

# A Voyage of Discovery

To the Southern Parts of

## Norumbega

Including the Places Named

CAPE COD, MARTHA'S VINEYARD AND THE ELIZABETH ISLANDS

By their Discoverer, Bartholomew Gosnold,

in the year 1602 A. D.



*Warner F. Gookin*

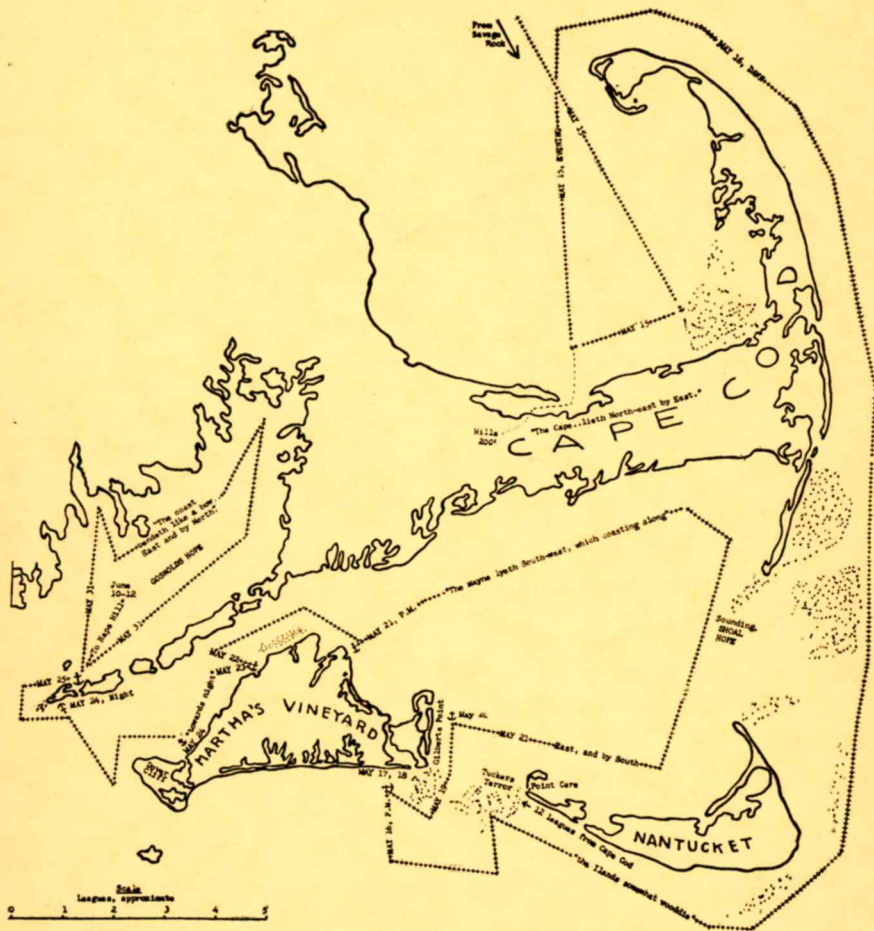
By Warner F. Gookin, B. D.



*Published by the*

DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
EDGARTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

1950



GOSNOLD'S COURSE AMONG THE ISLANDS

A schematic plan of his route drawn to illustrate the data furnished by Gabriel Archer, author of a day by day chronicle of the voyage of 1602. (*The Relation of Captaine Gosnolds Voyage . . . delivered by Gabriel Archer, a gentleman in the said Voyage. In Vol. IV. Chap. XI, pp. 1647 ff. of "Purchas his Pilgrims," published in London, 1625.*)

# A Voyage of Discovery

To the Southern Parts of

## Norumbega

Including the Places Named

CAPE COD, MARTHA'S VINEYARD AND THE ELIZABETH ISLANDS

By their Discoverer, Bartholomew Gosnold,

in the year 1602 A. D.



By Warner F. Gookin, B. D.



Published by the

DUKES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
EDGARTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

1950



## A Voyage of Discovery

**E**IGHTEEN years before the landing of the Pilgrims, Bartholomew Gosnold discovered Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands. He happened on these places in the course of a daring adventure across the Atlantic, to establish a trading station in the midst of the savages on the southern shores of Norumbega, as New England was then called. The settlement was to be in the vicinity of an Indian kingdom, rich in copper and gold, precious stones and furs, forests, and plains ready for planting.

This kingdom had been visited in 1524 by a Florentine navigator named Giovanni da Verrazano, who described it in a "Letter" to his patron, Francis I, King of France. The "Letter" was made available to English readers in 1583. In it, Verrazano states that the kingdom was to be found on a great bay, twenty leagues in compass, having a narrow entrance facing south at 41 degrees, 40 minutes, and containing five small islands. He had probably entered Narragansett Bay, although he seems to have confused the entrance to New York harbor with that of the bay later found. Apart from this vague description, with a none too certain latitude and no longitude whatever to indicate the western position, nothing definite was known about the geography of the region where Gosnold was to settle his traders. His task in the first instance, therefore, was to find Verrazano's bay.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Walter Raleigh's older half-brother, made a valiant but frustrated attempt to find this bay in 1583\*. With nearly two hundred men in three ships, he had sailed south from Newfoundland to start a settlement in Norumbega. The total loss of his largest ship on the coast of Nova Scotia defeated this attempt to reach the southern part of the present New England.

Before departing for England in his own small ship, fated to go down in a storm off the Azores, Gilbert conferred with his remaining captain, Edward Hayes. He was so taken with the northern country, he explained, his next voyage would be to that region; he therefore assigned to Hayes the task of organizing an expedition to settle Norumbega. From this momentous conversation it came about that the first successful settlement of New England was in its southern part; for Edward Hayes made the plan which Bartholomew Gosnold followed, and Gosnold's discoveries brought the Pilgrims to this region.

Hayes' plan was contained in a brief treatise, or prospectus, describing a proposed voyage, which either he, or the great geographer Richard Hakluyt, collector of such manuscripts, put into the hands of Bartholomew Gosnold. It was printed in the first report of Gosnold's voyage, written and published

---

\*A marginal note to the version of Verrazano's "Letter" published in that year states that the region of 41° 40' was "The country of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's Voyage."



in 1602 by the Rev. John Brereton, friend and fellow-voyager of the explorer. The plan, in contrast with earlier and more pretentious ones made at the time of Gilbert's expedition, seemed quite feasible. The ship, with "some few people at the beginning", wrote Hayes, was to sail directly across the Atlantic to the region between the 40th and 44th degrees of latitude. This, as we know it, is the coast from Maine to the Hudson; in the southern part of this area would be found Verrazano's great bay. One Simon Fernandez had made this direct crossing to Norumbega in 1580 on a reconnaissance voyage for Sir Humphrey Gilbert. This Portuguese mariner, in a ten-ton vessel, sailed across and returned within three months,—an amazing feat of seamanship.

Hayes reckoned that the crossing would take thirty to thirty-five days. The expenses of the first expedition, he suggested, were to be met by a return cargo of furs, fish, and sassafras-root, the last named being in great demand as a general curative, especially for the French pox. The natives, for the sake of peaceable trade, were to be "cherished" and won to Christianity. Hayes gave an extended and optimistic list of commodities in the temperate zone to be obtained by trade with the Indians. His expectations were supported on the whole by the two recorders of Gosnold's voyage, John Brereton, and Gabriel Archer. The former's "Relation" with Hayes' "Treatise" was printed immediately after the return of the voyagers; Archer's "Relation", a day by day account, was not published until its inclusion in a large collection of mariners' narratives which appeared in 1625.

Gosnold set sail from Falmouth, England, on Friday, March 26, 1602, in a small bark named the *Concord*, carrying some twenty gentlemen and prospective settlers, beside the sailing-master and crew, thirty-two persons in all. The ship was found to be unsound, and unable to carry full sail; the passage therefore took seven weeks instead of the anticipated five. Arriving off the coast of Maine on Friday, May 14, the voyagers followed the shore west and south, to a point (probably Cape Neddick) which they named Savage Rock to commemorate their first contact with the savages.

The Indians, as the *Concord* lay at anchor, came out to them in a Basque shallop, some of them wearing European clothing, evidence probably that a French or a Spanish fishing vessel from the Bay of Biscay had been wrecked, or perhaps that a landing-party had been overwhelmed. Following their usual wont, the Indians made outward show of friendliness. In the midst of attempted communication by signs, the savages, pointing north, pronounced plainly "Placentia", the European name of a bay on the southern shore of Newfoundland. Gosnold straightway indicated to them that he would like a map of the coast, and instructed them in the use of a piece of chalk. The plan that they drew undoubtedly showed Cape Cod, and Nantucket Sound to the south of it; but evidently in attempting to show a canoe stream and "carry" by which the Indians passed from Cape Cod Bay to Chatham Harbor and the Sound, the map-makers gave the impression that the northern part of the Cape was an island.

That same day, behind schedule and uncertain about the weather, the voyagers hurriedly left their exposed anchorage at three in the afternoon for the greater safety of the open sea. On through the night, traversing potentially dangerous coastal waters, they sailed directly south to reach the latitude

of their destination. In the early morning light of the next day, May 15, they saw in their course "a mighty headland", and sailed into the sheltered waters west of it on the assumption that it was an island.

In the south-east corner of Cape Cod Bay they came to anchor at nine in the morning, having made some ninety miles in eighteen hours. There, to their disappointment, the voyagers found no opening to afford them passage through to the south. Anchor weighed, they coasted westward and saw from three miles off a break in the shoreline that might be a navigable strait. Gosnold had in the hold a shallop of ingenious design, built in two sections for easy handling, either of which could be used separately, or the two could be fastened together to make a small "double-ender". In one of these halves, Gosnold with several companions went ashore. They found the supposed opening to be a shallow bay, and called the waters they were in "Shoal Hope",—a play on words, as there was at that time a word "hope", now obsolete which meant "inlet", and this was one that had dashed their hopes.

The shore off which the *Concord* was anchored is described as running "North-east by East". Beyond the "opening", within walking distance, were the highest hills to be seen from offshore. This combination leaves no reasonable doubt that the first landing made by Englishmen on Cape Cod was at Barnstable harbor. With their muskets slung "on (their) necks, the weather very hot," as Brereton reports it, the landing-party penetrated the wilderness to the high hills, from the summit of which they quickly perceived that they were on a cape of the mainland, with a suggestion of islands ringed about the body of water to the south.

The view from the highest of these hills, one with an elevation of two hundred feet now known as Shoot Flying Hill, was a thrilling one. To the north, at their feet, was the great body of water in which they had become "embayed". To the south was a similar sheet of water which Gosnold undoubtedly took to be his destination, the great bay described by Verrazano. Its limits to the east and south (Monomoy and Nantucket) were below the horizon. Barely visible above the horizon was Cape Pogue, suggesting a small island there. To the west, the hills of Martha's Vineyard and Falmouth merged to form a great land mass, the continent. (Nothing of Buzzards Bay or of Vineyard Sound could be seen.) That which we know as the broad entrance to Vineyard Sound, between the East Chop of Martha's Vineyard and Falmouth, at the sea-level limit of vision, was narrowed by intervening hills to the width of a river running back into the mainland. To Gosnold this would seem to be the River Dee, bearing the name of an English geographer and map maker who had been led to believe that a mighty river flowed into Verrazano's bay.

It was obvious to Gosnold and his companions that to find entrance to this supposed bay facing south, if it were that which Verrazano had described, his ship must retrace his course in the bay to the north, round the tip of the Cape, and follow the shore south and west until he came upon an entrance. The landing-party hastened back to the ship. There they found that the crew in the intervening five or six hours had caught so many cod that the decks were cluttered with them; a great number had to be thrown back into the sea. This exciting catch suggested the name Cape Cod, which Cotton Mather was to characterize many years later as "a name which I suppose it will never lose,



till shoals of codfish be seen swimming upon the tops of its highest hills". "I am persuaded," wrote Brereton, "there is upon this coast better fishing than in Newfoundland, . . . the places where we took these cod, (and might in a few days have laden our ship), were but in seven fathom water and within less than a league of the shore; where in Newfoundland they fish in forty or fifty fathom, and far off."

As soon as the half-shallop, and its other half which had gone ashore for wood and water, were safely stowed again in the hold, Gosnold set sail, making a night run around the northern tip of the Cape. The morning of May 16 found them "trending the coast southerly." Gosnold made no attempt to enter Nantucket Sound from the east. This is not surprising, as the shoals guarding this entrance were equally baffling to his successors, George Weymouth (1605), Henry Hudson (1609), John Smith (1614), and the captain of the Mayflower (1620), none of whom were able to visit Gosnold's islands south of Cape Cod. Gosnold's discovery that Nantucket Sound could best be entered at that time from the deeper waters south of the islands was obviously not known to these navigators.

Nothing is said in the narratives about the hazardous threading of the outer shoals as Gosnold followed his course south. His experience was probably much like that of Weymouth. After sighting "a whitish sandy cliff" (Sankaty Head, on Nantucket,) Weymouth approached nearer, and "espied a great breach ahead us all along the shore . . . putting back again from the land, and sounding . . . we found ourselves embayed with continual shoals and rocks in a most uncertain ground, from five or six fathoms, at the next cast of the lead we should have fifteen or eighteen fathoms. Over many which we passed, and God so blessed us, that we had wind and weather as fair as poor men in this distress could wish: whereby we both perfectly discerned every breach, and with the winds were able to turn, where we saw most hope of safest passage."

Seen from five or six miles off shore, there were slight elevations on Monomoy Island and at Great Point, Nantucket, which suggested the small islands mentioned by Verrazano. Archer later in his narrative refers to these as "the supposed isles." After rounding Nantucket on the south, "twelve leagues from Cape Cod," that is, about thirty-six miles from the last sight of the Cape at Monomoy Point, the *Concord* ran into difficulties. Jutting out southward from the "Southwest Point" of Muskeget Island is a sand-bar four or five miles long, at right angles to the shore, and directly in the course of a vessel coasting, as Gosnold was, along the south side of Nantucket, Tucker-nuck and Muskeget islands. This shoal is on the eastern side of the Muskeget opening, the southern entrance to Nantucket Sound. The navigators saw only the Point, with some surf on the shallows a good distance beyond it. Their thought was that if they could round this Point they might find themselves sailing into the great bay by the southern entrance Verrazano had described.

To their consternation, they suddenly found themselves in shoal water, the treacherous sand-bar plainly visible beneath them. By quick manoeuvring the sailing-master succeeded in bringing the *Concord* about, and withdrew to deeper water. A man named Tucker had added to the general confusion by vociferous, frightened outcries; the shoal was therefore named Tucker's Terror. The Point, as a warning to others, was called Point Care. Neither name survived.

Gosnold sailed on past the six mile wide opening, and at dusk drew in to the land again, anchoring in eight fathom of water off the south shore of Chappaquiddick, the eastern end of Martha's Vineyard. Archer emphasized the fact that the *Concord* at this anchorage was surrounded by surf; their situation was not dangerous, however, if the wind remained in a northerly sector. Throughout the next day, May 17, the *Concord* continued at this anchorage. On the day following, the wind moderated sufficiently to allow the long-boat to be sent out for soundings. All day long, back and forth, from the ocean into the sound, sailors measured the depths of the waters between Muskeget and the Vineyard, seeking out a possible channel. Their report was favorable; Gosnold had found his southern entrance into that which he assumed to be the great bay he was seeking.

As late as 1776, a Des Barres chart made by order of the English Parliament plots a course for entrance into Nantucket Sound through this Muskeget Channel. Though little used now, the channel was evidently long the preferred one, as no shoals had to be traversed to reach it from the sea. In the channel itself there is evidence, in the chart of 1776, that the sandy shoals had not then built up to their present levels. Gosnold named the western point of the opening Gilbert's Point. The distance between the two points, Point Care and Gilbert's Point, Archer reported, was two leagues, "the interim along shoal water." This accurate measure, together with the equally accurate measure from the southeastern corner of Cape Cod (Monomoy Point) to the opening, establishes with irrefutable certainty the location of the voyagers. Archer also reported the latitude of Gilbert's Point as  $41^{\circ} 40'$ . This is in error, as such observations usually were, but it is precisely the latitude given by Verrazano for the southern entrance to his great bay. Gosnold had good reason to think at this time that he had found that bay, the estuary of the River Dee. Three days later, he was to be disillusioned, or perhaps convinced that Verrazano had mistaken a sound for a bay.

On the day that soundings were being taken, Indians from the large native town on Chappaquiddick came out to the *Concord* in their sea-going canoes, hollowed out of great boles over three feet in diameter. They gazed at the ship with wondering eyes, offering bead-work girdles and the like in trade for such things as the mariners had to offer. The Englishmen were deeply impressed with the profusion of copper and other ornaments worn by the Indians, similar to those mentioned by Verrazano. Large numbers of these Chappaquiddick Indians followed along the shore as the ship made its way the next day up the channel to an anchorage in sheltered waters a league from the sea. There the voyagers remained the following day, waiting apparently for a fair wind and a clear day to explore the inland waters which they had entered. The crew found diversion in shooting wingless great auks that swam and dived around the *Concord* at its quiet anchorage.

On Friday, May 21, Gosnold started on a circuit of Nantucket Sound, still under the impression that it was a great bay or estuary. The course at first was easterly, following the northern shore of Nantucket toward "the supposed isles" seen while following the coast south through the off-shore shoals. Turned north by the Nantucket shore-line, the voyagers came to the eastern opening of the Sound. They ran the width of it, taking it to be the end or mouth of the sheet of water Gosnold had seen from Cape Cod. Gosnold had estimated the east-west length of the "bay" as thirty miles,—not far



wrong, as the actual measure of Nantucket Sound is about twenty-five miles. Somewhere along this opening, "a league off" shore, a sounding showed only a three-fathom depth. The explorers concluded that they were wise not to have tried to pass through the opening.

The *Concord* had now approached the southern shore of the Cape. "From this opening," Archer wrote, "the main lieth southwest, which coasting along we saw a disinhabited island." Brereton reports it as one of those they had "partly discerned" from the hills on Cape Cod. This was the island which they were to name Martha's Vineyard. Archer places it at eight leagues from the opening, an accurate report of the distance from Monomoy Point to the East Chop of the Vineyard.

A landing party went ashore, and found that they were on a peninsula almost cut off from the rest of a large island by inlets and ponds, making it a limited area, easily explored. The land-bridge today, connecting East Chop to the main body of the Vineyard, after some shrinkage of the ponds, is a scant three-quarters of a mile wide, on a straight line impossible to follow now without deviation because it passes through a cemetery and a heavily wooded section. The explorers quite correctly give the area of this clearly defined "neck" as about four miles in compass,—that is, a square mile.\* In a ten-minute walk the explorers were able to cover the half mile to the center of it, from which they could see everything to be seen. They found nothing interesting on this peninsula, save a bark-covered wigwam (of typical summer construction) close by the remains of a fish-weir at the outlet of one of the ponds.

On the following day, the explorers again made a landing, obviously at another place, although the narratives in their present form make no mention of a change of location. The scene of this day's landing is entirely different, with all sorts of interesting things to report, which could not have been overlooked on any square-mile area the previous day. There is a fresh-water lake near the sea side, a mile in compass, fed by streams running down to it through the woods. There are areas of fruit-bearing bushes, and great trees. Animal tracks are all about the lake, and a deer was seen. Sea-fowl with their young are nesting in the cliffs. Grapevines hang from the trees, and they cover the ground so thickly as to make walking through the woods difficult. Here, of course, they were on that part of the island that suggested the name Vineyard, when Gosnold named it for his five year old daughter Martha.

This day's report is an accurate account of the vicinity of James' Pond at Lambert's Cove on the north shore of the Vineyard, seven miles west of the first landing. The aspect of the place is but little changed at the present

---

\*In the narratives, this small neck is called an "island", and made to appear as the whole of the Island named Martha's Vineyard. But anyone reading the narratives, (p. 15), can see that there is something seriously wrong with the continuity. A place easily surveyed in an hour, and found uninteresting, apparently becomes overnight a garden of wonders. The confusion comes from the fact that the only "island" mentioned, is limited in area to a square mile, whereas the voyagers obviously made landings at three different places on an island so large that it took several hours to sail from one part of its north shore to another. Eminent historians, such as J. F. Jameson, (1909), have noted the contradictions set up by placing these three different scenes on an island too small to contain them, but have offered no adequate explanation. For a further statement on the solution here presented, see the Note, on page 18.

day. Wild grapes still grow on the west shore of the pond. The explorers had plainly entered Vineyard Sound, finding it no river, but a great body of water between Islands.

With this discovery must have come the realization that they had cruised about in a sound, not a bay, as it had appeared to be from the Cape Cod hills. Mention is made of an island to the north, where Indians thronged to the shore as they passed,—obviously Naushon. The voyagers had then crossed the Sound to anchor in Lambert's Cove, escaping by chance the observation of the Vineyard Indians, whose nearest habitations at the time were in the deep woods, several miles away.

On the following day, May 23, the *Concord* "weighed and towards night came to anchor at the northwest part of this island." When they landed the next morning, a party of thirteen Indians came running to them, armed but without fear. The savages offered gifts,—boiled fresh-water fish, deerskins and tobacco. Their pipes were made of clay, with skillfully fashioned copper stems. The mention of a great store of red clay and of white clay at this place suggests that the explorers were on the north shore of the Vineyard, about seven miles west of Lambert's Cove, near the outlet of Roaring Brook. In the last century at this site there were works making red brick, and a quarter of a mile away, cliffs of white clay, from which by a washing process marketable kaolin was obtained.

That same day, the explorers sailed on to the wide west end of the Sound. They passed the creek and low sandy area at Menemsha that separates Gay Head from the rest of the Vineyard, noting that it was a half-league "over the sound," that is, on a chord of Menemsha Bight, from the raised land of the Vineyard to that of Gay Head. Not knowing that Gay Head is a part of the Vineyard by reason of the continuous sand beach on the southern shore, they thought it a separate island. Reminded of the "white cliffs of Dover," they named it Dover Cliff. A Dutch description of the period speaks of the island as "white and clifflike;" apparently the white cliffs at the western end of the island were then much more prominent than they are now. The Indians' sale of the clay to white men's potteries on the mainland, and erosion, have sadly diminished the cliffs, particularly at the western end, where a remnant of white still remains.

The *Concord* rounded Dover Cliff, doubtless to see what might be seen of this end of the island, then reversed its course and crossed the open end of Vineyard Sound, anchoring on the exposed south side of Cuttyhunk. A boat was sent out to sound the water beyond the ledge of rocks (since known as the Sow and Pigs) at the western end of the Island. Deep water was found, and the *Concord* sailed around to a safe anchorage on the north side of Cuttyhunk. Archer describes Buzzard's Bay, which they had now entered, as "one of the stateliest sounds that ever I was in." The voyagers named it Gosnold's Hope, as he was later to explore its northern end in the hope of finding a great river, the supposed River Dee.

Brereton reports that this island which they had reached (at the end of a string of islands running out from the mainland) was "sixteen miles at the least in compass", indicating that Cuttyhunk and its neighbor Nashawena were then connected by a sand-bar; he expresses uncertainty, however, as to whether islands so connected were to be reckoned as one island or several. Gosnold



named the island Elizabeth's Isle, undoubtedly for his sister Elizabeth, who had recently married Thomas Tilney, a distant but recognized kinsman of Queen Elizabeth. The island was certainly not named for the Queen herself, as has been commonly assumed without warrant. It was well known that the Queen had forbidden her favorite, Sir Walter Raleigh, to use her name for the new land in America; the latter, therefore, had devised the name "Virginia" to honor her as the Virgin Queen. The Queen would have been infuriated to the point of saying "off with his head" if Gosnold had presumed to use her name for a scrubby little island in the north part of Virginia.

Elizabeth's Isle, after several days' consideration was deemed an ideal location for the new trading-station. It could be easily reached by the Indians because of the series of islands connecting it with the mainland; yet their approach could be observed long in advance from the summit of its single high hill. At the extreme western end was a shallow lake, with an acre of solid ground forming an islet in its midst. On this the prospective settlers determined to build their "fort", where the surrounding lake would form a natural moat. Here then was erected by "ten men in nineteen days", working at top speed, the first English structure in New England, a building large enough to accomodate a trading company of twenty, with their stores. The site was verified in 1797 by a historian named Jeremy Belknap, and others, who uncovered foundation-stones; their finding was confirmed in 1817 by a group of members of the Massachusetts Historical Society. A monumental stone tower, erected in 1903, now marks the site. This should be one of the most sacred shrines in New England.\*

When the day came, on June 8, for Gosnold's co-captain, Gilbert, to give the intended settlers their share of the provisions, the latter to their consternation learned that they were to have a scant six week's supply, instead of the six months' provisions which they had expected. There ensued a week of uncertainty and wrangling, Archer openly accusing Gilbert of dishonesty and the foul intent of selling the returned cargo to his own advantage, leaving the traders to starve on their remote isle. As it was, Gosnold reports in a letter to his father, "When we came to anchor before Portsmouth . . . we had not one cake of bread, nor any drink, but a little vinegar left." The decision that the project of settlement would have to be abandoned was inevitable.

The location chosen by Gosnold would have been safe enough for a small group of traders if the chief sachem of the surrounding Pokonokets (more recently called the Wampanoag) and his son Massasoit were to maintain a friendly tolerance. If their attitude had become inimical, a force of several hundred Englishmen could hardly have held out against the six thousand fighting braves of the Pokonokets and their allies, the Massachusetts. Besides, there were the five thousand braves of the Narragansetts who frequently raided the Buzzard's Bay area. On the whole, it is well that the trading post was not established, as the Indian wars and pestilence a decade or so later would surely have wiped it out. As everyone knows, it was nothing less than divine providence that the Pilgrims did not arrive until the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse had reduced the natives to a tenth of their former numbers.

\*Quite recently it was found that the Navy had placed the memorial in jeopardy by establishing nearby a target for practice bombing.

During the twenty-four days spent at Elizabeth's Isle and in cruising Buzzard's Bay the *Concord's* hold was filled to capacity with cedar logs, a ton of sassafras root, furs, and perhaps salted fish, as suggested by Edward Hayes, not to mention samples of soil, minerals, and other exhibits, including a canoe. The sale of this cargo, as Hayes had anticipated, probably brought enough to pay the costs of the expedition, but with little or no profit to the adventurers. On June 17 the *Concord* sailed away from Elizabeth's Isle, leaving the fort, and the shallop removed from the hold, to their fate. After a brief stop at the breeding-place of birds which they had found on Martha's Vineyard, five leagues from Cuttyhunk, to lay in a supply of fledglings for provision on the way home, on Friday, June 18, the voyagers set their course for England. They made land at Exmouth on the twenty-third of July, completing a four months' voyage of lasting significance.

The recognition of the value of Gosnold's accomplishment by his contemporaries appears in their use of the name Cape Cod in the years before it was published for all the world to read. Henry Hudson in 1609, and Sir George Somers in consort with Captain Samuel Argall in 1610, use the name Cape Cod in describing their location. It also appears on a manuscript map of 1610, and in a manuscript work of 1613 by William Strachey. In 1612, Captain Edward Harlow led an expedition to find "an isle supposed about Cape Cod." The name first appeared in print in Captain John Smith's "Description of New England," in 1616, which fixed it for all time, although Smith himself on his famous Map of New England made a futile attempt, at the suggestion of Prince Charles, to change Cape Cod to Cape James, in honor of the King.

The full measure of Gosnold's contribution to the geographical knowledge of his time is to be seen in the decision of the Pilgrims, as stated in their first narrative, *Mourt's Relation*, to settle "ten leagues west of Cape Cod." This was in the Buzzard's Bay region, supposedly described by Verrazzano, which Gosnold had explored and found good for settlement. Here the Pilgrims, having crossed a thousand leagues of ocean, would have been near the Dutch on the Hudson, in the sense that communication by ship could have been maintained without difficulty, as they knew from their friends in Holland.

Captain John Smith, as one result of his intimate contact with Bartholomew Gosnold in London and Virginia, (1604-1607), had long wanted to start a settlement in this region, which he called "those abounding countries of copper, corn, people, minerals." When he heard that the Pilgrims were to seek the same place, he offered himself as a leader, at a price. His services were declined on the ground that at less cost his "books and maps" would serve the purpose of guiding them to their destination. But the captain of the *Mayflower*, holding the lives of his passengers more precious than their hopes, retreated from the shoals guarding the course to the west, to land the Pilgrims first at Provincetown, and finally at Plymouth. For the shades of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Captain Edward Hayes, and Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, that must have been a day of rejoicing over dreams come true. Englishmen at long last were permanently settled in Norumbega, within a few miles overland of "Gosnold's Hope".



## The Original Narratives

*The spelling is modernized. Words in brackets are offered by way of interpretation. Otherwise, the narratives are printed as they are found in Brereton's Relation (London, 1602), and in Archer's Relation, printed by Samuel Purchas (London, 1625). The dates are as given in the narratives, Old Style.*

**Friday, May 14, 1602**

*Archer*

The fourteenth, about six in the morning, we descried land that lay north, etc., the northerly part we called the North Land, which to another rock upon the same [Cape Neddick] lying twelve leagues west, that we called Savage Rock (because the savages first showed themselves there); five leagues toward the said rock is an out point of woody ground, the trees thereof very high and straight, from the rock east-north-east. From the said rock came towards us a Biscay shallop with sail and oars, having eight persons in it, whom we supposed at first to be Christians distressed. But approaching us near, we perceived them to be savages. These coming within call, hailed us, and we answered. Then after signs of peace, and a long speech by one of them made, they came boldly aboard us, being all naked, saving about their shoulders certain loose deer skins, and near their waists seal skins tied fast like to Irish dimity trousers. One that seemed to be their commander wore a waistcoat of black work, a pair of breeches, cloth stockings, shoes, hat and band, one or two more had also a few things made by some Christians; these with a piece of chalk described the coast thereabouts, and could name Placentia of the Newfoundland; they spake divers Christian words, and seemed to understand much more than we for want of language could comprehend. These people are in color swart, their hair long, uptied with a knot in the part of behind the head. They paint their bodies, which are strong and well proportioned. These much desired our longer stay, but finding ourselves short of our purposed place, we set sail westwards, leaving them and their coast. About sixteen leagues southwest from thence we perceived in that course two small islands, the one lying eastward from Savage Rock, the other to the southwards of it; the coast we left was full of goodly woods, fair plains, with little green hills above the cliffs appearing unto us, which are indifferently raised, but all rocky, and of shining stones, which might have persuaded us to a longer stay there.

*Brereton*

But on Friday the fourteenth of May, early in the morning, we made the land, being full of fair trees, the land somewhat low, certain hummocks or hills lying into the land, the shore full of white sand, but very stony or rocky. And standing fair amongst by the shore, about twelve of the clock of the same day, we came to an anchor, where six Indians in a Basque shallop with mast and sail, an iron grapple, and a kettle of copper, came boldly aboard us, one of them apparelled with a waistcoat and breeches of black serge, made after our sea fashion, hose and shoes on his feet; all the rest (saving one that had a pair of breeches of blue cloth) were all naked. These people are of tall stature, broad and of grim visage, of a black, swart complexion, their eyebrows painted white; their weapons are bows and arrows: it seemed by some words and signs they made, that some Basques or of St. John de Luz, have fished or traded in this place, being in the latitude of 43 degrees. But riding here in no very good harbor, and withall, doubting the weather, about three of the clock the same day in the afternoon, we weighed, and standing southerly off into the sea the rest of that day and the night following, with a fresh gale of wind, . . .

*(continued below)*

**Saturday, May 15**

*Archer*

The fifteenth day we had again sight of the land, which made ahead, being as we thought an island, by reason of a large sound that appeared westward between it and the main, for coming to the west end thereof, we did perceive a large opening, we called it Shoal Hope. Near this cape we came to anchor in fifteen fathom, where we took great store of codfish, for which we altered the name and called it Cape Cod. Here we saw schools of herring, mackerel, and other small fish in great abundance. This is a low sandy shore, but without danger, also we came to anchor again in sixteen fathom, fair by the land in the latitude of 42 degrees. The cape is well near a mile (sic)\* broad, and lieth northeast by east. [\*Note: A numeral, ix, for nine, may have been misread as "a."]

*Archer*

The Captain went here ashore and found the ground to be full of pease, strawberries, hurtleberries, etc., as then unripe; the sand also by the shore somewhat deep, the firewood there by us taken in was of cypress, birch, witch-hazel and beech.

*(continued below)*

of the main, and sundry islands lying almost round about it: so returning (towards evening) to our shallop (for by that time, the other part was brought ashore and set together) we espied an

*Archer*

A young Indian came here to the captain armed with his bow and arrows, and had certain plates of copper hanging at his ears; he showed a willingness to help us in our occasions.

*(continued below)*

persuaded that in the months of March, April and May, there is upon this coast, better fishing, and as in great plenty, as in Newfoundland; for the schools of mackerel, herring, cod, and other fish, that we daily saw as we went and came from the shore, were wonderful; and besides, the places where we took these cod, (and might in a few days have laden our ship), were but in seven fathom water, and within less than a league of the shore; where, in Newfoundland they fish in forty or fifty fathom water, and far off.

*Brereton*

. . . in the morning we found ourselves embayed with a mighty headland; but coming to an anchor about nine of the clock of the same day, within a league of the shore, . . .

*(continued below)*

*Brereton*

. . . we hoisted out the one-half of our shallop, and Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, myself, and three others, went ashore, being a white sandy and very bold shore; and marching all that afternoon with our muskets on our necks, on the highest hills which we saw, (the weather being very hot) at length we perceived this headland to be a parcel

**Sunday, May 16**

*Archer*

The sixteenth, we trended the coast southerly, which was all champaine and full of grass, but the islands somewhat wooded. Twelve leagues from Cape Cod [i.e., from the southeast corner, where the legend "Cape Cod" is placed on the

*Brereton*

From this place, we sailed round about this headland, almost all the points of the compass, the shore very bold: but as no coast is free from dangers, so I am persuaded, this is as free as any. The land somewhat low, full of goodly



Archer

Velasco map of 1610; or more accurately, from Monomoy Point], we descried a point [the Southwest Point of Muskeget Island], with some breach [surf] a good distance off, and keeping our luff to double it, we came on the sudden into shoal water, yet well quitted ourselves thereof. This breach we called Tucker's Terror, upon his expressed fear. The point we named Point Care; having passed it, we bore up again with the land, and in the night came with it anchoring in eight fathom, the ground good.

### Monday, May 17 to Thursday, May 20

Archer

The seventeenth, appeared many breaches [much surf] round about us, so we continued that day without remove. The eighteenth, being fair we sent forth the boat, to sound over a breach, that in our course lay off another point, by us called Gilbert's Point [Wasque Point, on Chappaquiddick], who returned us four five, six and seven fathom over. Also a discovery of divers islands which afterwards proved to be hills and hummocks, distinct within the land. This day there came unto the ship's side divers canoes, the Indians appalled as aforesaid, with tobacco and pipes steeled with copper, strings, artificial strings [artistic bead-work], and other trifles to barter; one had hanging about his neck a plate of rich copper, in length a foot, in breadth half a foot, for a breastplate, the ears of all the rest had pendants of copper. Also one of them had his face painted over, and head stuck with feathers in a manner of a turkey-cock's train. These are more timorous than those of the Savage Rock, yet very thievous.

The nineteenth, we passed over the breach off Gilbert's Point in four or five fathom, and anchored a league or somewhat more beyond it; between the last two points [i.e., Point Care and Gilbert's Point] are two leagues, the interim [Muskeget opening] along shoal water, the latitude here is 41 degrees two thirds parts [forty minutes].

The twentieth, by the ship's side we there killed pengwins [great auks], and saw many schools of fish. The coast from Gilbert's Point to the supposed isles lieth east and by south. Here also we discovered two inlets [the outlets of Katama Bay and of Cape Pogue Pond, the latter now closed] which might promise fresh water, inwardly whereof we perceived much smoke, as though some population had there been, [the large Indian village on Chappaquiddick, found there by the Mayhews in 1642]. This coast is very full of people, for that as we trended the same savages still run along the shore, as men much admiring [wondering at] us.

### Friday, May 21

Archer

The one-and-twentieth, we went coasting from Gilbert's Point to the supposed isles, in ten, nine, eight, seven and six fathom, close aboard the shore, and that depth lieth a league off. A little from the supposed isles, appeared unto us an opening [between Great Point and Monomoy Point], with which we stood, judging it to be the end of that [body of water] which Captain Gosnold descrieth from Cape Cod, and as he thought to extend [from east to west] some thirty or more miles in length, and

Brereton

woods, but in some places plain.  
(continued below)

Brereton

At length we were come amongst many fair islands, which we had partly discerned at our first landing [i.e., that on Cape Cod]; all lying within a league or two one of another, and the outermost not above six or seven leagues from the main; but coming to an anchor under one of them, which was about

(Marginal Note)

The first island,  
called Marthaes Vineyard.

Archer

finding there but three fathom a league off [shore], we omitted to make further discovery of the same, calling it Shoal Hope. From this opening, the main lieth southwest, which coasting along we saw a disinhabited island, which so afterward appeared unto us: we bore with it, and named it Marthaes Vineyard; from Shoal Hope it is eight leagues, in circuit the island is five miles, and hath 41 degrees and one-quarter of latitude.

Brereton

three or four leagues from the main [at Point Gammon], Captain Gosnold, myself, and some others, went ashore, and going round about it, we found it to be four English miles in compass, without house or inhabitant, saving a little old house made of boughs, covered with bark, an old piece of a weir of the Indians, to catch fish, and one or two places where they had made a fire.

(This parallel arrangement makes clear that when the voyagers reached the "island" four or five miles in circuit late in the day on May 21, there was a landing which Brereton describes, but of which Archer says nothing. It also makes clear in the sections following, that the flora and fauna described by Brereton are those which Archer dates as having been seen on the following day, May 22. Archer's dates, therefore, reveal a fact which would not be suspected, if Brereton alone were read, namely that the profusion of vines and the "great standing lake of fresh water" were not seen on the day when a deserted wigwam was found, but on the following day, and therefore perhaps at another place. It seems reasonable to suppose that Brereton's apparent fusion of the observations of two different days, indicates that at this point, a transitional passage is missing, which clarified the sequence of landings.)

### Saturday, May 22 and the morning of Sunday, May 23

Archer

The place most pleasant; for the two-and-twentieth, we went ashore, and found it full of wood, vines, gooseberry bushes, hurtleberries, raspberries, eglantine, etc. Here we had cranes, herons, shovellers, geese, and divers other birds which there at that time upon the cliffs being sandy with some rocky stones [i.e., stones that move], did breed and had young. In this place we saw deer; here we rode in eight fathom near the shore where we took great store of cod,—as before at Cape Cod, but much better. [Note: They were anchored off the mouth of a herring creek, the outlet of James Pond, in the spawning season.]

(continued below)

with the springs running exceeding pleasantly through the woody grounds, which are very rocky [boulder strewn]. Here are also in this island, great store of deer, which we saw, and other beasts, as appeared by their tracks, as also divers fowls, as cranes, hernshawes [heron], bitterns, geese, mallards, teals, and other fowls, in great plenty; also great store of pease, which grow in certain plots all the island over.

Brereton

The chiefest trees on this island are beeches and cedars; the outward parts all overgrown with bushy trees, three or four foot in height, which bear some kind of fruit, as appeared by their blossoms; strawberries, red and white, as sweet and much bigger than ours in England; raspberries, gooseberries, hurtleberries, and such an incredible store of vines, as well in the woody part of the island, where they run upon every tree, as on the outward parts, that we could not go for treading upon them: also many springs of excellent sweet water, and a great standing lake of fresh water [James Pond, at Lambert's Cove], near the sea side, an English mile in compass, which is maintained



**The afternoon of Sunday, May 23, and the morning of  
Monday, May 24**

*Archer*

The three-and-twentieth we weighed [anchor], and toward night came to anchor at the northwest part of this island, where the next morning offered unto us fast running thirteen savages appparelled as aforesaid, and armed with bows and arrows without any fear. They brought tobacco, deer-skins, and some sodden [boiled] fish. These offered themselves unto us in great familiarity, who seemed to be well conditioned. They came more rich in copper than any before. This island is sound, and hath no danger about it.

(continued below)

ing they cover their privy parts with a black tewed skin [softened by beating], much like a blacksmith's apron, tied about their middle and between their legs behind: they gave us of their fish ready boiled, (which they carried in a basket made of twigs, not unlike our osier) whereof we did eat, and judged them to be fresh water fish: they gave us also of their tobacco, which they drink [i.e., smoke] green, but dried into powder, very strong and pleasant, and much better than any I have tasted in England: the necks of their pipes are made of clay hard dried (whereof in that island is a great store both red and white); the other part is a piece of hollow copper, very finely closed and cemented together. We gave unto them certain trifles, as knives, points [bodkins or daggers], and such like, which they much esteemed.

**The afternoon of Monday, May 24, and thereafter**

*Archer*

The four-and-twentieth, we set sail and doubled the cape of another island next unto it, which we called Dover Cliff [Gay Head], and then came into a fair sound, where we road all night; the next morning we sent off our boat to discover another cape, that lay between us and the main, from which were a ledge of rocks a mile into the sea [Sow and Pigs], but all above water, and without danger; we went about them, and came to anchor in eight fathom, a quarter of a mile from the shore, in one of the statliest sounds that ever I was in. [Buzzard's Bay] This called we Gosnold's Hope; the north bank whereof is the main, which stretcheth east and west. This island Captain Gosnoll called Elizabeth's Isle, where we determined our abode: the distance between every of these islands is, viz. from Marthaes

*Brereton*

On the north side of the island we found many huge bones and ribs of whales. This island, as also the rest of these islands, are full of all sorts of stones fit for building; the sea sides all covered with stones, many of them glistening and shining like mineral stones, and very rocky: also the rest of these islands are replenished with these commodities, and upon some of them inhabitants; as upon an island to the northward [Naushon], and within two leagues of this; yet we found no towns, nor many of their houses, although we saw many Indians, which are tall, big-boned men, all naked, sav-

*Brereton*

(Marginal Note) Elizabeths Island.

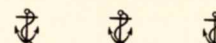
From thence we went to another island to the northwest of this, and within a league or two of the main, which we found to be greater than before we imagined, being 16 English miles at the least in compass; for it containeth many pieces or necks of land, which differ nothing from several islands, saving that certain banks of small breadth do, like bridges, join them to this island . . . On the northwest side of this island, near to the seaside, is a standing lake of fresh water, almost three English miles in compass, in the midst whereof stands a plot of woody ground, an acre in quantity or not above. . . . we went in our light horse-man from this island to the main, right against [directly in line with] this island some two leagues off . . . Now the next day, we deter-

*Archer*

Vineyard to Dover Cliff, half a league over the sound, thence to Elizabeth's Isle one (sic) league distant. From Elizabeth's Isle unto the main is four leagues . . . The five-and-twentieth it was that we came from Gosnoll's Hope. The six-and-twentieth, we trimmed and fitted up our shallop. The seven-and-twentieth, there came unto us an Indian and two women, the one we supposed to be his wife, the other his daughter, both clean and straight bodied, with countenance sweet and pleasant, . . . The eighth-and-twentieth we entered into counsel about our abode and plantation, which was concluded to be in the west part of Elizabeth's Island, the northeast thereof running from out our ken. The south and north [shores] stand in an equal parallel. This island in the water side admitteth some increeks, or sandy coves, so girded, as the water in some places of each side meeteth, to which the Indians from the main do oftentimes resort for fishing of crabs. There is eight fathom very near the shore, and the latitude here is 41 degrees 11 minutes, the breadth from sound to sound in the wester part is not passing a mile at most, altogether unpeopled and disinhabited. It is overgrown with wood and rubbish [shrubs], . . . In this island there is a stage or pond of fresh water, in circuit two miles, on the one side not distant from the sea thirty yards, in the center whereof is a rocky [boulder strewn] islet, containing near an acre of ground full of wood, on which we began our fort and place of abode, disposing itself so fit for the same. . . . [June] . . . leaving house and little fort, by ten men in nineteen days sufficient made to harbor twenty persons at least with their necessary provisions . . . The eighteenth [of June, on Friday], we set sail and bore for England . . .

*Brereton*

mined to fortify ourselves in a little plot of ground in the midst of the lake above mentioned, where we built an house, and covered it with sedge, which grew about this lake in great abundance; in building whereof, we spent three weeks and more. . . .





## Notes

For Hayes' account of the Gilbert expedition, see David Beers Quinn, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 2 vols., (Hakluyt Society, London, 1940), Vol. II, p. 385 ff., especially p. 418.

Modern reprints of the *Relations* of Brereton and Archer are readily available. For convenience, consult those in C. H. Levermore, *Forerunners and Competitors of the Pilgrims and Puritans*, 2 Vols., (Brooklyn, N. Y., 1912.)

Hayes' *Treatise* does not appear in any of the recent reprints of Brereton's *Relation*, despite the fact that it is an essential part of Brereton's first edition. The author has used photostats of it furnished by the John Carter Brown Library, Providence.

The canoe route to Chatham was used in 1627 by Gov. Bradford, who describes it in his Journal, "Of Plimouth Plantation," Boston, 1899, p. 261.

The writer is indebted to his friend, the Rev. Leslie F. Wallace, of Falmouth, Mass., for a painstaking study and report on the view to be seen from Shoot Flying Hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bartholomew Gosnold was aged about 31 at the time of his expedition. In 1595, he had married into a family with connections who had shared in the 1583 interest in Norumbega. His mother-in-law was a step-sister of Captain William Winter, who sailed a ship to Newfoundland under Sir Humphrey Gilbert and returned with the incapacitated. He was still living at the time of Bartholomew's expedition. An aunt of Bartholomew's wife was also an aunt by marriage of Sir Christopher Carleill, who had planned an expedition to Norumbega in 1583, and who had published a long treatise to promote his expedition. Gosnold may well have been chosen to carry on a family tradition. His wife's grandmother, Dame Mary Judd, (widow of Sir Andrew Judd) who died in 1602 a few months before Bartholomew sailed, was a very wealthy woman. Her daughter Martha, Bartholomew's mother-in-law and the grandmother of his children, was obviously the one for whom his first-born daughter Martha was named.

\* \* \* \* \*

There can be no reasonable doubt that Archer describes a course by which Gosnold entered Nantucket Sound from the south, sailed first east, and then west along the southern shore of Cape Cod, continuing on through Vineyard Sound to Cuttyhunk; otherwise Archer's data make no sense. Without any doubt whatever, the explorers made three landings on the island, twenty-five miles long, ever since known as Martha's Vineyard. It is equally certain that the place of their first landing is correctly described as four or five miles in compass, that is, about a square mile in area. The thing that is wrong in the picture is not primarily that this square-mile area is called an island, but that it is made to be the whole of the island which they named Martha's Vineyard. Those who find it difficult to believe that East Chop is the "island" of the narratives, should consider the greater misrepresentation in their failure to mention the true size of the island we know to be the most prominent feature of the region through which Gosnold sailed, and their complete silence as to the nature of Vineyard Sound.

Brereton distinctly says that the landing of May 21 was on an island "partly discerned" from the hills on Cape Cod. We know that there is no square-mile island in the location given by Archer, within this range of vision; only the eastern end of the island we call Martha's Vineyard can be seen from the elevation where Brereton stood. Nothing is to be gained, therefore, by looking for a non-existent island, and the problem becomes a literary, rather than a geographical one.

The contradictions in the narratives are overwhelming internal evidence that the story of the discoveries of May 21 and May 22 has been changed from the form in which it was originally written. Something is missing, which not only indicated the size of the great island, but also obviated the present difficulty of Indians and their houses seen on an island supposedly uninhabited. The missing passage would also have made clear why it was necessary to sail for several hours to get from the north shore to the northwest shore of an island reported to be of a size that could

not have had a northerly shore much over a mile long. Brereton and Archer were too intelligent to be guilty of such obvious inconsistencies.

It is this omission of an essential explanatory passage that has telescoped the narratives in such a way as to make East Chop an island. The large island which would make the sequence of landings clear has disappeared from the account; therefore the square-mile area of the first landing had to be substituted for it, to bear the name of the island, and to be the scene of the subsequent landings. This creates further difficulties that could not have been written into an original eye-witness account. A square-mile area can be thoroughly investigated in an hour or two. The landings of May 22-24, would have been unnecessary, not to mention that they revealed things which should have been seen on the first landing. It is a physical impossibility that the features described in these three successive landings could have existed on a square-mile island, no matter where it might have been located.

The conclusion is inevitable, that the omission which made it necessary to call East Chop an island, instead of a peninsula of the expurgated large island, was made by the intentional, but hasty, removal of several sentences from the manuscripts. This must have been done in London, just before the publication of Brereton's *Relation*, but after Sir Walter Raleigh had agreed that his name might be used as the sponsor of the expedition, to reassure certain Bristol merchants who were being asked to finance another expedition to the same region. About two months previously, Raleigh had written to the Secretary of State, requesting the confiscation of Gosnold's return cargo, on the ground that the expedition had been undertaken without his "leave," as the holder of the patent to "Virginia." It is a foregone conclusion that Gosnold, in consenting to the publication, would have insisted on the omission of a description of Martha's Vineyard, that might have excited Raleigh's cupidity. A square-mile island was negligible, but one large enough and fruitful enough for settlement on a large scale, was not to be put within Raleigh's grasp; he could have claimed it, not only by virtue of his patent, but also because the expedition that discovered it, according to the title page of Brereton's *Relation*, had had his sanction.

This situation supplies an excellent motive for the purposeful elimination of any reference to the true size of the Vineyard in the two narratives prepared for publication, not only to the confusion of Raleigh, but of historians since. The key to a correct understanding of Archer's data throughout is the recognition that Gosnold did not make his first landing, or any landing, on an island four or five miles in compass. His course, as described by Archer, leads to the northeastern corner of Martha's Vineyard, which can be seen from Cape Cod, as Brereton states, and which by its natural boundaries is nearly five miles in compass, is reached by sailing along the southwest shore of Cape Cod, and is eight leagues from Shoal Hope (the Nantucket opening), all precisely as Archer reports.



## Other Recent Publications

By WARNER F. GOOKIN, B.D.

CAPAWACK ALIAS MARTHA'S VINEYARD. A study of the early history of the Island and its several names, with notes and a complete source bibliography. Cloth bound, 58 pages. Published by the Dukes County Historical Society, Edgartown, Massachusetts, 1947.

### IN PERIODICALS, ARTICLES ON GOSNOLD

*A Communication*, (in refutation of Jeremy Belknap's theory that Gosnold landed in Noman's Land.) The New England Quarterly, June, 1949.

*Who Was Bartholomew Gosnold?* The William and Mary Quarterly, July, 1949.

*Genealogy: Notes on the Gosnold Family*. The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, July, 1949.

*Family Connections of Bartholomew Gosnold*. The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, January, 1950.

*The First Leaders at Jamestown*. The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, April, 1950.

(In preparation) *The Gosnolds of Otley*. A genealogy of Bartholomew Gosnold. For The New England Historical and Genealogical Register.

### OTHER ARTICLES

*A Communication* (on the use of the title "Mr." among the Indians of Martha's Vineyard) The William and Mary Quarterly, April, 1949.

*A Review* of "The Devil in Massachusetts," by M. L. Starkey. The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, January, 1950.

*The Pilgrims as Archaeologists*. Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, January, 1950.



