

F 213

Sydney White  
Please Return

DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. I, No. 4

PUBLICATIONS

October, 1926



# THE OLD SOUTH ROAD OF GAY HEAD

BY

EDWARD S. BURGESS, Ph.D., Sc.D.



A PAPER PREPARED FOR  
THE DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MASSACHUSETTS

EDGARTOWN, MASS.

JULY, 1926



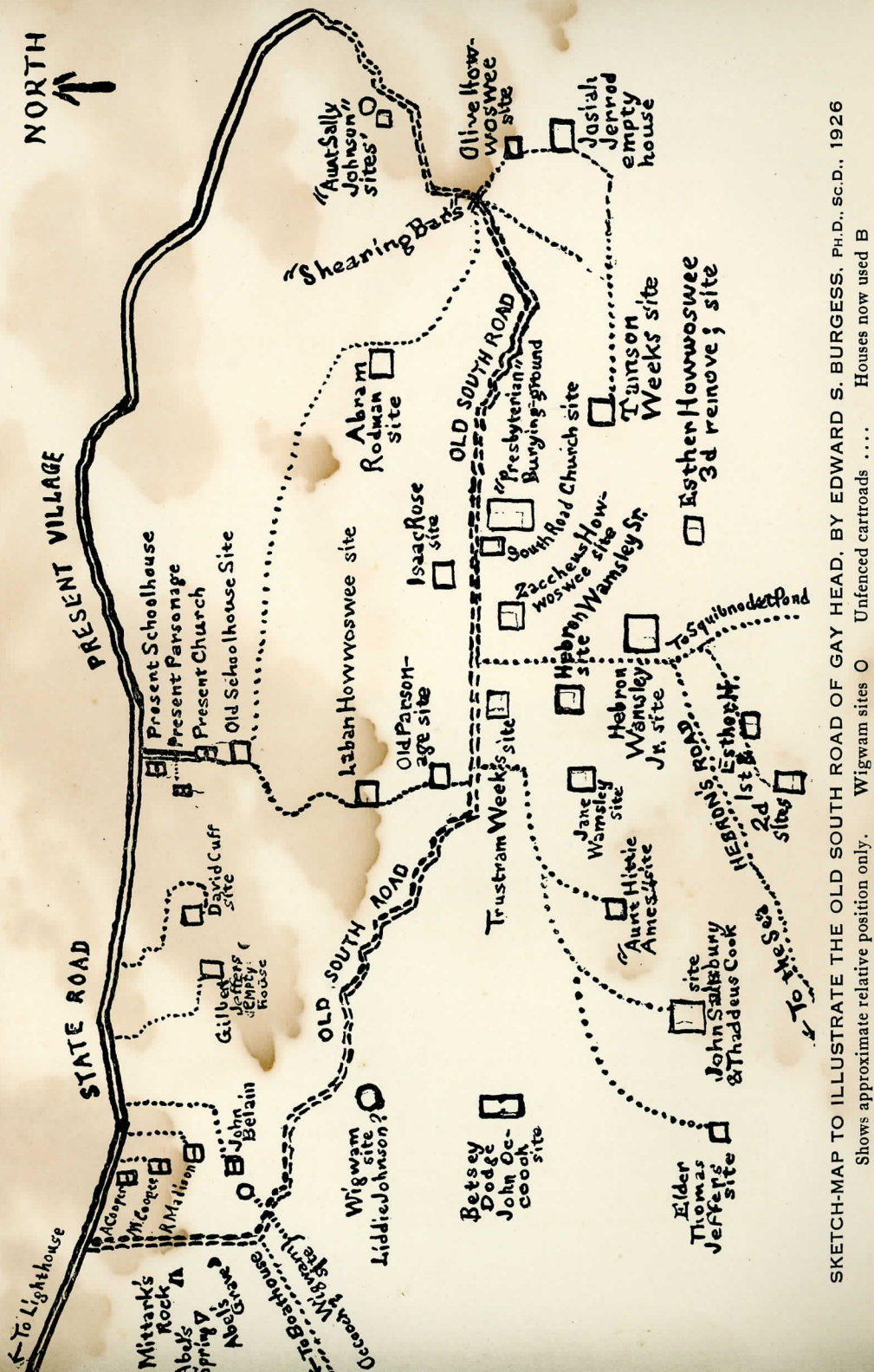
974.42  
B12.18  
C4

PROPERTY OF



EDGARTOWN, MASS.





# THE OLD SOUTH ROAD OF GAY HEAD

OR

## MUSINGS ON DISCONTINUED BYWAYS

BY

EDWARD S. BURGESS, Ph.D., Sc.D.

## PART ONE

Some of us find a charm in Discontinued Byways. There is an indefinite mist of memory which clings about them, which haloes bygone days, and gives a certain poetic vagueness to the past. Part of the charm may be due to that selective power of memory which eliminates from the past the roughness of the road, and brings forward those elements in it which were picturesque. Part may be due to traditions that cling to it and give a human touch to the place. To preserve such traditions in relation to their locality, is one of the objects of this paper.

In thinking of the Old South Road of Gay Head, the mind pictures a time, some sixty or seventy years ago, when that now abandoned road was the center of population for Gay Head: when there were many more people living on or near it than are now on the State Road in Gay Head, which every tourist travels.

Both roads existed then, and the highway then as now merited its "high" name not only by its importance but by its position on the upper levels. The South Road on the other hand ran its crooked course on lower slopes now much grown to bushes. Now there is no one yet living on this South Road. The memory of living men goes back to the time, however, when there were more houses there by half than are now on the main road; and some can tell you how the last house was "hailed up the hill" as they say, to do duty on the present highway.



The Old South Road left the present main road near the eastern border of Gay Head, as you climb Gravelly Hill, a little west of the house of James Cooper. It reëntered the main road not far east of the Lighthouse, thus traversing almost the entire length of Gay Head.

Now it forms a pleasant walk, only occasionally dampening our feet if not our ardor; but it is no longer passable for "the minister's buggy", nor, without letting down the bars, for the worker's ox-team.

Walk with me leisurely through its twists and turns, you who are country-life inclined, and we will re-live its past, and I will tell you some of the memories it brings. Expect no grandeurs and no excitements: but find with me in these elder days a little epitome of the former courses of life on Gay Head.

You will pardon me if there is incompleteness; these are but glimpses of the past: glimpses made possible by much inquiry for the things remembered. I am dealing here not with written records, not with things already printed, but with that more shadowy, fast-vanishing medium, the sensitive impression-plate of the Indian mind. And it is my aim to make faithful transcript of the way these past scenes have appeared to the Indian, and have been narrated by him to me.

I shall use the term Indian of any who have some percentage of Indian blood, even if less than half. Names and phrases that I quote I try to give in the pronunciation and unchanged vernacular of the speakers. I may blend many speakers in one general X; that does not mean, however, that they lacked individuality, but that they agree essentially in their recollections. Do not expect to find these Indians still bearing Indian personal names; and be prepared to find that 250 years of life with the white man has swept away a great deal of the original Indian thinking; let us be glad indeed when we find so many vestiges of it left.

Stand with me, then, in the State Road where the Old South Road once parted from the highway; we are well up the slope of Gravelly Hill; the State contractor has obliterated the gravels here which once pulled heavily on the traveller, and the Indian burials in his path are now no more in evidence. We look about and there appears little to see. At first there seems not a house in sight; instead, there are bleak swells of bare or bushy ground, dry and sterile pasture, lined with occasional stone walls, at places fronted with a low oak forest of some density.

Right at our side is a three-bar white fence of the State Road, guarding a sag that leads to a great hollow known as Simon Dose's peat-swamp. A little to the north-east there grow into our consciousness two evidences of the Caucasian. One is known as Gookin's Pump, near where once his bungalow stood; in front a little hollow with a standing pool suggests the illusory hope that led him to "drive" there for his water. The pump stands idle in what the Indians knew as Middle Pasture, one of the smallest divisions of Gay Head; ancient divisions known as "Pastures", separated by stone walls which now often seem to cross the hills in a most aimless manner.

Still another look to the eastward, and a little frame house comes into notice, the Eagleston house, now of Mrs. Judkins. That is the Caucasian aspect; but the Indian thought is to say, "it is by the peat-swamp where Uncle Elvin dug his peat", "where grass has come into that hole in the center where they dug out the peat". Look beyond and down the slope to the east, and there once stood the first English-built house, perhaps, of any Indian in this particular quarter, that of Peggy Talknot. With her growing family, living here, perhaps about 1800, Peggy Talknot practised—silence, shall we say? with her five daughters; with one son to bear witness; so at least it followed that the next thing we know, he made his disappearance from Gay Head.

#### DIVISION INTO "PASTURES".

Close by us stands the "East Pasture Barway" leading through an old stone-wall, which they claim has been here for 200 years; built by the Indians in common to enclose the Southeast end of their old East Pasture: shutting in the swine that were turned into Hog Pasture, the small division next southward, smaller even than Middle Pasture within the end of which we stand, smaller perhaps than the Fattening Pasture to the east, a division by many now forgotten; but once "Fattening Pasture began at Gravelly Hill; where there was better feed". The great South and North Pastures altogether overbalance these; and it is South Pasture that we are about to enter.

#### PLANTING IN COMMON.

Before a time some sixty years ago, before the assignment to Gay Head Indians in severalty, the yearly custom was to plow in common, all together in one place in rotation; as expressed by X, "The Indians plowed in the East Pasture in the old time (where it seems conspicuously sterile now); in turn with the other pastures; they used to



plow all about Gay Head, in places where it was good; they would plow in common; all would turn out to plow, and say, Where shall we plant this year?—and “from the last time they plowed in East Pasture so, when I was a boy, you can see the plow-lines yet. For once it was good land where now it is all sand and moss—where the earth has been washed and blown away. And the Indian way, the old way here, was, All the Indian people would say, Let us plant this season in the South Pasture, or in the East Pasture, or in the North Pasture; or it may be in Solomon’s Place; and they would go out there and plant, working side by side, and all agree about it; and next year in another place, and so on, and work together that way.”

“They would hold a meeting”, said another, “and decide where they would plant. They would turn the cattle into one pasture and they would plant in another. If they decided to turn the cattle into East Pasture, they might plow in Amoses’ Place; and so on”.

Still another said, referring to about 1850, “When I was a boy, I helped plow in East Pasture and in Solomon’s Place (two of the driest of the dry now) and in Amoses’ Place too; the head man would divide off the plow-land into strips; would give them numbers; then he would say, Who’ll plow No. 1?, and if no one responded at once he would say, John, you go plow that strip; and so No. 2, No. 3, etc. (Would any get help to plow his strip?) No, he’d do it himself; they all had to work.”

#### GAY HEAD PLANT LORE.

Here where we stand to view the highway today, I recall a day of botanizing some thirty years ago, when I was collecting and comparing plant names and popular uses. Here I was talking over my plants with the old Indian woman, famed for her knowledge of herbs, known to many as Aunt Biah Diamond. I had been gathering selected plants all day with the plan of finding her and securing from her the current Indian names and uses. Here as twilight was coming on, I met her, returning from the beach. “I’ve been beach-plumming, but it was mostly huckleberries,” said she; “I’ve just sold fifteen quarts. And now I’ll tell you about your plants.”

“There’s Mayweed (*Anthemis Cotula*); there was none on Gay Head till I set it out; but now it grows well here.”

But, said I, why did you care to set it out when it smells so? “Yes, and it tastes just as it smells; but if you steep it and drink it, there’s nothing like it for a broken bone; why, it’ll almost set a bone itself.”

Next I showed her *Apios tuberosa*, the groundnut, a vine once much valued as food by Indians elsewhere, as on Long Island especially, where they made much of the little tubers which grow like a string of beads along its roots. Her use agreed exactly with that in Long Island. This, said she, “is Indian potato, some calls it that; there’s a little potato on it that’s good to eat; looks like a sweet-potato, but it isn’t mealy. I eat it raw, but some bake it or boil it.”

Another little plant which has never acquired a common name of its own among the whites, a stiff bunch of stems with fluffy whitened leaves, *Helianthemum incanum*; “You’ve Cankerweed”, said she, “we gather it to drink for sore mouth; they come here from New Bedford to get it.”

“Shore Goldenrod” was her appropriate name for my next, *Solidago sempervirens*, that beautiful Beach Goldenrod characteristic of salt-water creeks; “You’ve got that on the salt-marsh,” said she, “but t’ll grow up here in the field when sea-weed is laid there; if you put eel-grass on a field it will grow there.”

Another shrewd and appropriate remark she was presently making to me about some broomsedge, that grass of barren sands, *Andropogon Virginicum*: saying, “That is Woodgrass; has a kind of woody stem; it’s good for nothing; I guess the ground is about worn out where one comes on that”.

Next I had some Sensitive-fern root, *Onoclea sensibilis*, and it brought out a survival in her daily utterance, of the vanishing word *tush* for tooth.

“Hog-tush it is, ’tis a very valuable root; boil it and it will rope up; ’tis very strengthening to the body to drink; ’tis a very valuable root, hogtush is; some calls it a brake; the tush to it? you haul away the grass from it, and it is like a big tush.”

“Copper-leaf is this next” (speaking of *Pyrola rotundifolia*; the false wintergreen of the books); “very good for a sore, very drawing. It’s name? because in winter you’ll find the underside of the leaf, it’s the color of copper.”

Next I showed her a Bulrush, *Scirpus lacustris*, which grows in water; “’tis another kind of brake,” said she; “it grows in Shotanira Herring Creek; we used it to make a mat in times past. But that Flag, which they use now for a mat (the old-time Cat-tail Flag which was used for flag-bottomed chairs; the Cooper’s Flag of Whaling days, then so-called on Gay Head from its use in caulking casks).



That is different, it's round and hollow like this at the bottom but as it grows up it's flat."

Twilight was deepening all too fast to go through all my bundle, or for me to still make legible notes; and Aunt Biah went on her way.

Just then there appeared in the dusk a picturesque survivor of an elder time, Old Aaron Cooper, most Indian-looking of the Indians then left on Gay Head, once a whaler, now still lithe and strong at his eighty years, riding up mounted bareback on his small Indian pony, his long black hair streaming out, waving in the twilight. It was now fast getting dark, but not yet too dark but that he added another local name to my list of the day, his appropriate name of Running Ivy for a Mikania, a vine with ivy-like leaves, a plant rare and bland, for which neither the white man nor Aunt Biah had a common name. I was loth to turn from the keen old Indian, acute of sight and mind.

"Uncle Aaron Cooper was a most interesting talker," said another Indian to me, "and up to the Life Saving Station he would come most every Sunday, Uncle Aaron Cooper would, and talk about the old folks, till we Coast Guard men began to think we were of the old folks ourselves."

But it was time now for Gay Head Light to shine out with its occasional red, and time for me to stand no longer in pursuit of folk-lore at that junction of the Highway and the Old South Road. That rencontre lacks but a few months of being thirty years ago, and those two good Indian types have been long slumbering with their race. Peace to their memory and honor to the nobilities that their race has shown. For us it is time to bestir ourselves, we who have lingered so long upon the mere threshold of our way.

Enter the Old South Road with me then, leave the highway behind, face the west, climb a few feet up the sandy highway slope, where a fence might be; and soon we are on a much higher bank. We now face another ancient stone wall, that which separates Middle Pasture and South Pasture, and before us is a "pair of bars", "Beech Bars we call it," says X, "because they used beech for them; beech is such very tough wood."

Now we are constrained to pause again, this time by widened stretches of the view. To the South spreads out Squibnocket Pond, with two little promontories and a wading-place to a little island, all in sight.

Sweeping the eye south-westward, there rises first an abrupt hill with its Indian graves, "it is Indian Hill; its name from the graves on its south-side"; not to be confused with the higher Indian Hill near Lambert's Cove. Bo-yer's Hill and Tallman Hill and finally Spider Hill follow to the west, and still we have hardly reached the end of the big Squibnocket Pond. But our own path is not to the hills today, we are to slope down into a lowland of bushes where distant views are lost.

We cross a little unnamed stream, and then pass a stone marker set by an intending purchaser at "a time when he thought he'd buy land here."

Then we meet another larger stone, a boulder left firm-bedded by the glacier; standing now against the road, where the old deep-gullied wheel-track kept the wagon-wheels in the same exact rut for years. Here with Indian acuteness of vision and of reasoning, my Indian companion pointed out one day, a well-marked groove in the rock, "where the wagon-tires wore it"; a groove which remains as a mute witness of the wheels which once made this now deserted road their thoroughfare.

A child of Nature, I could rely on this unpretending man to observe closely and interpret well. "I never pick up an arrowhead", said he one day, "but I think if I was as old as that arrowhead, how much I would know". Loving the wild free hills and ponds of his native Gay Head, he would say, "I have been at work all the time, but nobody knows but me, how all the time I was longing to be off over the hills. There beyond the South Road is that pond where I used to go perching when a boy; and the house;—I came from whaling, and found it gone. I in my dreams often seem now to be there in that house, because there I had those happy times in my younger days." So he voiced the spirit of this South Road land, once filled with animation and with home-content. Nor would any tribute I could pay be too great to fittingly honor his simple life of kindness and fidelity, ever true to the watchword, Better to be than to seem to be.

But now the way is narrowing, the bushes are closing in, the grass that fills the road is deeper green, our feet feel some moisture in the sod; we think surely we are coming to land where people could have lived. Yes, the dense bushes to our right are hiding the house-spot of a tall slim Indian of old, Isaac Johnson. He had a short and thick-set half-brother living near who was known as Simon Dose;



which will help distinguish him from that very different Simon Johnson of the North Shore who was deacon and sponsor to the reorganized Baptist church.

The brothers were coming back from New Bedford in their boat when in an overturn Isaac was drowned but Simon escaped. Isaac's wife Sally, a full-blooded Indian, still continued to live in her husband's house, so it came to be remembered as Aunt Sally Johnson's place.

#### PERSISTENCE OF BELIEF IN APPARITIONS.

We are treading here upon ghost-haunted ground. Nothing seems more deeply seated among primitive beliefs than the fear that the dead may "come again" to do us harm. The Gay Head experience, of the recent days, seems to resolve itself to this: Most people shrink away rather than try conclusions with the ghost. He would be a bold man who would stand up and front the apparition. But if challenged, the apparition would vanish.

Let us pause to consider a couple of examples taken from near our path. First, that at the home of one Q, who had survived the perils of the deep, finally to die on land, at home. In life he had been much feared by young children whom he had often scared from his place. Now would he come again? We are told of a neighbor whom we will call N., a resolute man not now himself living. N's story is this: "I was coming from the Head one night very late. I was almost at Uncle Q's house. The old gentleman had died there the year before. As I came near the house, walking along the hill, there shone a light. I thought it queer, as no one had lived there since. I went up and I looked in at the window, and there was Old Q kneeling to his chest of tools; there was the same old Russian cap on his head and his saw in his hand; fierce and ugly, that's how he looked, that man from Madagascar. I stood up to the window, and called to him, Hello, and then Q looked up, right on to me, and then looked down again; then I called out, You're dead, I know you are! and as I called, the window was dark and I could see nothing more."

Example No. 2, from near by up the hill: "Here, said she, I was out in the field, picking beach-plums; I looked up, and here was my brother coming right toward me, though he'd been dead some years. I faced him, and he vanished."

With a shift of emphasis, the next stage is for the apparition to take a different form from that which he possessed in life. Of this let us find a couple of examples, still near our present locality.

Example 3. Said one who had lived near, "We'd been up in the pasture, Father and I, milking the cows, and came back along, passing Q's house; and there a roll of white paper showed up and came blowing out. Then as we got opposite to it, it rolled, all itself, right out in the road, and was gone."

Example 4. Two sisters were out one day about fifty years ago or more, where the slope east from Gravelly Hill ended in a low bluff, when from below that bluff came a pair of black oxen; "swish, swish, they came, right on, swaying their heads as they came, and were going to pass us by but we ran; we ran home and told Mother. For you know there were no black oxen at all on Gay Head; and we knew that this which we had seen was something that was not right."

#### FROM WIGWAM TO FRAME HOUSE.

It is time that we turn aside from apparitions; and while still recalling the primitive days, let us hear this story of womanly devotion; an Indian's devotion to her mother; its locality near this place. This is the way it was told me: "There was that Sally Johnson house-spot near Black Brook. And near there, my mother remembered when they lived in a wigwam. In her old age, Grandmother had broken her hip and couldn't walk and couldn't go on living there alone any more, and Mother would take her home. Mother had no one to help her then. Mother said she took her mother in her arms and carried her as far as she could toward where she now lived; then rested awhile, and then took her up and carried her on again. Then Grandmother lived with Mother till she died; she was 103 when she died."

#### BLACK BROOK STEPPING-STONES.

We have reached Black Brook now, flowing out from Great Swamp, longest and largest of Gay Head streams. Said X.: "Black Brook is all the brook that has a name here; water has a dark reddish cast, almost black, because of a great peat-bog it comes out of." Where we cross it, Black Brook is some thirty feet wide at full water; the Old South Road dips down and fords the stream, almost grazing a bound-stone set by Isaac Johnson to mark his corner.

We can go over dry-shod, for we can cross on the big "stepping-stones" set by its side, "our causeway that the old people made", "the old way before the South Road was made". "When we went through there (I quote again) going to school, about 1850, we always went over on the Stepping Stones; they were just laid for that, there was



no bridge; and sometimes the water would get very full and two feet deep; but the horse would walk right through the brook.

Upstream the brook is widened into a small pond densely filled with pickerel-weed in bluish-purple flower. Downstream the brook narrows and is lost among thickets, difficult to penetrate, and hiding itself well till it finally emerges laughing and chuckling in a sandy ravine near its mouth at the west end of Squibnocket Pond.

#### THE BOOTS BY THE BROOK.

Few brooks, perhaps, have been more diversely linked with the supernatural than this. Besides being not far from the scene of the previous examples, there are other forms of the supernatural that have their abiding-place here. Here "Old people always said that Savvie locked her boots together"; or as later told, that "Savvie slapped them together". But who was Savvie? "Why when we were children, going to school, there was a pair of boots down there, by Black Brook; old leather boots; so old; stood by the road; we asked what it meant, we were told there Savvie locked her boots together; we didn't dare ask more, we never knew who she was." We know it was a custom here in days one hundred years ago, for Indian women to go barefoot, not only at home but through the woods; possessing boots or shoes but treating them as a luxury to be reserved and held in great respect. So my mother, says X, "would go barefoot to church till she had forded the last brook (Laban's Brook), then sit down and make ready to go into church by putting on the boots she had carried tied together and hanging from her neck."

Why Savvie left her boots by the brook so long remains to be discovered; perhaps she was but like many of her neighbors, long in making up her mind to go into church; but the children hurried by,—it was uncanny that the boots should wait for her so long.

#### THE HEADLESS MAN.

Next of Black Brook's tales, is that of the Headless Man who stands by the brook at the next crossing northward. We are safe from him ourselves, there is some distance; and besides, it is broad daylight now. What is more, we are grown-up folks, aren't we? But children couldn't reason it away like this, some seventy years ago, not even by daylight.

"Lots of people have seen him there, that headless man. Old people have always told us that a man was murdered there. And one of the boys was Solomon F., he

who went to sea, he got down so far on his way, and there by the brook stood the man without a head. And Solomon, he never came back. And about a year and a half after that, one of our people, his wife lives here yet, he went in there graping with his little boy; there at twilight when picking grapes he saw the headless man and he fell in a fit, and they found him dead; good honest man he was, but singular part of it was, it was there he was found dead, just there, there where he'd seen the headless man."

#### THE BRANCHES THAT SCRAPED.

"And if it wasn't one thing at Black Brook it was another. My mother was afraid of nothing, daylight nor dark; but there by the brook she heard as she came along, somebody breaking wood; she looked in under the bushes, there was nothing there; moved on again, when the sound began once more, and now she parted the bushes and looked in, and there was nothing there. But yet she was never frightened, not by bug nor beast nor Beelzebub."

There is another localization of this conception on Gay Head, at the "Cracking-twigs Swamp", which some now will not dare to pass after dark, for the sound of someone cracking twigs there; the white man has intensified the tones of this myth in his name for the "Crying-swamp", in another part of the Vineyard; but we go back to Gay Head for the man who has elevated it into a very poem, who tells me of his "Windharp Tree", "where I listen to the music two branches make as the wind rubs them on each other."

#### THE HARD-BREATH HORSE.

Black Brook is also the seat of the tale of the Hard-breathing Horse. Says the heroine:

"I was a girl in the time of going to school, we children were; it was early yet, and before dark, when we got into this narrow road, and here stood a big black horse right in the brook. We ran frightened, to tell the other children, and when we came back to the brook, from telling them that there was a horse there,—there was no horse there at all any more."

"And my Aunt Tamson Weeks saw it; she wasn't afraid of anything, but on the road by Black Brook she heard a stamping behind her and she felt its breath right in her face as she passed the brook."

"And then my brother saw it; daring young man, had no fear of anything; but as he was going toward Black Brook his horse shied at something; young horse, and jumped and ran; and in a few minutes something large as



a horse was following him, and then soon the animal was running right abreast of him, and breathing so hard. By this time brother was really frightened, and he shot off his revolver, for he thought he might just as well let it be known that he had one; thinking that he might keep it off. And his own horse never stopped running till he got home."

To this sagely rejoined X, a listening party to the colloquy, "So he had a revolver. But nothing ever frightened me at Black Brook except my own mind; but that was free to empty all its chambers."

#### INDIAN CLAIMS OF COMMON LANDS.

We must not linger longer over the mysteries of Black Brook; even the pickerel-weed masses will drop their flowers if we tarry more. We will turn away from that corner-bound stone so white over the dark water, which Isaac Johnson and Trustram Weeks set there of old by mutual agreement as their dividing line. We cross the Stepping Stones and there a fragment of a big stone wall begins, that ranges direct with that corner-bound. Can this be a remnant of a former house-wall, we query, but no, says our companion, "there was no house there, it is only what's left of the stones drawn there by old man Trustram. He began this wall to enclose a piece of common land and and claim it; people could do that then." That is, before about 1866, Indians could acquire parts of the common lands merely by fencing or walling them in.

We are able to look, over and beyond these stones, to another old wall further to the north, a long and well-preserved wall; it is the division wall between the Middle Pasture where the highway is, and the South Pasture in which our South Road lies. Said Deacon Thomas Jeffers, talking with me in 1915 of this division wall: "This wall was built by the Indians all working together; a long string of wall; it begins from Menemsha Pond; built under the call of the Guardians, who would call all the people together, when they tried to fence off the lots. For until Guardianship-time it was all one field."

#### THE SHEARING-BARS.

And now we reach another "Barway", the Shearing Bars, so-called; says modern Gay Head, "because a branch road sheared off here" at a sharp angle. Ancient Gay Head says "we'd drive up our sheep and we'd yard 'em there" for shearing; but modern times have known no sheep on Gay Head; and there is another illustration of the first explanation further north, where a second local-

ity called Shearing Bars, a grassy spot in thickets toward Skissi Hill, proves to repeat the conditions, one road shearing off from another at an acute angle.

On reaching Shearing Bars we have accomplished the first section of our journey, and we begin the Middle division of the Old South Road, once the thickly-settled portion, and still fairly clear as a road, the stone-walls on both sides nearly intact, and the grass-grown roadway greener and moister than before. Two or three paths lead off under the bushes to the south, invisible except to the Indian eye; one winding through the thickets to Tallman's Hill, highest of the southern hills. By our side is a small deep hole; a clambake hole, we are told, where once they baked clams in the ground.

Opposite to us on the north are two oak-groves once much used by picnic parties, the Vanderhoop and Rodman groves, separated by a roadway. "Always when I was a boy some sixty years ago we had our picnics in them there," I am told.

#### ABRAM RODMAN'S PLACE.

Off to the north beyond his grove once stood the house of Abram Rodman, coming to him through his wife Charlotte Wamsley. Its cellar-walls we find still true and firm. The house itself was finally drawn up the hill to the State Road. There it forms the body of the house of his son Abel Rodman, who pointed out the big granite boulder on the slope which was drilled to insert a capstan. Around this they wound the cable used in drawing up the house. Many other houses here were moved from the South Road by ox-teams working alone; before the day of capstan and cable. Fancy brings back the train of oxen; brought together from all the neighbors; oxen which have for two hundred years distinguished Gay Head; oxen responding to their drivers as the air filled with their cries in Gay Head oxen-language, "whish" to "go easy", going down a hill; "haw" to come toward you, "jee" to go from you, or to the right, as in the ox-world generally.

Another characteristic of Gay Head we notice at the Abram Rodman house-spot, the smaller excavation known as the peat-hole, with its roofing gone; in which he stored a peat-supply for burning; followed also in the new location up the hill where the old house was still burning peat in recent years.

#### THE JERROD PLACE.

Turn our eyes to the left, and in the south-east at some little distance, a gaunt and empty house stands alone, the Jerrod house, built by Josiah Jerrod who removed soon to



Vineyard Haven, a lithe, spry, straight-built man, an Indian "straight as an arrow" it was commonly said. Close to the deserted house is the cellar hole of his father's home, an older Josiah Jerrod, who came to Gay Head as an Indian of Mashpee, and married one of the South Road people, Olive Howwoswee.

#### TAMSON'S PLACE.

At the Jerrod house we may turn into a narrow path known as "Tamson Weekses' Lane", running west past a house-spot where her low one-story house stood, its door in the middle of the broad side, its form that which repeats on Gay Head the Crofter cottage of Scotland, and of which the Charles Mingo cottage on the north shore is the best surviving example.

#### TRUSTRAM'S PLACE.

By this lane we regain the South Road, omitting in this brief review the Boyer cellar-holes and many others far off the road to the south. We come in near the house-spot of Trustram Weeks, Indian schoolmaster once, equipped with a beginning of the art and mystery of writing, able to boast a small collection of books in his snug dwelling, a few of which still remain among Gay Head people. One morticed timber was still remaining at the site in 1915, but the main body of the old house had long before gone to make a new home on the Main Road. Two little cellar-holes remain near by to tell of his vegetable-cellars, "sos-cellars", as they were called; a local application of the name "garden-sauce".

Quite an area belonged to Trustram Weeks or to his wife Tamson, who was a Howwoswee, and a brook locally called "the Freshet" drains it toward the west, while a lane, Weekses Lane, leads across the land southward; and toward the west, many Indian burials now hidden among the bushes, form the "Weekses burying-ground", the chief interments perhaps near sixty years ago; marked by no inscriptions, but rough field-stones only.

Tamson Weeks, his wife, by birth a Howwoswee, was famous for the quality of her root-beer; "she knew all the herbs," it was said, "she was a pretty good tomahawk", or Indian; "she always said in departing, "I am going home to my Witchuck, always called her home-place her Witchuck", (her variant form of the Massachusetts Indian wickiup or dwelling place). She would always talk Indian with the older people when they met, and it was

Kar-nee-kay-ta, how do you do, and  
Me-tay-ta, take a chair,  
and much more that has been forgotten.

It was well along in life that Tamson married Trustram Weeks, and she had her own house already, that house which Tamson's Lane led by. Then came the time for Trustram to build their common dwelling. About that time the old church on the South Road was to be taken down; it was reported out of repair as early as 1810 and abandoned; now its timbers were given to Trustram in part payment for his teaching the Gay Head school. "I was there when they moved it, about 1835 it was," said one survivor; "some came from Chilmark with their ox-teams. An Indian man was boss to move it, a carpenter, Uncle Hebron Wamsley (who lived a little off to the south) —He had but one eye; an Indian man, a tall man; I noticed him, I a boy of 10, how he'd hold his head over to look if it was ready to move, hold his one eye along the timbers."

"It was already an old building but a sound one, so substantial they were built; it was full of oak timbers from the island. Its timbers were the old ship-stuff."

"Many a day I've rode horse for him working on his place," said another, as he pointed out Trustram's peat-house site, now a mound of winged sumach; "that shoe-make that is good for soup for a cold, the berries are," and there was "the peat he hauled from a swamp near Jerrods; August is the peat-month."

Not always had Uncle Trustram led the exemplary life of his middle and later years, and the story of his sudden change is that of a return late from a dancing party when he heard a horse coming on after him, dragging chains that rattled ominously. "On came the horse and circled right around him, rattling his chains. Trustram was so frightened that he rushed on home, the horse still rattling the chains round the house, as Trustram burst into the house and fell unconscious in the door; there his good Christian wife found him. When she roused him he told her how Chepie had come for him, and he had heard the chains rattle that were to bind him. It so affected him that he turned right about, went to no more drinking-parties, and became a Christian man."

No more was the rattling of chains heard, but the house became known as the abode of singing. For upstairs was the big room with many rafters, lighted by a gable window at each end; roofed in with projecting beams which still seemed to give forth the voices of the old church in singing. So it was remarked by X: "It was the Trustram Weeks house which had been the old church, where people as they passed by still heard singing from



its old beams, those queer old beams that I used to see upstairs there." Finally, as we have already seen, this reminder of the old meeting house, "the good beams that remained", was moved up the hill to the State Road, to do duty for Mr. Durwood Diamond. But people still refer to the Trustram Weeks house on the Old South Road as "that house where one could hear singing as he passed."

#### THE OLD HOWWOSWEE BURYING GROUND.

Near the Weeks place we reach the old Howwoswee burying-ground; or Presbyterian burying-ground as most of the people now remember it. Its slope causes its white stones to shine out against the green. Here rest many of the older day with only field-stones as markers; and also a large number of more recent, nineteenth century, burials; some fifteen with white marble stones duly inscribed, from 1825 on. Some were soldiers in our Civil War, as Daniel Nevers, James Diamond, Alfred Rose. Some were in service then in the navy, as Lewis Attaquin who had married Elizabeth, daughter of Trustram Weeks; and William H. Morton, who had for years volunteered to decorate the graves for the 30th of May, remarking to me once regarding a wild-apple tree in the road near by: "It comes handy at Memorial time. I take care every year to get its blossoms and to plant the flags for the soldiers and the widows of soldiers."

Faithful and intelligent companion through many Gay Head lanes, no more will he recount his island memories or his tales of thirty years at sea, as we roam the hills and dales of Gay Head: but I know that friends have duly placed the blossoms of remembrance at his grave, as he did so long for others.

#### THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

Close by on the level ground at the side of this cemetery, the site of the Ancient Church, the building which was reported very strong but "very old, disused and fallen into disrepair" in 1810, and which was removed in 1835 to make Trustram Weeks' dwelling; the remaining timbers from which later formed a building near the present post-office. The older Gay Head people speak of it uniformly as "the old Presbyterian Church", though why they do not term it "Congregational", like the white man, is not apparent. There was a long period of more or less irregular Congregational preaching on Gay Head by white men, ministers, like the Mayhews and others, who came of an occasional Sunday, from their far away homes. These were supplemented by natives, who preached in the Indian tongue. First of these, as is familiar, was their sachem, Mittark,

1663-1683, succeeded later by Japhet Hannit, of Chilmark, who died 1712. Probably Japhet Hannit kept up meanwhile his pastorate in Chilmark, and his residence in Chilmark too, supposed to have been at the slope known after him as Japhet's Field, near the site of the old Congregational church on the hill. Japhet, as Dr. Banks remarks, had at Gay Head "the assistance of other natives, among whom were Abel Wauwompuhque, brother of Mittark, and Elisha Ohhumuh. In 1698 they were preaching to at least 260 souls"; and they had "a meeting house already framed". It would be interesting could we know that this meeting house was the same as that still standing on the Old South Road over a hundred years later; and it is not impossible; though we cannot yet prove that it even stood on the same exact site.

Here where the old church stood, surely it is safe to rest. Such a resting place may lend us the will sometime to renew our ramble through further stretches of The Old South Road.

---

#### PART TWO

---

We who have been tarrying awhile, have rested on our way at the site of the Old South Road Church. We have listened in that quiet to many faint whisperings from the past. Floating down to us they have taken shape and have united to form the following summary of history:

Here on this level, below its hillside burial-ground, stood the ancient Congregational church of Gay Head; remembered by the neighborhood now as "The Old Presbyterian Church", and as "The Church of the Standing Order". Perhaps this was the identical first building; certainly it was its representative; the original church of Gay Head, church of the sachem, Mittark, (preacher to his death, 1683) and of his brother Abel (1698) and of their successors, Elisha and Japhet (to 1712), and Joash Panneu (to 1720). Here we believe occurred that remarkable service described in Sewall's diary of 1714, and cited by Dr. Banks in his chapter on Gay Head, p. 21. Here often had been heard the voices of the missionary Mayhews, at least of Experience, preaching 1694-1758, and Zachariah, 1767-1806, and their successor, Rev. Frederick Baylies, in years beginning 1810.



In this old building local tradition unites in claiming that the last to preach in Indian was the native preacher Zachary Howwoswee, at a time apparently not long before 1810. In that year a visitor recorded that the old church was "disused and out of repair". It lasted on, however, for the next twenty-five years, although not regularly used; and we have found it described as yet remaining in 1835 as "a sound old building", "full of oak timbers from the island, of the old ship-stuff."

So the next chapter of this story is, that it was now, about 1835, thought worth making over into a house, and was given to Trustram Weeks, the Indian schoolmaster, as part pay for his services. We have heard how ox-teams from as far as Chilmark came to remove it. We remember its overseer, "the boss mover", old Uncle Hebron Wamsley, the one-eyed Indian carpenter; and we can see him yet, bending over as they jacked up the old building, leaning close to take a sight with his one eye along its wall, to make sure that the moving wall was holding true and vertical. Arrived soon at its destined location, we have seen the old church become fashioned into Trustram Weeks's house, home of his middle and later years with his wife Tamson, repository of his schoolmaster books and of his Indian Bible. We have listened with the passer-by to that old-world singing that would sound out from its "queer attic rafters",—rafters which still vibrated to songs of the Mayhews's converts of long ago—till singing was still heard from them in the empty house by the passers-by of some seventy years ago.

Finally came another chapter, when Trustram and Tamson had been long no more. The old structure still had beams in it worth moving up the hill to the State Road, where they were made into a barn for Mr. Durwood Diamond, who had married a granddaughter of Trustram. There it might have been standing yet, Deacon Jeffers remarked to me in 1915, "but for that gale of about ten years ago."

And one of the short-length beams which did not share this second transportation, lay still on the ground at the Trustram Weeks cellar-hole in 1915, to exhibit its ancient morticing to the narrator.

Vanished ancient church of a vanished time, about its original site the white stones of its remembered dead still light up the adjacent hillside, and the dark unshaped field-stones of the more numerous forgotten, stand hidden in the grass between.

And if many lie here, many more had gone forth to return not, to do service in whale-ships and in fishing fleets. But now they sleep in far seas, these strong men of old, or in unmarked graves on Gay Head; more numerous than their better-remembered brothers who kept the faith at home, and whose white stones shine from the hillside.

#### THE ANCIENT HOWWOSWEE PLACE.

This whole region is tenanted with the past; and especially this Howwoswee church-site, and the old Howwoswee house-spots adjoining. Center of this tenantry of the past is here, where the Howwoswee lands stretched on every side.

Close to the church, a little over to the west, stood their central home, what was known as the Old Howwoswee house. Memories of this house which still survive among the living, are associated with its last occupant, Zaccheus Howwoswee, first parish clerk of the reorganized Baptist church, 1832 onward. Soon he became deacon, and as senior deacon, for thirty years, he rang the bell for church services, till old age prevented.

His death occurred not long after, and the old house was taken down, some fifty years ago.

It was of the crofter's house form, described as "an old fashioned low one-story house", long east and west, a door opening to the south and another to the north. Inside on the first floor was "a big kitchen, a front-room and a bed-room."

I found the cellar-hole clustered with lilac-bushes; while a blue-flowering red-berried *Dulcamara* or bitter-sweet, the nightshade-vine, was spreading widely over it. Smooth cultivated gooseberries were still ripening on the good Deacon's bushes. "Under the front-room", said my companion, "there was the sos-cellar, front of the kitchen; and the whole remainder was taken up by the immense chimney; I've been in that front-room lots of times," he continued, "when Mr. Fitts would preach to the people gathered in it, people filing in, up through the front door over that big black stepping stone," a stone which still dutifully waits at the doorway.

Rev. George B. Fitts, thus referred to, was an "off-islander" from Middleboro, chiefly known here as a teacher, but remembered as doing much to keep the Indian church alive, and serving for several years as its regular



pastor. As a boarder he lived in the Zaccheus Howwoswee house. A very superior man, energetic and faithful, he was the means of fitting a number of his pupils to teach; and there still remain in print, examples of the extra work he accomplished in his school, colloquies or school exhibitions for which he trained his older pupils. These, when printed, formed the chief contents of his ephemeral local paper, which he called "The Gay Head Light".

His provider for his table, the wife of Zaccheus Howwoswee, in early life known as Betsey Wamsley, was now universally termed Betsey Zach, to distinguish her from two other married Betseys of the neighboring houses. She left no children to mourn her; but I found one relative, Aunt Rosabella Howwoswee as she was called, who remembered her last days, and who said, "I was there at Aunt Betsey's Zach's funeral, when she was buried in the old Presbyterian burying-ground."

She had been a very active woman, "when I was a lad," said another companion, "we were at work at Zaccheus Howwoswee's plowing plot, and Aunt Betsey Zach (as she was commonly called), worked with us; I was plowing with ox-team, and she dropped corn after my plowing. And I remember how she brought us our lunch to eat under the bushes along that wall,—where the grapevines still grow, at Solomon's-Place Wall."

To return to my own visits. Foundations of Zaccheus' barn we found still distinctly marked; 1915; around them nature's own fruits were now ripening; known to my hungry companion as Wild Pear (shadbush), Dangleberries (*Gaylussacia frondosa*), Swamp-Apple (swellings on the swamp azalea), and Low-bush Blueberries; (such their popular names), the latter most plump and inviting of them all.

So the fruitage of wild Nature was all about the deserted place.

#### ZACHARY HOWWOSWEE.

Let us now go back a couple generations further to the Howwoswee place with its old orchard, in early prime; the days of Zachary Howwoswee, the Indian minister, said to be grandfather of Zaccheus. Little definite is remembered about his personal appearance or his family. But he is still a name to conjure with, a dim figure looming out of the past—but looming mightily. Owner of extensive lands, he is supposed to have had a second home, perhaps

only his sea-side wigwam, at the southwest bend of the Gay Head shore, where the miles of sand are replaced by a stretch of hard ground and low cliff, known as Zach's Head.

This headland southeast of Gay Head Cliffs, is supposed to have been of Zachary Howwoswee's ownership. With its wigwam-hole and traces of an old enclosure, it shows also many Indian graves. Over these are indications of a surface-hardening by fire, "for in those times, (says the tradition), they burned fire on the graves to keep the spirits from roaming." Many traces of this ancient feeling still survive. Said one to me in 1915, "that young Indian dug into an old Indian's grave and found his tomahawk and kept it; but I should put it back again and let it rest with him; 'fraid he might come after it, and ask what I was doing with his tomahawk."

At the home tract on the South Road, Zachary's possessions were large, and once well cultivated. His orchard, just east of his house, was said to be the first orchard started on Gay Head.

But beyond his proper home-plot, Zachary Howwoswee seems to have laid claim to a sort of overlordship of Indian lands, tracts which he proceeded to bargain to sell to white men of Chilmark. So his name often appears on the registry records, an unusual thing for a Gay Head Indian of his time.

The Gay Head people claimed that he had no right to make some, or perhaps any, of these sales; and that the land was under common ownership. The traditional version at Gay Head is that "Zachary Howwoswee undertook to sell most of Gay Head and the natives had to rise against it; he'd given privilege to whites which the rest of the people didn't agree to." The Indian tradition is further that his sales finally fell through on account of non-occupation by the whites, who attempted in vain against Indian resistance to drive their cattle over, for pasture, through the wading-place at Menemsha Creek.

But that which is most often remembered at Gay Head regarding Zachary Howwoswee, is that he was Indian minister to the Congregational church that stood by his house-wall. He was last to preach in their own native Indian language; last to baptize by sprinkling; last to try to keep up what the Indians now remember as "the Presbyterian church". Said one narrator:



"My grandmother used to say, "He was one of the old Standing Order; they was all sprinkled but me; for I changed my views." And, speaking of another:

"But my aunt would always go to hear Zachary preach, though she only understood English and didn't know what he meant in his Indian; she only knew when he said Mitcheemi, for that meant Amen. He was asked why he preached in the Indian language, and he replied: 'Why, to keep up my nation.'"

Still he kept on in his brave but impossible struggle to maintain his people as a race, but with dwindling attendance till no more came; and with the growth of his own unfortunate intemperance, the light he sought to keep burning, finally went out. Kendall, in his brief report of a visit to Gay Head in 1807, is claimed by older inhabitants to have referred to Zachary in his report that "The Anabaptist" (meaning Anti-Baptist) clergyman is a large farmer, and was when young of great promise, but he is now given up to drink." I would prefer to let this accusation slumber, but since the charge has been repeatedly reprinted, it perhaps needs a word further. Surviving Gay Head tradition fixes on Zachary Howwoswee as the person, the 'large farmer', hinted at by Kendall, but not named. Zachary, it is otherwise known, was a large farmer and became much addicted to drink. He warned his people earnestly against it, but could not seem to withstand it himself. He would say, as so many others have said, "My people, do as I tell you, and not as I do." He is claimed, however, not to have really lost control of himself. "I do not think he was down with it," said a survivor, "but he had to turn about and take some, after his morning preaching, before he could go on with his afternoon sermon." Another, a descendant, told me, "He used to tell them often when he went in to preach, 'I tell you, you must not do as I do, but as I say.' But his home-made spirit, he would go back to, and take a drop, and come in again and go on preaching. While he went on preaching in Indian, there was but few of them could know what he meant. Sometimes he would preach in English. Then if he wanted to say something that was not for all to hear, he would talk to them very solemnly in the Indian tongue, and they would cry and he would cry." His impressiveness has lasted so, that it is only recently that an Indian woman was heard to say that one thing she wanted was to name a son Howwoswee.

Leader of lost causes, Zachary's was a pitiful struggle. The decay of Indian language and custom meant much to

him. With an Indian's shrewdness he perceived that to preserve his race as a complete entity, he must hold fast the bond of language; and he spent his strength in an unavailing effort to maintain this Indian language, at least in the church service. The force of that effort was still evident in his grandchildren, by whom Indian phrases were still kept in use for ceremony though not for conversation.

But more pitiful still was Zachary's long effort to subdue himself, and to keep down the fires of that appetite for drink which was the bane of his race. Yet who shall say that it was wholly an unavailing struggle? what effort at self-command is ever wholly lost? It was against an overwhelming tide, but still he struggled on, acknowledged his weakness before his people, and warned them against himself. Causes may be lost, but that was not an inglorious end which went down fighting. Let us pay one word of tribute to the man who knew the enemy and gave warning of the danger.

Turning to the other house-spots of this Howwoswee land, we find them well-hidden. Most were reached each by its own woodroad leading southward through tangles of bushes and swamps from the Old South Road. Some of these paths are now hard to find. Even to cross from one to another close parallel, is often difficult, from the swamps between. We must thread these mazes for a few minutes, however, for each path is a pendant from the South Road. There were also other houses still further south along the shores, which are beyond the limits of this paper; but these next to be considered are the houses in the bushy-tangles between, parts of the South Road community; what the old Gay Header called "Down in the Lower Town."

First we will follow south along the charming Howwoswee Lane, still kept open in parts by passage of wood-carts; overgrown by bushes in other parts. Pondholes are all about; stones in the bed of a little brook help keep the feet dry; and we come to the big black-oak, very broad and stocky, known to the boys of sixty years ago as the Swing-tree, perhaps the largest oak tree in Gay Head. A different companion of another day, remembered many times when in swinging, the boys lost hold and swung themselves off into the black muck beneath it.

Look if we can through the thickets to the west, and there is a little clearing in the woods, where once was the home of an Indian grandmother—grandmother to many children, Johnsons later, of a wide dispersion. She herself, Mehitable by name, was known as Aunt Hittie Ames,



was half-sister to Bathsheba Occooch, (who lived a little further on, and was born, co-equal with our national life, in 1783). In her younger years, Aunt Hittie had achieved fame as a good cook, sought for at various hotels. Her only son Prince Johnson, achieved fame in another way by his wooden leg. Stumping along with that wooden leg, it came to be a saying, "Hear Prince coming and you'd know who's coming." But he grew to thank his wooden leg when his boat capsized coming from New Bedford, and though others were drowned, he would claim "I floated, 'cause of my wooden leg."

Off to the southeast we reach the cellar-holes of the Wamsleys, of Hebron Sr. and Jr. and of Jane Wamsley. That of Uncle Hebron Wamsley, Sr., is one of the best-preserved cellar-holes on Gay Head. There are still the three big squared stone steps. But the west door to which they led is gone, and so "the pleasant front-room, the two bedrooms, and the little low window under the eaves." And here was the great chimney, "built up of stone, before they made them of brick," now mantled with the nightshade-vine. On the other side, to the east, were other stone-steps, to a kitchen-door; the kitchen, where it was the Wamsley habit to sit when work was done; while the front-room was kept closed; the usual custom of the time.

The two Hebrons, uncle and nephew, were carpenters and undertakers, and made the red coffins which were regular on Gay Head eighty years ago. The elder Hebron was the one-eyed man who took the charge when the old church was moved; a man then of about fifty years. The younger was a boy of fifteen at that time, but grew to have larger house and larger family than his elders; and to leave in his daughter known as Lou-vi-ny Wamsley, one of the last inhabitants to survive from the Old South Road, living till about 1900, but removing long before to the north, where she was tenant of the interesting old home of Deacon Simon Johnson.

Most potent name in memory of all the Wamsleys, was that of Aunt Jane Wamsley, sister of Uncle Hebron, Sr., and with her own snug cottage well hidden in the woods next west of his. She, like many other Gay Head women of that day, had solved the problem of how to live alone and be happy. As one remarked, "she lived all alone a long time, until her home burned down." Its cellar-walls still are neat and strong. She is described as a regular Indian in features and expression, but stocky and thickset; unlike her nimble half-brother, Jonathan Francis of Squib-

nocket Pond. Both had come from Chilmark, from the high ground known as Uppaquay-issa. Gifted with eloquence, and moved with strong desire for the welfare of souls, she became Indian preacher to the old Indian church, during times of vacancy, until stopped by the stricter white brethren from beyond "the other side of Gay Head." "But she was good as a minister anyway," said one survivor, and others still speak of her as the first woman-preacher they ever knew,—though it seems that the Gay Head people had actually had a woman-minister still earlier, as appears in the record of one Esther Taconet, of the Baptist church.

Children found her a strict disciplinarian, and her piercing glance left them little room for escape. But there was one who never forgot her real kindness, and who told me "She took quite a notion to me, when I was a boy, though I was quite as mischievous as any; but first time I went a-whaling, when I was fourteen years of age, she came to the house, and said, "He must have a feather-pillow, to take with him, and I've made it, and brought it."

Past the house of the younger Hebron Wamsley, the lane, Hebron's Lane they call it, leads down to the sea, and for a short distance it is straight and wide and gives a charming glimpse beyond of a pond, Hebron's Pond, gleaming at the right time with white water-lilies. One soul-filling look at these shining cups that fill Hebron's Pond with white radiance, and we press on into a woodland cart-way at an angle, known as Aunt Esther's Woodroad, prettiest and cleanest of country ways, with surviving holly and wealth of white-flowering Viburnums. It is our introduction to the three homes of one of the most notable of Gay Head women, Aunt Esther Howwoswee, another of the "Lower Town" women who, lived for years all alone. To her man was more kind than the elements, however, for the indriving sands from the shore twice began to overwhelm her little home, but kindly neighbors lent a hand and shifted it to a new location. "They took it down and flaked it and moved it with ox-teams," said her niece Rosabella. So we have three sites for the house of Esther Howwoswee, "Aunt Easter" as she was often called by her neighbors, or "the Indian doctress" among the whites. One site is still a beautiful one, where a high-grown sumach-grove looks out on Hebron's Pond; sand-billows were deep around it in 1915, and a few years later had blown on and left some of the big stones bare again.



Another site, facing a part of the same pond now blown full of sand, was itself on higher ground, but proved not high enough to avoid the sand, and she was obliged to abandon her crofter-like home and her beloved lily-grown frontview and make a more distant remove. This third home was in what is known as "The Forty-acre Lot", an upland swell east of Hebron's Pond. Her house there looked out on a grassy plateau from the edge of woodland. Built taller than before, with neat gray blinds and comfortable interior, this is the home that is chiefly remembered by her friends. Here she lived many years alone; from this home she was familiarly seen issuing from the bushes tagged with bundles of herbs, on her missions of skill. As midwife she was in great repute, ever journeying, chiefly on foot or by boat, walking to Vineyard Haven or Edgartown, or going on through the Elizabeth Islands and into Cape Cod. How did she acquire her skill? I asked; and I am answered, "out of herself, it was her own; she read a great deal, but what she read confirmed her in what she already practiced; but how she first came to know she never told; she was an Indian woman, and would never tell."

Said her niece to me in 1917, "I used to go to Aunt Easter's house in the Forty-acre Lot a great deal; it was a nice one; not very big; a large room to set in, a large kitchen, convenient bedroom, all on the main floor; a frame house with great fire-place, a big chimney, crane and pots and kettles. Upstairs under the roof it was all one low room; no stone walls but frame. I used to love to go there and eat of her short-cake, it was so remarkably good. It was baked in a pot with a cover, set in the fireplace, with the coals all over the cover. We ate it with her salt-mutton and potatoes; with butter but no other relish; she baked it round, like our spider-cake. How good it tasted! and it was almost my finger-length thick."

Said another, "Aunt Esther would tell how it was any complaint. My mother had quinsy sore throat, and very bad. It was a fearful snow-storm, but my father went after her, and she came, with the right herbs, which she had all ready; she put them on the fire, steeped them and gave to her, and told her Drink it, and hold it in your throat; and in a short time mother was relieved."

Among her books was her large old Bible in English, her numerous collection of tracts from the American Tract Society, of dates up to 1825, and other tracts from the New England Tract Society at Andover, Mass., of dates 1821-3. One of the most interesting of her old books that I have

seen preserved by her kindred was her copy of "The English Physician Enlarged", an English summary of Culpeper's famous Herbal, of date uncertain, as from much use it had long ago lost beginning and end—though there remained over three hundred pages of descriptions of medical uses of herbs. "Not her first knowledge of herbs came from that book," say her kindred, "but she read to confirm it." She repeatedly wrote her name in her books, in an unusually clear well-formed hand; and I have followed her spelling, which was Howwoswee.

Of Aunt Esther Howwoswee's personality I am told that "she was dark, was wholly or almost all, Indian, was short and stocky in build but became spare in later life, was accounted good-looking in her prime, had strong cheekbones and straight black hair."

She "supported herself by going about among the sick", until failing strength came; "finally her mind weakened and she would wander off a little way, and think herself the other side of Menemsha Pond." It became necessary for someone to watch over her, and in her later years she was kindly cared for by one who has so helped the needy, Mrs. Rachel Ryan. Her age seems to have been 87, her dates about 1796 to 1883. What a link to the old Indian past was broken, with the death of Aunt Esther Howwoswee! What tales she might have told of the elder time! "She was never very talkative," but one tradition is handed down through her, the tradition of the chief or Indian medicine-man foretelling the future from his eyrie on Indian Hill,—a sharp eminence near Squibnocket Pond; so-called from him, "the Indian's Hill." The tradition was told me in these words, taken down at the time,—“On that Indian Hill the old Indian would go up and there he would prophesy that there should come another race in place of the Indians—Aunt Esther said so; and he was buried in a very long grave on the slope as you go up this way; Mayhew had come, but few more; this was told to me by my ancestors, when I was a very little girl;—so said Aunt Esther.”

Most of her conversation was in English in deference to her company; but to the people she was with, she used a few Indian phrases for ceremony, as Nomma weeka, "very good", and always in rising to go, Taubut, "thank you". What words she or other Indians would use, if any, when they met, is not remembered; but their greeting with a silent curtsy impressed itself on early memories; "Indians when they met would always curtsy", her niece Rosabella said; so "She had heard Aunt Esther say."



#### THE ISAAC ROSE HOUSE-SITE.

We come back along the Howwoswee Lane from Aunt Esther's to the South Road and resume our travels:

Opposite the Zacheus Howwoswee property was the rather large and sterile farm of Deacon Isaac Rose, born 1811, who had married Betsy Zach's sister Harriet Wamsley, and who for years kept the local post-office in his house, going on foot to Chilmark for the mail, having no horse to ride.

Old lilac-bushes and a discouraged Balm-of-Gilead tree still surround the cellar-hole; they have been standing for over sixty years practically unchanged. The cavity is filled up with a growth of spurge, here called "Bonaparte's Crown"; and live-forever, here called Houseleek; and with matrimony-vine, which seems to have developed no local name. A white lilac stands on the west side, a purple lilac on the east.

#### THE MINISTER'S LOT.

Our walk has now brought us to the small tract known as the Minister's Lot, and to the cartway which winds up from it to connect with the State Road, passing the present, the Baptist church. The parsonage that once stood on the Minister's Lot was property, not of the Congregational but the Baptist, order. Many a Baptist minister of Gay Head had his residence there, in this "Minister's house"; one of them is said to have died there, Rev. Mr. George W. Hawkins, June, 1906; and about 1907 the people decided to move it up the hill near the present church. There it now stands, and forms the present Gay Head Parsonage; first occupied there by Rev. Clarence L. Whitman, standing on the old site of the old Gay Head Windmill.

No one seems to know just when this "Minister's House" was first built, but the local statement is that ministers are known to have occupied it below, from about 1870. Some believe that the land was given for the purpose by Esther Howwoswee, as daughter of Laban Howwoswee, once its owner.

West of the building was the Minister's Spring or Laban's Spring; a collateral to Laban's Brook which here plunges down the hill; and lined with Balm of Gilead trees which were set out long ago by Samuel Haskins, as if for a windbreak.

Appropriately enough, I found at the Minister's-house site, that there was still a growth of Costmary, the "Smelling-Leaf" or "Bible-Leaf" of the Vineyard, habitually

used to place in the Bible and diffuse its fragrance. So the fragrance living yet from those old times, is not of memory only.

#### LABAN PLACE.

Next lot up the hill, a small bare space now, is still known as "the Barn Lot", from its once being the site of the Minister's barn; North of that stretches another bare area still commonly known as the Laban-place, from its almost forgotten owner Laban Howwoswee. Aunt Thia, his wife was called, (Vineyard form for Bethia), remembered as a "pleasant-looking old lady, light for an Indian."

So we have finished our way through "Lower Town", the second, the once populous, section of the Old South Road. We shall not be detained so long by the remaining parts, for they possessed fewer inhabitants to interrogate.

#### THIRD BYWAY.

Now we enter a third section of the Old South Road, stretching westward at another angle, with an up-grade at first. Thickets presently close in, but seem to have little to tell of the past, no more hidden cellar-holes lining the way. Cattle-prints, and green grass mostly replaced by brown, are our first accompaniments.

Off to the north is a tract owned by Priscilla Bowes, who became a famous cook and was last known in San Francisco; one of the few tracts we have passed without a cellar-hole; no house has been on it they say for eighty years. Further afield stands now the abandoned house where Gilbert Jeffers once lived alone, reached by his lane in from the Main Road; this was one of the few Gay Head homes still to burn peat in 1917; but at my next visit he was gone.

#### THE SALSBURY PLACES.

(Spelled Salsbury, etc., by the Indians)

To the south at some distance was a place more inhabited, in the remoter past, now difficult of access through impenetrable greenbrier entanglements; but if we were successfully to dart through oak groves and hazel scrub, and not wrap ourselves in greenbrier more hopelessly the more we pull, we would presently come to glades in the woods where once the numerous Salsbury and Cook families made merry. Here the old John Salsbury cellar-hole still keeps its stone walls foursquare, and looks out on its surprisingly flourishing pear-trees and quince-bushes. They are high contrast to the tangles near, where, as once



remarked, "Jophanus Salisbury began to clear; he done a good deal of work, but labor in vain; and he went to sea and never came back."

There were left at home, his sisters Drusilla and Emily; classic names that surprise us in the thickets. These Indians of the South Road and their neighbors had a keen sense for a good name. Beyond the Bible names which they used in common with the whites, their innate feeling for beauty led them to adopt Greek feminines when they came upon them. So we find their daughters named Diana and Diadama, Priscilla and Triphosia, Sophronia and Drusilla, to say nothing of the more familiar classic survivals of Lydia and Melissa, Laura and Clara, Julia and Almira, Sophia and Roxa, Rosanna and Rosetta.

Names derived from Teutonic sources were fewer on the South Road, yet there was Winifred to match with an Algnon.

Leaving "good old John Salisbury" as he was called, leaving him with his Jophanus and Drusilla, we are next to visit the home of another Indian minister.

#### THE ELDER'S PLACE.

Bordering west on Jophanus' Place is the Elder's Place, where Elder Thomas Jeffers of the Baptist church retired to live in his old age; a voice-trouble coming on, no longer able to preach but able to cultivate a little land; "about five acres, which he enclosed, where he raised crops and hay", and built him a little house, "a low one-story, little small house, but founded upon a rock; he was one to build upon a strong foundation; you can see his white corner-stone still if you go there." So said his grandson, Deacon Thomas Jeffers of more recent time; adding, "There he died, and it was his wish to be buried there. So he was; and his wife,—who would not be separated from him. Some years ago I had two marble stones set up there to them, where now the graves lie hidden in the bushes."

Still stand the unchanged white marble stones, mute witnesses of this faithful pair, seldom seen, but rewarding the seeker who parts and lifts the hazel-cover, and lets the sunshine in. They were not natives here; the Elder "was from Plymouth", but in middle life was with the Middleboro remnant "at Betty's Neck", in Lakeville. His wife, Sarah Ash, was an Indian from Mashpee, a very great helper in his work, beginner of the first Gay Head Sunday School, a great leader in singing, and possessed of a clear powerful voice. Here, where they rest, asleep on "the first

farm land" in from the sea, there stretches near them the shining water of a beautiful pond, the Elder's Pond, now almost cut in two by inblowing sand; and most charmingly crowned on its landward side by a green shrub-grown bluff.

His meeting house stood within a few rods of the present Gay Head church; there he had revivals and thence he led a train of converts "to baptize them" now and then in Occooch Pond." Such are the few glimpses that tradition gives of him.

And now our steps have reached a pasture ground, about the end of our third section of the road, from which the open sea begins to show, and nearer us there shines a ring of blue water, as if a circlet cast carelessly among the green thickets — it is Occooch Pond, or rather, the larger of the Occooch Ponds.

#### THE OCCOOCH FAMILY.

Here once stood, facing the pond, the house of the Indian John Occooch, who is said to have lived one hundred years, descendant we may surmise of one Akooch-uk, who is mentioned in the seventeenth Century as an important Indian of Gay Head.

John Occooch seems the last of his race in the male line; he was a man of daughters, five who lived to marry, carrying the Occooch blood into other families. There was Beulah, the well-remembered; Bathsheba, who married a Haskins; Hepsibah, a Holmes; Naomi, a Salisbury; Mercy, a Powell. It was one of Mercy's family, her son Sylvester, whose dying words are oft repeated on Gay Head; Deacon Thomas Jeffers coming to him in his sickness found him almost beyond speech, but he pointed and pointed to a book; on bringing this Bible to him, he grasped it and pointed upward now and said, "It has pointed me the way to Heaven."

In her remoter time, Beulah Occooch, called "the youngest of the Occooch girls," had her own Indian Bible, that monument of Eliot's devotion to the race. Her name has been repeatedly bestowed since, as in her niece Beulah Salisbury who married the first of the Vanderhoop family. Her ancestors of the still remoter past are believed to have lived further south beyond Zach's Head, where "Beulah's Mound", a dome of living green, still rises capped with bayberry bushes, among wilds of white sand-dunes. There it was her dying wish to be buried, it is said, "to lie with her people."



#### FOURTH BYWAY.

And now we have come to a parting of the ways. Two courses remain to choose; one leads on westward to the sea, toward the Coast Guard's Boathouse, over the sand-choked water of the Occooch outlet, which strives in vain to cross the beach.

Our other choice is to turn sharply north; here an open road leads to the State Highway, and is generally recognized as the final part of the Old South Road; our fourth section we may term it. No house or cellarhole shows along it, but houses of John Belain, Mrs. A. J. Madison, and Moses Cooper, are in sight at the right, belonging, however, more properly to the State Road, from which their drive-ways reach.

#### FORMER WIGWAMS.

Near the corner where we turn, two wigwam-holes are still pointed out; one overgrown with oak, said to be of the "Aunt Liddie Johnson wigwam"; one grass-grown and open, near the southwest corner of the John Belain house, said to have been an Occooch wigwam. Said one who remembered, "Where a wigwam stands a good while, there is apt to be a hole left, because they would keep earthing it up around it. To build the wigwam, they would put stakes around, leave a hole at the top, and cover all with mats of beachgrass; same grass as the backbaskets," and the "bag-baskets too, which were not woven for the back, but to swing from the hand; a fine example woven by Tamson Weeks still survives on Gay Head. "The last wigwam near us, they finally put a fence around it to keep the cattle from hooking it down and thinking it was a haystack"; told of the Sarah Henry wigwam; and so of the Martha Tauknet wigwam, both toward Lobsterville, and surviving past 1830.

#### THE BACKBASKETS.

Almost next to a wigwam-mat in interest, could we see it now, would be the Indian backbasket just mentioned, woven in loose openwork from beachgrass, or sometimes from cat-tail flag. Collapsing, and not in the way when empty, the Indian, man or woman, found the backbasket, resting light on the back, a very convenient way of carrying purchases and bundles. One of the Gay Head men who moved away "to be among people", became a frequent purchaser at Vineyard Haven stores; always he used to carry home his packages in his backbasket on his back. It is a pity that our museums, with all their wealth of Indian material, should be in such utter want of the backbasket: so perishable, it disappeared early.

Alas for posterity, his backbasket seems to have disappeared completely; only two years ago I made my last unavailing effort to trace it when talking it over with his daughter. Gay Head's most lively memory of a backbasket now, is that of another one that was formerly much in evidence here; borne by a woman, plodding home right where we stand; old Betsey Dodge, a niece it is said of John Occooch. She lived in his house after him, and though bent and seemingly feeble, moved rapidly about Gay Head, beneath her well-filled backbasket, so fast that everybody said she must be a witch; none but a witch could move so; "Yes," said one, "when I was a little girl with mother once, driving home, we overtook Betsey bent so under her backbasket that we were sorry and said, 'Let us take it for you, we have room in the wagon.' So we did, and hurried on; but pretty quick, there she was, walking right beside us again, so fast she came; I never saw any one move so quick."

#### WITCHES.

"And I," said another, "when I was a boy and I heard that she was a witch, I said, 'How can you prove it?' and they told me, if you can find a witch's footstep where she has walked, and you follow and step in it, she will turn right around and look you in the eye. So I did next time I saw her pass, and no sooner had I put my feet in her footprints than I saw her turn round, though she was far up now on yonder hill; there she turned round, and she looked me in the eye."

#### GRAVE OF INDIAN ABEL.

But there are no witches now on Gay Head, he adds, almost with a sigh, and we are left to the rocks and the thickets of our walk. Now something is close to our left or western wall. We must jump the wall and push the bushes apart and see what we see. Here is a row of hidden, forgotten, Indian graves, marked with small upright slabs, in English fashion only without inscription, save that on one of the largest, an unskillful chisel has endeavored to cut the name Abel. The A is very well made. I was indebted to Mrs. Edwin Vanderhoop for a hint that Indian graves were said to exist in these thickets.

I found it even so; here they were, hidden in the briery thicket. Her husband, nearest neighbor on the west, and Mr. John Belain, nearest neighbor on the east, both told me of a tradition that associated Mittark, the Gay Head Sachem, with this field: for Mittark's Rock is their name for a singular porphyritic rock close by, an outlier to a remarkable circle of great glacial boulders.



Abel's Spring is the name tradition hands down for a shallow spring, also near by, now muddy and cattle-trodden.

For some years I had heard that name for the spring; the Indians said, "It is called Abel's Spring, but no one knows why."

Then when I found the name Abel cut on the gravestone, I said, doubtless this is the Abel of the Spring. Next I observed that an Indian of high rank in Gay Head is recorded by Experience Mayhew as named Abel, and as brother of the Sachem Mittark. Then it flashed upon me that here are the graves of the family of this Abel; here we have probably one of the rarest of finds, an identifiable burial, among the scores of Indian graves that remain unnameable.

Everything points to the probability that the effort to cut the name Abel on the stone was to indicate that it is the grave of Abel Wauwompuhque, brother of the first great Sachem, Mittark, and himself a co-worker with Mittark in establishing Christianity here; recorded as a preacher here in 1698 and living till 1713.

In agreement with this belief, we note that these stones are upright slabs; in English fashion; not like the little field-stone markers, commonly set at Indian burials about the Vineyard. They indicate a family; and one of unusual dignity; and one that was adopting the English mode of life, so far as burial slabs may suggest.

A different Abel may have been the Abel of Abel's Neck on Menemsha Pond; a neck on the Chilmark, not the Gay Head side.

A still different Abel presumably, was he of Abel's Hill on the South Road in Chilmark, giver of Indian deeds, in which he referred, once at least, to that hill, as "where I, Abel Abel dwelleth"; meaning that he was Abel, son of Abel.

Tradition seems to have preserved little else about this spot, about Abel's spring, but for one superstition; that cattle can see or feel a presence sometimes which men are blind to; and "when cattle in that field come near the Mittark Rock, and the thickets about the burial stones, they become strangely excited, leaping and bellowing as nowhere else." Shall it remain so, that the cattle alone recognize that royal line? Furthermore, a light is sometimes seen there; but the light is in no man's hand. Shall it not light us back to Abel and to his brother Mittark? Must

such lights darken into shades, and must we leave these "shades of the past"? Yes, or though almost there, we do not quite reach the end of our way. And now as we go, our surroundings have changed, open fields and cultivated lands are all about us; till presently, at a particularly inviting rose-bowered wall, we are met by the Main Road with asphalt and autos, our Old South Road ends, and our visions fade into the light of common day.

THE END.



