

Journal of History of Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands



# THE DUKES COUNTY INTELLIGENCER

VOL.31, NO.1

AUGUST 1989

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From Forty-Niners



Going for the Gold!

## Vineyarders Catch The 1849 Gold Bug

by JOAN DRUETT

## Six Island Whalemen Murdered In History's Most Brutal Mutiny

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

## Ichabod Norton: Lover?

Documents: *Jeremiah Pease Diary*

Bits & Pieces

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Individual	\$25.
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This month we begin our first Capital Fund Drive in more than 30 years. Our goal is to raise \$2 million over the next three years.

All members will receive detailed information shortly. We ask that you study the material carefully and respond by returning the pledge card with as generous a pledge as possible.

It is an ambitious goal. But an essential one. The \$2 million will enable us to purchase buildings and land adjacent to our Edgartown headquarters to provide added and improved space for our library, archives, museum and administration. It will allow us to complete the preservation work on our two house-museums, to retire our mortgage and to increase our endowment so we can continue to function as the County Historical Society for future generations.

We must have your support. We urge you to give serious thought to your contribution when you receive the solicitation.

This is your Society and your financial support is critical.

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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 by membership dues, contributions and bequests, which are tax deductible. Its annual meeting is held in August in Edgartown.

It maintains two historic houses, both providing guided tours to the public during the summer, one in Edgartown and the other in Vineyard Haven. A nominal fee is charged to non-members.

In Edgartown, the Thomas Thomas Cooke House, circa 1765, is on the corner of School and Cooke Streets. Acquired by the Society in 1935, it is maintained as a museum of Island history.

Also on the Society grounds in Edgartown are the Francis Foster Museum and Gale Huntington Library. Both are open to the public year round. The Museum has an exhibition of the Vineyard's maritime heritage. The Library contains logs, journals, genealogies and other Island documents, plus many photographs and volumes of history.

The Edgartown property also includes the Gay Head Lighthouse exhibit with its 1854 Fresnel lens and the Carriage Shed containing various old boats and wagons, including an 1854 hand pumper fire engine. These, too, are open to the public all year.

In Vineyard Haven, the Society maintains the Jirah Luce House, circa 1804, formerly operated by the Tisbury Museum, now part of the Dukes County Historical Society. The exhibits are of early Vineyard explorers and settlers, with emphasis on the maritime history of Holmes Hole, as Vineyard Haven was once called.

The public is invited to visit the Society and also to take out a membership, which includes a subscription to this quarterly journal and free admission to our buildings.



## Vineyarders Catch The 1849 Gold Bug

by JOAN DRUETT

IN MAY 1848, rumors were reaching Col. Richard B. Mason, military commander and governor of the new territory of California, that gold, in an amazing abundance, had been discovered at a place called Sutter's Mill on the American River.

At first, Mason's informants scoffed, saying it was all nonsense, a scheme of trader Sam Brannan to boost his business. But the rumors kept a-coming.

Gossip persisted that back in January 1848, while building a saw mill for Johann Sutter on the American River about 40 miles north of today's Sacramento, James Marshall from New Jersey, had spotted flakes of gold in the mill race. Governor Mason remained skeptical, but when he heard that San Francisco merchants were buying quantities of flakes and nuggets, paying as much as \$16 an ounce, the governor decided he'd better see for himself.

On the 12th of June 1848, Governor Mason and Lt. William Tecumseh Sherman, later of Civil War fame, toured the area that had come to be called "the placer." In August, Mason wrote a report, declaring that the rumors were true. Gold was being found in abundance.

"A party of four men," he reported, "... [can] average 100 dollars a day." Most of the gold was in dust and flakes, but he had seen nuggets, "some as heavy as four or five ounces." Two men had taken more than \$17,000 worth of

JOAN DRUETT, a member of the Society, lives in Hamilton, New Zealand. A writer of historical fiction, she places her novels in the golden era of whaling. This article draws upon the wealth of material she gathered while researching her next novel, *A Promise of Gold*, the story of a captain who refitted his whaler to join the California Gold Rush trade. Her previous novels include *Abigail* and *Petticoat Whalers*.

American towns were filled with men willing to pay exorbitant prices for the roughest of berths and the most appalling food. The captains took on cargoes, for all kinds of hardware and foodstuffs fetched fabulous prices in California. After the cargo had been stowed two layers deep, a rough false floor for the passengers was built atop the barrels and sacks. Berths were installed around the sides of the hold and a long table set up in the center. Other passengers slept on deck, happy to find a soft plank in the scuppers; some even slept in the coils of rope.

The first passengers, in 1848, were mostly South Americans, but by 1849, North Americans, who sailed down to Panama from the northeast and crossed the Isthmus to take passage north to the land of gold, were in the majority.

On May 21, 1849, the *New Bedford Whalemens's Shipping List* reported that Panama was full of Americans crazy to get to Eldorado. Men were creating mayhem, gambling and drinking to shocking excess, dying of cholera and intemperance, according to the report:

There are about 2500 passengers at this place for the "gold diggings." . . . A large number of Americans are here who cannot pay, having lost their money in gambling. Their condition in this sickly country is deplorable. . . The Americans are dying daily. On my way up the Chagres river we passed a party burying a passenger from New Orleans, reported to have died of cholera, but upon inquiry I found that his death was more probably occasioned by indulging too freely in fruit and brandy.

The Fairhaven whaler *Sylph* arrived at Panama April 30, 1849, to recruit for another whaling voyage. Captain Gardner took one look at the situation, sold the 600 barrels of oil he had on board, and refitted for passenger trade, much to the financial satisfaction of the ship's owners.

By this time, early 1849, the gold fever had even reached the Vineyard.

The first Vineyarders to follow the gold trail sailed from Holmes Hole in the Schooner *Rialto*, February 7, 1849.

From *Cimarron Review*, Sept. 1968, courtesy Mrs. Dee W. Eades



Sketch by Cyrus Pease of Edgartown showing the departure of the *Walter Scott* carrying the Edgartown Mining Company to California.

There were 16 passengers aboard, including Jirah Luce, who owned a big house in Holmes Hole, and a Rev. George Denham.<sup>2</sup>

On April 10, the brig *Vesta* sailed from Edgartown with Osander Mayhew of Tisbury as "commander," a title that seems to describe his position in the mining company rather than as master of the brig. There were 22 from the Vineyard on board, most of whom were members of the Winnegahee Trading and Mining Company. Only one was from Edgartown, the others were all from Tisbury and Chilmark, and included George Nelson Hall, M.D.<sup>3</sup>

2. The Jirah Luce House is now owned by the Society and open to the public as a museum during the summer. We have no information on Reverend Denham.

3. *Whalemens's Shipping List*, April 17, 1849.

This seems to have been the first mining company to leave for California with Vineyarders in its membership. Islanders were slow to organize into mining companies. New Bedford and Nantucket companies were already in California when the *Vesta* sailed that April day.

But within a few months three more Vineyard companies prepared to seek their fortunes in gold: the Edgartown Mining Company, which had purchased the ship *Walter Scott* April 3, 1849; the Vineyard Mining Company, which chartered the bark *Sarah* in May; and the Dukes County Mining Company, the ship *Splendid* in August.

Many other Vineyarders headed for California as individuals or as members of off-Island companies, some aboard the schooner *Two Brothers* of Nantucket, the bark *Oscar* from Mattapoisett, and the schooner *L.M. Yale* from Holmes Hole. Others took the faster route, sailing to Panama from New York, crossing the narrow Isthmus and boarding another vessel, sometimes a steamer, to San Francisco. Some even crossed the continent by land. But the greatest number, as would be expected among a seafaring population, sailed around Cape Horn.

The demand for transportation was so great that whaling, which had brought so much wealth to Massachusetts, went into a sharp decline as ship owners turned to the more certain and more profitable passenger and freight business. Whaleships, returning to sell their oil, were refitted in haste "for California." Even some old hulks that had not been to sea for years were somehow made seaworthy.<sup>4</sup>

Those who joined mining companies were usually less adventurous than mariners — often being businessmen, craftsmen and teachers. Joining required the purchase of a share in the company at a cost of \$300 or more to underwrite the cost of passage. The shareholders held meetings before leaving in which they drew up imposing sets of "Rules and Regulations." One Vineyard company,

4. Almost every week in 1849, the New Bedford *Whalemen's Shipping List* reported one or more whalers being sold and fitted out for California.

The Dukes County Mining Company, chartered the ship *Splendid* which had just returned from a successful whaling voyage. They wrote a long constitution.

Article Number One in the constitution read: "We agree to embark for California in the ship *Splendid* of Edgartown, Capt. Jared Fisher, as Master, and Treasurer." They did embark as agreed, sailing September 20, 1849, but with a different master. For some reason, between the time the constitution was drawn up and the ship sailed, Captain Fisher was replaced by Capt. Gustavus A. Baylies of Edgartown. Twenty four of the men served as crew, a large number for a ship that normally required only twelve to work on a non-whaling voyage. Working as a crewman reduced the cost of getting to the mines.

Members blithely agreed to give up various rights and liberties: they promised not to work in the gold fields for merely personal profit and to pool all gold mined; to labor aboard the ship when not working at the mines; to refrain from drinking, gambling, dissipation, immoral conduct, quarrelling or getting into debt. Furthermore, they promised never to desert and to return the ship *Splendid* to her owners within 37 months.<sup>5</sup> With such restrictions, it is not surprising that the company, like virtually all such companies, was disbanded within three months of arriving in California.

Another company, not organized on the Vineyard but with several Vineyarders among its membership, embarked from Mattapoisett on the bark *Oscar*, October 6, 1849. A journal, kept by an unnamed person but believed to have been William Bradley of Edgartown, is an amalgam of a formal log, minutes of company meetings plus informal descriptions of the happenings ashore in their search for gold.

The company even ran the ship. On November 6, two months out of Mattapoisett, the logkeeper wrote:

Commences with fresh gale from ENE steering by the wind

5. The 37-month charter seems to suggest that they expected to be able to live on board while mining or that she would be there to bring them home, with pockets filled with gold. Neither happened.



heading SE called a meeting of the company at 6 p.m. to act upon certain articles recommended by the board of directors and likewise to be determined upon the qualifications of the second mate in the Starboard watch, it not being determined upon at that [time] it was adjourned until the latter part of the day when the second mate resigned his commission . . . <sup>6</sup>

The *Oscar* arrived in San Francisco March 16, 1850, after a voyage of 159 days and found the *Splendid* and the *Sarah* already there, both having left the Vineyard several weeks earlier than the *Oscar*. The newly arrived Vineyarders went aboard the two vessels to exchange news, and no doubt had much fun, but more serious business soon took over from chatter. That serious business was gold and how to go about finding it.

With so many mariners heading for the hills, some ships ended up as abandoned hulks, caught in the shore mud, slowly disintegrating. One such was the *Flora*, whose master, Captain Potter of New London, had left her to follow his crew in search of his pot of gold as mentioned above.

The *Oscar*, however, was to meet no such fate. She lived to go a-whaling again, but only after a shore-side tour of duty as a boarding house for gold miners.<sup>7</sup> On her voyage to California the *Oscar's* skipper had been Capt. John B. Dornin of Edgartown and among the members of the mining company on board were Ebenezer Dexter, Charles Marchant and William Bradley, all Vineyarders. The story of their adventures in their search for gold is told in the journal.

Two days after dropping anchor at San Francisco, the *Oscar's* mining company held a meeting to discuss the matter of getting to the hills. No doubt the option of abandoning the bark was argued, but it was voted to take her up the Sacramento River as far as possible to give the company a base closer to the mines.

6. The log of this California trip (1849-50) is in the Society Archives.

7. Best known of the ships that became boarding houses was the *Niantic* of Warren, R.I., skippered by Capt. Henry Cleaveland of West Tisbury. It became known in San Francisco as *Hotel Niantic*.

On March 22, six days after arriving, they "hove short on our cable and took our anchor and stood up the bay with a fair tide bound to Benecia." The tide changes, a light wind and the river current made it a leisurely journey. The next day, a Saturday, with the tide in their favor and the *Oscar* slowly moving upriver, they "lowered a boat [and] went on shore after game." They arrived at Benecia at 6 p.m., and dropped anchor. Sunday, "some on shore at church," while a party in a small boat was sent upriver to the tiny settlement named New York.

Monday, the scouts came back from New York with a favorable report and the company voted to proceed upriver to that place. Just one month earlier a Fairhaven man named Terry had stopped there and described it this way: "New York contains 5 houses and 5 ships," he wrote tersely.

The company, no doubt becoming impatient over the delays, soon began to fall apart. One member, Nathan H. Barstow, left. There was no requirement that the men stay, it having been "voted that members were at liberty to leave by giving notice thereof and paying \$5 per day for every other days labour performed by the company." It is not clear exactly what that meant and the journal-keeper does not explain. The rest of the company employed themselves in "various ways making Washers [gold-washing pans], pick handles, some washing their clothes and some Lounging about." On March 27, still unable to move upriver because of an opposing wind and tide, they began selling some of the coal they had brought from Mattapoisett to river steamers to raise money. It was not a happy time. "Some sick with bad colds, some down with dysentery."

Then on Friday, March 29, "at 8 o'clock hove short our cable, took our anchor for New York and drifted up river with the tide, at Meridian [noon] grounded upon a bar in Suisan Bay. Got out kedge anchors and made exertions to get the ship off but she resisted our efforts. Sunset low water, ship lying upon her beam ends."

At 3 o'clock, Saturday morning, it was high water and

a strong wind blew up from the west. All hands were called on deck. They got the ship off, but at 6 a.m., she was aground again. At two in the afternoon the tide turned, so they started again, but the kedge warp parted and they lost the anchor.

"Nothing more of interest occurred until our arrival at New York," the phlegmatic journal-keeper noted. "Furled our sails, made all snug and got supper."

There the bark *Oscar* stayed, in New York, at the junction of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. For two weeks the men unloaded the cargo; they rafted lumber ashore; sent down yards; unbent the sails and stowed them in casks. They "got the ship snug to lay her up side of the bank of the river." Six more of the company had resigned to head for the mines, weary of the delays.

At 1 p.m., April 13, 1850, nearly a month after arriving in San Francisco, the final meeting of the company aboard the *Oscar* was held:

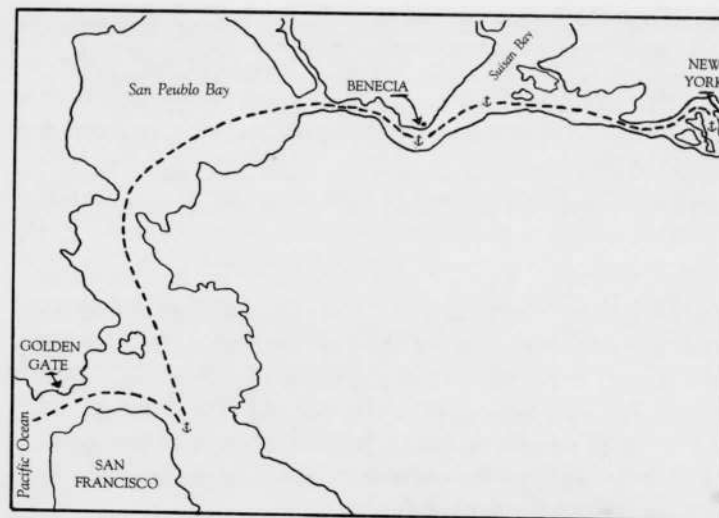
Chose Solomon K. Eaton as our Agent to do the remaining business of the company and in remuneration for his services is to have the use of the ship as a store house and boarding [house]. Likewise to receive 15 per cent for all sales made by him for the company. Voted to dissolve the company having but one negative voice.

But it wasn't until April 18th, five days later, that the company finally finished its chores on the *Oscar* and "took our departure for the mines in sloop *Sarah* by the [way] of Stockton."

One hopes that Solomon Eaton's boarding house was more successful than the miners were.

From Stockton, they set off overland for Angel's Camp. It was a long trip. Saturday, April 27th, nine days later, they arrived, pitched their tents and eagerly went looking for the gold they had come so far to find:

Arose early and shouldering our mining tools to find a place that would pay for working. Meredian, returned and prepared and eat our dinners. P.M. Set our cradles and went



Map of the *Oscar*'s voyage inside San Francisco Bay to New York.

to work in earnest, returned at 5 o'clock, 20 dollars better off than we were at noon.<sup>8</sup>

Fortunately for the weary men, the next day was Sunday. They needed the rest. The journal writer, a devout man, describes this unusual Sabbath:

Arose and found myself in the mountain vastness of California with no sound of the Churchgoing bell to hasten my toilet and prepare myself for religious service. Spent my time in reading and rambling.

All the following week, the men worked the claim, with no great success. Some hired themselves out at \$8 a day "on a quicksilver machine . . . [providing] our principal income," the journal writer reported.

After more than a week of hard work with little success, the group sent the journal-keeper to investigate the prospecting possibilities on the Stanislaus River. He described his trip:

Arose early, dispatched a hasty meal, rolled up my blankets and put on my way for the Stanislaus River. Passed through

8. For the entire company to come up with only \$20 for a half day doesn't seem like much, although it was just casual panning at this point. However, it must have indicated to them that the river banks were not lined with gold.

Carson's diggings, arrived upon the Stanislaus, sun about meridian. P.M., passed down the River some two miles to what is called "The Vineyard Camp" or Dusty Bar. Evening. Camped upon Dusty Bar in company with Z. Dillingham.<sup>9</sup>

After two days of prospecting along the river, he decided "there was a prospect of doing something better than we were at Angel's Camp," and he headed back to report his findings to the others.

The company, smaller now, voted to make the move.

It took them three days to locate a team that would haul their goods to the crest of the hill that stood between the two rivers. Saturday morning, May 11, they took off:

Engaged a team to take us to the top of the hill at the base of which runs the Stanislaus. Said hill is 1600 feet high and verrey steep upon the side next the River. So much so that the teamer would go no farther.

The next day was Sunday, the devout journal keeper unhappy:

Packed our things and started for the Stanislaus, breaking the holy Sabbath, but there was no remedy, it being the only Sabbath broke by us with labour while in the mines. Meridian, camped upon top of the hill looking down upon the Stanislaus. Paid the teamer \$50, the price agreed upon.

For three days, they sent men down to the river to try to hire pack mules to haul their goods down the steep trail from the top of the hill. None could be found. The men waiting on the hill went mining in a nearby creek, ending up with \$25 worth of gold dust. On the fourth day, several packed their blankets and one tent and back-packed them down to the Stanislaus River. That evening, the rest of the company arrived, having finally located some mules.

On Friday, May 17th, the day after arriving at Dusty Bar, the journal states:

Arose early and selected our sites for mining operations. P.M. Engaged in making preparations for the same. Evening, held a meeting of our company and concluded to start a

9. Zenas Dillingham of Tisbury had sailed to California on the Schooner *Rialto*, Feb.7,1849, with the first Vineyard contingent to head for the gold fields. He was back home by January 1851.



From *Forty-Niners* by Archer Butler Hulbert

*Mining on the Stanislaus River where the Vineyard Camp was located.*

trading post at Dusty Bar. Deputised Thomas Randall to proceed to Stockton and purchase goods for the same forthwith and then down to the ship and get the remainder of our provisions and pack them out to us.

The disillusionment obviously had started. The sure income from a trading post looked good to the men working the mine. Each day, while waiting for Randall to return, they panned for gold, hoping for a big strike. Each day, except Sunday, the journal entry was the same: "Employed mining with tolerable success." Sunday was the Lord's Day and, desperate though they were for income, no mining was done: "Attended divine service delivered by Hiram Jernegan."<sup>10</sup>

Thomas Randall had been successful on his buying trip. On Thursday, May 30th, a train of mules arrived with the

10. Hiram Jernegan of Edgartown sailed May 7,1849, a member of the Edgartown Mining Company, aboard the ship *Walter Scott*. He seems to have become the mining minister, although a farmer at home. He married Abigail Worth, Nov.18,1824.



supplies he bought at Stockton plus a trading tent. They eagerly set up the store:

All hands turned to and put up the tent and arraigned the goods for customers.

Our journal-keeper took up lodging in the trading tent. The next day the men

chose Thomas C. Hammond to tend our trading tent and to do our cooking while [we are] mining. The rest of the company continued their mining operations. Everything going on harmoniously together. Evening, our trading tent becomes a place of resort for the public in general.

One day later, Thomas Randall arrived with another mule train, bringing the provisions from the *Sarah*.

Within a week, the trading tent had become the social center of Dusty Bar. They became increasingly disillusioned with the long hours of shoveling gravel and the small production of gold. On Thursday, June 6th, the journal reported:

The Company still toiling on for filthy gain. P.M. The same routine of duty. Evening spent in spinning yarns in our trading tent or visiting around the camp which has been distinguished by the name of the Vineyard Camp, there being about 100 men in it from that Island.<sup>11</sup>

Dissatisfied with the amount of gold being recovered, the journal writer and Thomas Randall made several trips to other streams to check on their prospects. None seemed any better than where they were and that wasn't getting any more productive: "Our company still continue to mine it for poor pay."

Saturday, June 29th, they took inventory at the trading post:

P.M. finds us employed taking account of stock, cash on hand, and etc. Declared a dividend of \$150 on a share, stock on hand \$1200. Debts in Stockton \$200, reserved funds to ballance the same.

The trading post was looking better all the time. Then on Sunday, June 30th, this sad entry:

Another Sabbath is welcomed to the weary miner. Finished

11. Those 100 were about one-third of the nearly 300 Islanders in the gold fields.

my toilet. Ebenezer Dexter and myself start for Angel's Camp, visiting. Arrive at 11 o'clock. P.M. 4 o'clock start upon our return home, meeting A.C. Bennett who informs us of the Death of Prince D. Athearn by Dysentery. Evening: Passed gloomily occasioned by the sickness and death in the camp. The number of deaths 5, all from Martha's Vineyard.

Names of the individuals: [Jonson] Simpson, coloured, Prince D. Athearn, Franklin Mayhew, Austin Smith, Caleb Rotch.<sup>12</sup>

Hiram Jernegan conducted the funerals. More and more men fell ill of dysentery and ague. They tried shifting the camp upriver, with no improvement; then they tried declaring days off, to give the men more rest, but that did not improve things. All kinds of medicines were tried, including large doses of laudanum; they tried sleeping in hammocks, but that had little effect.

In July Philip C. Pratt "departed this life." In August, William P. Dexter and Asa C. Bennett did the same. Our journal writer came down with a severe dysentery: "Awoke with violent pain in my bowels, found I had the Dysentery severe, obliged to give up work entirely."

A week later he decided to seek treatment at "Mormon Camp," which was a few hours' journey on horseback. From September 4th to the 30th, he was there under the care of Dr. Horace Austin of Providence, R.I. Still no better, on October 1st, he decided to go to Stockton. His bills at the camp: Doctor Austin, \$85; board and room, \$22.

The three-day trip almost killed him: "Jolted almost to death in a mule wagon. After riding some 16 miles put up at a tent upon the road. My Dysentery worse." Two days later, he arrived at Stockton and checked into the Mount Vernon House, putting himself under the care of Doctor Shurtleff, "who thought he could cure me." After three weeks, still not well, he embarked on a sloop for the trip

12. There is a gravestone for Prince D. Athearn in the West Tisbury Cemetery. He sailed from Holmes Hole, Oct. 15, 1849, on the schooner *L.M. Yale*, as had Jonson Simpson and Caleb Rotch. Austin Smith of Chilmark and Franklin Mayhew of Tisbury had sailed on the *Vesta*.

down-river to New York, where he had left his old ship, the *Oscar*. At 10 a.m., the sloop tied up to the *Oscar* and the sick man unloaded his gear, learning that they were fitting out the *Oscar* for the voyage home.

But at that moment and in that place, the *Oscar* was home enough. He retired to his old bunk. Come morning, the world seemed better:

Felt quite smart. Got Breakfast, etc. . . . whiled away the hours in pleasant conversation.

He learned that the bark *Sarah*, Capt. John O. Morse of Edgartown, was fitting out for a short whaling cruise after which she would head back to the Vineyard.<sup>13</sup> Captain Morse was in New York trying to sign up a crew. On Nov. 5, 1850, our journal writer found the strength to dicker with the captain for the cooper's berth:

My health still improving. Trying to bargain with Capt. Morse to go a whaling in Bark *Sarah* in the capacity of cooper & boatsteer. P.M. Saw Capt. Morse, he offers me the 55th lay to go. Evening. Considering upon my offer, concluded to go if he would give me the 45th.

The following day the bargaining continued:

Saw Capt. Morse, offered to go for the 45th, offers me 50th! Finally offers me 48th, agreed to go for that.

On Friday, November 8th, he left New York for Benecia, where the *Sarah* was anchored: "Evening 6 o'clock started for Benecia. 10 1/2, arrived at Bark *Sarah* and took up my abode in her steerage." By November 15th, he felt well enough to go back to work: "Employed myself cooping, first day's labour performed by me for 77 days. . . Retired early, quite tired!"

His old ship, *Oscar*, came down the river from New York with more sad news: "Heard of another death of the *Oscar's* company. John Baird, who died of cholera at the French Camp."

Then, on November 26th,

at 9 o'clock took our anchor and bid farewell to Benecia

13. Captain Morse, like many others, never made it home to the Vineyard. He died of dropsy at Paita, May 27, 1851, while on this whaling voyage. He was 48.

and in company with the *Oscar* worked down into San Pueblo Bay.

There was no expression of regret whatsoever at abandoning his dream of a fortune in gold.

After recruiting, watering and all the fuss of getting ready for a whaling voyage, on December 21, 1850, the crew of the *Sarah*

hove short on our chain, loosed our topsails . . . [and soon] took our anchor and made sail. 2 P.M. passed through between the heads of San Francisco bay. Sunset, passed the bar, it breaking upon it from a heavy swell heaving from the Westward.

The bark *Sarah* was once again a-whaling. She was the second of the Gold Rush vessels to set sail from San Francisco, disillusioned with mining.<sup>14</sup> The Vineyarders on board were no doubt unaware of their place in history and it is even less likely they would have cared had they known.

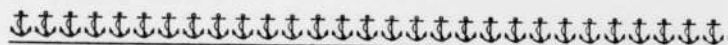
They and their ship had played a small part in the great gold lottery and failed — but out there lurking in the vast Pacific were hundred-barrel sperm whales ready to be taken.

Things were looking up!

14. The first was the *Popmunnnett* of Fairhaven.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Six Island Whalemen Murdered In History's Most Brutal Mutiny

by ARTHUR R. RAILTON

**I**T HAPPENED in 1824 in mid-Pacific, on the other side of the world. Before it ended, thirteen men had been murdered, six of them Vineyarders.

It was the *Globe* mutiny, "the most horrible mutiny that is recounted in the annals of the whale-fishery from any port or nation."<sup>1</sup>

Killed in a most brutal manner at midnight January 25, 1824, were Capt. Thomas Worth, master of the whaling ship *Globe*, 1st Mate William Beetle, 2nd Mate John Lumbert and 3rd Mate Nathaniel Fisher. All were from Edgartown except Lumbert, who was from Chilmark.

But those four murders were only the first of a series of killings, all barbarous. Final toll: 13 dead from a crew of 21. Six of the eight who managed to survive escaped certain death by "stealing" the *Globe* one night and sailing east, crossing the Pacific in a ship nearly stripped of equipment and provisions, sailed by an untrained navigator and manned by a makeshift crew of five, an extraordinary act of courage and seamanship. After four months and 7500 miles of sailing, they made it to Valparaiso, weak from

1. Alexander Starbuck, *The History of the American Whale-Fishery*, C.E. Goodspeed, Boston, 1924, p. 243. Starbuck is one of several authors who have written about the *Globe* mutiny. James A. Michener and A. Grove Day did so in *Rascals in Paradise*, Random House, N.Y., 1957. A first-hand account by two survivors, William Lay and Cyrus M. Hussey, *A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board the Ship Globe, etc.*, was published by the authors, New London, Conn., 1828, and reprinted by The Abbey Press, N.Y., date unknown. It is this reprint that is cited in this article. These books are available at the Society and members who want a more detailed account should read them. The present article emphasizes the Vineyard involvement and tells the story with a relatively broad brush.

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malnutrition and thirst, but alive.<sup>2</sup>

The remaining two survivors of the 21-man crew were rescued by a U.S. Navy vessel after spending 22 months in semi-slavery on a tiny Pacific island near the equator.

Unlike most famous mutinies, this one seems to have occurred without real provocation. It was truly irrational, the work of an egocentric maniac. As Jeremiah Pease wrote in his diary when the news reached the Vineyard, it was a "horrid affair."<sup>3</sup>

The *Globe's* ill-fated voyage began in Edgartown on December 19, 1822. A Nantucket whaler, she was outfitted for the voyage in Edgartown after returning from a successful Pacific voyage under Capt. George W. Gardner of Nantucket. Captain Gardner had been so impressed with his young First Mate Thomas Worth that he convinced her owners that the 29-year-old Edgartown man was qualified to command the ship on her next voyage.

Thomas, no doubt feeling financially secure with his master's rating, married Hannah Kelley Mayhew July 4, 1822, Rev. Joseph Thaxter of the Congregational church officiating. The bride, daughter of Deacon William Mayhew, had grown up in Governor Thomas Mayhew's homestead on Edgartown harbor.<sup>4</sup> The bridegroom, son of Jethro and Velina Pease Worth of Edgartown, was a handsome young man with a promising future as a master mariner.<sup>5</sup>

William Beetle, 2nd Mate on the *Globe*, 22 years old, was from Wintucket in Edgartown. Son of Reuben and Jedidah Coffin Beetle, he married Eliza Pease in September three months before setting out on the *Globe* voyage. She was the daughter of Peter Pease of Edgartown.

John Lumbert of Chilmark, 25 years old, the 3rd Mate, was the son of Abisha Lumbert of Chilmark and Hepsibah

2. Unfortunately, no first-hand account of this remarkable voyage seems to have been published.

3. *Jeremiah Pease Diary*, p. 44, this issue.

4. The house was on South Water St., in the open lot adjacent to the Mayhew Parsonage of the Congregational Church. It was demolished in 1910.

5. A portrait of Thomas Worth is owned by the Society and hangs in the Thomas Cooke House.



Coffin of Edgartown, and had grown up on a farm overlooking Menemsha Pond.

The fourth officer, Nathaniel Fisher, is believed to have been from Chappaquiddick but little is known about him and his family except that his father was Amaziah Fisher, son of Nathaniel. The family seems to have moved to Nantucket after the mutiny.

Thus the three officers whose ages we know averaged a little under 26 years, a youthful lot. But they ran a tight ship, if we can believe what Third Mate John Lumbert wrote in a letter to his parents on November 8, 1823, while the *Globe* was at Oahu in the Sandwich Islands (Lumbert spelled it phonetically, "Woahoo"), preparing to set out on her tragic voyage:

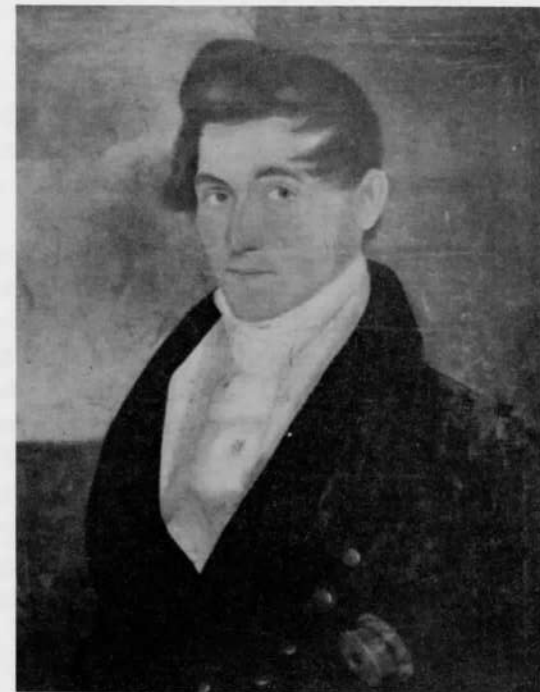
... our ship goes well and we have a man that will make her walk. Capt. worth is a fine man and Mr. beetle is a fine man and i am in all contented as ever i was in my life. . .

This letter, which is in the archives of the Society, may be the last surviving message from the officers of the *Globe*. Lumbert seemed pleased with the voyage thus far:

... All tho the pay is small, to beat round cape horn where whales are wild and scaterin and oil 40 [90?] cents per galon. All tho our luck small, we are about eleven months out, 600 barrels. i like [?] that i have dun my part. . .

Seven weeks later, on December 29, 1823, the *Globe* set sail, minus six of the original crew who had deserted, and another whom Captain Worth had discharged. One of the deserters, Constant Lewis, seaman, was from Frog Alley, Holmes Hole. The home towns of the others are not known, but there is at least one Vineyard name among them: Holder Henman, Jeremiah Ingham, both seamen; John Cleveland, cook, thought to be the son of Sylvanus Cleveland of Tisbury; and Joseph Ignatius Prass, cabin boy.

What caused them to desert is unknown. Desertions were common in whaling so we shouldn't read too much into these, but they may suggest something about Captain Worth's discipline. However, two surviving crewmen, in an



Capt. Thomas Worth, murdered master of the *Globe*.

account of the mutiny published in 1828, wrote that "there had been no abuse" on the voyage before leaving Oahu. Whatever the motivation, their decision to desert was perhaps the best decision they ever made.<sup>6</sup>

To fill the empty berths, Captain Worth signed on seven "beachcombers" at Oahu; "abandoned wretches," one survivor called them. Their selection was clearly a tragic mistake. It was among these seven newcomers that the ringleader of the mutiny, Samuel B. Comstock, boatsteerer from Nantucket, enlisted his fellow conspirators. Without them on board, it seems there could have been no mutiny. Except for Comstock, none of the original crew who sailed from Edgartown was active in the takeover.

Sam Comstock, the mutiny leader, was born on

6. Lay and Hussey, p.20. They write that seven crewmen left at the Sandwich Islands and certainly they would know. We can only account for five crewmen by name however.

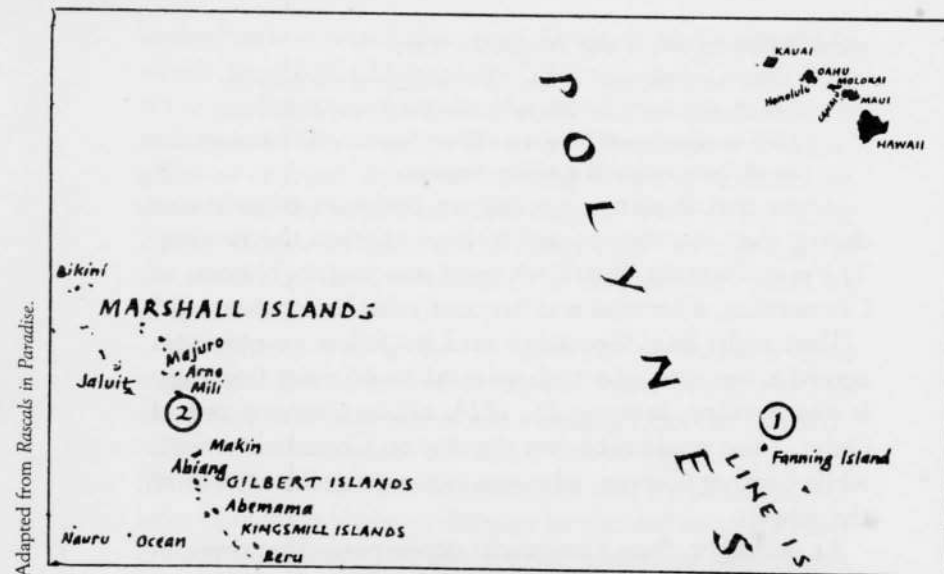
Nantucket in 1800, son of a Quaker schoolmaster, Nathan Comstock. His family was not living on Nantucket when he signed on the *Globe*, having moved to Dutchess County, New York, where Schoolmaster Comstock was teaching at the Quaker school, Nine Partners. Young Sam had attended that well-regarded preparatory school, making him one of the better educated members of the *Globe* crew.

But he hadn't inherited his father's love of schooling. Nor the Quaker ideal of peace. He had grander, more exciting dreams. While at Nine Partners, age 13, he ran away from home to become a mariner. After one voyage aboard a cargo vessel plying between New York and Liverpool, he decided to go a-whaling, hauling cargo was not adventurous enough.

On his first whaling voyage, he diligently studied navigation, learned the skill of harpooning and, with his quick mind and self-confident air, he was soon promoted to boatsteerer. Returning to Nantucket, he sought a boatsteerer's berth on the *Globe* and was quickly hired by young Captain Worth. By the time the *Globe* arrived at the Sandwich Islands (where John Lumbert had written his letter), Comstock had proved himself to be a reliable, skilled mariner, one who some day seemed certain to have his own command.

But working up through the ranks to whaling master was not Sam Comstock's goal. He nurtured the romantic dream of becoming king of his own Pacific island. Shipping on the *Globe* seems to have been a calculated move towards that end.

His was a bizarre scheme. He planned to take over the ship in mid-Pacific, sail her to a remote island where he would so befriend the natives that they would accept him as their king. Then, in his maniacal plot, he would persuade the natives to kill the other crewmen, eliminating all witnesses and competitors to his reign. By destroying the *Globe*, using her timbers to build his palace, he would make it appear that the ship and all hands had been lost at sea.



The mutiny occurred off Fanning Island (1). The mutineers landed on Mulgrave Island (2), now known as Mili in the Marshall Islands.

He then would live out his life as king of the island. It was truly the plan of an egomaniac.

As boatsteerer and harpooner on the whaler, Comstock lived with the officers, not with the seamen. He soon earned their confidence and was treated with considerable respect by his superior officers, especially Captain Worth. "The conduct and deportment of the captain toward this individual was always decorous and gentlemanly," is how two surviving crewmen, Lay and Hussey, described the relationship.

The three watches were headed by the two boatsteerers, Comstock and Gilbert Smith, plus Third Mate Fisher, the last two being from Edgartown. By coincidence or by the favor of Captain Worth, Comstock's young brother, George, a 16-year-old seaman, was helmsman on his watch.

When none of the original crew showed interest in his plan, Comstock turned his attention to the newcomers who had signed on at Honolulu. These men, one crewman wrote,

were different from the original crew:

... the men, shippin at Oahu, in the room of the deserters, were abandoned wretches, who frequently were the cause of severe reprimands from the officers, and in one instance one of them received a severe flogging.<sup>7</sup>

It was this flogging, a relatively common punishment during that era, that is said to have sparked the mutiny. The man Captain Worth whipped was Joseph Thomas of Connecticut, a perverse and frequently disobedient seaman.<sup>8</sup>

That night Sam Comstock and his fellow conspirators agreed it was time to act; there must be no more floggings. It was Sunday, January 25, 1824, about a month out of Oahu. They would take over the ship on Comstock's watch while brother George, who was not a conspirator, was at the wheel.

At midnight, Sam Comstock, accompanied by three of the Oahu newcomers, Silas Payne, John Oliver and William Humphries, went silently into the captain's cabin. With an ax, Comstock split open the head of Captain Worth, asleep on a hammock. The other three officers were killed in their turn, all within a few minutes, all with brutality, by the maniacal Comstock. Thus, four promising young Vineyard mariners were murdered at sea, near Fanning Island, thousands of miles from home.

Comstock took command and in two days had ordered another killing. Hanged was one of his co-conspirators, William Humphries, a black man who had been ship's steward. Comstock's brother George had seen Humphries loading a pistol. Humphries explained, "I have heard something very strange and I am going to be ready for it." George, who had been promoted to steward by his brother after the killings, reported what he had seen.

Sam apparently decided to demonstrate his toughness. He

7. *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

8. Thomas is a mystery member. Michener makes much of that fact in his account. He may have signed on at Oahu, but there is no record of that. Thomas was unpopular with the other crewmen. A survivor, he came home on the *Globe* and was the only one tried by a court as a mutineer. He was acquitted.

immediately arrested the negro. A mock trial was held in which he accused Humphries "of a treacherous and base act in loading a pistol for the purpose of shooting Mr. Payne and myself." The verdict, given by Comstock, was quick: guilty as charged, death by hanging from the yardarm. So there would be none who could claim to be innocent of the killing, Comstock ordered the entire crew "to take hold of the execution rope, to be ready to run him up" when he rang the bell.

Humphries was given 14 seconds to make a final statement. Before he had uttered a dozen words, the bell was struck and Humphries was swinging from the yardarm.

Comstock's original intention was to land at Fanning Island, which was close to where the mutiny occurred, but after examining it from a distance he decided to seek a more remote island, one less likely to be visited by Americans. After two weeks of sailing, he found what he wanted: it was Mulgrave Island, a small atoll group just about the over-all size of Martha's Vineyard, but consisting mostly of lagoons and small islets connected by coral reefs, passable on foot at low tide. Away from the normal route of whaleships, it would provide a perfect hideout for the future king.

On Sunday, February 15, the men began to set up camp on one of the atolls, unloading provisions, clothing, tools, even sails and other gear from the *Globe*. They ferried them ashore on rafts made with the ship's spars.

Quickly, Comstock began to befriend the curious natives, giving them items from the ship's stores. This enraged his second-in-command, Silas Payne, from Saybrook, Connecticut, who was sure they would need everything on the ship to survive. The original crewmen, now compliant workers, were also outraged. They knew that they would never be able to leave this island if Comstock gave away the ship's stores. While they had killed nobody thus far, they realized that they must stop Comstock:

...there were those around him whose souls shuddered at the idea of being forever exiled from their country and



friends, whose hands were yet unstained by blood, but who might yet imbrue them, for the purpose of escape from lonely exile, and cruel tyranny.<sup>9</sup>

Payne was determined to take action. He had not agreed to permanent exile on a remote island when he joined the mutiny. The others backed him as they began to sense that they would all be killed if something wasn't done. He went to Comstock and told him that he must stop giving away the ship's stores, which belonged to all of them, not to him personally.

The meeting took place in the tent and it was rancorous. Lay and Hussey described it this way:

After considerable altercation. . . Comstock was heard to say, "I helped to take the ship, and have navigated her to this place. I have also done all I could to get the sails and rigging on shore, and now you may do what you please with her; but if any man wants anything of me, I'll take a musket with him!"

He then went back on board the *Globe*, collected a cutlass, a knife and some hooks and lines, and left.

. . . immediately [he] joined a gang of natives, and endeavored to incite them to slay Payne and his companions. At dusk of this day he passed the tent, accompanied by about fifty of the natives, in the direction of their village, upwards of a league distant.

Payne was certain that Comstock would incite the natives to kill the crew, leaving him as the sole survivor. Then by distributing the ship's stores among the natives he would soon convince them to proclaim him king. The men were worried. A guard was posted around the tent that night with orders to shoot anyone who approached. The night passed without incident.

Boatsteerer Gilbert Smith of Edgartown, who had equal rank with Comstock but had been passive thus far, agreed with Payne that Comstock must be killed, although "poor Smith, like ourselves [wrote Lay and Hussey], dare do no other than remain upon the side of neutrality." John Oliver,

9. Lay and Hussey, p.45.

an Englishman, and Payne, both ruffians from Honolulu, drew up a plan to kill Comstock.

The following morning, Comstock came over from the native village where he had spent the night. As he approached the crew's tent, he drew his sword. Payne and three others were armed and waiting. Comstock saw the raised muskets and cried out, "Don't shoot me, don't shoot me! I will not hurt you!"

Indeed, he wouldn't. They were determined he wouldn't. Four muskets were fired, two balls hit their target: one entering Comstock's breast, passing out near his backbone; the other piercing his head. Lay and Hussey described Comstock's end this way:

Payne, fearing he might pretend to be shot, ran to him with an axe, and nearly severed his head from his body. . . . Thus ended the life of perhaps as cruel, blood-thirsty and vindictive a being as ever bore the form of humanity.<sup>10</sup>

Comstock was given a formal burial, his body respectfully wrapped in a canvas bag, his personal possessions, including his sword, were buried with him. Only his watch was saved. It would be a valuable navigation aid when it came time to leave.

"The ceremonies consisted in reading a chapter from the Bible over him, and firing a musket." Boatsteerer Gilbert Smith of Edgartown gave the reading, "acting under the orders of Payne."

It is difficult to imagine what the natives thought as they watched this graveside service. A man, brutally murdered by his friends as he pleaded for mercy, was given a dignified, religious burial with military honors. They must have wondered what gods the white men worshipped.

Silas Payne from Sag Harbor, Connecticut, the number-

10. It would be interesting to know who actually wrote this narrative. Surely, there was a ghost writer involved. Hussey was a cooper from Nantucket and Lay a seaman from Saybrook, Conn., and it is unlikely that they had the literary skill to write such passages as this one. The book was published in 1828, less than two years after their return to the U.S. Incidentally, Hussey immediately shipped out on another whaler, the ship *Congress* of Nantucket, and died at sea off Cape Horn in 1829 while returning home from that voyage. He had no chance to enjoy his fame as an author.

two mutineer, was now fully in command. One of those "abandoned wretches" picked up at Oahu, he trusted nobody. He ordered that the *Globe's* two binnacle compasses be brought ashore and placed in his custody, thus assuring that no one would be able to sail her away without his consent. He ordered six men, under the command of the mild Boatsteerer Gilbert Smith, whom he trusted, to carry out the order. Concerned that the natives, upset over Comstock's murder, might try to destroy the *Globe*, he ordered the six men to sleep aboard her while he and the others slept on shore. That was a mistake as he was soon to learn.

Boatsteerer Smith and his men went aboard the *Globe* to get the compasses. Smith, realizing that they must make their escape, sent ashore the hanging compass that Captain Worth had in his cabin in place of the second binnacle compass, which he concealed. Payne did not notice the switch, being unaware there was a third compass on board.

Smith discussed his plan with the other five men on board, two of whom were, like him, from Edgartown, Stephen and Peter C. Kidder.<sup>11</sup> The other three on board were George Comstock of Nantucket, brother of the mutiny leader, Joseph Thomas of Connecticut, the man whose flogging had sparked the mutiny, and Anthony Henson, a Hawaiian.<sup>12</sup> They all agreed they must make their escape at once.

Here is how Boatsteerer Smith told the story:

At 7 p.m. we began to make preparations for our escape with the ship. I went below to prepare some weapons for our defence should we be attacked by Payne, while the others, as silently as possible, were employed in clearing the running rigging, for everything was in the utmost confusion.

11. The two Kidders were probably brothers, sons of Benjamin Kidder of Edgartown. Our genealogical records show only Stephen as Benjamin's son and are probably in error since they show Peter C. as Stephen's son, which seems impossible. The only Gilbert Smith we show is Gilbert W., son of Samuel. He is listed as an Edgartown farmer, born 1787. If this is the *Globe's* Smith, he was among the oldest on board, being 37 at the time of the mutiny.

12. Some accounts say Henson was a Barnstable Indian. He was one of those who were signed on at Oahu. Lay and Hussey call him a Hawaiian.

Having found one musket, three bayonets, and some whale lances, they were laid handy, to prevent the ship being boarded. A handsaw well greased was laid upon the windlass to saw off the cable, and the only remaining hatchet on board was placed by the mizzenmast to cut the stern moorings when the ship should have sufficiently swung off. Taking one man with me, we went up on the fore-topsailyard, loosed the sail and turned out the reefs, while two others were loosing the main-topsail, and mainsail. . . By this time, the moon was rising which rendered it dangerous to delay, for those who had formed a resolution to swim on board, and accompany us.<sup>13</sup> . . . It was now half past nine o'clock, when I took the handsaw, and in less than two minutes the cable was off. The ship paid off very quickly, and when her head was off the land, there being a breeze from that quarter, the hawser was cut and all the sail we could make upon the ship immediately set, a fine fair wind blowing. . . we congratulated each other upon our fortunate escape, for even with a vast extent of ocean to traverse, hope excited in our bosoms a belief that we should again embrace our friends, and our joy was heightened by the reflection that we might be the means of rescuing the innocents left behind, and having the guilty punished.

Thus began a four-month voyage that ended at Valparaiso, June 14, 1824, a 7500-mile voyage "most miraculously completed," according to the United States Consul Michael Hogan, who took depositions from Boatsteerer Smith and the others. Refitted and provisioned, the *Globe* was placed under the command of Capt. James King of Brewster; a crew was signed on and she set sail for home, carrying Smith and the five other escapees. As reported by Jeremiah Pease in his diary elsewhere in this issue, the *Globe* arrived in Edgartown on November 18, 1824.

But back in the Pacific, the killing had not ended.

Remaining on *Mulgrave* were eight men: Silas Payne, now the leader; John Oliver, second in command; Joseph Brown, a Hawaiian; Thomas Liliston; Rowland Coffin; William Lay; Cyrus M. Hussey; and Columbus Worth. The only members

13. This is a confusing statement. Were others planning to join them from shore?

## Globe Mutiny Victims and Survivors

### Original Crew

Thomas Worth, master	Edg. Killed by mutineers
William Beetle, 1st mate	Edg. Killed by mutineers
John Lumbert, 2nd mate	Chil. Killed by mutineers
Nathaniel Fisher, 3rd mate	Edg. Killed by mutineers
Samuel Comstock, boatsteerer	Nan. Killed by crew, Mulgrave Is.
Columbus Worth, seaman	Edg. Killed by Mulgrave natives
Roland Jones, seaman	Edg. Killed by Mulgrave natives
Roland Coffin, 2nd cooper	Nan. Killed by Mulgrave natives
Gilbert Smith, boatsteerer	Edg. Escaped on <i>Globe</i>
Stephen Kidder, seaman	Edg. Escaped on <i>Globe</i>
Peter Kidder, seaman	Edg. Escaped on <i>Globe</i>
George Comstock, seaman	Nan. Escaped on <i>Globe</i>
Anthony Henson, seaman	Barnstable Escaped on <i>Globe</i>
*Joseph Thomas, seaman	Conn. Escaped on <i>Globe</i>
William Lay, seaman	Conn. Rescued by Navy, Mulgrave Is.
Cyrus Hussey, cooper	Nan. Rescued by Navy, Mulgrave Is.
Constant Lewis, seaman	Holmes Hole Deserted at Oahu before mutiny
Holder Henman, seaman	Deserted at Oahu before mutiny
Jeremiah Ingham, seaman	Deserted at Oahu before mutiny
John Cleveland, cook	Deserted at Oahu before mutiny
Joseph Prass, cabin boy	Deserted at Oahu before mutiny

### Crewmen joining at Oahu

William Humphries, steward	Phil. Hanged at sea by mutineers
Thomas Lilliston, seaman	Killed by Mulgrave natives
Silas Payne, seaman	Killed by Mulgrave natives
John Oliver, seaman	England Killed by Mulgrave natives
Joseph Brown, seaman	Oahu Killed by Mulgrave natives

\*There is a question about Thomas. Some believe he signed on at Oahu, but that seems incorrect.

of the original crew were Coffin, Lay, Hussey and Worth.

The natives had been astonished that morning when they saw that the *Globe* was gone. They rushed to the white men's tent, assuming they all had left. Payne, angered by Smith's successful break for freedom, told the natives that the off-shore wind that night had pulled the ship's anchor and that because she was so poorly rigged she would never be able to return and would be lost at sea.

That seemed to satisfy the natives, but Payne knew that the escape meant that their whereabouts would some day be known and that they would very likely be captured and brought to justice if they stayed on Mulgrave. He ordered the men to take one of their two whaleboats apart and use its planking to increase the freeboard and to add a deck covering to the second boat to make it seaworthy for sailing to another island.

While working on the boats, the men became increasingly friendly with the natives who traded foodstuffs with them for items from the ship's stores that could be spared. There seemed to be no hostility among them, according to the account of William Lay and Cyrus M. Hussey: "We continued to put the utmost confidence in them [the natives], or more properly speaking to live without any fear of them."

There were several atolls in the Mulgrave group and the Americans visited them, meeting more natives. During these trips, Lay and Hussey became acquainted with two native families and were invited to stay overnight. It was beginning to seem that the two groups, the whites and the natives, might be able to coexist happily. While they didn't talk openly about leaving, they continued to work on enlarging the boat.

Then the two leaders, Payne and Oliver, together with a few others, went exploring for a different purpose. A purpose that would lead to disaster. Here is how the two survivors described it:

They were absent but one night, when they returned,



bringing with them two young women, whom Payne and Oliver took as their wives. The women apparently showed no dissatisfaction, but on the contrary appeared much diverted. Payne now put such confidence in the natives that he dispensed with having a watch kept during the night, and slept as secure as though he had been in his native country.

But the following morning, one of the women was gone. Payne, Oliver and Lilliston, armed with muskets, set out to bring her back. Storming into the village, they fired their muskets into the air, terrorizing the natives. They found the young woman, who was being hidden by the other women. Forcing her back to their tent, they "gave her a severe flogging, and then put her in irons." This was too much for the natives. A large number rushed down to the beach and began destroying the boat the men had been working on. Their actions forced Payne to negotiate. The crew was overwhelmingly outnumbered. He agreed to everything the natives wanted even "to be governed by them and to adopt their mode of living."<sup>14</sup>

It was the only thing he could do, faced as he was by a mob of natives armed with clubs and spears. For a few hours, it seemed that his peace plan had worked and that they would be able to finish enlarging the boat and escape to another island.

"The natives now began to help themselves to whatever articles suited them," Lay wrote. Then, without warning, the natives attacked. Here is how survivor Lay described what happened:

. . . all at once my ears were astounded with the most terrifying whoops and yells; then a massacre commenced, but little exceeded by the one perpetrated on board the *Globe*. Our men fled in all directions, but met a foe at every turn.

Lilliston and Joe Brown (the Sandwich Islander) fell within six feet of me, and as soon as down, the natives macerated their heads with large stones. The first whom I saw killed was Columbus Worth. An old woman, apparently sixty

14. Lay and Hussey, p.69.

years of age, ran him through with a spear, and finished him with stones.<sup>15</sup>

All the white men were brutally killed except William Lay and Cyrus Hussey, both of whom were saved by the families they had met earlier. They were taken to another part of the island by their saviours.

The next day, the two survivors were brought back to the scene of the massacre:

We asked, and obtained leave from our masters, to bury the bodies which lay scattered about. We dug some graves in the sand, and after finishing this melancholy duty, were directed to launch the canoes, preparatory to our departure (for we had come in canoes), when we begged permission, which was readily granted, to take some flour, bread, and pork, and our respective masters assisted us in getting a small quantity of these articles into the largest canoe. We also took a blanket each, some shoes, a number of books, including a Bible, and soon arrived at a landing place near the village.<sup>16</sup>

Lay and Hussey were then separated, each living with a different family on a different atoll. They were treated kindly, but with the benevolence bestowed upon slaves. For twenty-two months they lived as natives, dressed like them, ate like them, and learned enough of their language for basic communication. Those were not easy months for the two white-skinned, fair-haired young men with tender feet. They lived virtually naked in the hot sun of the Equator and walked on the sharp coral of the atoll, their feet bleeding until the skin thickened. But they survived, allowed to see each other only rarely, both wondering if they would ever be rescued.

On November 23, 1825, the U.S. Schooner *Dolphin* was seen anchoring at the head of the island. The natives hid the two Americans, fearing retribution for what they had done to the others. For a week, the vessel remained there, sending parties ashore obviously searching for something.

15. Columbus Worth of Edgartown was a nephew of the murdered Captain Worth and was only 14 years old when they sailed from Edgartown.

16. *Ibid.*, pp.74-75.

The natives offered no help. Lay knew it was an American vessel and was sure that they were looking for the *Globe* mutineers with orders to take them back to be put on trial. He was willing to stand before any court. Neither he nor Hussey had "blood on their hands."

But the natives kept the two men hidden and it seemed that the vessel would soon depart without discovering them. Lay proposed a plan. He told the natives that the schooner was not from his country, it was too small. He would help drive them off. He offered to speak to them, invite them ashore at a certain spot where the natives could attack them.

After much discussion, the natives agreed. He and about 100 of the natives went to the beach and he shouted across the water to the schooner. A small boat soon headed toward shore. In English, which the natives could not understand, he warned that the natives were waiting to kill them and that they should be well armed before coming ashore.

The Americans were armed. They came ashore, pistols ready. Lay broke away from the natives and ran down to the boat. The officer asked who he was, was he from the *Globe*? His orders were to find the mutineers.

Lay, by now brown, long-haired and naked, looked not at all like an American sailor. Quickly, he told the officer who he was and that he and another crewman, Hussey, were the only *Globe* survivors and that Hussey was being held on another atoll. The natives, sitting on the beach some distance away, made no move to interfere. They could not understand the conversation. Only the old man who had saved Lay from the massacre ran down to him and tried to pull him away from the sailors, but the officer threatened him with a pistol and he turned away with tears in his eyes.

The Americans then set out to find Hussey, which was soon accomplished peacefully.

No doubt the natives were pleased to bring to an end this brutal and violent interruption of their quiet existence.

But the commanding officer of the *Dolphin* was not ready



*The Ship Globe.*

to end it so quickly. He had a mission to carry out. He sought out those responsible for killing the Americans. Then with Lay and Hussey as guides, they looked for the island chieftains. After much difficulty, they finally located them and held a meeting, as described by Lay:

The captain [of the *Dolphin*] told them he had been sent out by the Head Chief of his country to look for the men that had been left there by the ship *Globe* — that he had been informed they murdered all but two — that, as it was their first offense of the kind, their ignorance would plead an excuse — but if they should ever kill or injure another white man, who was from any vessel or wreck, or who might be left among them, our country would send a naval force, and exterminate every soul on the island; and also destroy their fruit trees, provisions, etc., and that if they would always treat white men kindly, they would never receive any injury from them, but would have their kindness and hospitality reciprocated. He also adverted to the practice of stealing, lying and other immoralities; stating to the natives that these crimes are abhorred and punished in our country; and that murder is punished by death.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

**NARRATIVE**  
OF THE  
**MUTINY,**  
ON BOARD THE  
**SHIP GLOBE.**  
OF NANTUCKET,  
IN THE  
PACIFIC OCEAN, JAN. 1824.  
AND THE  
**JOURNAL**  
OF A  
RESIDENCE OF TWO YEARS  
ON THE  
**MULGRAVE ISLANDS;**

WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE MANNERS AND  
CUSTOMS OF THE INHABITANTS.

BY WILLIAM LAY, OF SAYBROOK, CONN. AND  
CYRUS M. HUSSEY, OF NANTUCKET:  
The only Survivors from the Massacre of the Ship's Com-  
pany by the Natives.

NEW-LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY WM. LAY, AND C. M. HUSSEY.

1828.

Title page of the book by William Lay and Cyrus Hussey, 1828. Opposite page, certificate of their ownership of the title.

**DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT.**

*District Clerk's Office.*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty-fourth day of October, A. D. 1827, in the fifty-second year of the independence of the United States of America, WILLIAM LAY and CYRUS M. HUSSEY, of the said District, have deposited in this Office, the title of a Book, the Right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

"A Narrative of the mutiny on board the Ship Globe, of Nantucket, in the Pacific Ocean, Jan. 1824, and a Journal of a residence of two years on the Mulgrave Islands, with observations on the manners and customs of the inhabitants. By William Lay, of Saybrook, Conn. and Cyrus M. Hussey, of Nantucket, the only Survivors from the Massacre of the Ship's Company, by the Natives."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States entitled "an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an act entitled "an act supplementary to an act, entitled an act, for the encouragement of learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of Designing, Engraving, and Etching Historical and other Prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,

*Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*

S. Green, Printer.

The captain then presented them with many gifts, including "two hogs, and a couple of cats, with injunctions not to destroy them; that they might multiply."<sup>18</sup>

He then "caused potatoes, corn, pumpkins and many valuable seeds to be planted, and gave the natives instructions how to raise and preserve them. He explained to them that these acts of kindness and generosity were extended because they saved us [Lay and Hussey] alive and had taken care of us while among them."

After a few more days at Mulgrave island, during which the Americans dug up the grave of Samuel B. Comstock,

18. When William Lay spent the night with the native family his sleep was not deep: "... the rats, with which the island abounds, prevented my enjoying much sleep." *Ibid.*, p. 64. He probably suggested to the captain of the *Dolphin* that cats would be a useful gift.



removing his skull and sword, they left, confident that they had taught the natives that white men had certain rules of good conduct that must be obeyed.

No doubt, there was a language problem, but it is doubtful if those natives, even had they understood, would have believed what they heard. They had seen these white men brutally kill one of their own, the one who had been so very generous to them. And those killers of their friend had kidnapped and flogged a young native woman who had done them no harm, indeed, she had been kind to them.

But had they known about the butchery of the four officers and the hanging of a black man on the *Globe*, their confusion about the white man's morality would have been total.

It's good they didn't know.

***Where there's a Will, there's a Way . . .***

to help preserve and publish  
Dukes County history.  
When drafting your will, won't  
you please remember to include  
the Dukes County Historical  
Society among your bequests.

Moments in History

## Ichabod Norton: Lover?

Among the hundreds of ancient documents in the Society's Archives are a few that can be described as truly personal. Most archival material is not. In the main, intimate letters and journals seem to end up being committed "to the flames," as the writer of the following letter requests.

This letter, written by a woman during the early 1800s, is truly intimate. It is remarkably frank for something delivered by a third person. Our document appears to be the writer's copy, saved for reasons of sentiment. It is easy to imagine her re-reading it often over the years. She did not sign it, for reasons that will be apparent. Dated May 3, without the year, it was written to Ichabod Norton, Esq., the richest man on the Vineyard. He lived, with a black servant, on Farm Neck and never married.

Ichabod came to be called "Old 12 1/2 Percent" because of the usurious interest rates he charged borrowers (in those days, the early 1800s, 12 1/2 percent was an

extremely high rate). He was, as one might expect, an important figure in Island politics and business.

He is best known for the self-serving epitaph he had carved on a large marble tombstone, which was placed on his plot in the Edgartown cemetery years before he died for him, and others, to admire. He was, according to the epitaph, "endeared to his fellow citizens by his firmness and fidelity in publick affairs, and for his uprightness in all his private dealings." (See *Intelligencer*, Nov.1988, pp.3-5). He died June 29, 1847, at the age of 86.

Delivering the letter to Esquire Norton was a Mr. Chase, probably of Holmes Hole, where the Chase family had run taverns and operated ferries to the mainland for many years. This would seem to suggest that the letter writer, whose name we don't know, lived in Tisbury. But that is only a guess.

The letter needs no interpretation.

Dear Sir; To silence the Tongue of slander and to avoid the Censures of an Injurious world I pass over all the nice rules of Decorum and solicit for your Compliance to favour me with a Visit, as it has been reported and now got to be really established for a truth that I was in your Company at unreasonable hours when I was at my Brother's. You cannot be unsensible that it will cast an irreparable stain on my Reputation to have private interviews with a person

of your Character unless Considered as an honourable Lover and ne'er the less prejudicial except Continued. I dare not commit to paper what I would wish to write, but Sir if your pretensions are honourable and you would wish to preserve in me a fair name which I think I have merited and is dearer to me than all the envy'd Pomp the World can boast, you cannot deny my request, but if you should, henceforth consider me as a person that scorns your utmost hate.

Mr. Chase knows nothing of the Contents of this. I told him it was something pretty indifferent that I liked to communicate on a firm promise of his Secrecy, not so much that I valued the contents as but was unwilling to have it known that I wrote to you. This I am satisfied Mr. Chase believed.

I shall take it as a favour and shall think you do Honour to yourself if you keep this as an impenetrable secret and should thank you if you would commit it to the flames as soon as you have read it, especially if you do not wish for any further acquaintence and should think it was as little as you could do to reward me for my folly in putting Confidence in your word and being so blind to your imperfections.

I shall not put my name to this but you may readily guess and I shall not think to excuse you if you ever pretend not to be satisfied who it came from, in a few days from this I expect my mind will be fix'd by seeing or hearing from you.

Tuesday May 3d.

For Mr. Ichabod Norton.

*We don't know if her mind was ever fixed. But we hope so.*

## Documents

### Jeremiah Pease Diary

*There are several major occurrences in this segment of Jeremiah's diary. The first is his attendance at a Methodist camp meeting in Falmouth which had an important influence on him. In later years, he initiated the Vineyard camp meeting which was the beginning of the resort community of Oak Bluffs, although that was not his intention.*

*The second was the return home of the ill-fated whaler Globe on which a terrible mutiny had taken place in the Pacific. In and after the mutiny six Vineyard men were murdered. Its return, bearing the horrid details, must have been a traumatic event for the Island.*

*Another event worth mentioning is the killing of a whale just offshore in Edgartown. Jeremiah happened to be fishing nearby and, while he didn't participate in the killing, he was able to witness it. As whaling was becoming a major occupation for young Vineyarders, it gave him a valuable insight into how it was done.*

*The Pease Diary is the most detailed description that we have of life on the Vineyard from 1819 until his death in 1857. We have been publishing his diary in this journal since 1974 and are now in a volume covering the years from 1823 to 1829, a volume that until recently had been thought to have been lost. This is the last volume that remains to be published.*

#### August 1824

2nd. SW, very dry. Ebr. Smith liberated from prison.<sup>1</sup>

7th. SW. H. Arey sails for P.River.

9th. SSW. Camp Meeting commences at Falmouth. 11th. NNE. Set out out [sic] for Camp Meeting at Falmouth at 2 o'clock a.m. Arrived at ten a.m. Language would fail me to give a true account of this Scene, it was truly solem, awful, and yet Glorious. Here the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father was witnessed in an extraordinary manner.<sup>2</sup>

12th. Pleasant. Many Souls were bro't to bow before the Lord and many more hopefully converted to God.

13th. Pleasant. This forenoon Campmeeting breaks up. The scene was solmen [sic] and affecting when the Brethren and sisters took their leaf of each other having form'd themselves into a Circle they bid each other adue by shaking hands and singing hymns applicable to the occasion. Arrived home about 1 o'clock with my Soul much blessed.

15th. Sabbath. NE, pleasant. A reformation Spirit seems to appear this day in the congregation.

16th. SW, pleasant. Sloop Thomas, Brother C.Pease sails for P. River.<sup>3</sup>

1. On June 10th, Ebenezer Smith had been committed to prison "for abuse to his family & neighbours."

2. Jeremiah was so moved by camp meetings that 11 years later he convinced the Island Methodists to hold one of their own.

3. It would seem that this should be F.River, for Fall River, but it is clearly a P, as was the earlier entry. Where is P.River?

18th. SW. C.B.Worth hopefully converted.<sup>4</sup>

20th. S. Many of the Inhabitants under convictions.

23rd. WSW. Went to H.Hole to meeting, there being a Reformation there. Had a powerful Meeting.

24th to 31st. [Only weather related entries.]

### September 1824

1st. SW. A Meeting was held this day at 2 o'clock p.m. onboard of the Ship *Almira* of Edgt. Service by Revd. E.T.Taylor. The congregation was very large and the discourse solemn. The meeting was conducted with great propriety. A light shower of rain fell during divine service. There being an Awning over the deck prevented any material inconvenience.<sup>5</sup>

5th. SW. The Brethren & sisters of the Methodist Society came down from H.Hole to unite with the Brethren & sisters of this town in communion of Lord's Supper. It was a blessed season. There were a number of those who lately experienced Religion present.

6th. Wind SW. Ship *Almira*, Capt. Abraham Osborn, haws off to anchor ready for sea. ESE. Ship *Almira* sails for the Pacific Ocean.

7th. ENE. Sloop Thomas arrives, first voyage. Rains at night.

4. This so-called ungrammatical use (so-called by purists) of "hopefully" goes back a long ways. But then, it may be correct here, in the sense of being filled with hope of salvation.

5. Reverend Taylor is said to have been the first preacher to conduct a service on the deck of a whaler prior to leaving on her voyage. He later became the well-known "Sailor Preacher" of the Boston Seamen's Bethel fame. He had just come to take over the pulpit of the Methodist Society.

16th. SW, very warm. Mrs. Prudence Cleveland's house raised.

19th. E to ENE, rainy. Brother Greno preaches.

20th. NE. Sch. *Hiram*, Capt. Lott Norton, arrives from S. Bellisle.

25th. Wind NE. Went to H.Hole to Meeting.

26th. Wind NE. Returned. Had a pleasant season.

27th. Wind NE. Brother A.D.Pease's child very sick.

28th. Wind NE. Brother J.N.Maffet arrive. Brother Pease's child very sick.

29th. Wind NE. Brother A.D.P.'s child dies, aged \_\_\_\_\_.

30th. Wind NE. Funeral of the Child above mentioned. Service by Revd. J. Thaxter. Brother John Whittlesly arrives & preaches this evening.

### October 1824

4th. Wind SW. Engaged in gitting in Corn.

11th. NW. Ship *John*, Capt. Edmund Bradley, arrives. Brother Taylor takes possession of E.Smith's house.

12th. NW to SW. Ship *John* comes up to the Pier.

14th. W to S, rainy. Sloop *Superb* sails for Charlestown.

17th. SW. Brother Maffit preaches his last affectionate Sermon (being Sabbath).

19th. SW. Brother Maffit goes to Nantucket.

20th. S. The soleumn News of the Ship *Globe* of Nantucket arrives. The circumstances of this horrid affair are as follows. See Nov. 14th.<sup>6</sup>

6. The *Globe* mutiny was "the most horrible mutiny in the annals of the Pacific," according to James A. Michener and A. Grove Day, *Rascals*

Went to H.Hole to carry the news of the Death of Capt. Thomas Worth to his brother, H.P.Worth. The scene was affecting. Thomas was one of my intimate friends from Childhood until I parted with him about 22 months previous to this date.<sup>7</sup> News of the death of Capt. [Thomas] Manchester of H.Hole arrives.

21st. SW, rains a little. Solemn Day on account of the above news.

23rd. NW. News of the Death of M. Clark's Daut.

28th. SW. Bo't. a shoat of L. Crocker per P. Belan [?].

29th. NW to SW, rainy (Killed Hog.)

30th. NW, cold, hard frost at night. Went to Quarterly Meeting to H.Hole, had a blessed season.

31st. Returned at evening. C.B.Worth arrives from Providence. Wind NNE.

### November 1824

1st. Wind NW. Meeting for the choice of Electors for President & Vice President & Representatives to Congress. Rains.

2nd. ENE. Court sets.

6th. SW to SSW. Settled with Ebr. Smith.<sup>8</sup>

in *Paradise*, Random House, N.Y., 1957, p.7. Its master, Thomas Worth, and other officers were all Vineyard men and were all murdered as were others. See the article on the mutiny in this issue.

7. Jeremiah's reference to 22 months previous must refer to the date of his conversion to Methodism when he broke many friendships with Congregationalists. The Worths were faithful Congregationalists. Jeremiah's wife was a Worth.

8. This settlement may have been related to payment of rent for Smith's house, which the new Methodist minister had moved into. Jeremiah may have been the church treasurer at this time.

8th. NW. Went to H.Hole with the Sheriff to set off land, etc. Returned at night.

14th. SW. Ship *Globe* of Nantucket arrives, commanded by Capt. James King of Brewster. Gilbert Smith, Peter & Stephen Kidder arrived in her, being all that belonged to this Town of the original Crew that came home in the ship, the Mutineers having killed Thomas Worth, Master; Wm. Beetle, First Mate; John Lumbert, 2nd. Mate; & Nathaniel Fisher, 3rd. Mate; all of this Town except Mr. Lumbert who was of Chilmark. Left at the Mulgrave Island, Rowland Jones & Columbus Worth of this Town, Cyrus M. Hussey & Rowland Coffin of Nantucket, Wm. Lay & John Brown of \_\_\_\_\_ and Silas Pane, John Oliver, Thos. Liliston, mutineers. Saml. Cumstock (head mutineer) having been shot by his own party & Wm. Humphries was hung Jan.28th, 1824, by his own party, he being one of the mutineers.

18th. NW. Brother Hiram Jernegan & Sister Abigail Worth are Married this day, attended the wedding.

19th. NE. Attended 2nd part of the above wedding.<sup>9</sup>

23rd. SW to W. Attended the discharging the Ship *George Long* of Portsmouth with Mr. Wm. Cooke.

24th. NW. Ditto.

25th. SSW. rains. Ditto.

26th. SW, rains. Ditto.

27th. S, rainy. Ditto.

28th. ENE, rainy. Mr. Abner Fisher dies.

29th. ENE, rainy. Engaged as above

9. As regular readers know, weddings came in two parts: religious and civil. The second part was the civil ceremony.



mentioned all day. Mr. Fisher is buried. Funeral service by Revd. Frederick Baylies.<sup>10</sup>

30th. NNE to N. Brother Joseph Mayhew's dau. dies an Infant. Francis Smith's Child is buried today. Ship *Apollo*, Capt. Isaac Daggett, sails for the Pacific Ocean. Attended the Ship *George Long* in discharging cargo all day.

#### December 1824

1st. Wind NE. Attended Ship *G.L.* Brother Jos. Mayhew's child is buried. Funeral service by Revd. J. Thaxter.

2nd. ENE Attended Ship *G.L.*, rainy. This day is appointed by the Governor & Council as a day of Thanksgiving & Prayer thro this State.<sup>11</sup>

3rd. ENE, rainy. Attended Ship *G.L.*

4th. ENE to N, heavy gail, with snow, the first this winter. Finished measureing Salt on board Ship *G.L.*

7th. N to W, rainy. Went to H.Hole to survey land for request of James Cottle & others, in settlement of the Estate of Jona. Manter, Deceased.

8th. W. Finished surveying and returned home at night.

10th. SW. Ship *George Long*, Capt. John G. Pray, sails for Portsmouth, N.H. Went Eeling with A.C. (25 doz.)

15th. NW. Visited the Brig *Exchange* of

10. Abner Fisher is described as "Town Pauper. He had passed thro a vast Scene of Distress," in *Edgartown's Vital Records*. He never married and died at age 57. The fact that the minister was Rev. Baylies, missionary to the Indians, makes it likely that he was part Portuguese, part Indian. His family lived on Chappaquiddick.

11. Thanksgiving was celebrated irregularly during these years. It was not until 1863 that it was set as the third Thursday in November by Pres. Lincoln.

\_\_\_\_\_ from Granada per particular orders from the Collector. Paid W.Davis \$6.08, money rec'd of Mr. Mayhew.

17th. E., moderate. Bo't a shoat of J.Garloe [?], 85 lb.

19th. SW to WSE. Attended the Funeral of Matthew Mayhew Esqr.'s Wife at Chilmark, who died two days before, very suddenly, aged 68. A beloved Aunt of my Wife. Funeral service by Revd. Jonathan Smith. The congregation was very large. She was a very Pious person & is a great loss to Society. Returned same Evening.

20th. SW. Brothers Chase & A.D.Pease sail for Charleston, S.C., in Sloop *Thomas*. Brother F. Baylies Jr., raises his House.<sup>12</sup>

21st. SW, pleasant. Went to H.Hole, carryed the Plan of the land which I surveyed, belonging to the Estate of J. Manter, Deceased, & the Report of the Committee appointed by the Judge of Probate which I wrote for them. Returned at night. (Paid, May 1825, fees 6 Dollars.)

24th. SE to SSW. Received orders from S.B.Mayhew to sell his 2 1/2 shares in the Ship *Loan*.

27th. SW. News of the Death of Silas Butler Jr. arrives.<sup>13</sup>

31st. Wind SW. Went to H.Hole, from there to Falmouth on business for S.B.Mayhew. Returned same evening. This night there was a watch Meeting

12. Frederick Baylies Jr., son of the Indian missionary, was the architect of Edgartown's three churches: Baptist, Methodist and Congregationalist. The house he built was on Main Street on the site of today's Edgartown Market. It was moved to Starbuck Neck in 1923.

13. Silas drowned in the Pacific, age 27.

held in the Methodist Meeting House. Bros. Taylor & Weeks attend, closed at a quarter past 12 o'clock.

#### January 1825

3rd. NNW, pleasant but cold. Mr. Daniel Smith dies of a consumption AE \_\_\_\_\_.

5th. SW. The Funeral of Mr. Smith today, service By Revd. J. Thaxter.

6th. WSW, NNE. Went Eeling, caught 25 or 30 Dozs.

9th. NNW. Wrecked schooner toed in by Schr. *Hiram*.

10th. W. Sold 1272 gallons of Oil to Capt. Francis Coffin of Nantucket.

27th. SSW, pleasant. Went Eeling.

29th. SW, pleasant. Evening wind changes in a snow squall to the NW. Mr. Callot of Falmouth Drowned.

#### February 1825

2nd. ENE to SSE, violent Storm with high tide, Gail commences at daylight & continues until 2 o'clock and does much damage to the wharves, Saltworks, etc. Capt. Silas Butler's Shop is demolished. The Tide was as high, lacking about 12 inches, as it was in the remarkable Storm of Sept. 1815. The wind is tho't to be about the same as in that gail.

15th. ENE, light snow, 1 1/2 inches on a level.

16th. SW, very pleasant. The snow melts & is almost gone. News of the Election of John Q. Adams President of the U.S. come by mail. Great rejoicing. Cannon fired, etc.<sup>14</sup>

14. John Quincy Adams, of course, was a Massachusetts son. Hence the cannon firing. He had failed to win a majority of the Electoral College and was elected by the House of Representatives.

18th. WNW, fresh breeze. Went to H.Hole. The Brig *Albion* of Portland, John Jones Jr. master, from Havannah with a cargo of Molasses being on shore.

20th. ENE. After many attempts night and day to git the Brig off, they conclude to lighten her and take out 56 H.H.D.'s molasses. At about 12 o'clock p.m. she comes off.

22nd. ENE to NE. Took in the Molasses again, etc. Finished about 1 o'clock a.m. of the 23rd.

23rd. Wind NE. Returned from H.Hole. Funeral of Mr. Peleg Crosman, who died very suddenly the day before.

#### March 1825

1st. Wind WNW to W, pleasant. Ships *Washington* & *John Adams* of Nantucket arrive from the Pacific Ocean with Sperm Oil.

2nd. ESE, pleasant. Rec'd. my Money from Nantucket on acc't of Oil sold.<sup>15</sup>

3rd. ESE, ditto. Paid several debts of long standing.

5th. ENE, storm with rain & high tide. News of the Death of Capt. Presbury Norton's Wife at Northshore & of Capt. John Jones Jr. of Portland (late Master of the Brig *Albion*) who died at H.Hole.

16th. ESE. Went a fishing to the S. side of the Vineyard [sic] this day. Benjamin Worth kills Whale so near the Boat in which I was fishing as to give me a favourable opportunity to see all the manoevers.

15. He sold 1272 gallons. Sperm oil averaged 70 cents a gallon in 1825, so he could have received nearly \$900 — three years' pay for a lighthouse keeper. Incidentally, as a customs officer he was not supposed to buy and sell oil, nor own any shares in a vessel.

## Bits & Pieces

THERE never was such an exodus of males from the Vineyard as in the 1849 Gold Rush. The dream of striking it rich was overwhelming. Few could resist joining one of the local mining companies. More men headed for California than ever left to fight a war. More than went a-whaling.

We have the names of 287 Vineyard Gold Rushers. Other names, no doubt, were never recorded. The total very likely exceeded 300.

In the 1850 Census about 2300 males are listed as living on the Island, including children and old men. The 300 Argonauts certainly were a high percentage of the 20 to 40 year olds. Maybe 40 percent. As far as we have learned, few brought back the fortune they had sought.

One who did was William Rawson Norton who went with the Edgartown Mining Company aboard the *Walter Scott* in 1849. He returned in the summer of 1852, later than most, and according to a young girl's letter to her whaleman brother: "William made about \$3500 out there, he came home to get Married. The girls say if he will buy a good looking faze and pay \$2000 for it they will have him for the rest. He likes the looks of Ann very much."

Ann seems to have been a beauty. Another Gold Rusher, Benjamin Kidder Jr., of the Vineyard Mining Company, also liked her looks. That same letter reports that "Benjman Kidder is fully hart sick on the account of Ann, he goys up home and stays 2 months at a time, he talks sum of

goying back to California again."

Bringing back a fortune, as William did, was the exception. Most brought back only a weakened body and shattered dreams. More than a few, as Joan Druett tells us in this issue, died in California.

What did this sudden exodus of many men do to the community? To be sure, the Island was accustomed to long absences by mariners, but the Gold Rushers doubled or tripled that number. What did it do to the Island economy?

Jeremiah Pease described a religious service held for the Edgartown Mining Company (William Norton's company) prior to its departure: "It was a solemn and interesting season. The [Methodist meeting] house was very full and all things conducted with propriety. My own feeling, having two Sons who are about to embark in this expedition, I shall not pretend to describe." The two sons were John and Cyrus, secretary of the company.

Another son, Frederick, left with the Vineyard Mining Company a few months later. None of the three was married at the time so there were no wives or children to care for, but that wasn't true for all.

An earlier community trauma, this one violent, was the 1824 *Globe* mutiny (a story also told in this issue). Beyond the grief that friends and families endured, surely the bloody murders must have had an emotional effect on women whose men were off awhaling and on young lads dreaming of going.

Life was not simple or peaceful in the good old days!

A.R.R.



**Sketches by Cyrus Pease  
En Route to California**

Cyrus Pease, son of Jeremiah, joined the California Gold Rush. These sketches decorated his letters to Lucy Crane of Berkley, Mass., describing the voyage.



From *Cimarron Review*, Sept. 1968, courtesy Mrs. Dee W. Eades.





Sketch by Charles Nahl in Old Block's Sketch Book by A. Delano.



The Oscar miners headed over the mountain with a mule train not unlike this one to pan for gold in the Stanislaus River gravel.