History’s Insights into Martha’s Vineyard —
Today and Tomorrow
The 1850 Map by
Henry Laurens Whiting
Harvard University’s 4000-acre Laboratory and Classroom

Harvard Forest
Est. 1907
Harvard Forest Freshman Seminar *Reading and Conserving New England*

-- Quansoo Farm --

-- Seven Gates Farm --

Nathaniel Shaler
The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future ---- Theodore Roosevelt
Forest Cover and Population Trends in New England

Population of New England (see right-hand axis)

1880 Farm dominated

2015 Forest dominated
U.S. Coastal Survey

Navigation

Defense

Infrastructure & Commerce
Henry L. Whiting  1821-1897
Chief U.S. Cartographer

And, because of that, a West Tisbury Farmer

“Henry Whiting could make a better map of the far side of a hill without seeing it than others could while standing before it.”
Holmes Hole

1847

"Topography by
H. L. Whiting"
From a Trigonometrical Survey

under the direction of A.D. BACHE Superintendent of the

SURVEY OF THE COAST OF THE UNITED STATES

Scale Reduced

1860
“We learn that a ...map of the island, will soon be published”

Vineyard Gazette
January 28, 1848

Were our people aware of the manner in which these charts are engraved and published, there is not a family in town but would procure one as soon as possible.

What surprizes us most is, that the roads running to and on the island, are laid down so correctly... A correct description of every pond, with its outlet, or path leading thereto...besides a scale of miles, by which anyone can ascertain the exact distance (within a foot or less) from one point to another.

But this is not all. To the mariner, passing in and out of our harbor... this chart contains information of incalculable importance. The outlines of the coast, the position of the light houses, buoys and rocks, with shoals and soundings, are... perfect, or as near perfection, as science, at the present day will admit. It is, in fact, beyond improvement...
Edgartown Great Pond

1886

H. L. Whiting 1846-1886

1846

1,000 Feet

Edgartown Great Pond

Receded ~1300 Feet

1846 Beach

Average rate ~ 7-8 feet per year

June, 2014
Erosion Rate - since 1850

Long-term average in feet per year

Analysis by Clifford Kaye 1964
Whiting, H. L. 1886.

Report of Changes in the Shore Line and Beaches of Martha's Vineyard as Derived from Comparisons of Recent with Former Surveys
A New Opportunity for Agriculture in Conservation

Farm Land -- Managed by Farmers

Conservation Land -- Managed by Conservationists
Farms & Open Lands

- Agricultural
- Grass, Heath, Shrub

Map showing various farms and open lands with specific locations marked.
Martha’s Vineyard Land Bank. From Mowing Machines to Renters and now Owners... of Goats.
Woodlands from a Historical Perspective
Were our people aware of the manner in which these charts are engraved and published, there is not a family in town but would procure one as soon as possible.

Vineyard Gazette, 1848

All proceeds support the development of a new Martha’s Vineyard flora and research in plant conservation and forest ecology.

$35 at Polly Hill Arboretum or by Phone

Bunch of Grapes          Granary Gallery          Martha’s Vineyard Museum
We are here

Polly Hill

Ag Society
Thanks

Brian Hall & Jenny Hobson
Clarisse Hart & Julie Pallant
Dave Dandridge & Nancy Weaver
Tim Boland, Karin Stanley, & Tom Clark
Fritz Knight
Steve Spongberg & John Flender
Tom Dunlop & Hilary Wall
Allan Keith
Jim Athearn
Bow Van Riper
Linda Mirabile @ Ravenmark
Mark Wisniowski @ Villanti Printers

Highstead Foundation
National Science Foundation
A.W. Mellon Foundation
Edey Foundation
George & Doris B. Daniels Wildlife Trust
Martha’s Vineyard Museum
Vineyard Gazette
Leventhal Map Center – Boston Public Library
Polly Hill Arboretum
Yale University Press

Martha’s Vineyard
A Meeting of Land and Sea