The Summer of 1874
by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

Documents: Jeremiah Pease Diary
Director's Report  Books  Letters  Bits & Pieces

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<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
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<td>Life Membership</td>
<td>$500.</td>
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SUMMER HOURS
(June 15 to Sept. 15)
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The Thomas Cooke House is not open in the winter.
All other exhibits and facilities remain open.

THANKS AND A REMINDER

Our thanks to those members who have already sent in their dues for this year and added thanks to those who have upgraded their memberships to the Sustaining and Patron categories. We urge all who can to do so.

Those members who, in addition to their dues, have contributed to our 1986 Preservation Fund deserve a special mention.

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

THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

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Up-Island Catboats by John Leavens 99
They Earned Their Keep

When Power Came to the Cat 124
The End of Lobsterville

The Summer of 1874 by Arthur R. Railton 127
A Memorable Three Months

Documents: Jeremiah Pease Diary 137

Book Review: Far Out the Coils 141

Director's Report 142 Bits & Pieces 144

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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.

Up-Island Catboats
by JOHN LEAVENS

CATBOATS were familiar sights in New England
waters for many years, particularly south of Cape
Cod. The design evolved in the mid-1800s as a
fishing boat and later it came into widespread use as a
general-purpose work boat because of its adaptability.
The picturesque fishing village of Menemsha was a center
of activity for working catboats from before 1900 until
recent years. Over the years, Menemsha and the adjacent
waters offered a wide variety of fishing in which catboats
of all kinds and sizes were used, including handlining, sword-fishing, lobstering and, in later years, scalloping.

Before the dredging of Menemsha Creek in 1903, many of
the catboats that worked in and around Menemsha
anchored "behind the bar" at Lobsterville, just west of
Menemsha Creek, a diminutive seasonal settlement com-
posed of a handful of shacks on the shores of the Vineyard
Sound.

These two settlements, Menemsha and Lobsterville, share a
common tradition of fishing and for both the most com-
mon boat was the cat. Until 1903, fishermen depended upon
sail, thus limiting markedly the use of Menemsha Creek,
giving Lobsterville its period of prosperity. But with the
dredging of the Creek and the introduction of power to
fishing boats, both of which occurred at the same time, the
JOHN LEAVENS lives for six months each year, with his wife, Marian, overlooking
Menemsha Creek where he laments the decline of his favorite boat, the cat. As founding
curator of the Bulletin of the Catboat Association and its working editor for nearly 20
years, he has probably written more about the design than any other person. This is
his second article in this journal, the first being "When Menemsha Was Creekville,"
November 1983.
decline of Lobsterville began; Menemsha took over as the center of catboat activity.

Brave and hardworking men still fish out of Menemsha. In good weather (and sometimes in weather not so good) boats stream out through the jetties bound swordfishing or lobstering sou'west of Noman's, or floundering or scupping in Menemsha Bight. But one looks in vain for a catboat among them. Except for pleasure cats, which are coming back into favor, there are few to be seen.

Yet the catboat served importantly for many years in the Vineyard fisheries and its contributions deserve to be recorded more fully than they have been. As Capt. Ernest C. Mayhew characterized them: “They was slick boats.”

The catboat is a broad-beam, shoal-draft boat carrying a single sail, traditionally gaff-rigged, on a mast set “well up in the eyes.” Some keel cats were built, but the typical cat was fitted with a centerboard so as to be able to navigate shoals and sandbars. Although many cats had transom or sloping sterns with underslung rudders (particularly the early designs used in the “party” trade), the more typical catboat carried astern the large “barn door rudder.” Capt. Rod Cleveland once observed that a cat so equipped would go to windward much longer in a gale of wind than she would run off, the barn-door rudder making for a great weather helm. This is the sailing quality that makes a boat naturally want to head up into the wind. In running before the wind, the barn-door rudder often has to be dragged almost sideways through the water to overcome weather helm and keep a cat on her down-wind course.

The catboat’s extreme beam is noteworthy. Manuel Swartz, the well-loved builder of catboats in Edgartown, often referred to the cat as a “two beam boat,” meaning that the waterline (which did not vary greatly from the overall length) should be twice the beam (the maximum width).

The catboat has many good points: seaworthiness, shoal draft, relatively good speed under sail, convenience and low cost. Her broad beam assures a stable platform for hauling nets and gear or for hauling lobster pots. The large cockpit provides room on many cats for live fish wells located alongside the centerboard trunk into which sea water flowed through holes in the bottom. Capt. Dan Larsen of Menemsha recalled one trip when he had 300 live codfish swimming around in the fish wells of his cat. As for the low cost, the 22-foot catboat Goldenrod was built by Herbert F. Crosby of Osterville for Capt. Everett A. Poole of
Menemsha in 1897 for $450 “complete with box well.”

Catboats were ideal for party fishing that was popular out of Edgartown, Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs. In the 1880s, the run of bluefish in Nantucket Sound was fabulous and Island steamers would bring large numbers of men from all over, eager to troll the rips. To satisfy this demand, large catboat fleets were maintained in those towns for years. Later, many of the boats were sold to fishermen at Lobsterville and Menemsha for the more rigorous task of commercial fishing.

They were built in a variety of sizes. Scalloping cats tended to be smaller, under 20 feet, although on occasion any available boat was used. Lobstering cats ran from 22 feet upwards. The largest were the packet cats and liners or general fishing boats.

Although the cat rig, a single sail set on a single mast, is fairly ancient, the origin of the catboat as we know it today, is unknown. The same is true of the name; its derivation is unknown. There were cat-rigged boats in Boston and New York before 1850 and there were a considerable number of them built in Newport at about the same time. It is likely that the design spread to the Vineyard from Newport shortly after. By the 1870s, the Eastern catboat, known first as the Vineyard Cat and later as the Cape Cod Cat, was well established.

We do not know who built the first Vineyard catboats, but Norman G. Benson, who lived at Lambert’s Cove, stated that his grandfather, Charles Gifford of Vineyard Haven, built Noman’s Land boats and catboats. Mr. Gifford’s yard was located on the site of today’s Martha’s Vineyard Shipyard. Few catboats were ever built up-island. Lyman Cottle is reported to have built a small cat, the 18-foot Champion, in a barn on what is now Larsen Lane. There were a number of catboat builders in Edgartown, including Louis Pease, Rodolphus Morgan, Lorenzo Dow Smith, William King and George Huxford of Chappaquiddick.

The outstanding Vineyard catboat builder and the most productive was Manuel Swartz (later Manuel Swartz Roberts) of Edgartown. He began building cats in 1901 and continued until 1947. His last shop, the gathering place for all who loved boats, was the photogenic old structure at the Edgartown Town Dock that is now the Old Sculpin Gallery.

Building more catboats than any other builder were the famed Crosby shops at Osterville on Cape Cod. By 1900, some six separate and distinct Crosby firms existed there in friendly competition. It has been calculated that those six Crosby yards turned out about 3500 catboats in contrast to the 200 said to have been built by Manuel Swartz.

There were other builders in the Chatham area and on Buzzards Bay as well as many individuals on the Cape and on the Vineyard who built one or two cats for their own use. Lyman Cottle of Menemsha and Lindley (Linnie Wing) Mayhew of Menemsha and Vineyard Haven are examples. These builders on the Cape and the Island developed a distinctive hull shape to meet the needs of the fishermen
on Vineyard and Nantucket Sounds. In addition to its great beam in relation to length, these hulls featured high bows to safeguard against breaking seas and low freeboard just aft of amidships to facilitate hauling pots, nets and other gear. The cockpit had considerable space for people or fish, as well as gear, and a small cuddy cabin provided comparative comfort and shelter for the fishermen caught out at sea overnight.

In the early years of the 1900s, a bay-scallop fishery began in Edgartown and for these fishermen small 16 to 20-foot cats were built, some of which ended up on Menemsha Pond.

When fishermen depended totally on sail, cats tended to carry huge spreads of canvas, sometimes with four or five rows of reef points. Goldenrod, a 22-footer, carried 525 square feet of sail, half again as much as a cat of the same size might carry today. In the 1880s and 1890s catboat racing became popular, bringing even greater demands for increased sail area. On some catboats, the extremely long booms extended so far astern that they sagged outboard of the boom crutch when the sail was furled.

For years there were fishermen races at Falmouth that attracted entries from the Vineyard. Ernest Dean sailed over from Menemsha to race in the Reporter, a very fast boat. Onslow Robinson said, "In a good breeze you could see every seam in her, but she used to win all the races."

Catboat races were held at Menemsha as part of the Fourth of July celebrations in 1910 to 1912. Boats from other parts of the Island were allowed to race, but they had to be sailed by their owners. The hiring of professionals was barred. The starting line was eastward of the jetties, outside the fish traps, and the first leg was to Devil's Bridge, then to the Brickyard. The racing was taken seriously. Capt. Ernest Mayhew recalled: "When we started to race we soaked her bottom all over with laundry soap." Menemsha racing didn't survive for long, perhaps because, as was reported, they always seemed to wind up quarrelling over

time limits, handicaps or the judges' decisions.

As yacht clubs sprang up, especially in Buzzards Bay, racing became more and more competitive. Alterations in rig, calculated to produce more speed, led to hazards that gave the catboat an undeserved reputation for being a dangerous craft. Gradually, other designs were developed that were faster and the catboat's popularity as a racing boat declined.

Power came onto the scene around 1903 and cat rigs were cut down. Spars were shortened and sail area reduced. As more powerful engines became available some sail rigs were completely eliminated. The arrival of power brought new methods of fishing and that led to new types of working boats. The catboat hung on for a while, but when it came time to get a new boat the replacement was no longer a cat. It was a new type designed exclusively for power. By 1913, at the Crosby yard and elsewhere, the bottom had fallen out of the market for new catboats.

In the 50 years of their popularity, catboats had been the dependable, durable workboats that could do almost everything asked of them.

Perhaps the most unusual use was that which Henry Davis of Noman's Land made of the Lina B, named for his daughter. Some claim she was a catboat with a sloop rig; others recall her as a true cat. Whatever she was rigged as,
Lina B was built by Charles Gifford of Vineyard Haven probably around 1890. She was described as “short and chunky, apple bowed, very high, big, bulky and rounded, and she wouldn’t sail for a damn.” She had a heavy flat keel so she could be hauled ashore on skids at Noman’s by a yoke of oxen.

Maybe she couldn’t “sail for a damn,” but F. Roger Allen and Eugene Damon of Chilmark both recall that she used to haul live sheep from Noman’s to the New Bedford market and cattle from Menemsha to Noman’s. Allen recalled seeing Lina B coming around Gay Head with a load of baing sheep aboard, hemmed in by pen boards and with Henry Davis at the tiller. It was a sight to remember. Lina B was also used for general fishing, swordfishing and packeting. Later, she was sold to Jesse Smalley and fitted with a 5 horsepower engine for scalloping. She “laid her bones” at the head of Menemsha Basin.

The Menemsha catboat for which the earliest record exists was Capt. Everett A. Poole’s Goldenrod. Her enormous spread of 525 square feet of canvas accounts for her reputation as the fastest cat ever to sail out of Menemsha, but it must have made her hard to handle. She was built to order for Captain Poole “just as he wanted her” when he was only 23 years old and just out of the Life-Saving Service. More than 60 years after she married Captain Poole, Mrs. Poole observed that Goldenrod was really her husband’s first love. (A copy of the specifications sheet for the Goldenrod is in the Society Archives. She was built by Herbert F. Crosby in 1897.)

Originally, she was moored at Lobsterville, inside Dogfish Bar, but in 1903 Captain Poole married and settled on Creek Hill so her home port was shifted to Menemsha. At about the same time she was equipped with an engine. Used for lobstering in the summer and handlining, codfishing and trawling in the winter, Goldenrod was a hard-working boat, typical of the cats. She was sold in January 1913 to Thomas Dowling of Cuttyhunk and New Bedford and was last heard of around 1920 when she was owned in Providence, R.I.

Today with ferry boats bringing passengers and freight from Wood’s Hole, it is hard to realize the great extent of such shipping that was carried to Menemsha by small craft in the early 1900s. The basis for the traffic in people and freight was the movement of trap fish from Menemsha to markets at Wood’s Hole, New Bedford and other ports, a very lucrative business indeed. When these packets, most of them catboats, returned, they carried supplies and passengers for up-Island communities.

Capt. Ernest C. Mayhew stated that the charge to carry trap fish to Wood’s Hole was 50 cents a barrel at a time when a 200-pound barrel of fish sold anywhere from $2 up to $10. On one day when a heavy run of mackerel struck his traps he made two packeting trips to Wood’s Hole, over and back and over again, staying overnight. “Sold $500 worth of fish in one day!” he proudly recalled.

Deacon Leonard Vanderhoop of Gay Head remembers
that the 26-foot Crosby cat *Three Friends* could haul 50 to 60 barrels of fish to New Bedford at a time. It is said that packet catboats were so heavily loaded at times that their decks were awash.

F. Roger Allen of Chilmark told of packeting in his youth, in the period before 1912: "After fishing I went with Rodney Reed packeting. He used to cart fish. He'd lay alongside the pocket and they'd just bail the fish in. He used to carry about 40 barrels. They put them in live and carried them dead. There was no gutting. Took about three hours to New Bedford. The fish didn't live long. They had a bulkhead just forward of the wheel. It left just room enough to stand... From there to the cabin house it was all penned in... They used to fill that full of fish, loose. At New Bedford they would ice them up and ship them to New York on the New Bedford Line steamer. Rodney brought back groceries... He got 50 cents a barrel... $20 for hauling the fish, plus what he got for freighting stuff back."

Returning, the packets would bring barrels of flour, salt for salting fish, casks of salt beef, butter in bulk and other staples for the various small grocery stores that abounded at the time. They included Pauline Vanderhoop's store and the Jeffers' store in Gay Head, the E. E. Mayhew stores at Lobsterville and Chilmark, Carl Reed's store and David Butler's chandlery at Menemsha. Packet operators would also carry out special assignments on the mainland, picking up needles and thread, a bolt of cloth, or whatever was needed by some individual that could not be found in the local stores.

Passengers seeking transportation to and from the mainland were another source of revenue for the catboat packets. Sometimes, a note of urgency and derring-do crept into the trip. Capt. Ernest C. Mayhew recalled one night when he and his Portuguese mate were sleeping aboard the *Reporter* in anticipation of going handlining for fluke in the morning and being awakened in the middle of the night by someone coming aboard. Mayhew struck his head up the companionway, "What do you want?"

"A feller wants you to take him to Fall River right away."

The Fall River Line maintained fast passenger service to New York.

"For pity's sake," Capt. Mayhew replied, "Fall River! I'll take him to New Bedford if he wants."

At this point another man stepped out of the pitch blackness and came aboard. A bit of bargaining ended with a price of $10 for passage to New Bedford and Mayhew cranked up the two-cylinder, two-cycle engine. The *Reporter* pulled away, down the Creek into the darkness. It seemed that the passenger had been "cooching around" with another man's wife. When the husband came home unexpectedly, an escape out a window followed. The alarm was sounded and Sheriff Renear called up Carl Reed whose store was near the Creek.

"Do you hear an engine running?" he asked.

Carl Reed put his head out the door and came back. "Yup, it's Ernest Mayhew."

The Sheriff commandeered a power boat and set off in hot pursuit. Halfway across the Sound he caught up with the *Reporter*, which by now was sailing, her power off. When the Sheriff attempted to board her, Captain Mayhew picked up a two-by-four. "This is a registered vessel," he shouted, "you have no right to board her. My passenger is going to New York and has paid me for passage to New Bedford. That's all there is to it. You can go to whistle."

Whether the Sheriff was intimidated by the Captain's spirited defense or had some doubts about his legal right to board a registered vessel without a warrant will never be known, but after circling the *Reporter* several times, he headed back to Menemsha.

So the story went, as told by Captain Mayhew. It illustrates more than a chapter from the *School for Scandal*, the sovereignty of the skipper or the business potential of
a packet. More interesting is that Carl Reed, in pitch darkness, could identify Reporter from all the other boats in Menemsha merely by the distinctive explosions of her exhaust.

Apart from the Menemsha-based packets and fishing cats was the mackerel fleet that put in periodically from Cape Cod. Captain Mayhew, born in 1878, recalled:

"When I was a boy I'd see as many as 35 or 40 catboats, all under sail, when they couldn't get into the Creek. They came from the Cape for mackerel jiggling and would lay a little way offshore near Duncan's Wharf." (Duncan's Wharf served a clay operation near where the Lobsterville road now turns south to Menemsha Pond.) Mrs. Everett A. Poole recalled seeing as many as 65 handliners mackereling in the early 1900s. "Mostly cats," she remembered.

It is impossible to recall all the catboats that were based at Lobsterville and Menemsha at the turn of the century, but here are most of the memorable:

Anna, a 27-foot cat used about 1900 by Frank Mayhew, father of Lester, for packeting. She was kept tied up in the old Creek "at a building he owned."

Bessie Howard, a 28-foot Crosby built in 1893 as a yacht that came to Menemsha from Westport Point. She was sailed by David Butler for fishing and lobstering when she wasn't packeting trap fish to New Bedford and hauling back stock for Butler's small chandlery and hardware store at the foot of the Menemsha Creek Road. Ernest Mayhew had a high opinion of Bessie Howard, summed up laconically in two words: "Able? Boy!"

Chief, Ben Attaquin's 22-foot Crosby cat took fish from and packeted provisions to Lobsterville.

Cygnet, 26-foot Newport cat built in 1880 by Josiah Albro at Newport and owned by J. T. O'Connell of Newport. She was sailed in general fishing by Dan Larsen, first from Newport, then after 1912 from Menemsha, on shares. He later sailed the catboat Helen, also on shares for J. T.
S. Jeffers and Francis Manning, trap fishermen at Gay Head. They used her for a dozen years, more or less, to freight fish from their traps to New Bedford and to freight groceries back for Jeffers' store at Gay Head... They had the cabin bulkhead moved forward about three feet to make a larger cockpit for hauling fish... When trap fishing tapered off, about 1918, she was no longer used for freighting fish and was kept anchored in Menemsha Pond, where she sank when a connection in the head corroded. We hauled her out on Linus Jeffers marine railway on Menemsha Pond. I bought Manning's share and Linus and I used her for lobstering and swordfishing from 1921 through 1924. We moved the mast back into the cabin and somewhat shortened the rig. In 1925 I sold my half interest to David Vanderhoop of Gay Head."

The following year, she was bought by E. V. Rosemond of Greenport, Long Island, who bought up old catboats and rebuilt them into pleasure boats that he sold through ads in Yachting and Rudder magazines.

_Helen_, a 30-foot Manuel Swartz general fishing cat, built in 1909 and sailed out of Menemsha by Dan Larsen. She later became Stephen Gardiner's party boat.

_Mabel H._, a 26-foot Manley Crosby cat used in general fishing and packeting by Rodney Reed. He carried supplies from the mainland for the store owned by his son Carl. Donald Poole recalled that Rodney packeted grain for Chilmark farmers' chickens and cattle until 1920. Onslow Robinson remembered that "Rodney also carried passengers and gasoline in five-gallon cans and constantly smoked a pipe. It is remarkable that he died a natural death. Later, she was bought by Capt. William A. Robinson and used as a handliner for a few years."

_Margie_, a 28-foot Crosby overhanging stern cat built in 1888. She packeted freight to Aunt Pauline Vanderhoop's store that she ran in the basement of her Gay Head home. Margie's owner, Capt. William Vanderhoop, kept her

behind the bar at Lobsterville. She was very fast and Leonard Vanderhoop said that "in a two-reef breeze Margie would kite right along." He added: "My Uncle William had a high-pitched voice and he saw Margie going along pretty fast in bad weather one day and he cried out, 'See the Margie go!' Ever after that, the boys at Lobsterville would impersonate him. 'See the Margie go!' became a rallying cry in my boyhood."

Onslow Robinson recalled that the Margie was "distinguished by the two oval cabin glasses, common to most cats, plus a circular one between them. She had a fantail stern, which was later cut off, and a full cat rig when I first knew her, although Bill Vanderhoop carried a tiny bowsprit." Sold to a man in Vineyard Haven who used her as a dragger, she eventually "laid her bones" on Chappaquiddick.

_Marion_ was either a 27-foot cat built in Hyannis in 1884 or a 28-foot cat built in Newport in 1892. Whichever, she was owned by Nelson Luce, father-in-law of Norman C. Benson of Lambert's Cove, before Alpheus Tilton got her. According to Roger Allen, "Alpheus, who later moved to Cuttyhunk, had her cut in two and spliced into and made longer. She used to be used to carry fish for a trap." Later, she was riggled as a sloop, fitted with a derrick and used by Alpheus Tilton as a lighter and towing boat.

_Osprey_, a 28-foot boxy-looking cat used in packeting around 1900 by Tom Tilton to haul fish from his father's trap to market. She was at one time owned by Capt. Alvin Cleveland of Vineyard Haven.

_Poseidon_, an old-type cat with a cabin squared off across the ends, owned and fished about 1903 by John Davis, whose father owned part of Noman's Land. About 1905 it was owned by Alpheus Tilton.

_Progressive_, a big 32-foot cat built by Lindley Mayhew. She was never rigged for sail, but fitted with power and used as a dragger.

_Reporter_ (discussed earlier), a fast 25-foot cat built in 1897
by W. W. Phinney of Monument Beach. She was used for lobstering and packeting fish and freight, as well as general fishing. First owned by Capt. Ernest Dean, she later belonged to Capt. Ernest Mayhew.

Sterling, a 24-foot cat owned by Lindley Mayhew, Tom Tilton, Welcome Tilton and Hammet. Not much is known about her except that "she changed hands several times."

*Three Friends*, a 28-foot Crosby cat that sailed out of Lobsterville around 1900 when owned by Leonard and Edwin C. Vanderhoop. "*Three Friends* was fast before they cut her sails," according to Leonard Vanderhoop. "That's what they always did when they got power. They cut the sails and the booms down. I don't know how they carried all the sail and mast they put on catboats before power."

*Vivian*, a cabin cat of unknown length, owned by Linus Jeffers and Frank Manning before they bought *Floradora* in 1906. She was used to haul freight and was moored at Lobsterville. "She laid her bones at the head of the West Basin," according to David Vanderhoop.

Those were the catboats that were used for general fishing and packeting. Some of the bigger cats were rigged for swordfishing during the season. A stand and pulpit were installed on the bow. *Thelma*’s pulpit was guyed up from the masthead with a Spanish burton, a special block-and-fall arrangement that could be detached for use in hauling the swordfish aboard. Most of these swordfishing cats were, of course, used for general fishing the rest of the year. Among those rigged for swordfishing out of Menemsha are these:

*Anna W.*, a 28-foot Crosby cat sailed from 1913 to 1941 by Capt. Everett A. Poole of Menemsha.

*Floradora*, the 28-foot Manley Crosby cat discussed earlier.

*Helen*, the 30-foot Manuel Swartz cat discussed earlier.

*Thelma*, a 25-foot cat built in 1898 for Levi Ripley and Horace Hillman. She burned to the water’s edge and was rebuilt for Charles B. Cleveland and his son Rodney, both of Vineyard Haven, who made Menemsha their base during swordfishing season. Jim Look of West Tisbury, who did the rebuilding, was widely known for his warm humor and tall stories. "He used to caulk his boats with tobacco juice," folks said.

Perhaps the most common and intensive use of the catboat at Menemsha was in lobstering. In the spring, lobsters would work up Vineyard Sound westward from Cedar Tree Neck. for two or three weeks they would be in Menemsha Bight before moving out to the offshore ledges. Fishermen would drop a string of pots wherever they expected the lobsters to be, hauling them as often as weather permitted. Each
string was set according to ranges or bearings on shore. "Peaked Hill over Gay Head Church steeple," for example, would have a definite meaning for a lobsterman. Among the many up-island cats used for lobstering, in addition to many of those already listed above, were these:

Anna W., Capt. Everett A. Poole's 28-foot Crosby cabin cat, which he sailed from 1913 until his death in 1941, aged 66.

Brenda, Bill Ryan's 18-foot cat, formerly owned by Allen Flanders. Gale Huntington recalls that she was built in Rhode Island as a racing cat by Herreshoff and was very beautiful and very fast. When Bill Ryan bought her, he took out the mast and put in power.

Champion, an 18-footer built by Lyman Cottle and sailed by him or Roy Cottle until she was wrecked in the 1938 hurricane.

Terror, a 22-foot Crosby cat built for Sam or Bob Jackson of Cuttyhunk and later bought by Lester Mayhew. She was originally named the Reporter. Mayhew changed her name to Terror because there was another Reporter at Menemsha. Terror was the best name he could come up with using the brass letters on the stern spelling Reporter.

The Limit, a 27-foot Herbert Crosby cat, built for Carleton Mayhew and subsequently sailed in the 1920s by his brother Ernest.

Vigilant, an early 23-footer sailed by Roy Cottle. She had the old-style square cabin and had been owned by L. M. Osborne of Vineyard Haven.

In the fall, of course, scalloping was a major activity out of Menemsha and catboats were well represented among the fleet. Most was done in Menemsha and Quita Pond with boats equipped with power, including numerous cats. But some scalloping was done under sail, without benefit of power. Leonard Vanderhoop tells how:

"I scalloped with my brother Bill in the Three Friends under sail in Menemsha Pond before World War I. It was beautiful.

We had four drags on a side and it took a good two-reef breeze to do it. When you came along on the port tack, you'd throw the drags out to port, then when you'd come about, you'd luff her up and pull those drags. Then you would set the starboard drags when you fell off again on the starboard tack. As long as the wind was up it was easier than pulling with power. You'd just get your drags full and then let your sail luff while you pulled your drags. The best part was that there was no cost to it."

But most cats did use their engines while scalloping. The spars and sail were replaced with a short stub mast that served to support a curb line and spreaders for the drags. Many scalloping cats were unnamed and among these were:

Walter Jenkinson's 17-foot decked cat that was built at Pasque Island in 1927 by Richard Norton, caretaker for the Brown family, that they owned the island. She was named Guzza at the time, but when she came to Menemsha the name was dropped. In 1962 James Morgan bought her and kept her moored in the West Basin when not using her for
scalloping.

Another unnamed cat was a 16-footer built by Manuel Swartz around 1920 as a pleasure boat for the late Samuel Jones. When Mr. Jones died, the boat was given to Amos Smalley, the Gay Head Indian, famous for having harpooned a white whale. For years, the remains of this cat were seen at Herring Creek in Menemsha Pond, but now her bones have disappeared completely.

Cyril Norton of Chilmark scalloped with a 17-foot decked cat built in 1919 by Rodolphus Morgan of Edgartown. She was sometimes known as Valerie.

Some of the small cats came to rather ignominious ends. On a spit of land close to the Coast Guard boathouse at Menemsha there was visible for years the remains of Amelia, an 18-foot cat built about 1910 by Manuel Swartz. She was brought to Menemsha by George Cook who rebuilt her and added a hunting cabin. He and Leonard Vanderhoop used her for scalloping in season.

Another Manuel Swartz cat, the 18-foot Bunny, built for Leonard Vanderhoop in 1924 ended her days on the shore of Quita Pond where she was blown from her anchorage inside Clam Point during a hurricane.

Until the 1960s, the catboat Doris was a fixture in the cove behind the fish shacks on the Coast Guard Boathouse point at Menemsha. She was a Swartz boat and was used for scalloping by Eric Cottle from 1930 until 1963 when he chopped her up for firewood.

There were a series of small catboats used by Donald Lemarr Poole for scalloping, each of them named Dorothy C., for his wife, Dorothy Cottle Poole, for many years Historian of the Historical Society.

Another common usage of the catboat was as a party boat, taking paying guests out for a sail or a day of fishing. There was only one party boat based in Menemsha. She was the Helen, a 28-footer Manuel Swartz “high sided” cabin cat built in 1909. She was brought to Menemsha by Dan Larsen in 1913 who fished her on a share basis for her owner, J. T. O'Connell, until about 1920 when she was bought by Stephen Gardiner. He sailed her as a party boat out of Menemsha for 25 years, coming over each spring from Pawtuxet, R. I., where he and his wife lived aboard the Helen all winter. Their return to Menemsha was a harbinger of spring. Leonard Vanderhoop said, “things were really opening up, it was fishing time again,” when they arrived. Helen continued as a party cat until 1952.

Many more party boats were kept at Vineyard Haven, Edgartown and Oak Bluffs than at Menemsha. The only
The Multi-Purpose Catboat

Ward Parke's Beatrice, left, and Anna W., rigged for swordfishing in the 1920s.

Anna W. brings back a sword, c. 1930.

A working cat: Anna W., ready to go swordfishing, c. 1920.

This cat is rigged for handlining with stub mast and raised cabin.

On Time, Vineyard Haven party cat.

Flanders' shed, dock, gear, bait and catboat, set for lobstering.
party cat that is recalled as a regular visitor at Menemsha from those harbors was the On Time, Capt. Frank Vincent's 28-foot Crosby cat. For years, she was a feature of Vineyard Haven harbor. Onslow Robinson remembered that "when there wasn't any regular Sunday ferry, Vincent would run over to the mainland and get the papers."

The strong currents in Vineyard Sound and the prevailing southwesterly wind made it difficult to schedule a run from Vineyard Haven to Menemsha back in the same day. Nevertheless, On Time would put into Menemsha two or three times each summer. She continued to visit Menemsha until the power boats moved in, taking over the party boat business. The On Time was too slow to compete. Robinson believed that Vincent installed a more powerful engine in On Time about 1921, but it was not enough. She gave up party boating, he said, around 1926.

Then there were the yachting catboats, owned by summer residents and moored at Menemsha during July and August. These included:

- Kingfisher, a 25-foot Crosby cat owned around 1905 by Gardiner Green Hammond who at the time was the owner of much of the land at Squibnocket.

- Cuckoo, a 24-foot Daniel Crosby cat built about 1901 and owned for years by Dr. Edward J. Kuh and Dr. Robert C. Asher of Menemsha. She was wrecked in a hurricane in Falmouth harbor.

- Madam, a 20-foot Charles Crosby cat, built in 1910 and owned in Vineyard Haven by Capt. William A. Robinson and Walter E. Flanders. She was named Bunny at that time. Leopold Mannes brought her to Menemsha. After he died, she was sold to Peter S. McGhee, also of Menemsha.

- Pinkletink, a 22-footer, built in 1932 by H. F. Crosby & Sons. She was kept in Cychmere Harbor until 1958 when she was bought by the author and brought to Menemsha. A few years ago, she was sold and is now at Monument Beach on Buzzards Bay.

Finally, there is a variety of cats that have had such varied lives that it is impossible to classify them. Many we know very little about, but here they are:

Lydia D., a cross between a Noman's Land boat and a cat, owned before 1903 by Henry B. Davis of Noman's Land. A half-hull model of a Vineyard boat answering this description and said to have been designed by Charles Gifford is in the Peabody Museum at Salem, Mass.

Sirod, (Doris spelled backwards), Lawrence Percival's yacht of which Percy Tilton was the captain.

Sport, a summer-decked cat, probably by Manuel Swartz, and owned by Donald Poole.

Any record, especially one gathered so many years after the catboat era at Menemsha ended, is bound to have both errors and omissions. Covering about 80 years, this report makes no claim to be exempt from such. But serious as such an error, omission might be to the concerned individual, it does not alter the fundamental picture of Menemsha and Lobsterville in those many decades when the catboat was in its prime.

The cat, now considered less than exciting by sailors, was the stalwart workhorse for two generations of mariners, especially those who made their livelihood from the treasures of the sea. Whatever the season, whatever was running, the fishermen knew they could adapt their catboats to do the job. They have served our fishermen well and are a major element in Island history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is grateful to all those, many of whom are no longer living, whom he has quoted in this article. He also must add his thanks to many, many more who, like himself, have had a love affair with the catboat, and who, through the years, have shared their experiences and knowledge with him.
When Power Came to the Cat

The first decade of the 1900s brought enormous changes to Menemsha Creek and, therefore, to Lobsterville. It also was a watershed period in the history of the catboat, which was so much a part of the lives of the residents of those two communities.

About 1906, or perhaps a year or two earlier, the meandering channel of Menemsha Creek was straightened, widened and re-routed to the west, emptying into the Sound through a new opening. Part of the tidal flat was dredged to provide a protected and relatively deep anchorage, the one known today as Menemsha Harbor.

A few years before that, power began to be installed in the catboats, either the naphtha engine or, more likely, the one-cylinder, two-cycle, make-and-break engine universally known as the "one lunger." The earliest engines were in the 2 to 3 horsepower range, soon increased to 3 and 4 horsepower. These did little more than supplement the power of the sail. But in a few years, when power was increased to 7 horsepower, the supremacy of power began to become apparent. As Onslow Robinson recalled: "My, they were powerful."

The changeover was rapid. By 1905 of 11 catboats known to have been at Lobsterville and Menemsha, only 3 were without an auxiliary engine: Cognet, Eta W, and Leader. Eight were listed among the documented vessels registered in the United States Customs House as having power. They were: Dorothy T., Faustina, Mabel D., Mabel H., Margie, Reporter, Thelma, and Vigilant.

The convergence of these two changes, the dredging of the Creek and the introduction of power, meant the end of Lobsterville as a village for fishermen. Now they could keep their boats closer to home in Menemsha Basin and they didn't have to time their coming and going with the tide. The engines were strong enough to make headway even against the fast current through the Menemsha opening. Fish shacks began to spring up around the Basin like mushrooms and fishermen began to build houses on the hill overlooking the harbor. Lobsterville and its anchorage inside Dogfish Bar were no longer needed.

The best known early engines that were installed in catboats were the Lathrop, made at Mystic, Conn., and considered "a fine machine," and the T and W made in New Bedford. An occasional Palmer engine was used.

The T and W, "named for Tallman and his partner," was referred to as the "old Tired and Weary," more out of disgust than affection. "They were built something like a Lathrop," Leonard Vanderhoop recalled, "only they had the spark plug along the side instead of in the head... Sometimes when they worked, they worked good, but when they didn't -- well, you just try to start them! My father (Edwin C. Vanderhoop) had a 7-10 horsepower engine and, dear me, how he would work trying to get her going. That's where the nickname came - apart from the old Tired and Weary." Leonard had to chuckle at the thought of it.

With power came the development of a packeting trade in gasoline and lubricants. Ernest C. Mayhew recalled that Rodney Reed would bring over gasoline in five-gallon cans from the mainland and unload it at the Town Dock, then at the foot of the road that runs between today's Homeport Restaurant and the Postoffice. "We used to pay him 50 cents for the whole five gallons," he recalled.

A similar trade developed at Lobsterville where a few boats, mostly Gay Head owned, still were moored. David Vanderhoop recalled that Ben Attaquin would haul barrels of gas and oil to Lobsterville aboard the catboat Chief. His method of unloading was simple: he'd kick the barrels overboard and they would be rolled up on the beach.

Installing the engine may have made life simpler, but it often was a mixed blessing on the catboat. After all, it was not designed for such a major modification. Usually, the centerboard had to be cut down to make room for the engine and that often affected the boat's balance and handling. Some boats just didn't take to power very well, fantailed cats especially.

The earliest make-and-break engines were not fitted with reverse gear. That was no problem for the skilled skipper. By tapping the ignition switch at the right time, he would get the engine to run backwards, reversing the boat. It took a bit of skill to time the tap just right so that the crankshaft would turn in the opposite direction.

Roy Cottle, who owned the Vigilant in the early 1900s, said to have rigged his engine so he could reverse it by pulling on a string that ran to the firing gear. Donald Poole recalled: "He would get her in reverse, then go ahead and jockey her back and forth. He was very good at it and he loved to do it, especially when someone was watching. One day my father and I were in Woods Hole with a trip of lobsters and Roy came in with his catch. He shot around the end of the steamboat wharf, steamed right up to the fish market, pulled on the string to catch her in reverse and the string burned off. He went clear out of sight underneath the wharf and cleaned her off to the steering wheel. The mast came out of her. The boom, sail and everything went right over the side."

Capt. Everett A. Poole, Donald's father, was among the first to install power at Menemsha. It was a 5-horsepower, T and W, Goldenrod's centerboard had to be shortened to get it in. He also cut the boom and shortened the rig. As Joe Allen recalled: "It raised hell with everything." Goldenrod had been a fast sailer, the fastest in Menemsha, but the changes wrought by power "did her in." Captain Poole sold her in 1913 and bought a new boat, the Anna W.

Donald Poole told the author an unlikely tale about the T and W engine...
that he assured me actually happened when he was seven or eight years old.

"I remember hauling lobster pots back of Gay Head with my father in the Goldenrod. He had one of the first motors in a catboat here at Menemsha, a 5-horse T and W. It was new that spring and it gave us a great deal of trouble. This day in particular. It stopped and we couldn't start it. We worked and struggled and spoke about it at length. Finally it got beyond the point of despair... Fishing catboats had a big, square box in the center of the cockpit which enclosed the engine and you had to get down in there to start the motor, by getting hold of the flywheel. He crawled out of that box, went down in the cabin, brought out all his large, heavy tools and he went below to work on that motor. He disconnected the exhaust pipe, the propeller coupling, the engine mounts. He got out on the deck, straddled that motor and with bodily strength, pulled it up off of the beds, put it on the rail, and tossed it overboard. Then he dusted off his hands -- I can see it as plain as can be -- he dusted off his hands, he says, 'There, boy, that won't bother us any more, let's put the sail to her.'

As happened with the Goldenrod, the installation of power meant the inevitable cut in the rig. It also, of course, meant less and less use of the canvas. Ernest Mayhew observed: 'When the Reporter had the single-cylinder Lathrop 7-horsepower engine she would pound awful going to windward. But when I put in the two-cylinder, 12-horsepower Lathrop, she didn't pound. I sailed her whenever I got the chance, but I didn't have to sail her much because it wasn't necessary. When I had the (smaller) one, of course, I'd sail and power.'

Onslow Robinson summed up the impact of power: "Most catboats in use prior to 1920 had 'one lung' two-cycle motors, 8 to 12 horsepower. A few had two-cylinder, 16 horsepower. In later years more powerful engines of the four-cycle type were introduced. With the improvement in motors came deterioration of the sailing rig until it became difficult to find a real cat rig except on a pleasure boat."

But it really didn't matter much because by that time fishermen were turning to boats designed for power, boats that made the modified cat seem as old-fashioned as it really had become.

For two generations it had served its owners well. It was a boat you could love.

JOHN LEAVENS

The Summer of 1874
by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

IT WAS a summer long to be remembered -- the summer of 1874. Packed into it were celebrations, indiscretions, innovations and criminalities -- wonderment enough to fill a dozen summers. On an Island that a few years before had been quiet, secluded and sedate, visited only occasionally by outsiders, that hectic summer must have made Vineyarders ask: what have we created?

It was a watershed summer. There would be no turning back. The nation, in 1874, discovered our Island.

For two years, real-estate speculation had gone beyond the wildest imaginings of Vineyard residents. Spreading out from Cottage City were subdivisions of all sizes: Lagoon Heights, with 400 lots sold in a few weeks; Oklahoma; West Point Grove and Cedar Bluff on West Chop; Ocean Heights; Hines Point; all had their start at this time. Developers had grabbed over 2000 acres, dividing them neatly into tiny rectangles, eight lots per acre.

Buyers rushed to the Island, eager to get a spot before it was too late. Everywhere they looked they saw construction. The brand new Seaview Hotel dominated the Oak Bluffs waterfront and there was already talk of an addition, even larger than the first. The Highland House stood nearby and a few blocks away there were the Pawnee House and the Island House, plus a dozen more. As far away as Katama, the development was going on. The Mattakesett Lodge, within earshot of the pounding Atlantic, opened for business in August 1873, ready for a big summer in 1874. It must have seemed that the whole country wanted a piece of Martha's Vineyard -- hurry, hurry, hurry, before it's all gone.

ARTHUR R. RAILTON is Editor of this journal.
That was also the mood of the nation: expand, invest, speculate, the future belongs to us.

Then in September 1873, the first crack in the national confidence appeared with the failure of one of the country's largest brokerage houses, Jay Cooke & Company, setting off the Panic of 1873 and the deepest depression the nation had ever experienced. It was to last nearly six years.

Jay Cooke, the man who had masterminded the financing of the Civil War for Lincoln, had overspeculated in stock of the Northern Pacific Railroad, eager to make a killing for himself and his friends. His collapse sent shock waves through the nation's financial community.

The effect on the Island seemed minimal. How could something as far away as the Northwest Territories be of concern here? There was, to be sure, the Cashier of the Merchants Bank of Lowell, I. N. Pierce, Jr., who somehow couldn't account for $100,000 of the bank's deposits, "the result," one newspaper said, "of too high living... including an elegant establishment at Martha's Vineyard, where he has often generously entertained his friends." 1

The Island wasn't so remote after all.

But its promoters pushed ahead. Early in 1874, in the face of Jay Cooke's railroad disaster, the newly organized Martha's Vineyard Railroad Company set out to buy the right-of-way to run a narrow-gauge railroad from Oak Bluffs to Katama, with a station in Edgartown. It would bring the brand-new Mattakesett Lodge within a quick train ride of the Oak Bluffs dock. 2 It would give Edgartown a piece of the summer resort business.

An Island railroad was needed, wrote Editor Edgar Marchant of the Gazette. "The 'snort' of the iron horse will arouse men from their lethargy and infuse new life into their veins."

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2 The new Lodge would also be helped by the $20,000 spent by the Federal government in October 1873 to open a 75-foot-wide channel between Katama Bay and the ocean. It was dredged six feet deep at low water and for a distance of 2500 feet.

There may have been talk of depression on the mainland, but this was the Island — a special place, separate from such things.

And so the stage was set for the summer of 1874 -- the most exciting, most frenetic, two months in Island history. It was a high-water mark, to be followed by shattered dreams and lost fortunes.

But it was memorable. Here are some of the events that made it so:

- Editor Marchant had been right. Building the railroad did infuse new life into the Island's veins. The company went at the job with intensity. By the end of July 1874, only four months after the first planning meeting, all but three-quarters of a mile of track had been laid. Within a week, the engine and cars were to arrive. The Edgartown depot was nearly completed. The Governor of Massachusetts and a party of Bostonians had come down to admire the achievement.

With some exaggeration, Editor Marchant wrote: "Sixty-six days ago, the trees from which the ties were made were growing in Maine, and the iron for the rails was in the mines of Pennsylvania." It was, as he wrote, a miracle.

Then came the first letdown. In hopes of not frightening the Island's many horses with a puffing locomotive, it was decided to use a "dummy engine," a steam engine mounted inside a normal-looking passenger car. Horses, accustomed to street railways (there already was a horse-drawn trolley in Oak Bluffs), were not so likely to bolt. It was the type of engine used on the elevated trains of New York City.

The engine and cars were supposed to have arrived early in July, but they were a month late. It was early August when the test run was made. "All the loafing population turned out," the Gazette reported. What they saw was less than an unqualified success. "Some fear that it will never be able to do the work required of it." Although the Gazette
didn't mention it, one writer said that the dummy could not negotiate the sharper curves and was derailed early in the test run. A new engine, it was said, would have to be bought.

"The dummy speaks for itself," was Editor Marchant's only comment.

A new engine was ordered and delivered in record time (after all, the season was flying past). But there were more problems. As the engine, called the "Active," waited atop a flat car on the wharf at Wood's Hole for the steamer to haul it to the Island, two errant freight cars rammed into the flat car driving it into the caplog at the end of the dock. The flat car stopped, but the "Active" kept rolling, tumbling into the ocean. Recovered, a few days later, it was shipped to Boston for repairs, arriving back at the end of August, just in time for a few days of operation before the busy summer season ended.

On one of those early runs, as it snorted its way along the beach road between Oak Bluffs and Edgartown, it frightened the horses pulling a carriage containing a gentleman and three ladies. The horses broke loose and the carriage upset near the Sengekontackett bridge, causing injury to the ladies. Conductor Worth, viewing the accident, stopped the train, backed up, put the injured ladies on board and carried them to a doctor in Oak Bluffs.

The very late start had caused great financial problems for the company and by November the physical assets were in the hands of the Sheriff, pending settlement with several creditors, one of whom was the builder of the dummy engine. An arrangement was worked out and the railroad was back in operation in 1875, continuing to lose money until 1877. Its biggest business came from day-trippers who were carried from Oak Bluffs to Katama for clambakes held

at the Pavilion next to the Mattakesett Lodge. The railroad continued to operate until 1896.

- Vice President Henry Wilson came to Oak Bluffs for a day and the President of Harvard University spent a week in a tent he pitched on the grounds of the Sailor's Free Reading Room, Union Street, Vineyard Haven. The Taunton Glee Club gave a concert. Professor Cromwell lectured on famous art works, illustrating his talk with pictures taken on his European tour. The Mattakesett Lodge, tired of waiting for the delayed railroad, chartered the steam yacht Starry Banner which made four trips a day from the Oak Bluffs wharf to the hotel's dock at Katama. Business was so good, the Lodge hired Reinbach's band from Boston to entertain its guests and announced it would build a bigger hotel on the knoll behind the present one for next year (it never did). The Hartford professional baseball team came to Oak Bluffs to play an exhibition game for the crowds. The game so excited the population that in October two local teams played the first game of baseball ever played in Edgartown. The players obviously needed practice: the final score was True Blues 40, Regulators 31. The Regulators evened the score the following week, beating the True Blues, 45 to 27.

- A New York woman, staying at the Highland House, returned to her room after an afternoon stroll to discover that her trunk had been broken open and jewelry valued at over $1000 had been stolen. Another room in the hotel had been broken into and jewelry stolen. A New York man and a New London man were arrested after breaking into the residence of Mrs. Eunice Coffin of Edgartown. A "party of roughs from New Bedford, who had been indulging in the bad rum they brought with them, got into a dispute which led to blows" outside the Sea View House in Oak Bluffs. Constable James Pent of Edgartown was stabbed in the hip with a knife when he tried to break up the fracas. The new County Jail in Edgartown was completed just in time to handle the expanding criminal population.

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3The court ruled that the dummy engine be returned to the company which was ordered to pay the railroad $2000 for the loss of summer business caused by the engine's failure to perform as promised.
On the Fourth of July a purse of $150 was awarded to the winning horse at the Martha's Vineyard Trotting Park. That was not the only racing that summer: the competing steamers raced each other between Oak Bluffs and Wood's Hole. On July 17th, the steamer Martha's Vineyard beat out the River Queen by more than a mile, the Gazette reported. Nobody asked what the passengers thought about it.

President Ulysses S. Grant, his wife, and a party of about 300 very important persons spent a few days at the Campground. In the party were Vice President Wilson (his second visit), Surgeon-General Barnes, General Orville E. Babcock, General Horace Porter, Secretary of War William W. Belknap, Postmaster General Marshall Jewell, Publisher George Child of the Philadelphia Ledger and George M. Pullman, head of the Pullman Company of Chicago, manufacturer of railroad cars. They arrived on the River Queen and were met at the Highland Wharf by a flowerbedecked horse trolley. No one seemed to worry about the consequences to the nation if the River Queen had foundered.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, numbering 748 persons including "wives and other lady friends," held religious services in the Union Chapel in Oak Bluffs. The opening hymn began: "Behold how pleasant and how good, For brethren such as we, The Locomotive Brotherhood, to dwell in unity."

Captivating as these events were, they all paled in comparison with one other that summer, one with all the trappings of frontier justice.

It began in the spring when a Worcester man, Samuel K. Elliott, a former sewing-machine salesman who had decided to get into real-estate, came to the Island. He soon owned several cottages, one being on Tuckernuck Avenue, Oak Bluffs, where he lived while on the Island. As he explained later, he soon found he needed a housekeeper and he hired Mrs. P. R. Dexter for the job. She moved into the cottage, bringing with her a married sister, Mrs. Lizzie C. Dickson, whose husband was a sailor aboard a coastal schooner. Also in the house was the Deputy Sheriff of Dukes County, John N. Vinson.

In mid-summer when mariner Dickson came ashore, he demanded that his wife return to their home, but she refused, stating that she wanted to remain there with her sister, Mrs. Dexter, until her child was born. Mr. Dickson was understandably upset and, as Mr. Elliott described it, "threatened to shoot me and knock my brains out, tar and feather me," if his wife didn't come home. Other threats to Elliott and Deputy Sheriff Vinson were made and after several suspicious night-time activities outside the Tuckernuck Avenue cottage, Vinson, more cautious than his friend Elliott, left the Island for parts unknown.

The Boston Globe carried the story on the front page:
"The quiet atmosphere of Oak Bluffs has recently been disturbed by a scandal of some magnitude. Allen F. Dickson, a sailor employed on a coasting vessel, returned home a few weeks ago and found that his wife had deserted her home at Prospect Heights, midway between Oak Bluffs and Eastville, and was living at Oak Bluffs in a cottage with a deputy sheriff and other kindred spirits. On Thursday last, the facts became generally known, and at twelve the succeeding night, a party started for the cottage intending to tar and feather the inmates; but they [the inmates] had become aware that the place was too hot to hold them and had fled. The sheriff has not since been heard from."

Such a salacious story, seasoned with tar and feathers, made both the New York and Boston papers take notice. It was to become even more sensational, as this account in the Boston Daily Advertiser stated:
"For some weeks a good deal of scandal in connection with a Mr. Vinson of Edgartown and S. K. Elliott, from Worcester, who have occupied a cottage in company with
two married women belonging to Edgartown. These men have been threatened with a coat of tar and feathers and Mr. Vinson, fearing trouble, left the island some weeks ago.

"Last night, about eleven o'clock, a party of men went to the cottage and calling out Mr. Elliot, after considerable struggle forced him into a wagon in which was a pot of tar and a bag of feathers. Mr. Elliot drew a revolver and fired twice, the second shot killing Caleb Smith, a brother of the two women. The report of the pistol frightened the horse which ran away and threw the whole party from the wagon, when Elliot escaped and surrendered himself to the authorities."

The Globe's account of the event said that "although Vinson had decamped... it was determined that on Saturday night Elliott should be taken from his cottage and tarred and feathered. In a fierce rain-storm, with the requisite utensils, they halted their team opposite the cottage... which is occupied by Elliott... After a severe struggle in which Elliott proved himself equal for them all, he escaped [after shooting Caleb C. Smith]."

Five days later, the Gazette gave a more detailed account:

"On the night of August 1st, Almar Dickson, Caleb C. Smith, John Gordon, George W. Watrous and Stephen Robins met at Dickson's house with the avowed intention of tarring and feathering Samuel K. Elliott, who, it was alleged, was living at 89 Tuckernuck Avenue in criminal intimacy with two sisters of Smith's, one of whom was the wife of Dickson..."

The story went on to explain that Watrous, who was not known to Elliott, went to the door of the cottage asking to be shown a horse that Elliott had for sale. Elliott, by now suspicious of any night-time invitation, said he wouldn't come out, but that the stranger could look at the horse in the barn and come back the next day if still interested.

Watrous took out a gun along with a set of handcuffs and demanded that Elliott come out. With that, Elliott drew his own gun and "snapped it at Watrous, but failing to discharge it." Seeing all this, Caleb Smith, the disgraced brother, rushed out of the darkness and attacked Elliott who shot him in the chest. The five vigilantes quickly overcame Elliott and together, along with Smith who seemed unaffected by the shot, they loaded him into the carriage and sped off in the rain toward the southwest to carry out their plan. Suddenly, as they bounced across the field, they noticed that Smith was not in the carriage. In the resultant confusion, Elliott managed to escape. Going back, they found Smith lying on the ground in great distress from the bullet in his chest. He was rushed to a doctor, but it was too late to save his life. Elliott, sensing his life was now in danger, turned himself in for protection.

The next day, Sunday, a coroner's jury was convened. By late Monday, it delivered its verdict: Elliott had acted in self-defense and was not guilty of any criminal act. The four surviving vigilantes were arraigned for aggravated assault, riotous conduct and held for the September court session of the Superior Court. All but Watrous were able to post bail.

There is no record of any trial being held so it would seem that the grand jury failed to indict and the four men were set free.5

Mr. Elliott, in a long letter to the Gazette the next week claimed his innocence. He had hired Mrs. Dexter to be his housekeeper and she had insisted on bringing along her sister, Mrs. Dickson, so she could take care of her during her confinement. Elliott offered, he wrote, to let Mr. Dickson stay with them when he was not off sailing. "The outrage of August 1st [the attempt to tar and feather him] was simply because I would not take Mrs. Dickson out of a house where she could be properly cared for...."

5By coincidence Mr. Elliott was a defendant in another case on the September docket. It involved his non-payment of a bill of about $500 for goods received. He failed to show up for the trial and was ordered to pay the bill, plus court costs.
"As regards any illegal proceedings at my house, there have been none. I hold myself in readiness to answer to the law at all times. What I have done, I am truly sorry for. It was wholly in self-defense. If a party wishes to dictate who I shall have for a housekeeper, or who shall have board with me, I wish to know where they get their authority."

He left the Island almost immediately. The Gazette does not say what happened to the Deputy Sheriff, who was quickly replaced by John Adams Pease, or to the two women.

Thus ended the summer of 1874 -- a summer to be remembered.

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A sad picture, about 1900, the abandoned Mattakeeset Lodge, Katama. The locomotive, Active, was rolled ashore on this wharf in 1874.

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10th. NNE, heavy Gale with a severe snow storm, the most severe storm I think for many years. Snow in some banks 10 feet or more deep.

11th. NW to NNE, pleasant. Did not attend meetings at E'Ville on acct. of snow.


25th. NNW, very cold. Gale. Did not attend meetings at E'Ville.

31st. SW, moderate. This has been a very cold, windy month.

April 1855

1st. NNE to WNW. Gale with rain. Did not attend Meetings at E'Ville on acct. of storm.

5th. SSW. Fast day. Rain P.M. Heavy rain at nt.

8th. ESE. Attended meetings at E'Ville. "And now my Soul another year of my short life is past."

12th. NW, squally, very cold for the season.

14th. SE, very cold. Our Daughter Velina visits us....

May 1855


20th. NE, severe storm. Did not attend Meetings at E'Ville.

March 1855

4th. NNW. Attended Meetings at E'Ville. Heavy snow in the road yet.

5th. SW, fresh breeze. Ship Almira, Capt. Jenks, arrives from the Pacific ocean with a full cargo of oil, 2200 bbl. Whale, 100 Sperm, 175 blackfish.
24th. SW, cloudy, cool. A heavy rain with Thunder and Lightning. Mr. John Coffin dwelling house was struck during the night with lightning, it injured one of his chimneys, the ceiling and destroyed his clock.

31st. SSW, fresh breeze. Ship Narragansett & Bark Peru arrived from the Pacific Ocean.

**June 1855**

7th. S, rainy A.M., P.M., SW, fresh breeze. Union House opened for Boarders. A number of visitors from Boston, New Bedford, etc., with music, rather a high day. -- The rain detained a great number who intended to have been here as I understand.

8th. WSW, fresh breeze. The visitors above stated leave in the Steamer Metacomet for N. Bedford.

12th. SW, light, variable, little rain. Frederick visits us from East Boston.

13th. SW. My Wife, Frederick and Eliza go to E. Boston on a visit. Ship Nantucket of Nantucket, Capt. Gibbons, sails for the Pacific Ocean.

17th. SW. Attended meetings at E'Ville. Sister Dency Luce is very sick and near to death, according to her appearance. Br. Clement Vincent's Wife died suddenly on Saturday morning.


21st. SW, light, foggy. Funeral of Br. Smith, service by Revd. Sanford Benton of the M.E. Church and Revd.

**July 1855**

1st. SW, very warm. Attended meetings at E'Ville and the Funeral of Sister Dency Luce who died on Friday evening at about 11 o'clock, aged about 29 years. She was a pious, worthy young woman and much respected by all her acquaintances and died a happy death having great faith in her blessed Redeemer. Funeral at 4 P.M., service by Revd. _____ of Holmes Hole.

2nd. SW, fresh breeze. Commenced mourning.

7th. S to SSW, little rain. Reports. Rains at Nt.

8th. NE, cloudy A.M., P.M. clear. Attended meeting at E'Ville.

...agreeably to the foregoing letter, I delivered said Boat and appurtenances as directed to said Danl. C. Pease.

13th. SW, pleasant. Engaged surveying the Road to Tisbury for the Select Men and those who made the road.

21st. NE, cloudy, rainy. Corner Stone of the Martha's Vineyard Bank laid.

28th. NE. Engaged in searching the records for the Deep Bottom Indians. Fed to SW. Joseph T. Pease is this day elected Cashier of the Martha's Vineyard Bank.

**August 1855**

7th. E to SW. Went to D.C. Records on business of the Deep Bottom Indians.


13th. SW. Engaged at D. C. Records in business of Deep Bottom Indians, 1 day.

14th. Ely, light. Funeral of an Infant son above mentioned. Service by Revd. Sanford Benton. Went to H. Hole, set one Ladies arm and another Ladies wrist, they having been upset in a Waggon going from H. Hole to Tisbury.

15th. SW. Went to Tisbury by request of Thos. Robinson, Esq., for the Deep Bottom Indians, to attend the Commissioners Meeting at Dukes County Academy relating to said Indians.

16th. Returned from Tisbury.

...after this entry, the entire page that follows has been torn out, exciting the entries of July 9, 10, 11 and part of 12. Destroyed, as seems clear from what follows, was apparently the full text of a letter dismissing Jeremiah as Deputy Collector of Customs and Tide-Waifer. The Gazette, July 20, 1855, reported: "Simon P. Coffin, Esq., has been appointed Deputy Collector of this port and Daniel C. Pease, Tide-Waifer."

of the Martha's Vineyard Bank.

17th. Fresh wind. Went to Camp Ground and covered my Tent, etc.

Went to Chappaquidick, set a bone in Ladies foot.

20th. SW. Went to Camp Ground. 21st. Ely, went to Camp Meeting, remained until it closed on Monday evening. Returned on Tuesday morning.

29th. NE. It was an interesting meeting, a full account of which will be hereafter published.

31st. E to SW. Went to Christianstown.

**September 1855**

9th. SW, light, very warm. I never perceived the heat to arise from the ground so sensibly as on this day. Attended meeting at E'Ville.

12th. SW, A.M., P.M. NE. Frederick and Wife visit us from E. Boston.

14th. NE, fresh breeze, clear. I have been unwell for several days past with diarrhea (sic), somewhat better today.

15th. NE to S, light wind. Set K. Smith's Wife's shoulder & collar bone. 17th. SW. Frederick and Wife return to E. Boston.

18th. SW, fresh breeze, very dry. No rain since the 8th day of August or not enough to wet a man's jacket (sic) through since that time since which the winds and weather have been very dry. I think I never saw the grass and ground so much dried up. Mr. Oliver Norton died yesterday at about 5 P.M., aged 79 years.

*This is the first time he uses the expression "covered my tent." Before it was always "put up my tent." This probably means that he now is using a wooden frame with wooden sidewalks rather than a true tent.*

*The Gazette published the accounts of the meeting written by Hebron Vincent.*
October 1855

2nd. SE, rainy. Mrs. Polly Way dies. 3rd. SSW, squally. Funeral of Mrs. Way, service by Rev'd S. Benton, very few persons attended the Funeral. 8th. SW. Went to H. Hole and North Shore on business. Saw G.D. & A.N. 9th. SW. Went to Chilmark on business, saw J.N.T. 11th. NE, pleasant. Schr. Washington, Capt. B. Fisher, sails on a Whaling cruise in the Atlantic O. 14th. SSW to SE. Attended Meetings at the Middle District School House. It was a very interesting time, more than 40 persons attended. Br. Thos. Stewart was there in the afternoon. It was a good season. I trust some good was wrought in the name of our Blessed Redeemer. Mr. John Wait died yesterday at Taunton Hospital. He had been insane for some time past. Previous to his insanity he was a very respectable and useful man, possessing an excellent education and many good qualifications. He has left a widow and three children. Rains a little at nt. 15th. SWS to SW. Went to E'ville. Visited the Widow of John E. Wait. The Select Men received a Telegraphic dispatch from the Dr. at the hospital at Taunton wishing to know whether they should send the remains of John E. Wait to Edgartown or not, they returned answer to send him to Holmes Hole by steamer Metacomet tomorrow. I went to convey this news to his Widow. 16th. WNW. No Funeral, buried immediately after the arrival of the Corps.

Books

Far Out the Coils
By Henry Beetle Hough.
Published by The Tashmoo Press, Vineyard Haven, MA.
Illus. 129 pp. $15., paper; $100., limited hardcover edition.

THIS book, in spite of its esoteric title, is a gentle, graceful conversation with a man who knew more Island history than any other. And whose words about it come close to poetry.

It was not conceived as a book, but as a series of talks (one can't call them lectures) by Henry Hough, Vineyard author and editor of the Gazette. He gave the talks the year before he died. Katherine Tweed, a friend and the publisher of The Tashmoo Press, convinced him that the talks should be given a wider audience. This book is the happy result. Sadly, Henry Hough died shortly before the first copies were available.

Being Henry-in-conversation, the book rambles. It is easy, as one reads, to imagine him sitting in his yard, just talking. It is a verbal meander over the Island, a ramble in space and in time. From his vast inventory of anecdotes and reminiscences, he selects the choicest to sprinkle upon these pages.

The illustrations, carefully chosen by Mrs. Tweed, are most uncommon and, like the words they illumine, they lift

Letters

Editor:
I have just caught up with the November Intelligencer.
Of course, I don't "know" what "bald bile" is, but I have two guesses: (1) he was sick, so wrote "bald" for "bad"; or (2) by "bile" he meant "boil." After all, he wrote "anole." I enjoy the Pease diary.

RUTH REDDING

Oak Bluffs

Editor:
I enjoy and learn from the Intelligencer. But it is not always perfect. Page 60 of the November issue contains an error in the last complete paragraph. It should read, George G. Gifford, the C. is an error. An interesting bit of historical fact-trivia is that he was the first West Tisbury Town Clerk and was re-elected, I think, for 50 or more one-year terms before he retired.

EVERETT G. DOWNING

Foxboro, Mass.

The Editor is also grateful to John Gude of Chilmark for pointing out that on page 66 of that issue the correct title of the Denys Wortman cartoon was "Moby Dick and the Duke" (not Moby Dick).
**Director's Report**

MAKE a Joyful Noise: Music on the Vineyard Through the Ages," was the theme of our annual contribution to “Christmas in Edgartown.” Eleanor Olsen, chairman, Virginia Poole and Arthur Railton planned the exhibition which included early music books, photographs of marching bands, musical instruments, and several vintage sound machines lent by George Strimel. Punch prepared by Dorothea Looney and Alvin Goldwyn was served and Phoebe Norton provided 19th century style arrangements of fruit. Our thanks go to everyone, hosts and hostesses and all the others who helped, for making this a very successful event.

Joanne Coffin Clark joined the staff the first of the year. Her chief responsibilities will be membership and financial records. During the fall we were very grateful to Genevieve DeLisle for so ably filling in until Joanne could begin work. As you know, dues were raised this year, and the Council is appreciative of the prompt and generous responses that have already come in.

We have been awarded a three-day site visit by the Furniture Conservation Survey Program. It is scheduled for June and will be an opportunity to have all of the wooden artifacts in the collection examined and a priority restoration list drawn up.

With the Council approval of an Accessions Policy at the November meeting, an Accessions Committee consisting of Richard Burt, Natalie Huntington, and E.W. Vincent, Jr. has been appointed. The Committee will consider additions to the collections in relation to their potential contributions to the research and exhibition programs as well as restoration expense and available storage space in making recommendations to the Council. An early

Edgartown street lantern, gift of Mrs. Ward Berry, is an especially welcome new accession. It will be installed near the School Street entrance.

Volunteers, researchers, and visitors make this seem anything but “the quiet season.” We hope you will join them to visit, browse, or do research. In response to the requests of those whose plans are more long-range, the date for the Annual Meeting has been set for August 18.

MARIAN R. HALPERIN

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**Our Mid-Winter Exhibition:**

**Watercolors of Martha's Vineyard**

By Amelia M. Watson (1856-1934)

THIRTY jewel-like watercolors by Amelia M. Watson, a teacher at the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute for most of the years from its founding in 1878 until 1902, are now on view in the Society's Mid-Winter Exhibition.

Along with the paintings there are photographs of the Institute's building, faculty and students as well as of Miss Watson and her class sketching out of doors.

Amelia Watson as also an illustrator. Her best-known work is a two-volume edition of Thoreau's Cape Cod, published in 1896. It was a highly acclaimed book when it was first published and recently was an important addition to an exhibition of 19th Century book illustration at the Boston Public Library. These volumes are on display at the Society, courtesy of the Chilmark Public Library.

A native of East Windsor Hill, Conn., Miss Watson developed a great love of the Vineyard and frequently stayed on after the Institute's five-week session ended, boarding at a variety of places on the Island. Most of the watercolors on exhibit must have been painted during such leisurely times, since they are marked "August" and "September." Although 100 years old, they remain fresh and clear and provide a delightful tour of still-favorite Vineyard spots.

The exhibit will continue until Spring and is open to the public without charge. We urge all who can to come in and enjoy these lovely paintings.
DIGGING into the events of the summer of 1874 (see p. 127) gives one a more realistic sense of the "good old days" than romantics might wish to believe. Yesterday had its problems.

There were, in those horse-and-buggy days, a surprising number of highway accidents. They were rarely fatal, but broken bones were common. The arrival of the locomotive aggravated the problem. Its speed, noise and smoke caused horses to bolt, often overturning the carriage. One advertisement turned the hazard into a sales advantage:

**HORSE FOR SALE**

Not afraid of cars.

Cars, of course, were railroad cars. The automobile was unknown.

Back then, folks had different attitude toward our feathered friends -- seagulls, at least. An article about catching bluefish suggested:

"When you become tired of fishing, you can go to Muskeget after gulls' eggs which lie on the sands of that Island. There is no law to prevent one from catching as many of these eggs as you can find. It will afford some excitement to listen to the sea-gulls cry while taking away their embryo young."

There were certain chores that made life less pleasant. We tend to forget those tiny sheds at the end of the well-worn path in every back yard. They were not maintenance-free, as this notice from the Edgartown Board of Health made clear in 1874:

"...all privy vaults [must] be cleansed between the 30th of June and the 1st day of October and must be done between 10 o'clock P.M. and 5 o'clock A.M. Any person violating this rule will be liable to a fine of 10 dollars. We also recommend that Chloride of Lime, Carbolic Acid, Copperas, Slack Lime, or ashes be used as deodorizers between the times above, as often as necessary to prevent malaria."

By the year 1874, the whaling industry on the Island had nearly disappeared. Two of Edgartown's best-known whalers had been sold the year before: the *Europa* and the *Splendid*.

That left Edgartown with only one vessel still active, the bark *Clarice*, a much smaller whaler than the others.

The boom brought about by the sudden interest in the Island as a summer resort was therefore most welcome. President Grant's visit that year did much to spread the word. The *New York Herald* ran a long article under the headline:

**Martha's Vineyard**

"The Cottage City of America"

The Great Camp Meeting Ground
How Enterprise and Taste Developed

Beauty

A NEW WATERING PLACE

It praised the development:

"...a shrewd company of land speculators...have made a beautiful little city, which now stands as a monument...to...those who worked, planned and carried out the original idea of converting the island into one of the leading summer resorts of Massachusetts."

And thus it began.  

A.R.R.

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The opening of this hotel takes place this day (Thursday). Very exclusive preparations have been made by Mr. Sinnott, the enterprising host; and, we doubt not, notwithstanding the rain, that the occasion will be a joyous one. The "Whitehouse Bards" will give an entertainment at the Town Hall, commencing at 7 o'clock precisely; after which a grand "hop" will take place. The New Bedford Brass Band will be in attendance, and will probably remain until Monday next... About one hundred persons and the Brass Band arrived by the steamer *Metacom* in the afternoon... The band, composing fifteen musicians, paraded through the principal streets of the town; after which they proceeded to the Ocean House, where a most superb dinner was served up in excellent style to the company. At half-past two P.M., the weather was quite favorable, the rain having ceased three hours previously.

Let those hop now, who never hopped before,  
And those who always hopped, now hop the more —  
At the Ocean House, near the salt sea shore.
Mattakeeset Lodge at Katama with tennis courts and ladies avoiding the sun.

When hotel was abandoned, this portion was moved to upper Main Street, Edgartown where it is now a hairdressing salon.