

MV History Notes and Excerpts IV

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.

COLLECTIONS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS Historical Society *For the Year 1792. Vol. I BOSTON :*

[Daniel Gookin](#), c 1612-1687 *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England.*

§. 3. In the year of our Lord 1659, it pleased God to bring things to such maturity among the praying Indians at the Vineyard, that one Indian church was gathered among them ; which since is become two churches : Where I take this account in part of a letter from Mr. John Cotton (Mr. Cotton's letter, dated at Plymouth, Sept. 14, 1674), now pastor at Plymouth, which sometimes lived and preached to the Indians upon the Vineyard.

"When I lived at the Vineyard, the praying towns were Chappaquidgick,* Nashamoies,+ Sengekontakit,|| Toikiming,¥ Nashuakemmiuk,¶ Talhanio ;**

* *Chappaquidgick is an Island east of Martha's Vineyard, separated from it by a strait, about a quarter of a mile wide. It is within the limits of Edgartown.+ The south part of Edgartown.|| Also spelled Sanhecantacket. The north part of Edgartown.++ Taacame, or Takame. Tisbury.¶ Nashouohkamack. Chilmark. ** Probably part of Chilmark.*

one church there gathered long before, but no officers. Since I lived here, I went over with Mr. Eliot thither ;++ and Hiacoomes was ordained pastor: John Tokinosh, teacher; John Nonoso and Joshua Mummeecheeg, ruling elders.¥ Since I hear they are become two churches ; the pastor and one ruling elder for Chappaquidgick; the teacher and the other ruling elder, for the other church, which hath some members, if I mistake not, in all the other towns above mentioned. Hands were imposed in ordination, by Mr. Eliot, Mr. Mayhew, and myself."

"To the Worshipful, his worthy friend, Mr. Daniel Gookin. These deliver at his house at Cambridge.

"Upon the Vineyard, Sep. 1, 1674.

"Much honoured Captain Gookin,

"Sir,

"A copy of yours of the 14th of May I did receive, containing fifteen queries. I have no time to answer so many now, of which some are very difficult. Briefly, the first church was gathered here just fifteen years since, I sent for Mr. Prince* and several others, but they came not ; but the English of the island, and several strangers of divers places, present, did well approve of them. Which church is now become three churches, by reason of their habitations : two upon the Vineyard. There are near fifty in full, and suppose rightly in communion, [A] by virtue of their Godly conversations. Which churches have a pastor and an elder. Mr. Eliot was here, and joined in their ordination. Mr. Cotton was also here with Mr. Eliot. The families here are three hundred at least: upon the isle Chappaquidgick, sixty families; but one of them that prays not to God. The other, two hundred and forty families are generally praying. Care is taken that all and every one come in by voluntary confession ; which is and hath been the constant practice here now. We did at the first receive them, they renouncing heathenism and confessing their sins; and those were generally professors. Out of them they entered into church fellowship, when by the word and spirit of God they are moved thereunto. There are ten Indian preachers, of good knowledge and holy conversation ; seven jurisdictions; and six meetings every Lord's day. In every jurisdiction the heads are worshippers. The whole holds forth the face of Christianity : how sincere, I know not.

"For schools, sometimes there are some ; sometimes, not. But many can read and write Indian: very few, English ; none, to great purpose ; not above three or four ; and those do it brokenly. Myself and my two grandsons can speak the language of this island. But my grandsons not yet employed. John, the

younger, doth teach the Indians, and is like now, I suppose to be encouraged by the Commissioners. Matthew, my eldest grandchild, hath also preached to them ; and I think, when settled, will again.

"This upon the sudden ; which is that I know to be exactly true : for I am always considering of persons and things, being well acquainted with the state and condition of the Indians. I shall not add, but my due respects, and salute you, and rest,

"Worthy Sir, your affectionate friend,

"And servant to command in our Lord Jesus,

"THOMAS MAYHEW."

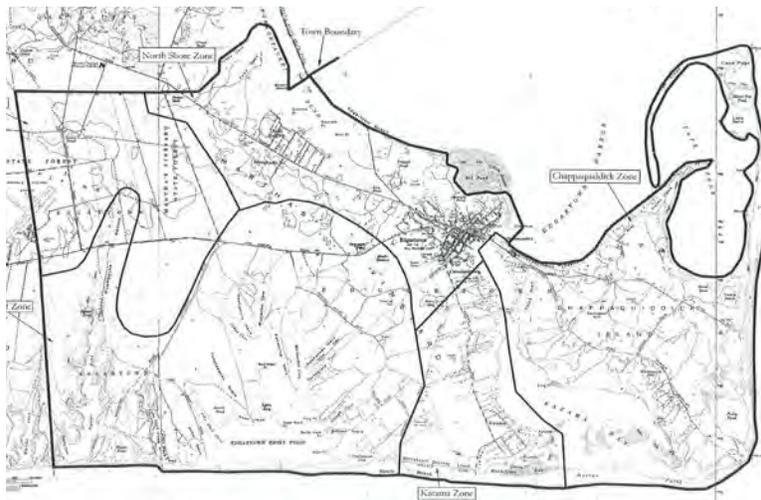
1720, there were on the Vineyard six small villages, containing about a hundred and fifty-five families, and about eight hundred souls. Each of these villages was supplied with an Indian preacher. There was also a small assembly at Winthrop's island ; another, consisting of twelve or fourteen families, at Tucker's island and Nashaun, which lie near together. There were a few Indians left at Noman's Land. Beside these Indian assemblies, there was a small congregation of Baptists at Gay Head. (a) [Exp. Mayhew's Nar. of Ind. on Martha's Vin. pag. 2.]—In the year 1764, there were remaining in Duke's County three hundred and thirteen Indians ; eighty-six of whom were in Edgartown ; thirty-nine, in Tisbury : and a hundred and eighty-eight, in Chilmark.—About that period they began to intermarry with negroes ; in consequence of which the mixed race has increased in numbers, and improved in temperance and industry. At present there are of pure Indians and of the mixed race about four hundred and forty persons ; seventy-five of whom live on Chappaquiddick, (not more than one third pure ;) about twenty-five, at Sancheantacket, (not more than one fifth pure ;) about forty, at Christian-town, in the north part of Tisbury, toward the sound, (about one half, pure ;) about twenty-four, at Nashouohkamuck, (about three quarters, pure ;) and about two hundred and seventy-six, at Gay Head, (of which about one quarter are pure.) In this account unmixed negroes are not reckoned. [Information of Captain Jerningham and Benjamin Bassett, Esq.]

Herbster and Cherau Edgartown

Inland water resources not plentiful in Edgartown

Sandy – so few rock walls. Ditch and mound system. Soil piled in linear rows often with wooden fences. Some today can be tied to historic period maps of fields and properties.

Five areas: Chappy, Great Pond, Katama, North Shore, Plains



Captain Martin Pring 1607 – anchored in Edgartown harbor and reportedly built a stockade on Chappy Bluffs (Norton 1923).

Chappy – Sagamore Pahkehpuunnassoo Chappy = “place of separate island”
Sagamore of Nunnepog (“fresh pond or water place”) – Tewanquatick. Great Pond = Winnetukqet. Few hundred people in the area.

Contact period trail probably skirted the Great Pond heading to other parts of island.

Early settlers divided the land in series of transactions – first into “home lots” in 1646, then “town lots” 1646-1652. 10-40 ac each. Division of Common Land or “Planting Field” 1653 among 20 proprietors in northern part of town. Eng population: 75-1653; 100-1660; 125-1676.

Katama was peripheral section, part of Edgartown Plains – consisting of 40-acre lots divided among proprietors in 1646. Plain Road – may be Katama Road – mentioned in 1662 but may be old Indian trail and cart path.

Chappy – meadows divided among Edgartown settlers around 1668 with grazing rights to land owned by Indians. Made a praying town around 1670. North Neck – center of Native community, eventually including burial grounds, meeting house, home sites. But, no record of the church in 1700s. In 1800s Indians increasingly crowding into North Neck with whites on farms. NN – poor soils, heat from peat, little employment except long whaling voyages. By early 1900s meetinghouse for Indians repaired and held church services. Community once extended from NN to Tom’s Neck.

Two Euro-American archaeological sites identified in Edgartown may date to the Plantation Period. The Vincent House and Andrews/Vincent sites, located off Meeting House Road, may document the settlement patterns of the Vincent (originally known as Vinson) family, one of Edgartown’s earliest English settlers.

Land evidence records indicate that William Vinson was living in the Mashacket Neck section of Edgartown as early as 1656 (Dukes County Registry of Deeds [DCRD]). The Vincent House Site (MHC no. 23), originally located in this area and moved to Edgartown Center in 1977, is locally known to be the oldest house on the island, and possibly the home of William Vinson. Although archaeological and architectural investigations undertaken as part of the house relocation suggest that the house may date to the early eighteenth century, it is likely that the structure was part of the historic Vincent family compound (Stachiw 1978).

Recent archaeological investigations at the Andrews-Vincent Site, located a short distance from the original Vincent House Site, suggest that an earlier structure was present on the Vincent property. Belowground structural remains and artifacts indicate a late-seventeenth-century occupation of this site (Cherau et. al. 1999). Additional analysis is ongoing to fully understand the relationship between these two sites, although they clearly document the earliest period of Euro-American settlement in Edgartown.

E incorporated under NY in 1671. Wind grist mills by mid-1700s. Relatively little development in first map even though town a hundred years old. Desbarres – 1776 – lot lines, structures, topo; Crevecoeur 1784 (wind mill in Great Pond area), Smith 1794 (rode from E to HH; 2nd wind mill near Mill Hill).

Town began operating as county seat – courthouse, jailhouse, customs house.

Early 1800s – coopering and 3 salt works.

Crapo – extensive woodland - 1830.

1860 – all-time high 2118. Custom House built 1849. 1870 – population of 1500; by 1895 Cottage City split off and Edgartown had 1125.

Largest business Dr. Daniel Fisher (1799-1876) North Water Street oil and candle factory “largest in the world” (Hough 1936). By 1855 - \$470,000 production.

360 men on whaling ships – 1855, including some Portuguese. Decline 1860-1870 so only 180 by 1865. Influx of Portuguese fishermen so 1276 by 1915; 1370-1940 with Portuguese dropping from 18 to 14%

Chappy Indians – 65-1807; 110-1828; 84-1848; 74-1861; 1899 – 7

Remnants of ditch-and-mound field system at several places in E. Could be found in Chappy and Katama. By 1675 Swimming Place name used – passage between Green Hollows and Snow’s Point.

1652 – Thomas Daggett and Wm Weeks – appointed “whale cutters for this year”. Town meeting 1653 drift whales “to be cut out freely, four men at one time, and four at another, and so every whale, beginning at the east end of the town”. Drift whale industry flourished into 18th C.

Offshore whaling began on Martha's Vineyard about 1738 when Joseph Chase relocated his sloop, the *Diamond*, from Nantucket to Edgartown. He purchased a house and about 20 acres of land on the shores of Edgartown Harbor, erected a wharf with a tryhouse nearby, and began offshore whaling with his vessel. Shortly thereafter, James Claghorn purchased a small sloop, the *Leopard*, and fitted her for offshore whaling. In 1742 John Harper of Nantucket moved from Nantucket to the Vineyard, bringing the sloop *Humbird* with him. These early Vineyard whalers were succeeded by John Newman, Samuel Finley and countless others (Starbuck, reprint 1989).

The early history of offshore whaling on Martha's Vineyard was not as successful or popular as on nearby Nantucket. By 1775, the whole island only had a fleet of 12 vessels and an aggregate of 720 tons (Starbuck, reprint 1989). Its principal involvement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was in providing personnel for the whaling voyages, including many captains and officers for the region's fleet of ships. The numerous "Captain's houses" that line the streets of Edgartown Village attest to the importance of this industry and the wealth brought to the community from the whaling voyages (Ambrose 1999). One of the most successful eighteenth century Edgartown whalers was Captain Peter Pease, born in 1732. Captain Pease embarked on numerous whaling voyages along the East Coast and as far south and west as the West Indies and as far north as Greenland (Banks 1911).

Deep-sea whaling did flourish on the island during its Golden Years from about 1820 to 1860. The first ship from Edgartown to engage in deep-sea whaling was the *Apollo*, which sailed on July 5, 1816 under the command of Captain Jethro Daggett, bound for the Pacific Ocean. Another Edgartown ship *Hector* was called the "luckiest whaleship afloat," and from 1826 to 1853 she brought into port 19,697 barrels of sperm oil. In 1860, there were 11 Edgartown-owned whaling ships, five Edgartown-owned barks, and two Edgartown-owned schooners (Norton 1923). An Edgartown whaler, Captain Charles W. Fisher, is credited with capturing the largest sperm whale ever killed, which yielded 168 barrels of oil, while master of the *Alaska* in 1884 (Banks 1911). Most of the oil processing was done at the Edgartown wharf, which by the early 1800s, had replaced Nantucket as the port of call for many of the region's whaling vessels.

Another prominent leader in the industry was William Martin, an African-American captain who was born in Edgartown in 1829. Between 1853 and 1887, Martin led many whaling voyages out of the Vineyard and New Bedford. Martin's home still stands on Chappaquiddick.

Second in importance to whaling were the general fisheries and the maritime service and by-products businesses. The largest single such enterprise in Edgartown, and reportedly in the country at that time, was the whale oil and candle works of Dr. Daniel Fisher and Company. In 1850, this business had an investment capital of \$40,000 and the annual product for that year was 118,000 pounds of candles, 13,200 barrels of strained and refined oils. Fisher's company supplied oil and candles for government lighthouses, and employed many of the island's men through the Civil War years (Banks 1911). The business flourished until the 1860s when petroleum was discovered in Pennsylvania, and replaced whale oil for lighting purposes. Dr. Fisher was also the founder and president of the Martha's Vineyard National Bank located at South Water Street (Norton 1923).

As whaling declined fishing increased. 1852 – 553 swordfish caught. Mattakeset Herring Fishery very profitable – 1850 creek cut from M Bay to EGP.

Tar extraction – reportedly mid-1700s (by 1738 – acc Banks) in Penny Wise section, also known as "Dark Woods.

Mattakesett Lodge served by rail (wharf, gatehouse, 50 rooms) – for few decades late 19th C. 1872 Katama Land Co, which owned lodge and Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Co bought 600 acres at South

Beach to turn into summer resort to rival Oak Bluffs. Never happened. 1882 RR carried 26,142 passengers. Ran 22 years – discontinued 1896

Lists Paths and Roads and dates.

Several potential cellar holes in NN area from Native period, also Wasque.

Great potential for archaeology around Dr Fisher's old factory site. Also might find Tar Kiln area sites as remote and undeveloped. May have extended from N section onto Plains section.

List of Informants/Contacts

Howard Andrews, Edgartown MA resident
Jean Andrews, Edgartown MA resident
Jude Bishop, Chappaquiddick, Edgartown MA, Avocational Archaeologist
Bill Boggess, Edgartown MA resident
Christina Brown, Edgartown Planning Board and Martha's Vineyard Commission member
Jill Bouck, Staff Archaeologist, Martha's Vineyard Historical Society
Dick Butt, West Tisbury MA, Avocational Archaeologist, Martha's Vineyard Archaeological Society
Jeff Chapman, Edgartown MA, Avocational Archaeologist
Albert L. Cuttis, Boston MA, Chappaquiddick Wampanoag Sagamore
Mark Harding, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
Randy Jardin, Tisbury MA, Aquinnah Wampanoag
Milton Jeffers, Edgartown MA, Aquinnah/Chappaquiddick Wampanoag
June Manning, Aquinnah MA, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
Allouise Morgan, Edgartown MA resident
Bob Morgan, Edgartown MA resident
Ursula Prada, Edgartown MA, Edgartown Historic District Commission
Fran Resendes, Edgartown MA resident
S. Christopher Scott, Executive Director, Martha's Vineyard Preservation Trust, Inc.
Edward Tyra, Edgartown MA resident
Mathew Vanderhoop, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
Peter Van Tassel, Edgartown Historic District Commission and Martha's Vineyard Historical Society
Jayne Varkonda, Edgartown MA, Edgartown Conservation Commission
Elaine Weintraub, Oak Bluffs MA, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School
Penny Williams, Washington D.C., Chappaquiddick Wampanoag Sachem
Wanda Williams, Edgartown MA, Town Clerk of Edgartown
Wayne Williams, Washington D.C., Chappaquiddick Wampanoag Tribe