Postoffice) rested on the counter, only three feet wide, four feet high and about a foot deep. A four-inch counter extended out to the customer through a two-foot high barred window. The window was ingeniously made. Two eight-inch doors on the Postmaster's side behind the bars closed the Postoffice when drawn together. A latch release allowed the entire window, bars and all, to open to accept packages to be mailed.

Surrounding the window were the boxes. Inside, on the "working side," each box had a name label identifying the slot. Beneath the barred window was a drawer for stamps and money. The unit still exists, having been bought by Ted Meinelt for \$10 from Albion Alley when he remodeled the postoffice in 1946.

The postoffice was integrated into the store. At the far end of the mail boxes was a rack loaded with work gloves. A phone booth stood to the left of the entrance door and beyond this, near the front window, were fishing reels, jack-



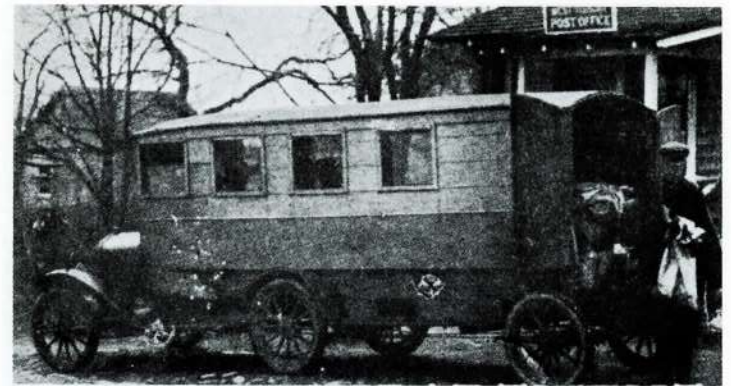
knives, alarm clocks and similar items. Some dry goods were on the wall counter. The chimney and one stove were on this side of the store, the safe and Charlie's rolltop desk were behind the stove against the rear wall.

On the right side of the store was a fresh vegetable rack, just inside the door, the wall behind it was lined with shelves of groceries. The cash register and counter then, as now, ran in front of them. A central shelf ran from the door back to the second stove. Left of it was another counter with the candy showcase at its far end. This showcase was sketched by Denys Wortman for his "Every Day Movies" in 1931. This noted cartoonist who also created "Moby Dick and the Duke" and "Metropolitan Movies" lived on Middle Road from 1940 until he died in 1958. He had been coming to the Vineyard since he was four years old. His widow, Hilda, lives there now and recalled to me that Denys used many Island scenes in his cartoons. His work was featured in the *New York World Telegram* and syndicated nationally until his retirement in 1954.

The stairs to the attic were closed at the top by a trap door hinged along the outer wall. It was opened by a rope that ran through pulleys to a bucket containing old window sash weights with several extras to add to counter-balance the door properly.

Because of the rat problem expectedly attendant in a store, Charlie made use of an old enemy of rodents. Several small hinged doors were cut between the studs in the store room and on the stair wall was a little box made of eel trap wire for Charlie's pet ferret. He would let it out at night to roam the store. In the morning, full of rodents it was hoped, the ferret would go back to his box.

Against the back wall, hiding the stairs, was a fine new unpainted electric refrigerator, replacing the old ice chest in the back room. The store had put in a 32-volt Delco generator around 1925. It was mounted on a concrete pad in the corner of the barn behind the original store. Leonard



*Bart Mayhew's six-wheeled bus-truck brings the mail to West Tisbury.*

Athearn remembers that the exhaust pipe came out through the wall -- he remembers because while rounding the corner of the barn in a fast game of tag he tripped and reached out to grab a support. The hot exhaust pipe was it!

So there was some electricity at the store before the power line came through, but apparently it didn't provide enough for everything. In 1929, the power company strung electric lines up-Island and on April 18, Sanderson M. Mayhew, then 80 years old, at Charlie's gracious request, turned on the electric lights for the first time in the store -- the store that still was called "Sanderson's."

"It should be said," the *Gazette* reported, "that the lights add greatly to the appearance of the store at night. The inside is brightly illuminated and outside lights make the long veranda and sidewalk as light as day. With this and various other improvements the store takes rank with the attractive and up-to-date business places of the Island."

Oil lamps that had provided illumination for so many years had to go. Two that hung from the ceiling in the grocery section and two more in the dry-goods area, plus two reflector lamps on the shelf behind the scale and cash register were replaced with large white ceiling-mounted globes. The round globe lamps that were mounted over each





*Sanderson's, with its granite hitching posts early in the century.*

front door must have cast a pretty glow through the graceful elms that bordered the road in front of the store. The elms are gone now, but the effect can be imagined by looking at Peter Simon's remarkable warm winter evening photograph taken in 1983 (see pp. 72-73).

The year 1933 brought considerable financial hardship worldwide and it had its effect on the store. To keep prices low and still remain in business Charlie affiliated with Pioneer Stores.

"The passing of traditional General Stores in rural districts and their replacement by large chain organizations is marked here by Charlie A. Turner's announcement yesterday that the S. M. Mayhew Co., block is being altered to affiliate with the Pioneer Stores." So the *Gazette* noted the transition.

The Jolles family, proprietors of a wholesale grocery business in New Bedford, felt they could better serve smaller stores by establishing a closer relationship with them. This took the form of Pioneer Food Stores located mostly in the New Bedford and Fall River areas. These stores were pro-

Courtesy Bobby Cronig



*By the 1930's, the posts were gone, Pioneer Food and Coke had arrived.*

vided with special brand foods, John Alden and Peter Piper, and each Thursday the *New Bedford Standard Times* carried an ad featuring these items at "special" prices. The advertising was furnished by the Jolles company.

When Charlie joined the Pioneer Food group, he put up a new sign that ran along the top edge of the porch roof. About 12 feet long, its black background provided a surface for "PIONEER FOOD STORES" in raised gold letters. The candy counter was moved and other changes made to facilitate customer service.

Clerking in the store through all these changes was Albion Alley who had started working for Sanderson and Ulysses and their S. M. Mayhew Company as a boy of 12 or 13. In the 1920s, while delivering groceries to the home of Miss Laura Lee and her friend, Hope Gray, on the shore of Great Pond, he met their housekeeper, May Ann Flight. Miss Flight was born in Newfoundland, but had emigrated to South Boston. She worked for a while for Hope Gray's brother in Weston and while there she was asked to go to the Vineyard to become housekeeper for Miss Lee and Miss Gray. Albion and Mary Ann fell in love and were married



in 1923. As soon as he could, Albion bought the old William Mayhew house on Edgartown Road opposite Old County Road. There they raised their family until about 1946 when Albion bought the Sanderson Mayhew house. Their children were Albion Jr., Phyllis, Jim and John, the last three of whom were to follow their father in the store business.

During World War II, Albion left his clerking position in the store to work as a guard at the Naval Air Station, now the site of the Martha's Vineyard Airport.

As the war drew to an end in 1945, Charlie Turner decided it was time to retire from the store and he called his old chief clerk, Albion, and told him that he would like him to take over the business. After all, Charlie argued, who knew it better? But Albion, by this time a Chief at the airport, said No. The next night, Charlie called him again. This time he must have been more persuasive because on September 1, 1945, Albion became the store's fourth owner.

A month later, Charlie, now 65, resigned as postmaster, turning the position over to Albion. Now completely retired, Charlie was honored by Harold L. Tinker, who published a poem about Charlie in the *Gazette*. The poem ended with:

And Charles's "unremembered acts  
of kindness and of good"  
Around the stove of Sanderson's  
Were purest brotherhood.

Charles A. Turner died April 23, 1955, aged 74 years.

In those first years that Albion owned the store, the Island's role as a summer resort leaped into prominence. New clientele and new markets were presented to him as challenges. The bleak years of the Great Depression and World War II had created conditions that strained Charlie Turner's operation. David Correllus remembers those times and the minimal business that was done. Now, Albion decided, was the time to regroup.

Sanderson Mayhew had sold the store long before, but to many it was still known as "Sanderson's." Albion had a long-time stake in the store having already worked there

more than 40 years. He was a well liked and well known figure in town. It was time to change the name, he thought.

The *Gazette* at the end of December 1952 made the announcement: "As of January 1, 1953, the S. M. Mayhew Co., of West Tisbury will be known as Albion Alley and Co." It signified a change that had been foretold by Joe Allen in his book published in 1931 subtitled *Tales Told Longside the Stove at Sanderson's*:

Longside the stove in Sanderson's  
The gang don't meet there anymore.  
The most of 'em have sailed away  
For ports upon a brighter shore.

Albion was determined to create a new identity. He did borrow the slogan he had learned while working at the Chilmark Store for Charlie Turner. Originated by E. E. Mayhew, it was from now on to be associated with Alley's: "Dealers in Almost Everything." And he added another one over the front door: "If You Don't See It -- Ask for It."

The difficulty of observing the many persons flowing in and out of the two front doors of the store troubled Albion. The tiny old postoffice was too small so he built an addition on the rear wall to house a new one in 1955. The old oak countertop "office" was moved into the barn. The new postoffice was 10 feet wide and 28 feet long and contained 177 boxes for residents, each with a tiny window and combination lock. There was a spacious room for the postmaster, a sorting table, stamp drawer and safe. The windows, now lost to the new addition, were moved to the west side of the postoffice. The cellar stairs now had to be entered from inside the store through a trap door and the cistern from which water was dipped for years was closed over.

To improve traffic flow (and to have more control over those kids who might have copped a candy or two), Albion closed off the two front doors and put a new one in the center, giving the store a single entrance-exit. A wooden step was built between the original two granite steps opposite the new center door.





Photograph by Peter Simon

*Alley's General Store, a few years ago, in the winter twilight.*

Perhaps the oldest tradition to succumb to the remodeling was the removal of the "Florence" stoves and their chimney. A furnace was installed in the cellar, burning coal at first, it was later converted to oil. With it came a new

chimney rising up along the rear wall. The old stoves were removed. They and their forebears had served a community of story-tellers (gammers, they called themselves) for just over a hundred years. The old sheet-metal pads on



which the stoves rested remain partly visible.

It was the age of vending machines dispensing soda, popcorn, gum balls and cigarettes and they graced the old front porch for a quarter century. The upstairs "tenement" created by Nathan and Sanderson was renovated and provided a start-up living quarters for many a village family.

In 1956, Albion and Jim, his son and chief assistant, decided to add a garden shop to the north side of the building. The lean-to addition was set on cinder blocks with its shed roof sloping from the second floor level on the north side. An entrance was made from the front porch and a large window faced the road.

Inside, the old stairwell was removed and another one built at the west end of the garden shop. An office was constructed around the new chimney, adjacent to the postoffice.

When Albion decided to sell out to his three younger children in 1964, Jim, who had worked in the store longest, was sworn in as postmaster, following a long tradition of country store-postoffices. Although Beanie Alley sold out to his children, he didn't quit work. In 1966, he and Jim built the Village Wash-O-Mat with five dryers and twelve washing machines plus a two-bay U-Do-It car wash in the rear of the parking lot.

Beanie continued to go to work, unpaid now, first thing in the morning, frequently being the one to open the store. He would work until early afternoon when he went home to lunch with his wife, Mary. At her insistence he would settle down in his rocker for the afternoon, but he managed to place the chair so he could see the store. Soon, he would say to Mary, "They look pretty busy down there. Guess I'd better give them a hand." Off he would go. Beanie was never known to turn a customer away and it was a great source of annoyance to him when his kids started locking up at 6 p.m.

He said he had retired, but he hadn't. He had worked the day he collapsed with a ruptured aortic aneurysm. He

Courtesy John Alley



Albion "Beanie" Alley with his great-grandson Jeffrey.

died a month later in Boston on August 31, 1972, at age 69.

He had worked at the store 62 years, longer than the 54 years Sanderson was there. Ulysses worked 39 years, Charlie 35. These four created the character of the store, which continues today.

Others worked at the store, of course. The first clerk anyone can remember was Joe Howes, who had started working for the Mayhews in 1897. He lived across the street and sold dry goods and ran the delivery operation for the store.

On June 22, 1903, Leonard Athearn's father recorded in his diary that "Willis Moodie began work with Sanderson M. Mayhew Co., today." His brother also worked in the store as did Dana Hancock in the early years of the 1900s.

Precise dates are difficult to determine, but among those who clerked there were young Beanie Alley (of course), Walter Jenney, Ben Anderson, Frank Blodgett and Sam



Earl.

In April 1924, David Correllus, who was born and raised on a farm at Squibnocket, started work in the Chilmark Store for Charlie Turner and Ben Woodaman. His pay was \$15 a week. In his second week, he was told he was such a good worker that he would soon be raised to \$18. When he quit four years later, he was still being paid \$15, but he loved the work.

He would go into the store early, sweep up and stock for the day. Then he made up the orders and delivered them. The store had two cars, an open and a closed Model T Ford, the closed one having curtains on the sides. David preferred the open model. About 6 p.m., he took the day's receipts down to West Tisbury to Charlie. When the Chilmark Store was sold, David came to West Tisbury to work in that store. He remembers it was the custom in those days for farmers and fishermen to have an account book at the store. Some would run up \$1000 or more in the account before the crop would come in. Then, usually in the fall, they would pay up.

David remembers that whenever Sanderson entered the West Tisbury store, Charlie Turner's rule was that whoever saw him enter was to drop everything and attend to the old gentleman with the white hair and beard. Sanderson would give his order to the clerk as always and they duly wrote it all down. But it stopped there. Charlie never entered the charges in the book. This, after all, was the man who made the store famous.

In the 1930s, Celestino Silva, Anthony Campbell, Elmer and Clifton Athearn clerked for Charlie. There may have been others. After World War II, Albion and his kids ran the store with increasing numbers of summer helpers. The pattern continues today.

In 1977, Jim Alley became an inactive partner and Phyllis and John ran the store until February 1980, when Alley's was sold to my wife, Teena, and me.

Since acquiring the store we have made several changes.

A new office was built in our first year and in 1981 we added a refrigerated room on the back of the old blacksmith shop. Later, the garden shop was extended to provide a new sales area for paint and plumbing supplies. In 1983 we converted one bay of the car wash into a sales and storage area for large outdoor items such as trash barrels, lawn furniture, fertilizers and peat moss.

But the most exciting change for us was the reshingling. In the 1950s, Albion had been convinced of the value of asbestos cement shingles and for the first time in its history the store was covered with siding that wasn't of wood. One of our first thoughts on buying the store was to replace the asbestos siding with cedar shingles. It was partly because we wanted to restore the building as nearly as possible to its original appearance and partly because asbestos siding was offensive to our sense of design.

In the fall of 1982, the building was stripped down to its inner planking. The old cedar shingles under the asbestos had a story to tell. The outer layer of paint was silver, applied in 1933 when Pioneer Food became associated with the store. Earlier, the shingles were brick red, and before that, a dusty gold. While no one remembers when the shingles were first painted, it must have been early in this century. The trim was variously white, then grass green, then royal blue, and now forest green and white. Shutters had always hung by the windows until the 1940s. They are now being replaced. The original front doors are once again exposed, the right-hand one being used and the others closed off.

The old narrow strip flooring has been covered over in several spots by plywood sheets. At some future date, a new floor will be required but until then a liberal coat of linseed oil is a periodic delaying tactic.

Otherwise, although the ceiling has a nautical bow and the beams are propped up, the old store seems ready for the next 125 years, a lively and fitting memorial to the "other" Nathan Mayhew, my favorite.



## My Dig Under Alley's Store

IN 1982 we decided to replace the floor of the shed that connects the old blacksmith shop and the "new" store. We didn't realize what we were getting into.

While digging holes for new joist supports, I spotted an amber-colored bottle. It was exquisite, hand-blown and most probably a snuff bottle from a time before Nathan Mayhew opened his store after returning from the Gold Rush, probably between 1830 and 1850.

It is four inches tall, nearly three inches in diameter with a rough open pontil scar, whittle marks and a bubbly surface that produces a kaleidoscopic glow in the light. Two small but prominent knobs on either side of the pontil scar identify the bottle as having held snuff of an intermediate strength, there having been, in the early 1800s, a system set up of grading snuff from one to four knobs. It has no other identifying marks. Pierre Lorillard, the tobacconist, was perhaps the first to use this grading system.

What happened to me next was that which is all too commonly the fate of collectors. For five days I did no work on the floor, but dug through some 18 inches of accumulated dirt to the original sand surface. I learned to sift and sort, to discard and save, with kind assistance from skilled and unskilled fellow diggers.

The bulk of the findings consisted of patent medicine bottles, pottery, china, various grocery bottles, fragments of shoe soles and uppers, an old felt hat brim, a beautifully decorated, but unidentified, padlock, and, my favorite of all, an example of the prudence and frugality of the old storekeeper: a pencil consisting of a bit of eraser, a tarnished metal band, about one-sixteenth inch of shaft and a whittled point. The whole being about one inch long. Waste not, want not, indeed!

Dating my dig is difficult. The snuff bottle clearly dates way back, but most other bottles were blown-in-mold types, characteristic of the late 1800s and early 1900s. There were fragments of newspapers dated 1901 and 1914.

Many years ago my best friend went to work for the Davis Lawrence Co., of New York. He introduced me to Perry Davis Pain Killer, later called Davis Lawrence Liniment to conform to drug laws. When I uncovered several bottles once filled with this wondrous cure in the sub-dirt of my dig I was inspired to learn more about Perry Davis.

He was born in 1791 in what is now part of New Bedford and at 14 was injured in an accident and left permanently crippled. He learned the trade of shoemaking, but his inventive mind led him to bigger things. He held several patents, one, in 1837, being for a highly useful mill for grinding grain. It was about this time that he began ex-

perimenting with various medicines to ease the pain in his back and hip.

I found a Vineyard connection. One of the mills in which he had part ownership was located on the William Huxford place on Chappaquiddick (there was another on the "Plain"). He came to the Island often to supervise the mill and, it is said, that he did a lot of work on the pain-killer formula while there on Chappaquiddick.

The Perry Davis Pain Killer was first produced in Taunton in 1839, but in 1840 he moved its production to Fall River. Local tradition records that he sent one of the first cases of the liniment to William Huxford on Chappaquiddick in appreciation for his help.

After the great Fall River fire in 1843, which destroyed his building and many more, he moved his liniment production to Providence. Later, the company, much expanded, set up its headquarters in New York City. It ceased doing business only in 1975.

Excavations at the old Sandwich Glass Factory uncovered many samples of bottles used by Davis. In my dig, one bottle I found had a label reading "Providence, Rhode Island" and thus must have been made in Sandwich between 1843 and 1895, before he moved to New York.

What brought so many years of success? The formula for the liniment was:

Tr. Opium Camphorate.

Myrrh, Capsicum, Guaiac, Spruce Gum, Camphor and Mombassa Chilis.

All mixed in 114 Proof (57%) Alcohol.

The justification for this remarkable concoction was the Mombassa Chilis, which made it almost too hot to touch.

Perry Davis, who became an ardent leader in the temperance movement and a licensed Baptist preacher-evangelist, reasoned that no one could possibly drink this mixture for its alcohol content. The Chillis were just too hot. Therefore, it was purely an external liniment and not like certain other medicines which were taken internally with evil effects.

When restrictions on patent medicines came along in the 1930s, Perry Davis's reasoning was accepted by the government and it was not listed as an alcoholic or drug (opium) beverage.

No matter what Perry Davis believed, the Chillis didn't stop folks from taking the Pain Killer internally. The last president of the company told me that when he was selling it in the Hudson Bay region the miners and lumbermen would buy six or eight bottles at a time. One was seen putting a single bottle in each of his pockets before uncapping the last one and walking out the door, his head tipped back as he drained the fire-water. Asked why he put each bottle in a different pocket, he explained that when he fell down in a stupor he didn't want to break too many.

I found many other bottles that had contained patent medicines. Each in its way provided comfort in a world only beginning to organize medicinal cures, the alcoholic medium basic to most of them helping to overcome life's tedium.

I also uncovered inkwells, "Umbrellas" and standard "rounds" from J & I.E. Moore and Co., as well as the "Turtle" with an 1865 patented offset neck. There was Billings Mauve Ink



(1835-1900) which, the label said, would eventually turn black.

Among other items were samples of pottery and chinaware. Though most were broken (the unbroken pieces, it is hoped, were sold), they provide a glimpse of the turn-of-the-century merchandise.

Most of the crockery was plain white, of a simple though pleasing line. There were pieces of serving plates, small dishes, gravy boats of graceful style and an unusual serving dish of elliptical shape with one end narrower than the other. Cups tended to be mug-shaped. There were several handsome bowls and pitchers. One large thin-wall pitcher, about 12 inches high, has bright blue bands and alternating brown lines around it.

The pottery varies from large jugs to Benningtonware cream saucers and mixing bowls, plus various flower pots, some gaudily decorated with ivy and flowers in painted relief.

Glass tumblers were basic Sandwich glass of about four-ounce capacity, plain with octagonal flat bases. Wine glasses were more decorative of a cut-glass mold manufacture.

Other items included blown-glass darning or setting eggs. To my surprise, I excavated an intact chicken egg, a well-preserved, dehydrated 80-year-old West Tisbury egg. I promptly broke it in my excitement!

There were many lamp chimneys, including those for whale-oil lamps. And clay pipes -- lots of them -- of two basic types: one, white T.D. pipes; the other, the basketweave decorated red-clay variety.

Here is the list of bottles I uncovered:

Sawyers Crystal Blueing  
Billings Ink  
Stafford Ink  
J & I. E. Moore & Co. (ink)  
Warren, Mass.  
Cabot's Sulfonaphthol  
Baker's Flavoring Extract  
Curtis and Moore (fruit syrup)  
Hero Brand Fruit  
Cairns and Paisley  
(Scotch preserves)  
Heinz (vinegar)  
Red Berry Brand (stuffed olives)  
J. Loughery & Co. Boston  
R. L. Acosin (olive oil)  
Renne's Pain Killer/Magic Oil,  
Pittsfield, Mass.  
G. W. Davis,  
Inflammation Extirpator Co.  
E. Hartshorn  
Harley and Smith Honey Balsam  
Perry Davis Vegetable Pain Killer  
Dr. Seth Arnold's Balsam,  
Gilman Bros., Boston  
John Wyeth and Brother  
(probably medicine)  
Philadelphia  
Dr. Wistar's Balsam  
of Wild Cherry  
Sweet Bye and Bye, Corning and  
Tappan (medicine?)  
Holmes Fragrant Frostilla  
(medicine?) Elmyra, N.Y.  
Hanson and Sproat (medicine?)  
Taunton  
A. L. Willard (medicine?) Taunton  
Lydia Pinkhams'  
Vegetable Compound  
Dr. Pierre's Golden Medical  
Discovery, Buffalo, N.Y.

The fact that there were so many empty patent medicine bottles under the store may tell us something about the people who worked there or those who came to gam around the wood stove. In any case, it tells us a lot about the items that lined the shelves.

CHARLES W. PARTON

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## Recollections

# East Chop in World War I

by ROBERT M. FERRIS III

IF YOU were in lower Manhattan, at West and Barclay Streets, on a Friday afternoon in late June 1914, you'd be caught up in the bustle of people lugging bags and assorted objects, including children, through the traffic jammed under the elevated tracks. Many of them were rushing from the Hoboken ferry to the Fall River Line pier two blocks away to board the steamer *Priscilla*, the night boat, to start their trip to the Cape and Islands.

My mother, by some miracle, managed to get me, my brother, John, and all our luggage through the confusion and settled aboard the steamer. We were bound for our first summer at the Watson cottage in East Chop. I was almost 5.

We made other trips on the *Priscilla* in following years, but that first one was a memorable one for me. The slightly musty smell of our stateroom, the deep sound of her horn signalling departure, the throb of her engine, and the frightening creaking of her wooden structure as she rolled in the swells off Point Judith, even now in memory send a chill of excitement down my back.

Later trips were the same, except after our entry into the war we were accompanied by a submarine-chaser escort. It added to the excitement. One pitch black night during the war, the ship's engine suddenly stopped. We could hear the officers shouting unintelligible orders. Mother got us up and

ROBERT M. FERRIS has been making his pilgrimage to the Vineyard for 70 years. Since 1936, he's been accompanied by his wife, Mig. ("She liked the Vineyard so much that she married me," Bob explains.) A retired electrical engineer from Western Electric, he's a graduate of Hotchkiss and Yale. A fisherman, he is often seen early mornings in his duck boat on Menemsha Creek. He and Mig live half the year in their house overlooking Squibnocket Pond and the Atlantic Ocean, the other half in Montclair, N.J., where he was, years ago, the Mayor.



hurriedly dressed. We trotted up on deck, calling out to the first person we met in the dark, "Are we sinking?"

"God, no, lady," came the answer, "we're docking at Newport."

In subsequent years, we took the New Bedford line boat. It landed us on the same dock as the Island steamer, which was much simpler than having to transfer from Fall River. But even so, getting the luggage from the New York boat to the Island boat was a hassle. One year, my brother and I, in our excitement to get across the dock onto the Island boat, forgot our assignment of insuring the transfer of our bicycles and thus had to wait on the Oak Bluffs pier until the next boat came from New Bedford while our Mother departed on the front seat of Fatty James' horse-drawn, low-slung, buckboard-type wagon, en route with our trunks and other impediments to East Chop.

The Hunts, the Brooks, the Stevensons, the Knapps, the Pecks, the Mills, the Hands, the Fullers, the Meleneys, the Metcalfs, the Hegemans and the Elmers were all there.

Mr. John Brooks, the young boy's friend, started the baseball games in the park across from his East Chop house. He would carry the very smallest of the children to first base after helping him hit the ball. He'd teach you to dive off the Mills' pier, and might even arbitrate feuds on the croquet court.

One day, word came that the tug *Perth Amboy* had been shelled by a German submarine right off the lightship and was just then tied up at the dock in Vineyard Haven. Mr. Brooks broke up the ball game, piled us into his station wagon (called a beach wagon in those days, and a Model T Ford, I think) and drove us to see the suddenly famous tug where we each got a piece of German shrapnel.

Another interruption to a ball game came when two Navy pontoon planes taxied up to our beach. We thought it was because the snappy, uniformed pilots were entranced with Ruth Brooks. I still think so. But what I know for sure is



*Fred James and his wagon head for the Oak Bluffs dock.*

that Ruth did learn to signal with semaphore flags and once wigwagged a passing destroyer. The young man aboard the vessel who responded to her signals became her husband ten years later. A rock on the bluff commemorates the happy event.

In those days, Sunday was a day of quiet. There was no tennis, no ball games. The highlight was an evening hymn sing at the tennis club with Mrs. Robinson at the piano. She was a lovely lady, but young boys are apt to snicker at eyes somewhat walleyed and we certainly were not what you'd classify as devout. Nonetheless, hearing the words and music of "Now the Day is Over," even today brings back vivid memories of teetering on hard chairs while trying to catch somebody's eye across the barnlike wooden walled room.

The East Chop golf course was a thicket filled with lost balls. The first hole took off from the tennis clubhouse across the field and over the hill to the left of the lighthouse. Lighthouse Keeper Purdy had a dog that liked to catch moving objects and if you were able to hit the ball over the hill, it went momentarily out of sight. That was the dog's chance and he was fast.



The course was used on July 4th as a cross-country track, the route winding down near Crystal Lake, then up around the fire tower, and back to the tennis courts. A motley group would start out and none of us ever beat Jack Brooks to the finish line.

Tennis was the big sport for us through our college years. It was tennis all morning, then a swim, lunch, and (in the early years) a bike trip to pick up the mail.

We didn't eat our meals in our own houses. At first, we ate at the Atlantic House on the bluff (that name may be wrong; I've forgotten). A few years later we went across the downs to the Pollards for meals and finally, much later, we ate at the Ahoma. Yellow slickers and Uneeda Biscuit hats were in order for the trek during a northeaster, but come hell or high water, meal times had to be kept. Exactly. It wasn't until later that maids came with the families, but that still didn't change the necessity of being on time -- at 8, at 12:30 and at 6.

Cocktails were unheard of until about 1927 when some new people from New Jersey arrived on the scene. At least, they were new to us, the cocktails, that is.

But to return to World War I:

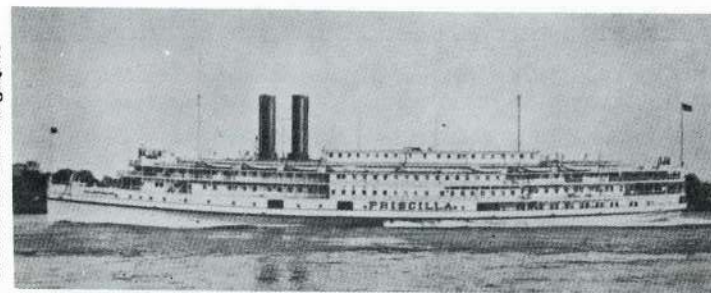
Item 1. My Mother discovered a German spy occupying the house just to the left of the East Chop lighthouse. He had a transmitting radio. A Navy officer came and removed him -- in handcuffs. Wow! What excitement.

Item 2. A gorilla was reported having escaped from a schooner off Naushon and was said to be on the Vineyard killing chickens. All of us were kept indoors after supper for three days. No gorilla was ever found.

Item 3. An epidemic of infantile paralysis swept the East in 1916. Schools were closed so we didn't return home until late October, staying to enjoy the Island fall. Fishing for mackerel off the New York Wharf had never been better. Fatty James caught the most -- always.

Item 4. Judge Hand drove us to Gay Head. A day's trip.

Steamboat Bill Magazine



Steamer Priscilla of the Fall River Line.

Item 5. Mr. Mills took us in his catboat on a sail to Cape Poge, where, trolling with hand lines, we caught bluefish.

Item 6. Clayt Hoyle showed us where to catch striped bass off the rocks below the lighthouse.

Item 7. President Wilson got fogbound overnight near the buoy, just off East Chop.

Item 8. The *Port Hunter*, a vessel carrying army supplies, hit a reef two miles offshore. A total wreck. We all wound up with leather vests and assorted Army clothing, not the right size.

These, then, are some recollections of my earliest years on the Vineyard. Some may be faulty, but they persist.



## Indian Bondage

by CHARLES E. BANKS  
(Written before 1910)

*In the Archives of the Society, among the voluminous papers of Charles E. Banks, the Vineyard historian, is the following monograph with this handwritten note attached:*

This article, or notes -- very rough -- seems not to have been included in my history. I may be mistaken. At all events, if not, you can use it as the basis of a paper for some meeting of the Society.  
C.E.B.

FORM of human slavery, perhaps peculiar to the Island, and one which extended over a period of a hundred years, was that of holding Indians as bond servants by judicial process for debts. The legal authority for this kind of slavery is found in the first code of laws adopted at the General Court held in Edgartown, June 18, 1672, and is as follows:

Ordered That noe Man's Person shall be Arrested or Imprisoned for Debt of Fine, if any competent Meanes of Satisfaction can bee found otherwise from his estate, which shall bee made and apprized as neare as may bee to what is contracted for in Cases of Contract, by persons appointed thereunto by the Court: But if no such estate can be found then his person may be Arrested and Imprisoned, where hee shall bee kept upon his own, not upon the Plaintiffes Charges, until Satisfaction be made, unlesse the Court shall see Cause to the Contrary. Provided Neverthesse That

CHARLES E. BANKS (1854-1931) was a public health official, historian and genealogist, best known on the Island for his three-volume history of Martha's Vineyard, published by the Society. He also wrote a history of York, Maine (he was born in Portland). "Both rank as outstanding works," according to the *Dictionary of American Biography*. He was instrumental in the early growth of our Society and for years was its Historian. His interest in Martha's Vineyard history began while he was stationed at the Marine Hospital in Vineyard Haven from 1889 to 1892. He was buried in Vineyard Haven.

no Mans Person shall bee kept in Prison for Debt unlesse theire be an Appearance of some Estate which hee will not produce: In which case the Court may administer an Oath to the Person indebted and likewise to any Person suspected to have such estate in his keeping: And in such case his Person shall be sold for Satisfaction, but neither out of the country nor to any other but the English Nation, neither shall he bee transported out of the Country unlesse by his own Consent.

This law was, in effect, the "poor debtors" imprisonment statute derived from the English law of that period. In its practical application on the Vineyard it affected only the poor Indian who had a great capacity for running into debt to the whites without considering how payments could be made. His further capacity for absorbing rum, surreptitiously sold to him by his white neighbor, and thus stimulating his physical powers to over-activity with resulting arrest and fines for breach of the peace, which he was unable to satisfy, also helped to bring him under the operations of this law.

The first instance of Indian bondage dates from 1676, when Felix, an Indian, sold to Thomas Daggett of Edgartown for 4 Pounds an Indian girl for a term of 14 years. This Felix was the aboriginal owner of Felix Neck and it is possible that another Felix, who was sold as a bond slave later, may have been the son of the first.

There are other sales on record. At Edgartown on August 19, 1690, Matthew Mayhew made a complaint against his servant Hannah for stealing money, corn, rum and clothing. She was convicted "on Evidence and undeniable circumstances," and "the Judgement of the Court is that Hannah shall be delivered to Mr. Matthew Mayhew, Esq., to make sale of her for the tearme of thirty years in any part of their majesties dominions or Elsewhere."

In the minutes of the "Court of Sessions holden June the 3d, 1690," we find the following interesting record:

Whereas Wahommo the son of Piammo is acused for Stelling of three Sheepe being convicted is adjudged to be sold at a Vandue for fife yeres in any part of there Majesties



dominyons: as also Sam, the son of Piamoo, an Indian boy, is to be sold at the Vandue in any part of there Majisties dominyons fore seven yeres for stelling of Sertayn Sheepe: this is to be understood that the abofs'd boy Shall not be sold out of this provence or newingland except he doth Stele or Runaway from his Master.

Be it knone to all persons whome these presence may Conserne that Thomas Daggett, Esqr. hath made purchus of the abof sd Indian boy Sam: dated this August the 8th, 1690.\*

We now come to the records regarding two other Indians named James Covell and "Keiape, otherwise called Felix," the younger, who committed a crime and were punished for the same. The records read as follows:

September 11, 1693.

The declaration of Matthew Mayhew, Esq., of Edgartown against James Covell and Keiape, two Indian youths, humbly sheweth that at Sundry times he missed mony out of a trunk in his dwelling house at Edgartown and that between the latter end of May and the time the sd persons apprehended to his certain knowledge was taken above the summ of Eight Pounds, part of it English mony as Shillings, Six pences, half Crownes, for which he Chargeth the sd Persons, having found two pieces of sd monie, he is reddie to depose was part of said mony and soe taken out: disposed of by sd persons as he hath made appear: and therefore Prayeth Judgment against sd parsons as actors or accessaries to sd theft:

Keiape aforesd in Court Confessing that he at these Several times Entering to the house of Matthew Mayhew Esq. through the Celler dore, and took mony out of a trunk, and James Covell and one Stephen watched without least any boddie should come: and Received from time to time part of the monie.

The said James Covell and Keiape are ajudged to pay the Summe of five and twenty pounds to the said Matthew Mayhew: or for want of payment thereof to be sold into any part of their Majesties dominions the terme and time of Seven years only.

\*It is interesting to find in another record that Sam was finally adjudged to serve 7 years from 1693, to make up for "time lost and moneys expended in recovery." (Banks' footnote). "Vandue" is a misspelling of vendue, a public auction.

The following record shows that disposition Matthew Mayhew made of the two unfortunate youths by selling them to a gentleman in Southold, Long Island.

Know all men by these presents that Matthew Mayhew of Martha's Vineyard, Esqr. haveing two Indian servents, the one named Keipe the other James Covell, bound for the full term of seven years doth by these presents in consideration of a valuable sum to him paid by Mr. Jacob Mayee, sell, assigne and put over the said servents to the said Jacob Mayee him, his heirs executors administrators or assigns to serve from the date of these presents untill seven years be from there fully finished, accomplished and compleat. In witness whereof sd Matthew Mayhew hath to these presents subscribed and put to his seale this fifteenth day of September, in the fifth yeare of their Majesties reigne, Anno Dom: 1693.

Signed and sealed in presence of Jahleel Brewton, Mehetable Sarson.\*

Further citations are unnecessary to show that it was not an infrequent spectacle on the Vineyard to see scions of the "Noble Red Man" standing on the block "at publick vandue" to be auctioned off to the highest bidder to serve a term as bond servant for trifling misdemeanors.

\*Southold Records, N.Y. Vol. 2, pp. 74-5.



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\*Southold Records, N.Y. Vol. 2, pp. 74-5.



# Documents

Jeremiah Pease (1792-1857) of Edgartown, our diarist, is engaged in some secretive correspondence with friends in Washington, D.C., during this installment. He never tells us what it involves, but it probably is concerned with his job as Inspector of Customs in Edgartown. As we saw in the previous installment, his eldest son, Joseph Thaxter Pease, was named Collector by President Franklin Pierce and had for unexplained reasons tried to replace Jeremiah with one of Edgartown's leading Democrats, Constant Norton.

The new steamer Metacomet goes into service in September 1854, plying between Edgartown and Fairhaven, with stops at Holmes Hole and Woods Hole, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. She returns on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. On one trip in October, 81 persons travelled from the Vineyard to Fairhaven. Her mate and pilot was an Island mariner, Capt. Hiram Crowell, former skipper of the packet Passport, signifying the beginning of the end for such wind-dependent craft in coastal commerce.

We all know that spring comes late on the Island. It was no different in 1855 when a March 10th storm left snow in drifts more than 10 feet deep, keeping Jeremiah from his regular Sunday trip to E'Ville. (We no longer include his E'Ville trip entries, unless something unusual occurs. He continues to go to Eastville every Sunday for a full day of church services with the Methodists there.)

## May 1854

1st. SW. Engaged surveying the new road to Tisbury. Ship *Splendid* Capt. John Fisher from P.O. arrives.<sup>1</sup>

7th. NW, very cold, made Ice in our water at the well and water hogshead. Attended Meetings at E'Ville. Moderate P.M.

8th. NW to SW, pleasant. My Wife goes to Boston on a visit to our Son Frederick.

11th. SW, foggy. Went to Holmes Hole on Lt. House business.

20th. SSW, fresh. My Wife returns from Boston.

26th. NWly, rainy. No appearance of the Eclipse of the Sun today.

31st. NNE, fresh breeze, very cold. Went to North Shore to set a Boy's arm and to W. Tisbury to set a Ladies angle.

## June 1854

12th. SW, foggy. Sent a letter to my Friend Wm. Handy, Esq., Washtn.<sup>2</sup>

15th. SW. Watched with Mr. E. P. Pease, he being very sick (bad arm).

19th. W, light, very warm. Engaged surveying land at Holmes Hole for Capt. Lorenzo Smith.

<sup>1</sup>The *Splendid* was the most famous of the Vineyard's whaleships. She was returning from her first whaling voyage after taking a load of Vineyarders to California for the Gold Rush. On this voyage to the Pacific Ocean she got 117 barrels of sperm oil and 2200 barrels of whale oil, a most successful catch. She continued whaling until the 1870s, ending her career some years later carrying coal from Newcastle, England, to Australia.

<sup>2</sup>As mentioned previously, Jeremiah occasionally marked certain entries with an asterisk-like device, signifying perhaps that he had placed relevant material in another, more secure, place. This entry was so marked.

21st. NE, smoaky, very thick, light wind.

22nd. NE, smoaky. Went to Tisbury & Chilmark on business relating to myself and others.<sup>3</sup>

## July 1854

1st. Ely, light, warm. Joseph returns from Washington.

3rd. W, very warm. Went to Chilmark.<sup>4</sup>

7th. SW, warm. Got in my hay from Ox Pond Meadow.

9th. S to SW, foggy. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Capt. Rose from the State of Maine Preached P.M.

10th. NE, cool, rained a very little last night. Sent my Communications to the Sect. of Treasury.<sup>5</sup>

12th. NE, rains all day. Revives vigitation very much. Mr. Wm. Vinson's Wife dies dropsy.

13th. NE, rains plentifully.

14th. ENE, rains. Funeral of Mrs. Vinson, service by Revd. Kellen.

16th. NE. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Br. Joseph Vincent dies about 12 M., aged 85 years. He has ever been a man of good Christian character since I knew him. He has long been a valuable member of the Methodist Society and has done as much to support that cause as any man in this Town.

<sup>3</sup>Again, he used the asterisk.

<sup>4</sup>Again, the asterisk.

<sup>5</sup>And again. Because the letter went to the Secretary of the Treasury, it probably had something to do with his position in the Customs Office. It was a highly political post and Democrat Franklin Pierce was President. Jeremiah was a Democrat. This is, of course, only speculation. It could have been something else.

17th. NE, warm. Engaged surveying Roads for the Town.

18th. NE, warm. Funeral of Br. Vincent. Service by Revd. Kellen of the M.E. Church & Revd. Mr. Holmes of the Baptist Church.

21st. SWly, light. News of the death of Dr. Henry Arey arrives. He died June 13th on his passage from \_\_\_\_\_ to the U. S. in the Ship *Alfred Gibbs* of N. Bedford. He was a very promising young man having married an English young woman and resided several years in S.A. and was returning on acc't of his health being in a consumption.

## August 1854

2nd. SW, very warm. Went to Camp Ground, put up my Tent.

5th. SW. Went to Camp Ground.

7th. SW. Went to Camp Ground.

8th. NE, light. Went to Camp Meeting. Remained there until the 15th. It was a very interesting time.

15th. SSW. Funeral of Capt. Tristram D. Pease's Son, about \_\_\_\_\_ years old, having lately returned from a Whaling voyage, died suddenly. His name was Wm. H. Pease. Funeral service by Rev. Wm. Kellen.

27th. NE. Did not attend Meetings at E'Ville, being sick from the affects of a bald bile.<sup>6</sup>

28th. NE, clear, fresh

breeze. Br. Arnold Butler dies.

29th. NE. Funeral of Br. Butler, service by Revd. Wm. Kellen.

## September 1854

5th. SW, fresh breeze. P.M. 3 H.Hd.

<sup>6</sup>Does anybody know what "bald bile" is? It could be "bold bile," Jeremiah's handwriting is not too precise.



Rum seized by Collector.<sup>7</sup>

21st. NE to SW. Engaged surveying Road to Tisbury.

22nd. NW, light. Steamer *Fales* of Boston takes a Bark off S. Beach.

26th. SW. Finished husking my Corn.

28th. SW to NE, light. New Steam Boat *Metacomet* arrives from N. Bedford.

### October 1854

5th. NW. Ship *Navigator* Capt. Jared Fisher Jr., sails for the Pacific Ocean.

11th. S. Went to Boston in steamer *Metacomet*, via Fairhaven. My Wife & Daut. Eliza went with me.

14th. NE. Returned from Boston with my Wife, Eliza, and Frederick's Wife.

21st NE. Our little Grand Son John L. Pease dies at about 8 o'clock P.M. of Croup. He was an interesting and promising Child, much beloved. His loss is very senciably felt by all the connections and Friends, his mother having died while he was an Infant, a few days old, and leaving him under peculiar circumstances which served to endear him to all his friends. He has gone to rest with his blessed Saviour, happy, happy Soul. He was about 5 years old.<sup>8</sup>

24th. NE. Funeral of our little Grand Son. Services by Rev. Wm. Kellen.

26th. E, light. Frederick arrives from Boston.

27th. W to SW. Frederick goes to Boston with his Wife who came with us a few days ago on a short visit.

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29th. NE. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Rebecca a coloured woman dies. She was the Daut. of Nancy Michael, aged about 50 years. She died about 8 o'clock A.M.

30th. E, a little rain. Funeral of the above coloured Woman Rebecca. Service by Revd. Wm. Kellen.

31st. NE. Engaged surveying Land at Christiantown.

### November 1854

2nd. NW. Ship *Splendid* Capt. John S. Smith sails for the Pacific Ocean.

10th. SE, fresh breeze. Capt. William Mayhew dies very suddenly at Dr. Luca's Shop at about ½ past 7 o'clock P.M. It is supposed his death was occasioned by a rupture of a blood vessel.

13th. SSE, rainstorm. Funeral of Capt. Mayhew. Service by Revd. Breed.

16th. SW to NW, rainy. News of the Death of Henry Nye of E'Ville, Son of Warren Nye, lost in Boston Bay. He was about 19 years old & a promising young man.

29th. ESE. Went to N. Bedford in Steamer *Metacomet*. Rainstorm.

30th. NW, fresh wind. Returned in the same steamer. Thanksgiving Day. This day I hear the solemn tidings of the death of Brother Freeman Sherman of Nantucket. He was one whom I highly esteemed, whose friendship was dear to me. We had enjoyed many happy seasons together, both on this Island and Nantucket. He was a pious and excellent man and has no doubt died in the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

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### December 1854

3rd. ENE. Attended meeting at E'Ville. Br. Geo. Weeks was there and Preached A.M. Br. Rose of State of Maine (Master of a Vessel) was there also and took an interesting part in meeting with others. Storm with thunder and lightning at night, wind changed to SW during the night.

### January 1855

10th. W to NW, cloudy. Went to D.C. Records.<sup>10</sup>

21st NW. A.M. very pleasant. PM. ENE, rainy. Did not go to E'Ville being unwell.

30th. SWS, clear, pleasant. Brother Jonathan Worth and Mr. Richard B. Marchant are drowned this evening near a flat opposite to the South beach, the Boat was found next morning with her sail spread and sheat made fast to the cleat, the boat upset. The anchor being made fast to the road and that likewise made fast. She remained anchored when found. A most shocking loss to their families and the community.

31st. NW, cool. Funeral of Capt. Henry Pease second Son, Henry Edward, about 10 years old. Service by Revd. Wm. Kellen, Revd. Mr. Holmes and Revd. Mr. Breed. A solemn day.

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Worth. Service by Revd. Wm. Kellen, Revd. Mr. Holmes & Revd. Mr. Breed.

40 years ago this day Br. Joseph Thaxter was drowned at Nantucket.<sup>11</sup>

6th. NE. The coldest day for many years. Thurmometer at 10 below Zero.

7th. NE, very cold. Ice closes the harbor. Heavy snow.

8th. NE, very cold. Snow is deeper than I have seen for 15 years or more (about 2 feet upon a level).

10th. NW, pleasant. Funeral of Wid. Love Lewis. Service by Revd. Wm. Kellen and Revd. Mr. Holmes.

15th. ESE, foggy, snow melts fast. Harbor still closed with ice. Rains at nt. Wind SE.

16th. SW. Ice breaks up and goes out during the last nt.

20th. NW, cold. Brs. Frederick Upham, Andrew McKeon, Col. Hatch and Wife, Revd. Goold arrive from N. Bedford and visit us.

21st. NW, strong breeze. At about 8 o'clock A.M. our Daughter Velina B. was Married to Revd. Andrew McKeown who is now stationed at North Bridgewater, Mass., he being a member of the Methodist Conference.

Marriage ceremony by Br. Upham, concluding Prayer of Revd. Wm. Kellen, Benediction by Revd. Goold. Velina and her husband, Br. Upham, Col. Hatch and Lady, all set out for N. Bedford at ½ past 8 o'clock A.M. in Steamer *Metacomet*. P.M. wind N.E.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>A hogshead is 63 gallons. Three of them is a lot of rum.

<sup>8</sup>This boy was the son of John A. Pease, a carpenter, and the late Mary L. Pease, daughter of Ira Darrow, a leading Edgartown citizen and prominent Democrat

<sup>9</sup>Freeman Sherman was believed to have been with Jeremiah when he chose the site for the Campground (Henry Baylie's "Memories" -DCHS).

3rd. W. Funeral of Br. Jonathan  
<sup>10</sup>Probably District Court Records.

<sup>11</sup>Son of Rev. Joseph Thaxter, Edgartown's "Parson" for many years and the man who taught Jeremiah bonesetting.

<sup>12</sup>Not much time was wasted here. The marriage ceremony was at "about 8 o'clock" and the wedding party sailed for New Bedford at 8:30. The steamer must have delayed departure, as scheduled time was 7:45 a.m.



## Director's Report

A successful summer is behind us and so is a busy fall. On the second try the weather cooperated beautifully for the Annual Meeting held under a tent on the Society's grounds on August 20. Retiring President Arthur Railton was warmly thanked for his many contributions and S. Bailey Norton was welcomed as the new President. Appreciation was also expressed for the work of retiring Treasurer Kathryn Bettencourt, who was succeeded by Keith Urmy. Richard Burt is the new Vice-President and William Honey, Natalie Huntington, and Edward W. Vincent, Jr., were elected as new Council members.

The season set a record for attendance and, as usual, visitors came from the far corners of the globe as well as from right next door. It was been a great and frequent pleasure for me to hear compliments about the changes in the Cooke House and the competence and helpfulness of the guides. My thanks for helping go to Council members, guides Elizabeth Berube, Pauline Berube, Hilda Gilluly, Gladys Goud, Andrew Thomas, and gatehouse keeper Mary MacLean, and especially to volunteers Eleanor Olsen, Norma Bridwell, Kay Chamberlain, Betty Henrickson, and John Willoughby who filled in over the lunch hours near the end of the season when we were short of staff.

Just after the Cooke House closed for the year, two long-anticipated projects were completed. Ultra-violet filter film was applied to the interior of new storm windows for the House and a major fumigation project to rid the building and furniture of powder post beetles was completed. The Herculean task would not have been possible without the assistance of Council members and volunteers Sophie Block, James Francis, Patty Lovell, Neils Olsen, Clinton Powers, and the Robert Dayton family.

A major loss, happy though the reason, came in September when Shirley Erickson left to be married and spend the winter off-Island. She has served both as Secretary of the Council and staff librarian, so will be doubly missed. In January, Joanne Coffin Clark will join the staff, replacing Shirley (now Mrs. Clinton Powers). In the meantime, Genevieve Delisle is filling in as both membership secretary and bookkeeper.

Mrs. Catherine Chamberlain has been elected Secretary of the Society and Frederick Williams has joined the Council, replacing Richard Burt, now Vice President.

Massachusetts duck hunters will carry a picture of one of the Society's decoys while hunting this winter. The decoy, a preening bluebill by an unknown carver, is the subject of a opaque watercolor by Robert Piscatori of Taunton that was selected for the 1986 duck stamp in a competition held by the Peabody Museum. Artist Piscatori chose this decoy after visiting the Society earlier this year. His painting will also be available in print form. We will exhibit the decoy along with the stamp in the Library this winter.

Winter plans include the Second Annual Christmas Open House on December 13 from 11-4 and December 14 from 10-4. A special exhibit will be organized and refreshments served. Committees have been appointed for Finance and Budget, Keith Urmy, chairman; Membership, Eleanor Olsen, chairman; and Accessions Policy, Lane Lovell, chairman. Because the work on the Cooke House required us to dismantle almost all the exhibits, this is an ideal time to reorganize storage and make plans for changes for the exhibits for next year. Dorothea Looney, registrar, has been kept busy recording a number of gifts. As always, genealogical work with the assistance of Doris Stoddard goes on, and a number of researchers have been aided by archivist Alvin Goldwyn.

We hope you will stop in for the festivities of the Christmas Open House or a quiet day of reading or browsing.

MARIAN R. HALPERIN



## Bits & Pieces

HISTORY buffs know how easily tales, old wives' and others, become "fact." The story of Perry Davis's Vineyard connection, told by Charlie Parton in his delightful history of Alley's General Store (p. 79), seemed too neat, too convenient, to be true. The Editor was suspicious.

But in one of those serendipitous discoveries that are nuggets for history prospectors, the story of Perry Davis's Vineyard connection was confirmed.

Thanks to Joanne Coffin Clark, we have a scrapbook that belonged to Rev. Henry Baylies of Edgartown. Among the clippings Mr. Baylies had pasted in the book are some articles he wrote in 1876 entitled "Boyhood Memories of Edgartown."

By sheer coincidence, the Editor was reading the Baylies articles while editing the Parton manuscript. Suddenly, he came upon the following:

"One thing that brought about the destruction of the [old mill on Mill Hill] was the erection of another new-fangled and unsubstantial wind-mill, out on the plain, many years ago. . . Perry Davis built that new-fangled mill -- the same Perry Davis who afterward made Pain Killer. I think he succeeded better as a pain-killer than as a wind-miller."

There is was. Charlie Parton's tale, dug up from a different source, was correct. Such are the exciting rewards (to borrow a phrase) of messing about in Archives.

Another discovery in the same scrapbook settled the question: how did

Jeremiah Pease find time to be the Keeper of Edgartown Lighthouse? He was so busy as a Methodist lay-preacher that it seemed impossible for him to operate a light, seven nights a week. From Baylies's memories:

"The Pease boys (Jeremiah Pease boys) used to trim the lamps and sleep in the light-house, and, being a good, jolly set of fellows, attracted other good, jolly fellows to them. Charles G. Thomas, now a lawyer in Boston, put up at the light-house and had to put up with a good deal from the noise and mischief of the boys. He was then preparing for college -- poor, frugal and industrious. I was surprised, a few years ago, when in Boston, to hear him spoken of by lawyers as 'Light-House Thomas.'"

So, it appears, Jeremiah didn't operate the Light, his sons and a young man named Thomas did, all quite illegally. Regulations required the Keeper to live in the Lighthouse.

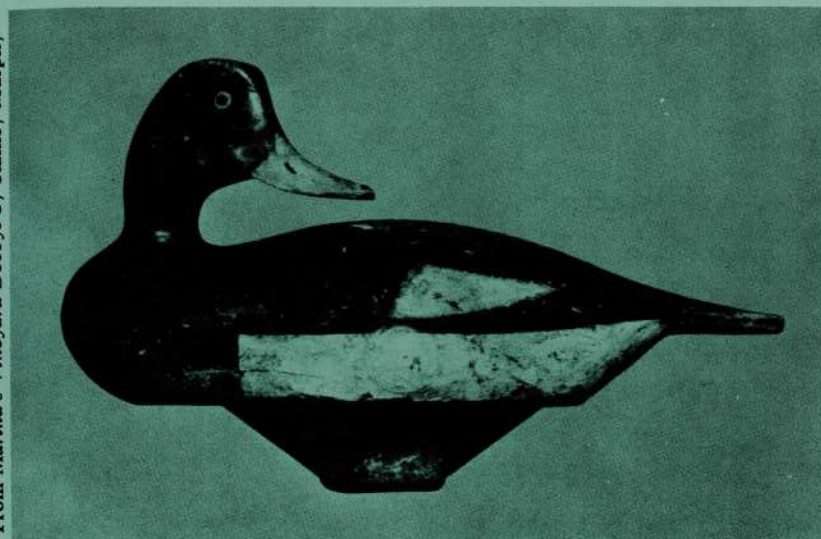
By another coincidence, we have in our Archives an account of Charles Thomas's stay at the Lighthouse. It quotes from his Harvard classbook:

"In 1829, Thomas came to Martha's Vineyard to visit the grave of his sister . . . and in the spring of 1830 went to school at Edgartown where he found a place in the lighthouse. Here, he says, I lived almost entirely on bread & water at the rate of 40 or 50 cents per week and attended as intensely as possible to my studies for about 3 yrs. Here I fitted for college."

Along with James Russell Lowell, the poet, he graduated in 1838. Lowell, a life-long friend, often told the story of his classmate who prepared for Harvard, not at Exeter or Andover, but in the Edgartown Lighthouse.

A.R.R.

From Martha's Vineyard Decoys by Stanley Murphy



Photograph by George Moffett

Our Bluebill decoy, star of the 1986 duck stamp (see page 95).

## CORRECTIONS

In the May 1985 *Intelligencer* on page 154, the author stated that the only comment the *Gazette* made on the death of Jeremiah Pease was a very brief obituary.

That is incorrect. Elsewhere in the same *Gazette* under the heading, "A Good Citizen Gone to His Rest," there was a lengthy article about Mr. Pease and his good works. Among many points made in the eulogy were these:

"His uniformly courteous bearing towards others, and his gentlemanly and friendly greeting as well to the poor man as to the rich, to the lowly colored man and the man of standing and influence, while they showed that he

possessed the finest feelings of the true christian gentleman, have set us all an example worthy of imitation. The sick and the afflicted, the poor and the needy, the aged and the young, all feel that they have lost a friend. Let this be his epitaph."

In the August 1985 issue, the caption at the bottom of page 20 should have read:

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

On page 22 of the same issue, at the bottom of the first column, it should have read: Warner F. Gookin, and not Warren F. Gookin.

We regret these errors.



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