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# INDIAN LEGENDS

OF

# MARTHA'S VINEYARD

BY DOROTHY R. SCOVILLE

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BY DOROTHY R. SCOVILLE

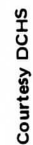


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**TO MY FRIENDS**  
**THE DESCENDANTS OF MOSHOP'S PEOPLE**

Printed by  
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**Map of Vineyard with Indian place names.**



## SOURCES

*HISTORY OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD*, by Dr. Chas. Banks,  
Pub. by the Dukes County Historical Society

*THE OLD SOUTH ROAD*, by Edward S. Burgess,  
Pub. by the Dukes County Historical Society

*CAPAWACK*, by the Rev. Warner Gookin,  
Pub. by the Dukes County Historical Society

*THREE ISLANDS*, by Alice Forbes Howland, Privately Printed

*POKONOKET WORDS*, from the Dukes County Historical Society  
Archives.

AND

As told to the author by:

Mrs. Mary C. Vanderhoop

Mrs. Nanetta V. Madison

Mrs. Rachel Ryan

James Cooper

Linus Jeffers

Also other descendants of Moshop's People.



Photo by Katharine Tweed  
Courtesy DCHS

**NAPOLEON B. MADISON**, Descendant of Moshop's People in his  
regalia as Medicine Man of Aquinnah.

## CHAPTER I

### MOSHOP AND HIS PEOPLE

Unknown years before any of the early explorers discovered Martha's Vineyard, there were Indians living on the island they knew as Capawack, the "refuge place", sometimes called Noepe, or "amid the waters."

These people were said to be the descendants of Moshop, a legendary giant who lived on Aquinnah, at the western edge of Martha's Vineyard, with his beautiful wife Squant, their twelve handsome sons and their twelve lovely daughters. Aquinnah, meaning "land under the hill"; later became known as Gay Head, because of the multicolored clay cliffs.

Moshop was a Great Chief, reputed to be endowed with supernatural powers, so say the Old People who can remember the stories handed down to them from other generations.

The legends of Martha's Vineyard are seldom told and some are almost forgotten except when a brief flash of memory recalls them. Some of the legends vary or have been embroidered by their narrators and some were told solely for the entertainment of the imaginative listener. Researchers have traced their similarity to those stories related by the Indians of other tribes on the mainland.

Vineyard Indians were Pawkunnawkutts, usually shortened to Pokonokets. They were a branch of the Wampanoags and a part of the great Algonquin Nation. Historians have recorded they once were under Massasoit, then the feared King Philip, although they did not join him in war against the white people who became their neighbors. Perhaps this was due to the missionary efforts of Thomas Mayhew, first and only governor of the island who in 1642 decreed the Indians should be treated fairly, with Christian kindness.

Gabriel Archer and John Brereton who were with English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold's company in 1602, describe the Indians of Capawack as "courteous, gently of disposition and well conditioned, excelling all others that we have seen; so for shape of body and lovely favour I think they excell all the people of America; of stature much higher than we; of complexion and colour much like a dark olive; their eie brows and haire blacke, which weare long tied up behind in a knott, whereon they pricke feathers of fowles, in fashion of a crownnet."

Aquinnah, Takemmy (the West Tisbury area), Nunnepog, "fresh water place", (Edgartown) and Chappaquiddick, "the separated island", were the four divisions of Capawack and each area was ruled by a chief or sachem who was a member of the Council on the mainland. Although the sachems usually were men, there was at least one queen sachem. She was Adomas, who ruled the Sanchacankacket pond area, now a part of Oak Bluffs.

The women of Capawack wore shifts or blouses and skirts made of tanned deer skins. Animal furs were used as blankets. The men wore shirts and leggings. In summer, clothing was kept at a minimum for freedom and comfort.

Capawack people lived in wigwams of varying sizes. These were of poles covered with woven marsh grass mats and sometimes they were beehive shape known as wickiups or wetus. They often were moved to convenient fishing spots in the Spring and to more sheltered places for protection from winter winds.

The wigwam floor was dug lower than the outside ground, to keep out wind and rain. Smoke from the wigwam fire escaped by way of an opening at the top where the poles were fastened together. A few wigwam holes are faintly visible today in places where the people of Capawack once lived.

From digs made by archaeologists, and from accidental findings, many of the implements used by Moshop's People have provided factual evidence of their way of life. Arrowheads continually are discovered here and there about the island, as are crude stone pestles for grinding herbs, stone sinkers for fishing, and many other items treasured by collectors.

Food supplies for the Capawack Indians were plentiful and

offered a menu of wide variety. There were fish in the sea, shellfish along the shores. Duck and geese populated the ponds and deer as well as smaller animals lived in the forests. In the summer there were blueberries, grapes and cranberries, in addition to other edibles. Corn, beans and peas were staples used in the clay cooking pot, along with all sorts of additions such as fish or meat. Ground corn was mixed with berries to make a flat biscuit called pemican.

Some 3,000 Indians were first counted as living on Capawack when the white settlers came, but the settlers brought diseases and many Indians died. Their burial places are scattered and often are marked only by field stones not always recognized as grave sites.

Archaeologists, anthropologists, genealogists, palaeontologists, historians, all have found the Indians of Capawack a fascinating, never ending study.

Once Gay Head was under protection of the state but it proudly became a town in 1870, with full citizenship rights for Moshop's People. In those days many Vineyard Indians were famed as whalers, notable for their strength, keen eyes and deft hand with a harpoon.

People of Indian ancestry, some 200 of them, today live largely on Gay Head, bound to their home place by the love which brings them back, even when scattered to far lands. They live as do their other island neighbors, in comfortable, modern houses. Their children attend school and often go on to college. They have jobs and professions; have intermarried with non-Indian people and speak Yankee American. The Pokonoket words are lost in years. Even the legends are only faintly remembered.

The courteous descendants of Moshop's People are quietly aware of the interest in their history shown by visitors and sometimes they are amused, sometimes annoyed. They agree the researchers undoubtedly are right about many things. But before Then?

When did the legends begin? Often they were told in the wigwams of winter or the lodges of summer, among the sheltered places of the island known as Capawack, long before the time of Then, and uncounted years before Now.

## CHAPTER II

### HOW THE ISLAND CAME TO BE

Moshop was a man of peace who first lived on the elbow of Cape Cod. He loved to contemplate the beauty about him and would sit long hours tranquilly smoking his big peudelee or pipe while he watched the clouds or stared out at the ever changing sea. He was known as a just arbiter and a kindly philosopher whose wisdom was unquestioned. He excelled in feats of strength and bravery, which the envious attributed to magic. This caused malice and dissension to arise among some of his neighbors. After long consideration, Moshop decided he was weary of strife and discord. He would search out a new place where he and his followers might live in peace.

Along the marshes of Nauset on Cape Cod, over the dunes and through the forests, Moshop with his wife Squant and their people, walked with the rising sun and the sun guided them toward land which was new to them.

The shore birds flew up ahead of them, pheasant and deer looked with wonder, then scurried into hiding behind bayberry, sumac, viburnum and wind swept oaks.

At last, spent with walking, Moshop paused to look about him. As he slowly dragged one huge foot, water rushed in and a pool formed behind him. The pool deepened and became a channel and the tide swept in to separate a portion of the land. That land became an island separated from Cape Cod by blue water. Soon his footsteps were marked by a chain of small islands, but it was the land that lay ahead which fulfilled Moshop's desire and became the most beautiful island of all. Moshop named this largest island Capawack, or "refuge place".

Many years later, in 1602, the smaller islands were named by Bartholomew Gosnold. Today they bear the name of his sister and are known as the Elizabeth Islands. Their Indian name was Nashanow, whose translation is given as "between", possibly meaning between Martha's Vineyard and the mainland or between Buzzards Bay and Vineyard Sound waters.

From the westernmost high clay cliffs of Capawack, Moshop could see whales playing close by the shore. There were forests edged by ponds of fresh water; sheltered fields for planting and

beauty wherever he looked. Never before had he gazed on such perfection. Truly the Great Spirit had led him here. This was the Refuge Place he had been seeking.

With housewifely concern, Squant set about preparing their first meal. Moshop pointed to nearby young trees and she pulled some of them up for firewood. Today there are no sizeable trees on Gay Head, for Moshop's wife and children burned constant fires in their lodges. Smoke from these fires settled in a haze over the hills and today the Old People sagely nod their heads and say the haze that often is seen, comes from Old Squant's fire or if the fog is unusually thick, then Moshop is smoking his pipe.

Moshop provided the food for Squant to cook by wading out into the sea and catching a whale by the tail. Quickly he would dash it against the cliff so the blood ran down in a crimson stain. It ran down into the sea and stained the water red, even as the water sometimes is stained today when the surf washes against the cliffs which have the red clay deposits.

As the family of Moshop and Squant grew in size, they continued to eat their meals at the edge of their cliff home where they discarded the whale bones as well as the bones of other animals. There were many bones and sometimes the teeth of animals unknown in present times. These are found today by sharp eyed visitors who recognize them embeded in the cliffs or washed down on the beach.

Archaeologists and palaeontologists say the island was formed some 3,000 years ago by the progressive rise of the land and relative sea level in the southern New England area. Other scientists argue this rise never ceased but is continuing today, constantly nibbling away at Moshop's land.

### CHAPTER III

## CHEEPII, THE EVIL ONE

Just how Cheepii, the Evil One, came to Capawack, no one has explained, but he was an ever present threat to all who lived there. Whatever mischief was done or whenever disaster threatened, then everyone knew it was Cheepii who was responsible.

Children often were threatened with Cheepii when they were slow to obey their elders.

"Cheepii will get you." warned mothers, "You be good or I will call on Cheepii to punish you."

Indian children seldom needed punishment however, because they respected the wisdom of their parents and would not risk the scorn of others in the village if their behavior was censured.

One of the stories about Cheepii which has been retold down through the years, concerns the cornfield planted for common use, as was the custom of the people. The summer sun and rain had ripened the corn and it soon would be ready for harvesting. In celebration of this, the children of Moshop decided to have a festival with food and dancing. They invited everyone with the exception of Cheepii, who naturally was not welcome.

The feast was lavish. There were great pots of Indian succotash, boiled fish and lobster, steamed clams, roast pheasant and rabbit stew. After the feasting there was dancing around a tremendous fire.

Suddenly there was a roaring wind that scattered the blazing fire amongst the dancers and those watching. Women and children, young and old, scurried out of the way, beating out the embers as they ran.

The roar then seemed to come from the nearby cornfield and the braves hurried there to defend the place against whatever enemy had crept upon them. In the darkness there was confusion and much calling but there was no answer. The cornfield was trampled as if by giant feet. Sadly the braves brought the news back to the people.

"Cheepii," they muttered, "Only Cheepii would do this."

In the morning light they surveyed the ruined field. The corn

was ripe for picking but the tall green stalks lay flat on the ground. There were no footprints anywhere, only those made by the mocasined feet of the braves in their search for the unseen enemy.

Even today there is a place near the Gay Head cliffs known by some as "Cheepii's field."



## CHAPTER IV

### THE UNFINISHED BRIDGE

Because Moshop was a kindly person who greatly wished peace and contentment, not only for himself but for his family, he was unhappy when some of his people suggested he build a bridge to the mainland. A bridge, they argued, would allow them to visit other tribes for trading and would permit some of their friends as well as relatives to visit Capawack. There also would be more opportunity and adventure for the younger braves who were growing restless within the confines of Capawack.

The possibility of a bridge became the main topic discussed around the camp fires. By some it was thought to be good but there were others who voiced loud disagreement. Soon there was anger boiling up between friends. Neighbors refused to speak to neighbors. Even the children took it up and began a game of tossing stones out into the water to see who could be Moshop, with the rock that would fall farthest from shore in the direction of the mainland.

At last Moshop decided something must be done. A delegation had come to him, urging him to build a bridge of rocks across the expanse of water between Aquinnah and Cuttyhunk. From Cuttyhunk it would be an easy trail along the small islands to the mainland. Then there would be a way to the outside lands for those who wished to travel far from Capawack, but the bridge also would provide a safe means of return across the dangerous tidal waters.

When Moshop finally made it known he would build the bridge, there were those who continued to oppose the plan. They predicted Capawack would be overrun with people from the mainland and that these visitors might, in time, become an undesirable majority.

While all this was being discussed, a very old woman, bent with her years and said to have wisdom from unnamed sources, asked to be heard.

Her proposal was to have Moshop agree to work on the bridge only from sunset to cockcrow. Her listeners were not impressed. How, they asked, could this help matters? By the light of the full moon, Moshop easily could complete the bridge in that time. The

old woman insisted and to please her, because they respected her years, they approached Moshop with the plan. Moshop, seeing this as a way to keep peace between the two factions, readily agreed.

Long before sunset, on the night of the full moon, the village people assembled along the top of Aquinnah's cliffs to watch Moshop build the bridge that was to link them with the mainland.

As the sun dipped into the sea, Moshop began his labor. From along the shores of Aquinnah as far as Menemsha and Kuppi-egen Moshop collected rocks in his leather petunk or apron which he wore around his immense waist. One by one he tossed the big stones into the water between the cliffs of Aquinnah and the shores of Cuttyhunk.

He was wading out into the deeper water with another large rock in his arms, when suddenly he was seen to drop the boulder, yell loudly and kick one bare foot in the air. Attached to his great toe was a giant crab which flew through the air to drop with a splash and lie like a small island toward the southwest of Aquinnah. Later this island was known as Noman's Land, for Chief Tequenomans, an Indian owner.

Muttering in discomfort and anger, Moshop hobbled ashore to sit on the beach rubbing his great toe. At this moment, those watching on the shore heard the loud crowing of a cock, which was the agreed signal for Moshop to end his work. Amazed, the villagers saw the old woman who had set the time limit, standing on the cliff with her pet rooster. In one hand she held a lighted torch which she passed in front of his eyes. Thinking dawn had come, the rooster crowed loudly.

The bridge was unfinished but the bargain was binding, according to Moshop's decree. Those who opposed the bridge danced and laughed, while the others retired in disgruntled silence.

Moshop rose without speaking, reached out into the water and caught an unwary whale by the tail. With a swift swing of his arm, he killed the whale against one of the big rocks he had tossed from the shore. Then he told his people to prepare a feast and to forget their differences in sharing the food which Manitou, the Great Spirit, had provided.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DOWRY ISLAND

Today the descendants of Moshop often heal their differences with community efforts which include food shared around the tables set up in the Gay Head Town Hall. As in the old days, the women cook and bake. The men dig the clams for chowder and lend a hand in setting up the tables. Children help decorate with wild flowers and greenery from the nearby fields.

Once again the spirit of Moshop directs his people in the remembrance of their ancestry.

From earliest custom, Indian marriages were sealed with a dowry gift from the bride to her husband. No young woman was eligible for marriage unless she could bring gifts to the wigwam of her future husband. Often the gifts were of land, or animal skins, cooking pots or other necessities. Many a marriage did not take place because the girl and her parents could not provide a dowry in exchange for the blanket with which the brave enfolded his bride as the marriage symbol.

One couple, whose names never have been revealed, refused to let this custom prevent their marriage. The girl's parents, who lived on Aquinnah, were very poor and her lover's well to do parents not only were from another village but they demanded their son wed a wealthier prospect who could increase their land holdings in nearby Nashowa-kommuck.

There seemed no way out of this dilemma until the girl humbly suggested to her lover that they go to Moshop for advice. Perhaps he could provide a solution.

Moshop was busy helping some of his neighbors clear a pasture near the east side of Menemsha Pond but when the two young people approached he stopped to listen attentively to their tale.

When they finished their plea for help he looked very thoughtful and agreed they indeed had a serious problem. After a moment or two, he advised them to consult with him again. He would, he said, be at Chappaquiddick on the following day. They were to meet him there at the place later to be known as Sampson's Hill, and he would give them his answer. The two young people were heartened by his words but anxious as to how Moshop possibly could find the answer to their difficulty.

Smoke from Moshop's giant pipe was drifting across the island of Chappaquiddick when the young couple reached there the following day. Making their way to the hill where Moshop was seated, they explained again that because the girl had no dowry gift, they could not marry.

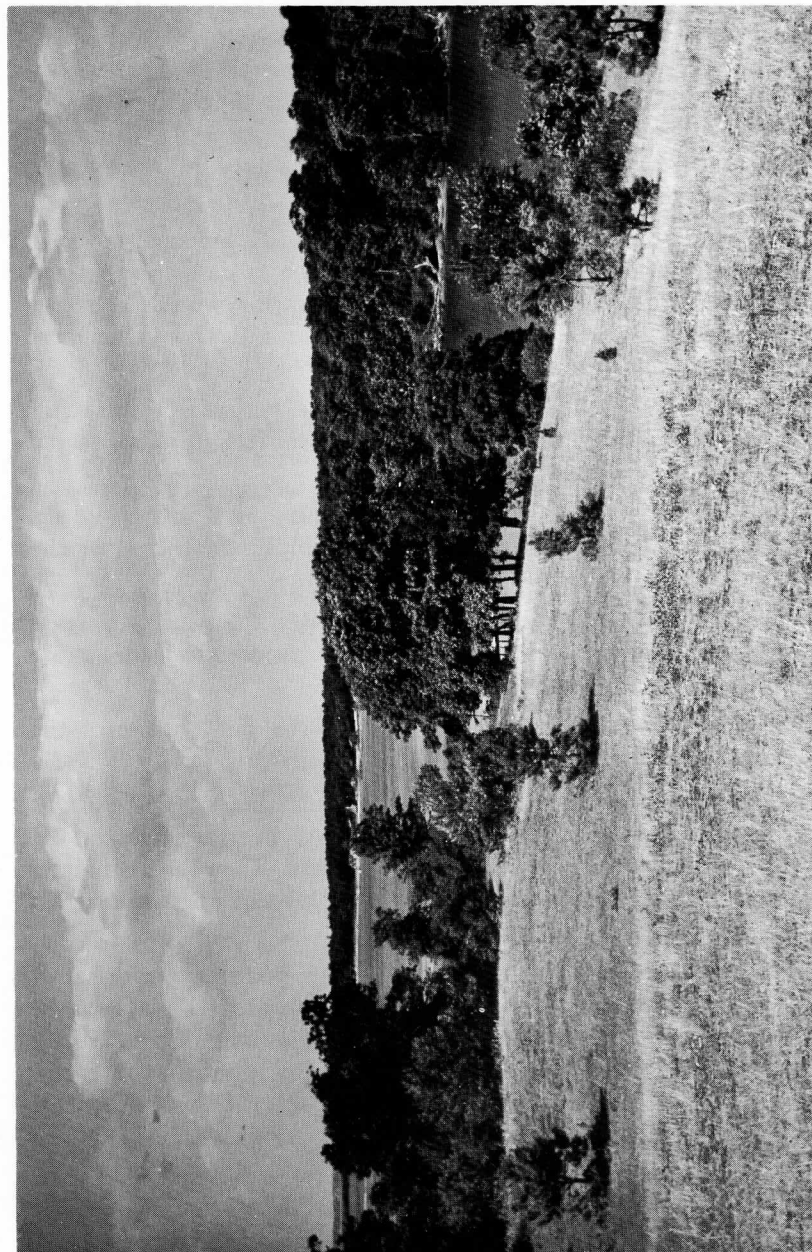
Moshop listened without comment. His eyes were on the distant sea and he seemed not to hear them. They were about to

turn hopelessly away when he smiled down at them, stood up and emptied the bowl of his pipe.

A breeze wafted the ashes seaward and from the distance there rose a great hissing and steaming as the dying embers fell into the sea. As the two young people watched in awe they saw a fair island had been formed.

Moshop pointed, "There is your dowry," he said, "There you may live in peace and plenty."

The island was named Nan-tuck-et, which means "far away land" and is so known today, although Moshop's gift is more factually ascribed to being the outermost edge of land formed in the glacial drift period.



LAKE TASHMOO

## CHAPTER VI

### TASHMOO

Among the much respected people of Capawack was Quampechi, whose son Tashmoo long had been known as the swiftest runner and the best hunter among all the young men on Aquinnah. Quampechi was honored because of her ability to predict the future which came before her in dreams.

It was in one of her dreams that she saw Tashmoo discovering a beautiful spring of clear, sweet water such as no other that had ever been known. The search for the spring would lead him through the forests and across many hills but always he must journey toward the rising sun.

Tashmoo, as well as others in the village, believed Quampechi's dream was given by Manitou, the Great Spirit, and so his search was approved by the people.

On the day Tashmoo was to begin his quest, all the village gathered to wish him success. Quampechi, his mother, gave the traditional blessing while he knelt before her.

With a piece of white clay from the cliffs, she marked a white circle on his forehead and chanted the words used to insure a safe journey.

"O Sun, guide his footsteps through the dark places of the forest, to where lies the end of his search."

Three times she made the white, circular mark. Once on his forehead, and again on each smooth, brown cheek as she asked the same compassion of the moon and the stars. Then she gave him a huge, white sea clam shell to be used for his cup when he reached the spring.

Tashmoo thanked his mother, kissed her and raised both hands in salute to the villagers. Then he faced toward the place where the sun rose each morning and began his journey. Some of the young braves joined him for a part of the way, but they returned to the village at dusk, reporting Tashmoo was running too swiftly for them to follow.

For many days Tashmoo searched for the spring and dipped his shell to taste the waters. Some were beside running brooks and some were in forest glades but none was as his mother had

seen in her vision. He was becoming weary and discouraged when he reached the far edge of the island which was where the sun rose out of the sea. Now he must turn back toward Aquinnah.

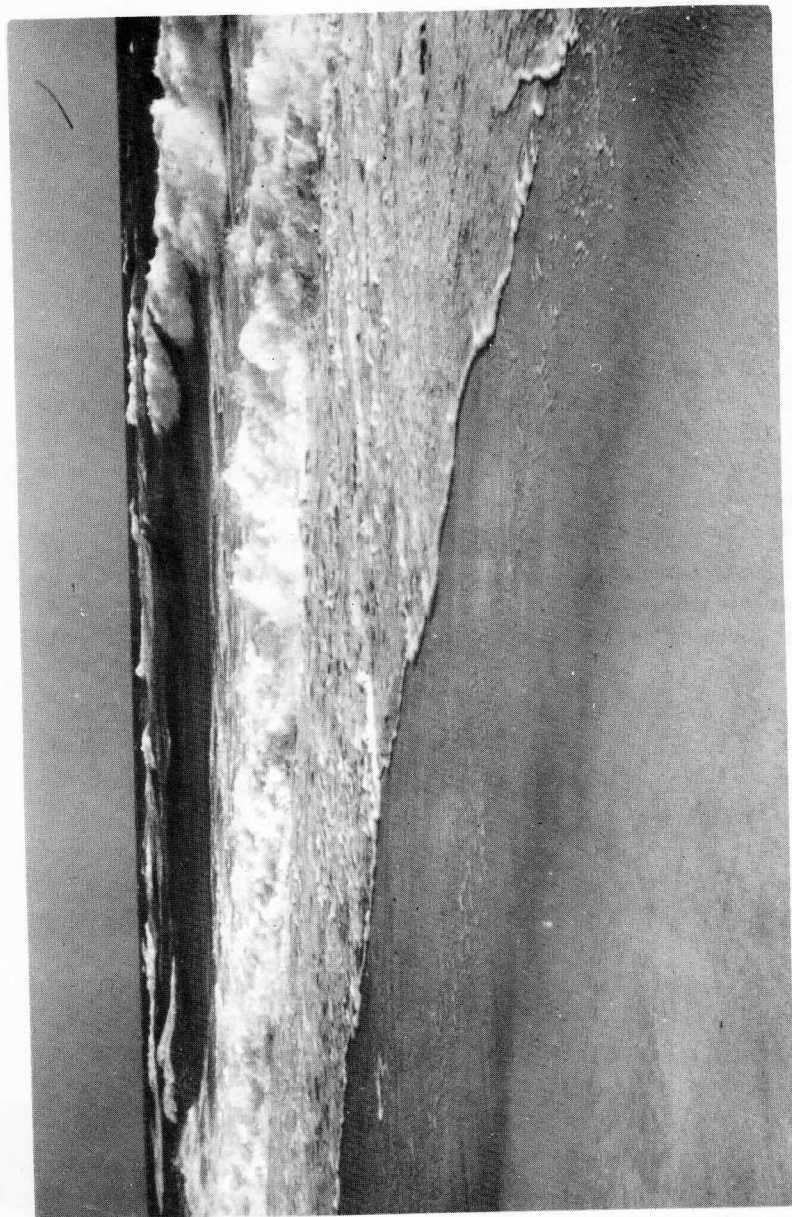
He stopped to rest and look about him. Here the land sloped gently to the sandy shore and surrounded a small lake whose blue waters sparkled in the sunlight.

Although the place was new to him, it seemed as though he had been there before. With rising excitement he examined his surroundings. There was the sea and there was the ribbon of sand separating the lake from the shore.

He hurried to the edge of the lake and dipped his shell cup into a bubbling spring of clear, icy water, sweeter than any he had ever tasted. Joyously he lifted his shell of water in gratitude to Manitou, to the sun, to the moon and to the stars, for the success of his search. Then he began to run swiftly toward Aquinnah.

Today Lake Tashmoo and the spring provide the Vineyard Haven water supply. Experts have declared the water to be "the purest in the world," and at one time it was bottled for nation wide distribution.





THE SHORE OF KATAMA

## CHAPTER VII

### KATAMA AND MATTAKESSETT

Nunnepog lay fair and ripe in the summer sun when Katama and Mattakessett first met, there on the edge of the marsh near Wintucket. Katama had come in her canoe to gather grasses for her mats. Mattakessett had been looking after the fields of corn that his tribe planted each spring on the flat plains near the pond. This was the corn to sustain them through the long winter when the snows came and ice glazed the water.

Katama was the daughter of Nashamois, chief of the Wintuckets and she was beautiful in her youngness. Mattakessett was the proud and handsome chieftain of the tribe whose name he bore.

In the heat of the day, the two sat together where the wind stunted oak trees gave shade. They talked of many things, exploring with delight the trails of mutual admiration. After that they met again. Often they walked hand in hand along the lonely beach or sat in the lee of the great dunes watching the breakers crash on the shore. They speculated on what might lie beyond the edge of the sea, which was the home of Paum-pa-gussit, the God of the Sea.

Mattakessett envisioned a beautiful place which was everything longed for in all dreams. Katama listened and dreamed with him.

So the summer passed. The marshes became golden and the birds gathered for their annual flight southward. It was then that Mattakessett spoke of marriage. Sadly Katama told him she had been promised in childhood to the old chief of the neighboring Ahquompaches.

Mattakessett knew the promise could not be broken and Katama knew her tears would not change her father's agreement with the chief of the neighboring Ahquompaches. Tenderly Katama and Mattakessett said their farewells at the place where they had first met.

Back in her own village Katama saw unaccustomed activity and excitement. The women were laughing and talking. Children were playing at war and the men were in groups, evidently discussing something of importance. With growing consternation, Katama



heard the plans. There was to be a raid that night on the neighboring cornfields of the Mattakesetts.

It was to be a surprise raid with the Wintuckets joined by the men of the Pohogonot and Ahquompache tribes. When the dusk first came they would creep stealthily down to the field and strip the corn, quietly working their way between the rows of waving green stalks. In the morning, when the Mattakesetts came to pick the corn, it all would be gone.

On the pretext of going to the spring for water, Katama left her father's lodge to walk quietly away. She would warn Mattakesett of the raid so he could save the corn for his people. Once out of sight she hurried across the plain and over to the place where he often worked at making arrowheads. Trembling in his arms, she told him of the plot. Bidding her to remain there in safety, Mattakesett hastened to collect his braves.

From a nearby rise, Katama could see the distant cornfields. Mattakesett and his braves made no secret of their intentions to protect the corn. They raced across the plain from their village with horrendous cries, brandishing their weapons in a fury of threats.

The raiders, already at the edge of the cornfield preparing to pick the corn, threw down their baskets and drew their weapons. They had not expected to meet resistance but they fought with fury at having their prize snatched from them. Mattakesett and his men also fought bravely in defense of their cornfields. The battle raged and the fields soon were trampled underfoot.

By the growing light of the moon, Katama saw the desperate Mattakesetts driven back, outnumbered by her father's braves and those from the villages of Pohogonot and Ahquompache. Now all was lost. She could not return to her people, nor could she go to the Mattakesetts. There would be no peace between them if she became the bride of Mattakesett.

With the battle over and the invaders busy taking the corn back to their villages, Mattakesett came wearily to Katama, defeated and dejected. He too, knew the bleakness of despair.

It was Katama who timidly pointed to the silvered path of Nanepaushat, the Moon God, shining on the dark water. They

had talked of Paum-pa-gussit, God of the Sea. Surely he would help them find happiness. Their love was strong and true. She had no doubt this would bind them together wherever they might go.

Slowly they walked across the sand to the edge of the sea. The gentle surf washed around their feet in a foam of white lace. Mattakesett drew Katama to him and they embraced. Then they plunged into the water and began to swim together down the shining path of Nanepaushat which would lead them to Paum-pa-gussit's sea kingdom.

The moon path still shines on the shore which bears Katama's name and there are those who claim they have seen the two lovers swimming together, far out in the silvered distance, forever joined by Paum-pa-gussit, God of the Sea, in his eternal kingdom.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WITCH POND

No living memory can recall when the Spirit People first were known on Capawack. They always had been acknowledged by Moshop's people and even by Moshop himself, for his lovely wife Squant had encountered them.

As the young bride of Moshop, Squant was very beautiful. Her long, shiny black hair was braided in two thick ropes that hung over her shoulders. She laughed and sang, happy in Moshop's wigwam. This beauty and happiness aroused dark envy in one of the Spirits.

One night, while Squant was sleeping, the Envious One crept up and scratched Squant's face with long, sharp claws. Weeping and covering her face with her hands, Squant ran to Moshop. No longer were her lovely eyes as he had known them. Now they were square and ugly. Moshop comforted her as best he could but she would not be consoled and ever after wore her hair like a veil, hiding her face from view.

Certain ones among those living on Aquinnah, believed they might gain the friendship of the Spirit People and learn of their supernatural powers. Among them was an ancient crone who was said to practice witchcraft. It was she who ferreted out the place called Witch Pond where Spirit People were said to congregate.

The Pond, well hidden by bushes, was reputed to be bottomless and was, as it is today, filled with brackish brown water which lies like a small, dark mirror in a seldom visited place on Aquinnah. Indeed, the place was carefully avoided by most people, for they had no desire to excite the wrath of the Spirits by intruding on their domain.

Persistently inquisitive, the old crone one day stole off to Witch Pond, determined to discover more about the secrets she felt sure were hidden there. Muttering all her incantations, she hobbled three times around the pond edge, the while she kept her sharp eyes on any roiling of the water which might indicate her voice had been heard.

To this day, no one claims to know what really happened there on the edge of Witch Pond, but all the people of Aquinnah heard

the old crone's screams as she came running home, as fast as her legs could carry her. When she came into view they saw that her hair, previously straight, now was snarled in a tangle which she never was able to comb out.

Her overly curious visit to Witch Pond, which resulted in her snarly hair, is said to be responsible for some of the "snarly" hair seen today among the descendants of Moshop's People, although this theory is not commonly accepted by genealogists.

## CHAPTER IX

### BLACK BROOK

Not far from Witch Pond is Black Brook, now hidden by bull briars, blackberry, viburnum and sumac. But this was not always so, according to the Old People. They remember when all travel to Aquinnah was along the Old South Road, and crossed Black Brook, before the present State Road was built.

The brook is not a wide stream, except when heavy rains come. The water is dark from a nearby peat bog and it flows across the Old South Road where stepping stones were laid so long ago. Many an ancient tale concerns Black Brook and what the descendants of Moshop's People have seen there.

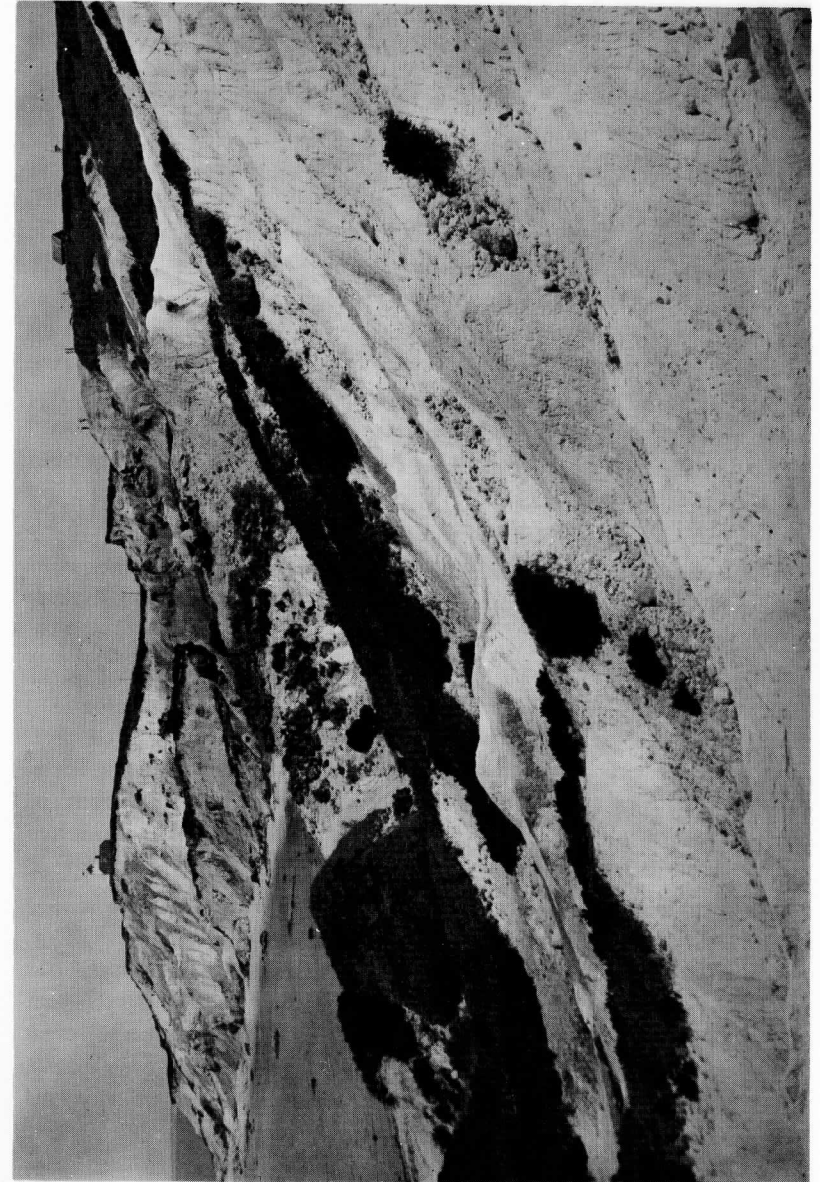
A headless man has been seen, standing beside the brook, say the Old People. He was murdered there and he is looking for his killer. Once the headless man was seen by a whaler on his way to Edgartown to ship out on a whaler. The ship sailed and never was heard from. Again, the headless man appeared before a father and his small son who were picking wild grapes near Black Brook. The father, a strong, seemingly healthy man, fell dead. No one wanted to see the headless man for fear of what his appearance might portend.

Then there was the handsome black horse that was seen by several people whose word was never doubted. The animal was always standing by Black Brook as if waiting for a rider but there was no rider and the horse could not be found by those brave enough to hunt for him the length and breadth of Aquinnah. Nor had anyone on Aquinnah ever owned such a horse.

Not so many years ago, a descendant of Moshop's family was walking home one snowy, moonlight night. Nearing Black Brook he heard footsteps coming along behind him. The wind was still and the sound carried. He stopped and halloed but there was no answer. Looking back he could see no one and there were no footprints in the snow.

He said later, "The footsteps followed me all the way to where the road turns toward the church and fear was riding me like a nightmare until I reached home."

Two small sisters were out picking berries one day when they saw a pair of huge black oxen pass by "with a great swishing sound," and later when the girls rushed home to tell their parents about it, their parents listened gravely and shook their heads. There were no black oxen anywhere on Aquinnah.



THE CLIFFS OF AQUINNAH

## CHAPTER X

### AQUINNAH'S MYSTERIES

On Aquinnah the descendants of Moshop's People know of many unexplained mysteries which today are accepted with a shrug. They are seen or they happen, which no one doubts. Who knows why?

There is a house on Gay Head which long ago stood empty. A once commonly used path from the shore to the village, passed through the yard. The house was very old and had been lived in by a large family, which one by one had "died off" until only distant relatives were left. So there was no ready explanation as to why some heard the distinct sound of a baby wailing from an upstairs room, while others saw a light shining from the kitchen. Yet when anyone came bravely near to investigate, the house was empty. The baby's cries were silenced and there was no lamp in the kitchen window.

Now the house is occupied and the present owners have not, of late, heard or seen anything unusual. Once the young wife of the present owner heard steps across the floor but when she went downstairs to investigate there was no one to be seen and the door was still bolted.

In more recent times there was a young student coming home for the holidays, saddened somewhat because her pet dog had died while she was away and so would not be there to greet her. She was hurrying toward the house when suddenly the beloved animal appeared from around the corner, jumping and wagging as was his happy custom. She eagerly reached out to pat him when he vanished, never to reappear to her.

Another such unexplained incident involved an old dog whose master died. The dog mourned him and one day not long after, seemingly heard a familiar step outside. He got stiffly up from his nap, eagerly wagging, and went to the door as if ready to greet a well known presence. When the door was opened for him, no one was there, but the dog showed all the pleasure of a welcome, then trotted over to the chair which his master customarily had occupied, and lay down there, apparently content.

At one of the houses once occupied by a whaler, a man in yellow oilskins has been seen down by the stone wall barway. He

usually appears in the half dark, carrying a lighted lantern as if searching for someone. The road he follows leads up from the beach, where long ago a ship was lost with all of its crew.

"Looking for his shipmates, most likely," explain the ones who have seen the ghostly figure.

In the old days Aquinnah people often held impromptu dances in their homes. Furniture was cleared out of whatever room was largest and a fiddler would provide the music. Many were talented musically and played or sang by ear, even as they do today.

A lively dance was in progress one night and when an intermission came, the fiddler left his seat for refreshment. Suddenly the music was resumed in a wildly frantic rhythm, but the dancers stood frozen with horror. There in the center of the room sat the Devil, fiddling for all to see. The dancers as well as their own musician, looked then fled. To this day, that fiddle has never been touched by its owner, and the Devil is forever looking for a fiddle to play but no one on Aquinnah will welcome him.

Almost every one on Aquinnah has seen apparitions of a loved one. For these things the descendants of Moshop have no answer. They know only what they have seen.



## CHAPTER XI

### MOSHOP'S FAREWELL

As the years increased, Moshop pondered over the future of his large family. In a vision he had foreseen the coming of an unknown, pale skinned people who spoke a strange tongue and sought a new land where they would make their home. They would come one day to Aquinnah and would live there in harmony for Moshop's children would not lift a hand in anger against a neighbor. Other tribes on the mainland would make bitter wars against the pale skinned people but the Pokonokets of Capawack were destined to set their mocasins forever on the trail of peace.

Moshop knew his vision was a warning and he was troubled. At last he called a family council. From all the corners of Capawack came his children and their children's children. They assembled on the gentle slope of Skissi Hill, overlooking Menemsha Pond where tiers of earthen seats formed a giant half moon of an amphitheater. The tiered earth is faintly visible today, although its origin and meaning has been forgotten.

Moshop's words brought sadness to the hearts of his children, for they realized Moshop soon intended to leave them. There would be no place for him, his wife Squant, or his two treasured pets, the giant toad and the handsome white whale.

For those of his children who had married with the people of Takemmy, or Nunnepog or Chappaquiddick, he advised them to continue their way of life. The pattern of their days would change slowly, sometimes painfully, but they would continue to exist. Some of the new ways would be good, some would be bad, but always they must remember they were Pokonokets and descendants of Moshop's People.

To his sons and daughters who lived on Aquinnah, Moshop gave a choice. They might seek refuge in the sea where they would become members of Paum-pa-gussit's sea kingdom, or they could continue to live on Capawack where they no longer would have Moshop's protection. There would be difficult days ahead for the people of Capawack, but the children of Moshop now were strong and could always be so if they never forgot their proud heritage.

Some of the daughters wept and were afraid; some of the sons trembled and were unhappy. Those Moshop called to him. Then,

when the family council was ended, he led them to the beach below the cliffs of Aquinnah and bade them wade out into the water. In a moment they were changed to the mammals known as killer whales and they swam away to the Sea Kingdom. They are so known because the males eat first and the females after them, as Moshop's sons and daughters properly were taught to do in their homes on Aquinnah.

Because Moshop's white whale inevitably attracted attention whenever he appeared in the blue water near Aquinnah's cliffs, Moshop knew he must provide a safe hiding place for his pet. Carefully he dug an underground passage from the sea to Witch Pond. Here the white whale could elude his pursuers and always find refuge.

Even now, when the night is heavy with fog, some people claim to hear peculiar sounds from the direction of Witch Pond, while others say the moisture against their cheek is like the spouting of a whale. Could it perhaps be Moshop's white whale come up to blow?

Moshop's giant toad gave the most difficulty. When Moshop and Squant turned their faces in the direction of Zach's Cliffs on Aquinnah, the toad refused to be left behind. There was no sanctuary for such a large toad, who was at least twice as tall as an ordinary man.

Knowing his pet would be lonely and perhaps in danger, Moshop regretfully turned the toad to stone. Today, if you know where to look among the dunes of Aquinnah, you will see the giant toad of stone facing toward the place where Moshop and his wife Squant were said to have been seen last. And when the fog drifts across the hills, the people of Aquinnah know Moshop is contentedly smoking his pipe and smiling on them.



## CHAPTER XII

### SOME POKONOKET WORDS

Kar-nee-kay-ta	How do you do.
Me-tay-ta	Take a chair
Taubut	Thank you
Nomma-weeka	Very good
Mitcheemi	Amen
Micheme	Forever
Koo'waantam'umwoo	You are wise
Nechanong	Children
Nan-nau-wiy-ack	A safe place
Moo-wonk	No more
Pequauke	Field
Wunnetu	Beautiful
Kehtah-hannit	On the seashore
Ketoh-hannit	Beach
Wompompeague	Money (pieces of whelk shell)
Nokehick	Parched ground corn
Wachimin	Corn
Quittocks	Oysters
Poquauhock	Quahaug
Sikkissoug	Clam
Pootaop	Whale
Wohkuhquishik	The end

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