

Historical Notes VII

Note: Many of these are likely redundant on other pages of notes.

Between 1831 and 1855, the number of sheep in the study unit fell nearly 60 %. The decline was greater on the mainland (86%) and Nantucket (80%) than on Martha's Vineyard (22%). However, during the Civil War virtually every town added a few sheep to their flocks in order to profit from the premium on locally produced wool... The rise was short-lived, and in the forty years to 1905 the Cape lost nearly 88% of its flock and Nantucket 94%. By contrast with the rest of the region, however, the sheep decline in Dukes County was slower. In 1905, Dukes reported 21% of the state's sheep. Gosnold and Chilmark were the leading sheep-grazing towns in the state.

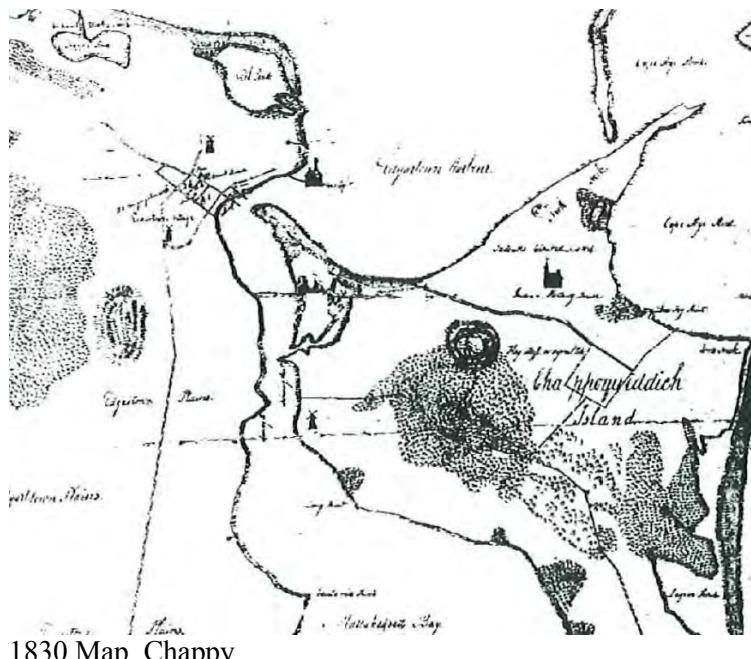
Edgartown but also HH for whaling with Dr Fisher's oil works continuing to 1876 . Decline after Civil War but still 8 whalers in 1882, last in 1896.

MHC Tisbury

Center, Franklin, Church, and Spring Streets were established in 1854; part of William Street was laid out in 1864.

In 1889, a new road north from Main Street (West Chop Avenue) was cleared and graded.

Residential development continued to extend west from Main Street, especially in the Spring/Pine Street area. New resort development extended north along West Chop Road to West Chop, where the West Chop Land and Wharf Company developed a district of large Shingle Style summer estates in the 1890s.



The ravages of the Civil War and the losses to the Arctic disaster of 1871 (together with the substantial rise in insurance rates that followed) cut sharply into Edgartown's prosperity. Nevertheless, as late as 1882, the town still had eight whalers, and the last did not leave port until 1896.

Most of the cooperage done for the whale industry. The largest consignment from Falmouth, produced 9,000 oil casks, by ten men., Edgartown sold 3,000 barrels to whaling ships. By 1855 Nantucket leading manufacturer of oil casks. Twenty-six men by nine shops produced over 20,000 casks. Provincetown, Yarmouth, Edgartown, and Tisbury each produced 1,000 casks, while Falmouth's single shop turned out 2,600. barrels also for the mackerel fleets.

Holmes Hole Village distinction as region's third most important whaling center and as port of call along main coasting routes resulted in marine hospital (1866) and seamen's chapel (1867). Boston Seamen's Friend Society (1893) and a new marine hospital (1895)

Bradley Holmes Hole whaling merchant bought West Tisbury Look Mill (?) for satinet.

Elizabeth Islands separated from Chilmark as Gosnold in 1864, but remained sparsely populated.

Wikipedia – MV

It is the 58th largest island in the United States and the third largest on the East Coast of the United States. It is also the largest island not connected to mainland by a bridge or tunnel on the East Coast of the United States.

Wesleyan Grove became one of the largest and best-known camp meeting sites in the country. Nine tents in 1835, a five-year lease in 1838, 17 tents in 1839, 40 tents in 1842, 64 tents in 1847, an 11-year lease in 1850, 100 tents in 1851, to 200 tents in 1855. By 1860 500 tents with 12,000 people attending the Sabbath and in 1868 570 tents. Until 1855 campmeeting met for one week to ten days and was exclusively religious in purpose. Between 1855 and 1865 began to change in character. Religious in nature, but the participants also began to enjoy the benefit of the sea air and social interaction as they revived both mind and body. Between 1859 and 1864 new American building type, the "Martha's Vineyard" cottage developed at Wesleyan Grove. The architectural form unique considered as an invention of local carpenters. 40 cottages in 1864, 250 in 1869 and 500 by 1880. The number of cottages has decreased over the years as some were moved to other Oak Bluffs locations, some were joined together to form larger cottages and some fell into disrepair and were torn down. Today approximately 318 cottages remaining

Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, Wampanoags numbered about 700 until an unknown epidemic wiped out nearly all the Nantucket tribe. The last surviving Nantucket Wampanoag died in 1855. Wampanoags from the mainland and Cape Cod emigrated to Martha's Vineyard, but by the mid-19th century, only about 40 island tribal members full-blooded Native Americans. Under Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard and mainland banded together in 1928 to become the loosely organized Wampanoag Nation. Designation allowed limited self government in tribal lands and precursor to eventual full recognition. Currently five bands of Wampanoags in Massachusetts, but only Vineyard Aquinnah group granted federal and state recognition as a Native American tribe. Status was approved in 1987 after years of petitioning the U.S. Congress.

Late eighteenth century Methodist and Baptist revival meetings were significant in bringing early white and some black visitors to Oak Bluffs. In the 1920s the African American Islanders began to offer accommodations in their small cottages that attracted black visitors from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other Northeastern cities. As blacks grew more prosperous after World War II, many brought their families to Oak Bluffs. In Oak Bluffs especially middle-class black vacationers rented at affordable prices or purchased cottages for less than \$30,000 from the 1950s through the early 1970s. By 2010 Oak Bluffs arguably the wealthiest of the black resort communities.

Agriculture

1850

MV: 265 farms; 79 E, 90 T, 96 C; Wool: E 3,258, T 5,933, C 13,199 pounds; Butter: ~50% of the 23,147 pounds from C (van Tassel 1974:43; Eric Peters). 4,200 pounds of cheese from Tisbury.

1856 On all lands where red sorrel abounds, acids of some kind abound, application of neutralizing substances — such as lime, ashes, &c, — that they can ever be rendered fertile in the production of valuable crops. we have eradicated it effectually, by the use of lime and ashes, but at the same time giving the soil a more generous manuring, and more careful cultivation with the hoe.

New England Farmer 1856

We know of no way in which the many thousand acres of poor, sandy lands in this State, can be made so valuable, as by planting them with either White or Pitch Pine seed. Such was the favor with which the Barnstable County Agricultural Society viewed the experiment we made in planting the seed of the Pitch Pine, that a liberal premium was awarded therefor in 1853. — Barnstable Patriot.

1860. For the New England Farmer

CULTURE OF PINE TREES. DEAR SIR—, I will now give you some account of the “Culture of Pines” on our Island. I think it was in the spring of 1846 that Mr. JOSIAH Sturgis, (now of California,) planted a lot of five acres, after taking off a crop of) corn the year previous, with the seed of the common hard pine of Cape Cod.... We purchased about four hundred acres of light sandy land, for about two dollars per acre, and expended about one thousand dollars in procuring seed from Barnstable county, and in the spring of 1852, planted the whole tract,

Coastal Survey motivation for Mapping MV and region

1844

Are we not greatly deficient in knowledge of soundings in Buzzard’s Bay, Nantucket Shoals, Cape Cod and Massachusetts Bay?

Answer: Yes, it is more wanted there than anywhere. More tonnage passes. Most vessels from Europe, for New York and Philadelphia, come between the Gulf Stream and Nantucket Shoals, in addition to navigation north of Cape Cod. Most of the coast trading comes through the Vineyard.

MV Work: Triangulation of Buzz Bay and greater part of MV Sound East Rock to East Chop of Holmes Hole. Started in May; 24 stations occupied; 6600 angles measured on 68 objects (44 signals, 13 spires, 9 lights, 1 beacon, 1 telegraph) – 379 sq miles; topo work by WM Boyce and HL Whiting (charge of 2nd party) – 3 plane table sheets RI, New Bedford etc.; HL Whiting assisted by Samuel A Gilbert, W.E. Greenwell.

Shore upon the Vineyard: is described as generally level and sandy, and cut up by numerous ponds; the interior is wooded; earlier note says it is contrary, level, and covered with woods of scrub oak; interspersed with pines;
Area surveyed 139 sq miles; 145.5 miles of shoreline; 102.5 pond shorelines; 182 miles roads.

Letter from William Mitchell of Nantucket to Professor A.D. Bache, Superintendent of the Coast Survey:

"My Dear Friend: I have at length obtained the information I desired relative to the number of vessels which annually pass through the sound. Knowing that thou wouldst prefer a modern account I applied to the captain of the light boat, with whom it has been somewhat difficult to communicate. To his politeness I am indebted for the following particulars:

In 1842 there were 144 ships, 1295 brigs, 7551 schooners, 3616 sloops

In 1843 there were 151 ships, 1194 brigs, 8228 schooners, 3525 sloops

In 1844 there were 152 ships, 1175 brigs, 7483 schooners, 2566 sloops

1846 – Zenith of whaling when 19 ships in Edgartown. ACK ships outfitted and unloaded there.

Crapo, H. A. 1830. *A Map of Edgartown, Shire Town of Dukes County.*

"Throughout the early historic period the Plains area [of Edgartown] functioned as a broad, open area used for common pasturage, with smaller woodlots interspersed."

Eisenstaedt, A. 1988. *Eisenstaedt, Martha's Vineyard*

1905 – Menemsha Pond opening dredged and jetty, causeway.

Pine tar – lubricant, greasing wagon wheels.

Tom Dunlop – Gazette articles 1940s on Martha's Vineyard land use history.

Dunwiddie, P. W. and M. Adams. 1994. *Landscape Change on Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands 1640-1993.*

Some areas – no recorded burning but have nice grassland and heathland; Pasque and parts of Gay Head.

Chappaquiddick and West Tisbury moraine – extensively grazed and cleared shore to shore but experienced rapid regeneration –< one century – possibly resprouted root boles.

Herbster and Cherau

Edg - Sandy – so few rock walls. Ditch and mound system. Soil piled in linear rows often with wooden fences.

Swift, W. S. and J. W. Cleveland. 1903. December 4, 1685 – fences 4'3" – any ditches or fences built be casting up banes (spoils) shall have hedges or rales to equivalent to 4' 3".

December 4, 1689 – all fences – 4 feet and 3 inches – judged sufficient. Any ditches or fences built be casting up panes (spoils) – *shall have hedges or rales so equivalent to 4' 3". Two men – judges and savairs of fences.*

From Gonzalo Leon 100 sheep 1900; 300 1930s; deer ~500 when coyotes arrived – now ~45; one fire at Lighthouse Pasture.

Whaling Showing decline in 1859

Debow's review, Agricultural, commercial, industrial progress and resources. [Vol 26 \(3\): 323](#)
THE FISHERIES.

1859 - New Bedford 316 Ships & Barks 107,931 tonnage; Nantucket 30 & 11,037; Edg 16 & 5956

Whale oil/Sperm/Bone Total Value – NB \$5,960,727; ACK \$580,947; Edg \$346,097

Employees – NB 8000; ACK 900; Edg 450

Holmes Hole – 1 Ship & Bark

Number of ships overall	Stock	Vessels	Import bbls	Export Bbls
1856.....	14,000	635	80,941	20,052
1857.....	30,000	655	78,540	37,231
1858.....	38,000	654	81,941	33,666
1859.....	17,176	625	91,408	52,207
1860.....	13,429	509	73,708	32,792
1861.....	15,888	564	68,932	37,547
1862.....	16,132	433	55,641	27,976
1863.....	16,038	362	65,055	18,366
1864.....	31,200	304	64,372	43,362
1865.....	20,382	276	* 33,000	+ 7,000
1865.....	13,000	259		

Vessels Employed

The number of vessels and amount of tonnage employed since 1844, have been as follows:

	Ships and Barks.	Brigs.	Schs.	Tonnage.
Jan. 1, 1866	199	8	56	68,536
Jan. 1, 1865	226	7	43	79,690
Jan. 1, 1864	258	5	41	88,785
Jan. 1, 1863	301	10	42	103,146
Jan. 1, 1862	372	10	41	125,465
Jan. 1, 1861	459	14	41	158,746
Jan. 1, 1860	508	19	42	176,842
Jan. 1, 1859	561	19	45	195,115
Jan. 1, 1858	587	18	49	203,148
Jan. 1, 1857	593	22	40	204,209
Jan. 1, 1856	585	21	29	199,141
Jan. 1, 1855	584	20	34	199,842
Jan. 1, 1854	602	28	38	208,399
Jan. 1, 1853	599	30	32	206,286
Jan. 1, 1852	558	27	35	193,990
Jan. 1, 1851	502	24	27	171,971
Jan. 1, 1850	510	20	13	171,484

Jan. 1, 1849	581	21	12	196,110
Jan. 1, 1848	621	22	16	210,663
Jan. 1, 1847	670	31	21	230,218
Jan. 1, 1846	678	35	22	283,189
Jan. 1, 1845	643	35	17	218,655
Jan. 1, 1844	595	41	9	200,147

A Short History of Chilmark

http://www.chilmarkma.gov/pages/ChilmarkMA_About/chilmark_history

1852

The 1850 Chilmark town census, taken by Richard L. Pease of Edgartown, provides a good historical account of the town at that time:

"Chilmark was a land of working and subsistence farms...at least 96 farms in total. Almost all of the town was cleared, consisting of fields, meadow and pasture lands, all separated from one another by stone walls, and in the southern portion of town by split rail fences. There were a few and only few woodlots. (Most people heated with peat, a few with coal, some with driftwood found on the beaches.) By far the largest town occupations within the town were farmers and mariners who made up 112 and 103 individuals respectively. (Together, these two occupations made up 81 percent of the labour force within the town.)"

In 1850 Chilmark's farms collectively had: 61 oxen, 92 horses, 154 swine, 247 cows, 543 other cattle, and 5,514 sheep. In that same year these farms collectively produced: *"some wheat and orchard products, 305 bushels of barley, 518 bushels of rye, 1,174 bushels of oats, 2,723 bushels of potatoes, 4,458 bushels of corn, 4,170 pounds of cheese, 10,010 pounds of butter, and 946 tons of cultivated English hay (salt marsh hay not included)."*

Hitchcock on MV -- Great Plain, Agricultural Decline,

1824. Notices of the Geology of Martha's Vineyard, and the Elizabeth Islands

1 *Alluvial.* This formation occupies a considerable portion of the southern part of the Vineyard; reaching in some places, even beyond the centre of the island. Where I crossed it, it consists of a perfectly level, sandy tract, uninhabited and uninhabitable. I have rarely seen as extensive a region, that was so cheerless and barren. It is covered by stunted shrub oaks, rarely exceeding five feet in height, and when I saw them, they were entirely leafless, presenting to the eye, , a cheerless, wintry waste. On my right as I crossed this plain, at a distance, appeared a ridge of high land and rounded eminences: but on my left, nothing was to be seen, except this uniform unrelieved barrenness. I was immediately struck with the idea, that this sandy desert must have been formed by the action of the waves of the vast Atlantic, which have beat upon this shore, without obstruction, for so' many centuries.

Hitchcock

Peat use described in Chilmark as perhaps 100 acres