

MV History Notes I

One of many documents containing miscellaneous notes from readings on the history of the Vineyard. These were compiled over a six-year period beginning in 2011.

Historical Quotes

E. Hitchcock 1824. Western Moraine

All the north western extent of the island, several miles in width, is hilly and uneven: with no abrupt precipices, however, but rising into rounded eminences, which together constitute a ridge of considerable extent, and nearly as long as the island. I should judge that in some places, this rises three hundred or even four hundred feet above the ocean; and the quantity of huge boulder stones, scattered over these hills on every side is immense. The land is mostly cleared, and the rounded masses are chiefly granitic, and of course, of a white colour; so that they may be seen at a great distance to good advantage.

Waite. O. F.R. 1871. Guide Book for the Eastern Coast of New England. Edson Eastman & Company. Concord NH

New Bedford – second to Boston in wealth in NE; slow and steady decline of whaling etc. since Revolutionary War; many mills; regular steamer to Nantucket that stops in Woods Hole and VHaven.

MV – most delightful and popular summer resort; Vineyard Sound – great highway of coasting vessels – alive with ships; hundreds of vessels may be in Holmes Hole Bay – one of safest and best on the coast – good shelter; lands at Oak Bluffs and then on to Edgartown; western part of island lay some good farming lands – many under a high state of cultivation; principal business was whaling; 30,000 bricks per day made with steam; great detail on Camp Meeting and Oak Bluffs; nothing on other towns.

ACK – originally well wooded and inhabited by Indians; nothing but stunted trees on Cascata are left; few patches of pine left (?); discusses beaches and swimming places.

Cape Cod

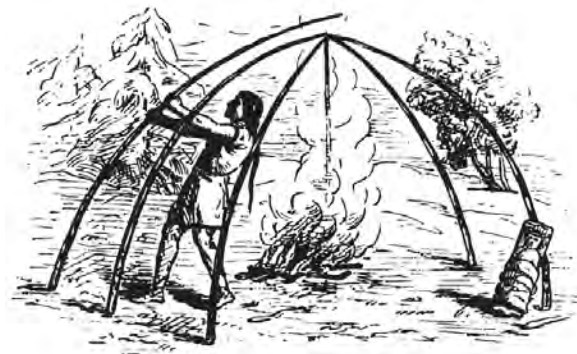
Light. Since 1602, greater changes have been effected by the action of the waves and currents, than on any part of the New England coast. Point Care was the easterly cape of *Isle Nauset*, a large island situated east of the entrance to Nauset and Pottaminaquutt harbors. It was hilly, rocky and covered with wood, and belonged geologically to the drift formation. Not a vestige of it now remains. One hundred and fifty years ago there was a large swamp, filled with bushes, rocks and trees, situated near the centre of what then remained of the island. It was called Beriah's Swamp,—now it is called Beriah's Ledge,—half a mile from the sea-shore, covered with four or five fathoms of water, and in the direct course of vessels passing around Cape Cod.

Richburg and Patterson. 2005. Historical Description of the Vegetation of the Boston Harbor Islands: 1600–2000. *Northeastern Naturalist* 12:13-30.

Descriptions of open, pastoral landscapes seem too reminiscent of the 17th-century English countryside, from which settlers were being encouraged to emigrate, to be completely trustworthy. Nonetheless, descriptions of the islands and surrounding areas suggest a mix of wooded and open habitats, with extensive use by Native Americans. In 1616, Smith writes of “many Iles all planted with corne; groves, mulberries, salvage gardens” (Barbour 1986). Although likely not describing the islands of Boston Harbor specifically, Samuel de Champlain in 1605 relates a similar scene with this description: “All along the shore there is a great deal of land cleared up and planted with Indian corn. The country is very pleasant and agreeable; and there is not lack of fine trees” (Russell 1980:10, Winship 1968).

Chestnut dominated southern New England forests from ca. 7500 B.P. to the early 20th century, when an introduced blight destroyed all mature stems and converted the species to a stump-sprouting shrub (Anagnostakis and Hillman 1992).

Drake, S. A. 1886. *The Making of New England, 1580-1643*. Charles Scribner & Son, NY.



MAKING A WIGWAM. — INDIAN CRADLE.



THE FIRST SHIP.



THE BATTLE AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN.—DRAWN BY CHAMPLAIN.



POSITION OF THE NEW ENGLAND TRIBES.

Purportedly John Smith's Map - 1616

From Penobscot to Cape Cod Smith found at least forty Indian villages and sounded about twenty-five excellent harbors. Beginning with Penobscot, we have Pemaquid, Kennebec, Sagadahoc and Aucocisco (Casco) already named by those who had preceded Smith. Then come Ac'co'min'ti'cus (Ag'a'men'ti'cus), Pas'sat'a-quack (Pis'cat'a'qua), Ag'ga'wom (Ag'a'wam) and Naem'keck (Naum'keag). Then Mat'ta'hunts (Na'hant) Mas'sa'chu'set,⁹ Quon'a'has'sit (Co'has'set) and Nau'set, all of which names were first given by Smith, and have either been retained or are still used as alternates with the English ones.

Smith's map awkwardly and improperly shows a sea-coast dotted with English settlements none of which were even thought of when he made it.

Squanto became useful in many ways. He told the settlers when and how to plant their corn as the Indians did, to plant when the oak leaf was as big as the mouse's ear and to drop one or two herrings in each hill if they would have a good yield. Squanto hunted and fished for them. Squanto was their trusty guide, interpreter and messenger. Squanto held the Indians in awe by telling them that the white men kept the plague buried in the ground and could let it loose among the Indians whenever they pleased.

THE GREAT EMIGRATION, 1630.

MV and ACK

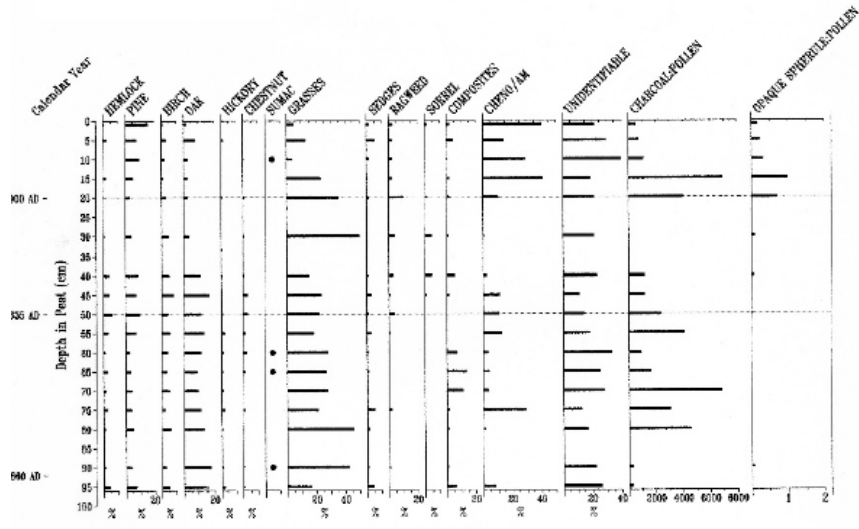
For many years no whites thought of settling upon the island. The Indians were looked upon as being the most savage, cruel and treacherous of their race. Hardly could the whites yet call themselves masters on the main, nor did any one seriously think of Martha's Vineyard as a place of abode until the Pequot War had cowed the Indians everywhere.

Patterson et al. 2005. Paleocology of Calf Island in Boston's Outer Harbor. *Northeastern Naturalist* 12(Special Issue 3):31-48.

7.5 ha, lies in the outer harbor. Variations in the abundance of fossil pollen of native species suggest that the vegetation of this small, exposed island has been dominated by low, shrubby vegetation since before the arrival of Europeans in the early 1600s. Increases in non-native species since that time may reflect disturbance of the soil associated with grazing and other activities. Sorrel (*Rumex*) pollen, which indicates local grazing, declines by the late 19th century, whereas Chenopodiaceae/Amaranthaceae pollen, an indicator of disturbed soil, is most abundant since 1900. Charcoal abundance shows that fires, probably

ignited by humans both before and after 1600 A.D., have burned on the island throughout the last 1000 years. In addition, increases in soot and opaque spherules in sediments reflect increased air pollution during the last 100 years.

Pine very sensitive to salt spray. The harsh maritime climate and exposure of Calf Island to salt spray would have made it difficult for large trees to establish and persist on the island.



(Ch:P) for sites elsewhere in New England show that values in excess of 500–1000 reflect fires which burned in local watersheds

C.G. Hine. 1908. The Story of Martha’s Vineyard. From the Lips of its Inhabitants, Newspaper Files and those who have Visited its Shores, including Stray Notes on Local History and Industries. Hine Brothers, NY.

Shaler comparison with ACK

Professor Shaler wrote in 1874: “Of those who travel, by far the larger part are driven about the world by a hunger for the curious. The evil demon that pursues them hides the beauty of things near at hand with a veil of the commonplace, and sets on the horizon beacons that seem to point to fresher fields beyond. * * * Martha’s Vineyard gives a rich soil, beautiful drives, brooks and woods, features denied to its bleaker sister to the east.”

Pring call Edgartown Harbor – Whitson Bay. Katama Woods were long known for their large supply of sassafras. Martin’s Vineyard – supposedly that Pring changed to his own name.

The first settlement by white men was, according to tradition, about 1632, when four men—Norton, Vincent, Pease and Trapp—and possibly others, are said to have wintered in roughly built stone houses in the side of Green Hollow, a little south of the oldest burial ground in Edgartown. Mr. Richard

through well-known sources". The usual story explaining this settlement is that a ship bound for Virginia put in here through stress of weather, and rather than longer face the Winter's storms, part of the company at least concluded to remain and continue their journey in the Spring, but finding the Winter climate pleasant and all manner of fish abundant, they decided to remain permanently.

Tisbury selected as name for Middletown as home of Mayhew in England.

When Reverend Thomas Mayhew left for England, the Indian work was put in charge of "an able, godly Englishman, named Peter Folger, employed in teaching the youth in reading, writing and the principles of religion by catechizing; being well learned likewise in the scripture and capable of helping them in religious matters". This Peter Folger was the father of Abiah who, marrying Josiah Franklin, became the mother of Benjamin Franklin. Coincidence! The first steamer that

Edgartown Harbor shields from all winds. Much better than Nantucket so boats all come there to fit out ships.

The worker finds under these waters quahaugs which are worth probably \$40,000 a year in "new money" to the village. The beds of these hard-shell Baptists seem to be inexhaustible. And that reminds me that quahaug is a comparatively new word for these parts, for Dr. Freeman noted in 1807 that "The poquag called the quahaug in the county of Barnstable, is found in Old Town harbour, Cape Poge and in Menemsha Pond, great quantities are exported". Two thousand dollars worth

Katama – Indian princess betrothed to an ancient man found a young lover Mattakesett. In a battle on the shores the two realized they would die and so walked into waters and swam off to die.

EGP – fresh, connected to salt Mattakesett Bay. Herring Creek. Fish crowd to destruction. Conflict with farmers whose adjoining land may flood and would rather a direct cut from EGP to the sea.

Sampson's Hill on Chappy had a semaphore to ACK and to East Chop for news.

Four windmills in Edgartown for grinding corn in 1800, one on Chappy. Three saltworks. Women knit 15,000 pairs of socks and 3000 pairs of mittens per year.

Gray's raid – 82 warships.

1846 – Zenith of whaling when 19 ships in Edgartown. ACK ships outfitted and unloaded there. MV captains and sailors in great demand – was the port of the "fluke-tailed" island (ACK).

MV RR opened – Aug 22 1874. Last remnants of station removed when book written.

Wintucket Cove and Janes Cove – Submerged trunks of great trees that boats occasionally get hung on. Same in Vineyard Harbor and out into Vineyard Sound where anchors bring up trees.

Track through the scrub oak wilderness – Dr. Fisher’s Road.

Farm Neck on Sengekontacket Pond – on Butler Meadow – old mill for grinding tanbark.

Whiting below – mapping dates and erosion estimates

On the eastern side of East Chop Prof. Henry L. Whiting, who first mapped the island in 1845-6, found that the bluff, which has a height here of about 80 feet, retreated 75 feet between 1845 and 1871, or at the rate of 3 feet per annum. In these years 13,000,000 cubic feet of earth and stones were washed away by the strong currents, a large portion being carried into Vineyard Haven harbor.

1815 – hole put into Lagoon Pond. 1872 bridge installed and Beach Road opened. Previously had to travel by head of the Lagoon. Have discussed eliminating bridge and opening Lagoon as a harbor for refuge of Northeast storms. Sand washes down from Eastville and East Chop. Also suggested a high bridge over the Lagoon from Robbins Rock.

Hine – hates telegraph and telephone poles along roads.

Hospital site had a lighthouse in 1880s.

satisfies every one. One simple excuse is that Mr. Holmes died and was buried in a hole; others that the man

Main from Beach Street.

killed in the fight at the head of the Lagoon, mentioned in the first chapter as of legendary record only, was named Holmes; still others that it is from a grove of Holm oaks that grew along a stream that once ran through the village. The first record of the name, so far as I am informed, either appears in early deeds of property around Brush Pond in Eastville, or in the

name. Holmes Hole was not pretty enough for certain of its misguided inhabitants, who were ashamed when abroad to record the fact that they came from such a vulgar spot, and they managed after a good deal of hubbub to effect the change to the present title, which is certainly pretty enough, if it doesn’t mean much of anything; but why it was necessary to destroy an old name under which the history of the place has grown is beyond me. It has seemed to the writer that the name Tisbury Harbor, which was suggested at the time, is both dignified and musical, while it has a better local application.

Owing to the exposed position of the island and the impossibility of protecting it the General Court, on March 29, 1777, recommended that all sheep and cattle be removed to the mainland for safe keeping, but no heed was paid to the warning, and on September 10, 1778, Major-General Gray, with a large force of British, entered Holmes Hole in 83 vessels for the purpose of ravaging the island. He calmly called the selectmen together and informed them of his intention and, that if any of his robbers were attacked or molested, he would burn every house on the island.

83 vessels

After thoroughly scouring the island, the British troops, to the number of possibly 10,000 rendezvoused at Holmes Hole, camping for some days just across Church Street from the present postoffice. The site was particularly suitable for a

The islanders were theoretically treated as neutrals by the British cruising in these waters, and while there were a few home companies for local protection, such as those of Capt. Nathan Smith, Capt. Benjamin Smith and Capt. Jeremiah Manter, those who were willing to enlist for the war did so under some other banner than that of the exposed Vineyard, and thus did not subject their beloved island to open hostility.

August 11, 1883 – VH fire. 40 acres 60 buildings.

Nov 28, 1898 – Great Hurricane. [Nor'easter?] Greater storm than 1815. Many boats washed onto shore in VH. 50 ships onto shore or sunk in harbor.

Manter Hill "Mill Hill" for wind mill built 1815-1817. Photo without sails in 1884.

Herring Creek outlet to Tashmoo Pond with many fish huts. Fishery open to all in town.

Abandoned graveyard towards Cedar Neck

**"Lydia the Wife of John Claghorn
She died in Child bed December 31st, 1770, in ye 23rd year of
her Age**

**John and Lydia, That lovely pair
A whale killed him, Her body lies here
There souls we hope, With Christ now reign,
So our great Loss, is there great Gain."**

Chunk's Hill – on W side of Lagoon Pond. View across.

Cedar Neck (W of Lagoon) for the Cedar Trees. Wizened Cedars of great age.

Webetaqua - Old Norton House at head of Lagoon – one of oldest houses. Near famous springs. And "Stepping Stones" now under water. Original bound used in laying out Tisbury. Great gathering place for Indians as tremendous mounds of shells. Pestles, skeletons.

In the bank between Chunk's Hill and Cedar Neck was found, not long ago, what was evidently at one time a package of arrow and spear heads, there being twenty-two packed together so snugly as to suggest that, when dropped, they had been tied up for transportation; and pottery, pipes and all manner of implements have been found from one end of the Lagoon's shore to the other.

Heading out of VH on State Road immediately plunge into a nice oak woods. Always beautiful. Before get to Tashmoo.

Head of Tashmoo – spring that supplies VH unfailingly with water.

of the lake, the Sound and the distant Cape. From here Vineyard Haven receives its good and abundant supply of water, a never failing spring that long ago fitted itself into Indian legend and story, for it has been handed down how Pohogant, the old Sachem who once ruled over the sand dunes of Squibnocket, gave to his son Tashmoo this distant portion of his domain, and how Tashmoo, whose mother, Quampechee, was a seeress possessed of the gift of knowing things, was told by the old lady of beautiful springs of pure water which would mark the end of his journey, and given a white shell with which he was to drink therefrom and give his name to the land. Tashmoo, bidding farewell to the friends of his youth, plunged into the dense woods, where his father's braves were wont to seek for game, and following a trail that led toward the rising sun across the level country of the south shore, he came to a hill and looked down on a broad sheet of water, but this was the salt water of Webataqua, and while there were beautiful springs of sweet water at its head, an inward spirit, or possibly a larger Indian—it is not quite clear which—whispered that they were not for him, and so he turned back into the depths of the forest and soon came to that land which he knew for his own, a land flowing with water brooks, where he knelt and drank of the pure water dipped up in his snow white shell.

Lamberts Cove – attractive woodland road. Arched with oaks.

Makoniky – failure. Should be a summer colony. Clay and outcrop of lignite.

Blackwater Brook.

“Middle Ground” shoals off Lambert's Cove. Shaler calls submerged land. Sunken forest with branches and tops that extends over to ACK, [ACK??] woods debris picked up by anchors.

Can drive across to State Road by way of Old House Pond. Or continue around Lambert's Cove Road.

Indian Hill – Joe Mingo lives there. Last family – used to be a popn of 60 people. Old School House building.

Mill Brook bridge – beautiful photo of stone. Athearn Farm.

Shaler. Bought seven farms. Wonderful man. MV owes much. Etc. Visitors are free to roam across the place as long as they behave themselves.

Howlands Brook = Paint Mill Brook.

Letters from American Farmer – shows iron mine near Prospect Hill – bog iron. For Constitution when outfitted in 1814.

Roaring Brook roars you as gently as any sucking dove; those who named it must have come from a flat country where any sort of babble from a brook seemed ferocious. Thus the name may arouse expectations that lead to disappointment, though it is a beautiful little brook all the same.

**Here stands the old
grist mill, built in 1849
by Francis Nye, on
the site of a still ear-
lier one. When pushed
it could grind thirty
bushels of corn a day,
but grist mills do not
pay in these days, and
it is some time since
the mill has done busi-
ness, though as re-
cently as April, 1906,
the owner set the**

The old grist mill, Roaring Brook, 1849.

wheels in motion for the sake of having a little real corn meal such as cannot be bought in these pure food days. Paint was also ground here to some extent, and clay for soap makers. When the mill ceased to pay, Mr. Manter, the miller, kept a grocery store when the brick works near the beach were going

Nice photo of mills at Roaring Brook from 1840s and of the old brick mill with a large water wheel on Roaring Brook – no date. Gave up for lack of fuel. Water wheel was to the north. Ancient aqueduct that took water to the kaolin works about a quarter mile from the brook. Nice photo of Prospect Hill from Roaring Brook.

Tea Lane starts at swampy head of Roaring Brook.

The first public road to the westward from Edgartown, and the only one for a hundred years, was that now called the South Road; it was probably the trail of the Indian in earlier times. This was the only open road; on others the equestrian is said to have opened gates and let down bars at the rate of about five in every three minutes. It must have been some such way

The second east and west road was the Middle Road, and last came the North Road. In 1807 the other roads were from West Tisbury to Holmes Hole, from which branched a third to Lambert's Cove, while a fourth ran from Holmes Hole to Edgartown, with a branch through Farm Neck to Eastville, the first being the Edgartown-Tisbury-South Road.

Nice photo of W Tisbury mill

Shaler's Atlantic description of W Tisbury

"Some of the fields of maize and wheat are as good as one finds in the Connecticut Valley. I have never seen better ground for the gardener. Strawberries grow as in Southern France; roses have a glory unattainable anywhere else in New England.

"The expectancy of life is about double what it is in Boston. * * *

South Shore of Chilmark

These fields we are looking across are down on the map of 1782, before referred to, as "the best mowing grounds in the island, yielding four tons of black grass per acre". Of this stonewalls

As long ago as '67 there were 40 miles of stone walls in Chilmark, these walls where they surmount the hills and silhouette against the sky, being made almost entirely of round stones, look like the fancy filament of a queen's crown and add not a little to the landscape. Mr. J. Hector St. John made the great and interesting discovery in 1782 that "Chilmark contains stone for fencing"!

Professor Whiting noted that during the forty years between 1846-86, a period during which he frequently surveyed the island, the shore in the central part of these cliffs moved into the island 220 feet, an average of 5½ feet per annum. The Whiting erosion

A tradition is said to exist that 100 years ago it was possible to skate from Tisbury Pond to Edgartown village along the line of connected bays that are now separated into individual ponds, but the map of 1782 does not support such tradition, and it may be that the tradition goes back 200 years.

CHILMARK VILLAGE.

Chilmark village was formerly known as Beetle Bung Corners for here grew hornbeam trees the wood of which was turned into beetles. One of the most prominent features as one approaches the village is Sugarloaf Rock, which is the chief diadem of a stone wall circlet that crowns a nearby hilltop.

MOSHOP'S BED AND PILLOWS.

One of the most peculiar of the large rocks on the island is known as the "Devil's bed and pillows", to reach which from the village we take the North Road back a half mile or so, and after passing the first house on the west or north, ascending a brief hill and dipping down to

Moshop's bed and pillows. Originally the pillows lay on the bed as they were placed when the glacier made it up.

the bottom of the next hollow we stop at a pair of bars on the left and climb these and the hill straight up to a stone wall that looms overhead, so stiff is the upness of the hill. And just over this wall do we find the Old Boy's resting place with

View in all directions from Peaked Hill.

What the ice-age did to Chilmark. Could anything be boulder!

...disappears as one penetrates Gay Head, where for some distance it is sandy roads and

brushy roadsides, and even after we are out in the open again, the weather stained dwellings of the "snarly haired" Indians by the way are particularly unattractive.

It seems that a hundred years or so ago the Indians were all straight haired, but a certain squaw got into bad company consorting much with witches and other adepts of the black art. Her curiosity, however, finally led her too far, and there came a time when she saw more than her friends thought good, whereupon the witches clawed her hair over her eyes and snarled it all up, and ever after the race has been snarly haired.

year around. There is no wood, but an abundance of peet which is used for fuel, though in 1702 Judge Sewall

vineyard land. Unlike the Wall Street variety this is better and baas less after being skinned.

wrote: "No Man's Land is well watered and wooded and inhabited by 7th day Indians." The land is very fertile, some of it extraordinarily so. It is claimed that one field of grass has yielded so large a crop that it could not be cured on the surface of the field. Large white owls abound in the Winter season.

the fishing grounds. On Stony Point, whose five acres are covered with nothing but clean stones, all the codfish caught about the island are placed, after being dressed, and cured by the sun. At times the entire five acres have been completely

At no point on the island can boats ride safely at anchor, and there are times when, for weeks at a stretch, it is impossible to make a landing. The fishermen must haul their boats ashore each night, every boat having its boat-ladder, which extends to low water, and up which the boat is skidded to safety with the help of a pair of oxen.

There is a great Indian burial ground on Able's Neck, where it is supposed Hiacommes, the first converted Indian, was buried.