

Historical Quotes

Note: An eclectic collection, in no great order, largely dealing with land use history, the historical condition of the land, or interpretations of the ways in which history and other factors influence the modern vegetation.

Oak Bluffs

"Oak Bluffs is a mushroom town without any oaks, except some scrubs, and little in the way of bluffs except what one gets from super Christianized people. White pine in the shape of gothic shanties is the only forest growth I have yet found ... box-like houses ... of a profane architecture ... scattered around through the thick set copse of oaks which are not high enough to hide their ten-foot eaves..." (Shaler, 1887). (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

Edgartown

"Edgartown is one of the best (harbors)in the U.S." (Hine 1908)

Nantucket

"The aspect of the two islands differs greatly on account of the peculiarity of the vegetation. Nantucket is essentially treeless, while the greater part of Martha's Vineyard is forest-clad. This difference is probably owing to the greater exposure to the sea winds suffered by Nantucket, which is due to its smaller size and greater distance from the shore. In part the deforested condition of Nantucket may be attributable to the fact that for nearly two centuries its fields were used as open sheep pastures and the young trees were constantly browsed down by the flocks. Martha's Vineyard, on the contrary, has held its woods; only a small strip on the southern shore shows any tendency to become sterilized in respect to forest growth by the action of the sea winds. On the sand plain the woods are of stunted oaks and other dwarf varieties of trees, but the growth is vigorous enough to give a wooded aspect to the surface and thereby to distinguish it in a very marked way from the neighboring and otherwise similar island of Nantucket."

(Shaler 1888)

Elizabeth Islands

Below – from Freeman 1807

"Beginning north-east, the first island is Nanamesset. It is a mile and a quarter long, and a half a mile broad, and contains three hundred and sixty acres, fifty acres of which are wood land: the soil is as good as that of Nashaun. This island constitutes one farm, which is sufficient to keep twenty cows and a hundred sheep. There is on it one dwelling house, containing two families; and about nine hundred feet of salt works, built in the year 1805."

"This island is seven miles and a half long, and a mile and a quarter broad, and contains five thousand five hundred and sixty acres. There are on it four farms, four dwelling houses, at which are milked from forty-five to fifty cows. The soil in the eastern part is a sandy loam and good; in the western part it is light, and not so good. The principal part of the mowing land is at the east end; but bodies of salt marsh lie on the southerly side of the island. Nashaun is well wooded: the other Elizabeth Islands, except Nanamesset, have no wood. About three fifths of the trees are beach: the remainder of the wood is white and black oak, hickory, and a little pine. About one half of the island is in wood and swamps; and in the swamps grows white cedar. Some fire wood is sold, and transported from the island. Very little ship timber remains, not more than three hundred tons; but it is of a superiour quality."

"These islands are the property of James Bowdoin, Esq. whose stock on them consists generally in summer of about a hundred and twenty head of horned cattle, sixteen hundred sheep, seven hundred lambs, and twenty horses; and in winter, of a hundred head of horned cattle, seventeen hundred sheep, and twenty horses. About a thousand acres at the west end of Nashaun are set off into three farms, on

which are generally kept three hundred sheep, forty head of horned cattle, and ten horses, exclusive of the above mentioned stock. The milk obtained from the cows is for the most part converted into cheese, which has a high reputation. On Nashaun there are about three or four hundred deer: seventy were killed the last autumn."

"The archipelago bears the name of Elizabeth, but the separate islands have Indian names: Naushon, Pasque, Nashawena, Penikese, Cuttyhunk, all picturesque names and well suited to the savage front the islands present to us. Culture has taken no hold on them. They lie the same rude moraines the ancient glacier left them. Their heaps of massive stones, only half concealed by the mantle of vegetation, look like the ruins of Cyclopean architecture."

Shaler, N. S. 1874. Martha's Vineyard. *Atlantic Monthly*, 34, 732-740.

Great Plain and State Forest

Freeman on Little Pond and the problem of oral histories.

"It has never been known to be dry; and as there is no water either salt or fresh within about four miles of it, it seems to be placed here by a benevolent Providence for the refreshment of the thirsty animals, by which it is surrounded. ...Of this pond a marvellous story is told, that in a wet summer it is two feet lower than in a dry summer, and that the remarkable fact has been confirmed by the observation of more than a hundred years. But after careful inquiry, the author has reason to believe that this is a fabulous story. Those, who during a hundred years have conveyed it from one mouth to another, have probably been too much pleased with the wonderful tale, to give themselves the trouble to examine into its truth. But a physician of the island, who, in the exercise of the duties of his profession, has had frequent occasion to pass by the pond, assured the author, that this pond was like other ponds, that its water was lowest in a dry season, and highest after copious rains."

"Owing to the fact that the surface of this plain, which occupies the central part of Martha's Vineyard, is covered with a dense growth of scrubby woods, these depressions [the bottoms] in good part escape the eye, but if they are closely examined they are seen to have a continuity not indicated on the excellent chart of the Coast Survey, which is the basis of the maps contained in this report. These depressions are best studied on the similar southern plain of Nantucket, where the treeless character of the surface clearly reveals their form." (Shaler 1888).

Refers to bottoms as troughs

"Their [the Plains] valleys [bottoms], often several hundred yards in width, do not present the smooth downward grade so characteristic of ordinary valleys; their floors are generally more irregular than those of an ordinary stream could be." (Shaler 1888)

"Thus a relatively scarce native community type [openland vegetation of heath, grassland, etc.]—modified somewhat with the addition of several introduced taxa became considerably more widespread because of human disturbance." (Dunwiddie 1990)

"The outwash plains, described as early as 1794 as that 'vast plain of bitter oaks between Edgartown and Tisbury ...'" (Smith, 1794??) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994) Collections of the MHS 1815 A Description of Dukes County August 13 1807

" The internal parts of the Island will probably always remain without inhabitants. Land is enclosed in the Eastern part, though many parts are not worth enclosing ... they are destitute of water and left in common." (MHS, 1815, p. 54) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

“An 1830 town atlas map of Edgartown signed by Crapo, also at the DCHS, includes marginal notes describing woodland in the Great Plains as ‘rather thick and interspersed with short stunted oak shrubbery ... with the exception of a small part thereof which may be termed woodland ... the same sign however is given to the whole.’ (Crapo, 1830) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"Having passed from the township of Holmes Hole into Tisbury, the road lay through what would have been an oak forest, except that none of the trees [exceeded] some four feet in height — [our guide] affirming this to be their mature growth, and that no larger ones had grown since the forest was cleared by the original settlers." (Dunwiddie Adams 1994) Society of Preservation of New England Antiquities 1859, p. 284. Travelogue description.

"The part of the Island which I now had to traverse on foot was very barren and showed traces of great earth upheavals which had taken place in prehistoric times; it is therefore no wonder that our white fellow citizens left this desolate region as the last refuge to the poor Indians. I left the carriage at the last house which was surrounded by a few trees, [probably just beyond Beetlebung Corner]. From here the whole area showed only bare hills divided by somewhat more fertile valleys which were frequently broken by ocean inlets and small sand steppes. Yet those hills and desolate valley were separated into irregular fields by man-made walls of field stones, and here and there rose a house which ... looked lonely and melancholy indeed without a garden or the shadow of a tree." (Koch, 1990) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

Great Plains - "never very desirable for grazing or cultivation, was distant from settlements and had very few natural barriers to prevailing winds and the spread of fire. This area seems to have had the highest fire frequency of any area on the Cape or Islands. The resulting landscape changed little over the period documented here. Since the earliest description in 1794 the outwash plain has had a stunted, second-growth oak forest." (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

“The Great Plain is, perhaps, the largest uninhabited stretch of land in the State of Massachusetts.”
(Huntington 1969)

“The most conspicuous element in the vegetation is the large number of oaks which in many places form square miles of low dense woods. *Q. ilicifolia* is the most abundant species, but *Q. stellata*, *Q. tinctoria*, *Q. palustris* and *Q. alba* are also plentiful.....” (Hollick 1893)

“All are stunted in stature, although this may be due to the fact that the timber throughout the island is second growth, and possibly the original trees may have been much larger.” (Hollick 1893)

“Another track through this scrub oak wilderness is a half moon known as Doctors Fisher’s Road, built by a gentleman of the name to connect his mill in Tisbury, where water power is to be had, with Edgartown.”
(Hine 1908)

"...management for plantations and timber is not sound or practical from a silvicultural or economic perspective, and that such vegetation (plantations) exacerbate the potential for serious fires."
D.E.M. 1994. An ecosystem management plan for the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest. Draft, unpublished report.

"Many of the plantations were planted by hand. Two men to a team went out into the scrub oak with grub hoes and pails of young seedlings from state nurseries." "Later, as the pines grew the scrub oak was cut out to release the newly planted pines." "... the hardwoods were later girdled to release the conifers,"
Whiting, S. B. 1976. Management plan for Martha's Vineyard State Forest, Vineyard, Massachusetts.
Mass. Div. of Forests and Parks. Draft, unpublished report.

"rather thick and interspersed with short stunted oak shrubbery...with the exception of a small part thereof which may be termed woodland..." Crapo, H. A. 1830. *A Map of Edgartown, Shire Town of Dukes County*. On file, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, MA.

From West Tisbury "Toward the south and east it is a plain, chiefly covered with a growth of stunted shrubbery..."

Toward Chilmark "to the west is a tumult of hills, grass covered, specked with flocks of sheep and broken with numerous detached and massive rocks."

Anonymous 1860. Harper's Magazine.

"A great plain makes up the remainder of the Island. Most of it is barren and uninhabited and is covered with scrub oaks."

Woodworth, J. B. and E. Wigglesworth 1934. *Geography and geology of the region including Cape Cod, the Elizabeth Islands, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, No Mans Land and Block Island*, Cambridge, MA.

"...an uninteresting waste with a lure and attractiveness that I could not at first appreciate... to the westward, scrub oak for miles, unbroken to the hills of West Tisbury and Chilmark..." from old fire tower

Gross (1928). (taken from Historical Quotes on Martha's Vineyard, incomplete citation entered into Endnote)

"...the Great Plain, thickly grown over with scrub oak that barely reaches the height of an average man. Lonely, wind-swept and haunted by swooping hawks... the Great Plain has always been looked upon as a waste place. Scarcely anyone has ever lived there and succeeded in wresting a livelihood from the soil, not because it is infertile, but because of the early frost."

"Hardly a spring passes that does not see a fire started somewhere on the plains."

Anonymous 1930. *Vineyard Gazette*, 84:474.

"Shaler's remarks that characterize the forest soils as exhausted and useless for anything but woodlots"... "presage the doomed experiments in forestry that were to take place in the twentieth century." (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"In a 1982 interview with oral historian Linsey Lee, Manny Correllus described the grueling process of reforestation:

'We started in the late 20s reforesting. We used to put in 125,000 trees a season. We had gangs come up here and plant them by hand, ... three-year old seedlings. Three or four years later we would come back and we did what we called "relieving" in among the scrub oak. We would take a tool we called a brush hook and clean out so that the trees could come up between the scrub oak.... I had men go into the woods with brand new sweatshirts and come out at night with just a ring left around the collar. That's awfully clawy stuff -- those scrub oaks -- they grab you and pull you.'" (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

Natives

"Not less than three thousand Indians, it has been, generally estimated, were on the island, when it was entered by Mayhew. As it seems capable of supporting scarcely a greater number of white inhabitants, who occupy much less space than savages, it may be asked, whence did so many of these children of nature derive their subsistence? From the account which has been given of Martha's Vineyard, it will be easy to answer this question. The truth is, that its harbours, coves, lagunes, and ponds afford an inexhaustible supply of food. They could obtain the shell fish, which lie in such profusion on its shores,

without the exercise of much invention and they had discovered several ingenious methods of entrapping the eels and other fish, which swim in its waters. The island besides was not destitute of game; and innumerable birds haunted its woods and coasts, which would sometimes be pierced by the arrows of the Indians; not to mention that the sandy soil was peculiarly favourable to the cultivation of squashes, beans, and maize. It was a knowledge of these things, which induced so many of the savages to press to these islands, and the parts of the sea coast which resemble them: they appear barren to those, who think that no country is fruitful, where the fields are not green; but to an Indian they were the most fertile parts of America.” Freeman, Rev. J. 1815. Description of Dukes County, Aug. 13th, 1807, Massachusetts, Historical Society Collections Series 2, vol. 3 (1815). Pp. 38-94; reprinted in *Dukes County Intelligencer* 12 (May 1971), whole issue.

“In the Late Woodland Period (1,000 to 450 years before present), agriculture became widespread, and native tribes became correspondingly more sedentary. A more sedentary population would likely lead to a higher frequency of fire and land-use in a given settlement area, creating a more human-influenced landscape.” (Raleigh 2000)

"Shells are found in great abundance round the harbour; some of them as deep as five feet in the ground. If they were left there by the Indians, the place must formerly have been thickly inhabited; but they seem to be too numerous to be attributed to this source."
Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1815. Volume III of the Second series. Boston, John Eliot, 1815, Source= Rev. James Freeman (1807). At State House Library 906 M41 CSC2, Vol. 3A.

Historical Interpretation Driving Management

“But preservation of endangered habitats cannot simply be accomplished by buying land and keeping houses from being built on it. Management of these areas is often essential to maintain them, and this management must be based on a thorough understanding of the forces that created and shaped the community. Thus, what can be learned about the nature and causes of the changes these areas have undergone in the past is essential to saving them in the future.” (Dunwiddie 1994)

“When humans were removed from the picture, many species dependent on human-induced disturbances declined or disappeared from the landscape. (Raleigh 2000)

“The Wampanoag created drastic changes on their surroundings predominantly through large-scale burning, which assisted in hunting game, maintaining berry patches, and creating fertile soils for cultivation. Because of these Wampanoag practices, many explorers that traveled the waters surrounding the Vineyard in the 17th century found an ‘open’ landscape.” (Capace 2001)

“In the mid-1600s, the Europeans began to settle on Martha's Vineyard and began associating with the Wampanoag. As the Europeans learned from the Wampanoag practices, various intensities and frequencies of burning continued to spread across the island throughout the European settlement period.” (Capace 2001)

As various forms, frequencies, and intensities of burning, clearing, grazing, and mowing were practiced by the Wampanoag and the colonists on Martha's Vineyard; they were the driving forces in determining habitat structure and composition. Today, we use such disturbances as tools to restore and maintain Wasque's rare habitats. (Capace 2001)

“These fires aided in creating savannas and open woodlands where grasslands and forests met. As these surface fires killed aboveground vegetation and reduced surface organic matter, a diversity of grasses, shrubs, and herbs were able to persist on Martha's Vineyard.” (Capace 2001)

“These fires had a massive influence on the landscape, drastically altering structure and species composition.” (Capace 2001)

“Coastal heathlands and grasslands are able to remain open naturally because the plant species found in these habitats are tolerant to salt spray from the ocean, which typically kills most other plant species.” (Capace 2001)

"Such authorities as Professor Shaler and the Rev. Hebron Vincent agreed that this island was once covered with pine trees. A Vineyard Haven man who is himself 80 years of age remembers to have heard his grandmother tell of gathering pine knots when a girl in the fields about these head waters, indicating the former existence of extensive pine forests." (Hine 1908)

Pre-European there were “several thousand aborigines.”

“There were large, open spaces, overgrown with grass and planting fields which they [Indians] had cultivated for centuries.”

Quotes Wm Wood & Morton on burning

“We can readily believe their [Wm. Wood and Morton] statements that on the coming of English to this coast there were open fields covered with grass.”

Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

Agricultural and Colonial History Informing Management

“Following the cessation of the agricultural era, Wasque Reservation fell victim to the threats of ecological succession. Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*) and oaks (*Quercus spp.*) Quickly invaded the heathland/grassland complex at Wasque. In high numbers and densities, these trees stifle rare plants and create habitats unsuitable for rare animal species. As fragmentation increases, species that require a more open structure are threatened.” (Capace 2001)

Chapter 3 of Acts of 1714: “... the harbor of Cape Cod... is in danger of being damnified, if not made wholly unserviceable, by destroying the trees standing on the said cape (if not timely prevented), the trees and bushes being of great service to keep the sand from being driven into the harbor by the wind. Be it enacted.” (Hollick 1893)

1740 “ An Act to prevent damage being done to the harbor of Cape Cod by cattle and horse-kind feeding on Provincetown ‘land.’” (Hollick 1893)

“Sheep and cattle grazed in large numbers over the hills.”

Norton, H. F. 1923. *Martha's Vineyard: History, Legends, Stories*, Henry Franklin Norton and Robert Emmett Pyne, Publishers.

“The same Pohoganot fields that have been pastured since the 18th century are now kept open by periodic mowing.” (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

South Shore: “These fields we are look across are down on the map of 1782, before referred to, as ‘the best mowing grounds in the island, yielding four tones of black grass per acre.’”Hine, C. G. 1908.

Chilmark Pond vista: "A foreground of pasture lands dotted with sheep and occasional homes, with here and there a well or some other homely suggestion off in a field by itself. Beyond are the quiet waters of the pond...." (Hine 1908)

N. S. Shaler 1874. "Martha's Vineyard gives a rich soil, beautiful drives, brooks and woods, features denied to its bleaker sister to the east." Hine, C. G. 1908. *The Story of Martha's Vineyard, Hine Bros.*, New York, NY.(also see: Shaler, N. S. 1874. Martha's Vineyard. *Atlantic Monthly*, 34, 732-740, below.)

"In plowing, this protective covering [of vegetation and humus] is broken up and destroyed; hence very thin soils frequently do well in timber when they will make no return to tillage. This generally untillable area [the terrace drift or plain] of Martha's Vineyard has an extent of about thirty-three thousands acres. At present about twenty-five thousand acres of this area is covered by low, scrubby woods, principally composed of varieties of small oaks; the remainder consists of abandoned fields which are slowly returning to the condition of forest. Frequent fires sweep over the district, destroying the parts of the trees which are above ground, but not injuring the roots, from which a tangle of stems quickly springs up. Originally this region was heavily wooded, mainly with coniferous trees, the present prevalence of the deciduous species are due to the peculiar endurance of their roots in the fires, a capacity which does not exist in the conifers.

The greater part of this land is not at present valued at more than \$2 per acre and much of it could probably be bought for a less price. It is all near the sea, and therefore its timber product would be readily accessible to market. The timber trees best suited to this soil have yet to be determined, but it seems to me from an inspection of the existing trees on the island that, in the several parts of this field, suitable localities can be found for larches, catalpas, ailanthus, white ash, white oak, hickory and black locust, all excepting the white oak, trees of tolerably rapid growth and all of much commercial value." (Shaler 1888)

"This woodland is the growth which has sprung up since the pine forests, which originally covered nearly the whole Island, were swept away by the ax. Now a pine is a rare object; we may ride ten miles without seeing a specimen. But in the mysterious succession of the forest, there has come an amazing variety of oaks. The trees are all young; in most cases, from the saddle ...the eye ranges above their tops for miles over a billowy sea of deepest green. The shape of the leaves vary in a confounding fashion...The extent and unbroken character of the forest is amazing; in one direction we may journey through the woods for ten miles without a trace of habitation or culture. Through it runs a maze of paths made before the rich foliage could bar the way. The oaks seem to disdain to grow wherever a wheel has run, so the disused wood roads remain unencumbered..." (Shaler 1888)

1874 "agriculture here is in decay...One never sees a field newly won from the forest, while on every side are signs of the gain of the woods on the fields. There are many deserted houses...[The plains] along the south shore...were once cleared and cultivated but now the fences are falling away and...a few sheep...are all that mark the presence of man." (Shaler 1888)

"Oaks, great and small, are the principal constituents of our forests, and the great plain land is a dense jungle of the 'scrub oak' which thrives despite repeated devastating fires covering large areas." Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

"The evergreen trees, pines, firs, spruce, have scattered growth still on the island, but their early extent is problematical." Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

Shaler: "Originally this region was heavily wooded, mainly with coniferous trees, the present prevalence of the deciduous species being due to the peculiar endurance of their roots in the fires, a capacity which does not exist in the conifers."

Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

The Heath Hen: "A cock, hen and their young may frequently be seen from the state highway in that town."

Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

"It is a fair presumption that the Vineyard presented a general aspect of fresh verdure to the explorers, for its virgin soil had not been exhausted by the improvident whites, nor its groves of beeches, cedars, and firs denuded to provide tribute for hundreds of wasteful fireplaces, where ancestral shins were toasted and 'all outdoors' heated through chimney flues large enough to exhaust a brickyard."

Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

"The hills and meads of the island were clad in a rich covering of evergreen that is now all gone, and its place taken by the walnut and hickory and the endless prospect of dwarf oaks that now struggle for a parched existence on the great plains of Tisbury and Edgartown."

Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

January 20, 1777. General Court "The removal of stock & c to the main-land is recommended."

March 29, 1777. "Resolved: that it be and hereby is recommended to the inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard to send off said Island as many of their cattle as are not absolutely necessary for their present and immediate support, that they may be in a better capacity to retreat from the enemy, if they should be attacked by a force they are not able to oppose."

Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

"Several miles of 'ragged plain' separated West Tisbury, Holmes Hole [Vineyard Haven] and North Tisbury...." "Sheep and cattle grazed in large numbers over the hills."

Banks, C. E. 1911. *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, Boston, MA.

"Once the Great Plain had been wooded with conifers, but it had been cut and burned over, so that even a hundred years ago it supported a scraggly growth of scrub oak, not much larger than brush. Here and there a deformed pine or blasted oak of larger size stood above the scrub, roosting place for hawks, eagles or crows. On the Great Plain the sweet fern grew, wild flowers in profusion, and, especially after a spring fire, blueberries and huckleberries of large size and succulence!"

describes Bottoms as great depressions—no mention of temperature.

Hough, H. B. 1936. *Martha's Vineyard Summer Resort 1835-1933*.

farmers counted on sea for fish, shellfish, seaweed "And the great flocks of sheep which ranged the Chilmark and Tisbury hills (there were at one time fifteen thousand sheep on the Island) ate of grass and herbage which had been sprinkled with salt spray..."

Hough, H. B. 1936. *Martha's Vineyard Summer Resort 1835-1933*.

Chapter 3 of Acts of 1714 "...the harbor of Cape Cod... is in danger of being damnified, if not made wholly unserviceable, by destroying the trees standing on the said cape (if not timely prevented), the trees and bushes being of great service to keep the sand from being driven into the harbor by the wind. Be it enacted." Hough, H. B. 1936. *Martha's Vineyard Summer Resort 1835-1933*.

1790 "An Act to prevent damage being done to the harbor of Cape Cod by cattle and horse-kind feeding on Provincetown land." Hough, H. B. 1936. *Martha's Vineyard Summer Resort 1835-1933*.

Below – all from Freeman 1807

Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1815. Volume III of the Second series. Boston, John Eliot, 1815, Source= Rev. James Freeman (1807). At State House Library 906 M41 CSC2, Vol. 3A.

"None of the swamps in Chilmark are large. Several of them have been cleared, and converted into fresh meadows; but the greatest part of them are filled with bushes and small trees. Some of them have springs of good water, a few of which give rise to brooks; and others of them contain peat; which, as wood has grown scarce, begins to be much used."

"The soil of Edgartown is not as good as that of Tisbury and Chilmark: it is sandy and dry, but not unfavourable to the growth of corn. The soil of Tisbury is in general a heavy, gravelly loam; a portion of it is sandy, and a smaller portion inclining to clay. More than one half of these two townships is covered with shrub oak and bitter oak, is of little or no value, and is not enclosed."

"The land is generally horse-hoed with a harrow, not with a plough. Garden vegetables and potatoes are raised sufficient for the consumption of the inhabitants. The land is manured for potatoes; and the produce is forty or fifty bushels to an acre. Seaweed has of late been much used: it is laid on the potatoes, and covered with earth. The land is made to yield great quantities of pumpkins, which are green, thick shelled, and of a good taste."

There is more grass land in Chilmark than in the other two townships. Upland English mowing, in this place, yields about eighteen hundred to an acre; the salt marsh, a ton; and the black grass marsh, a ton and a half. This black grass is frequently overflowed by the water of the ponds, which it surrounds, and much injured. For the sake of drawing off the water, a passage from them into the sea is opened during the summer; but it is liable to be shut again with the first southerly gale. Another kind of grass, called creek stuff, grows on the borders of the ponds, and the greatest part of it in the water. It is a coarse sedge, and is worth about one third of English hay. --In Tisbury there are no upland English meadows, except those which are made by manure: they are of small extent, and produce about a ton to an acre. Bordering on the small rivers and brooks, which run into Newtown Pond, there are about seventy or eighty acres of fresh meadow, which affords hay of a better quality than common fresh meadow hay: the produce is about a ton and an half to an acre. There is very little salt marsh, creek stuff, or black grass, within the limits of the township. --In Edgartown there are about a hundred and forty acres of English mowing land; a hundred and thirty, of fresh meadow; and a hundred and seventy of salt marsh. Very little of the English mowing land deserves the name, the greatest part of it being strips of land on the borders of the salt marsh, between it and the upland. It produces a fine grass, resembling spear-grass, and from a ton to a ton and a half to an acre. The proper English upland mowing ground yields about fifteen hundred to an acre. The fresh meadow is on the borders of the ponds, is of a good quality, and produces about a ton to an acre. The salt marsh yields not more than a ton to an acre; and much of it, not more than five hundred: the grass is short sedge, and is of a good quality. Some of the marshes of late have produced black grass, and yield a great burden. --The best hay of the island is of an excellent quality; and affords more nutriment, than hay which grows at a greater distance from the sea. --Not much butter and cheese are made in Edgartown and Tisbury: in Chilmark there is a greater quantity; but of the former, not more than two thirds; and of the latter, not more than one quarter, sufficient for the consumption of the inhabitants."

"Very little wood land is left in Edgartown and Chilmark: in Tisbury there is more than in both the other townships, about two thirds of the whole island. The trees are principally of white and black oak, and are about thirty feet high: few exceed fifty feet. In Chilmark there is not half fewel enough of wood for the consumption of the inhabitants; and in Edgartown the greatest part of the fire wood which is used is

brought from other places, chiefly from Buzzard's Bay, Waquoit, and Coxit: the price of a cord is five or six dollars."

"All the houses are within a mile or two of the sea coast: the internal parts of the island will probably always remain without inhabitants. --where the land is enclosed, it is in the eastern part entirely fenced with posts and rails, which are chiefly brought from Buzzard's Bay. As many spots however are not worth enclosing, and are destitute of water, they are left in common. In the western part of the island, the land in general is fenced with stone walls. The stones are large, flat pieces of granite, and can be laid in such a manner, as to admit spaces between them; by which labour is saved.

Beside domestick animals, the quadrupeds which are found on Martha's Vineyard are these which follow: the skunk; the musquash; the mink; four or five species of ground mice; the mole; the rabbit: four or five otters have been killed during the past ten years, and are supposed to have swum from the Elizabeth Islands across the Sound. There are no deer, foxes, nor squirrels."

"On Martha's Vineyard, including those on Chappaquiddick, the horses and colts have been estimated at four hundred; the neat cattle, one year old and upwards, at twenty-eight hundred; and the swine, at eight hundred. Six hundred animals of the beef kind, part of which is sent to market, some of it to Nantucket, are perhaps killed every year. Many goats were formerly kept on the island; but they were of little profit to their owners, and have been greatly injurious to the present generation, by preventing the growth of trees on that vast plain of bitter oaks, which lies between Edgartown and Tisbury. These mischievous animals are still to be found in the same places, but their number is unknown. Of the number of sheep there are different estimates. One man raises it as high as twenty thousand; another supposes it to be half that number; whilst another says, that it does not exceed nine thousand,"

"The sheep, one with another yield a pound and a half of wool annually: there must be then fifteen thousand six hundred sheep."

"The sheep run at large during the whole year, chiefly on the commons: ...

"Next in importance to the manufacture of wool is that of salt. There are in Edgartown three sets of salt works, containing twenty-seven hundred feet; and in Tisbury, five sets, containing eight thousand nine hundred feet. This manufacture is increasing; and probably in three or, four years there will be more than double the present number of feet."

"The land [Chappaquiddick Island] is sandy, but is of a better quality, and has not been so much worn as the opposite land in Edgartown. There are about fifty acres of wood: the trees are white and black oak, and are from ten to fifteen feet in height. There are three hundred acres of shrub oak. The east and north parts are level; but the west part of the island rises into hills sixty feet high:..."

Below - Shaler, N. S. 1874. Martha's Vineyard. *Atlantic Monthly*, 34, 732-740.

"It is worth while to journey, to learn how deceptive is that mirage which forms itself out of distance and nothingness; how good is the land about us, and the life that requires no translation to be understood."

"If we look upon our country and its people in this way, we shall find that every nook and cranny will pay for ransacking, for it will give to those who search it in this spirit a mass of curious things, quite as rich as those we could bring to light out of the darkest corner of Europe, and far more comprehensible."

"...there is always a cloud of sails along the horizon, marking the course of the shipping from Europe to all our ports south of Boston, and in the nearer distance shoals of fishermen and yachts vie with the gulls in their effort to vary the sober beauty of the sunlit water."

“All the plain is wrapped in a dense mantle of forest and grass, for, unlike most land that faces the sea, Martha's Vineyard retains its foliage, despite the ruthless fashion in which man has repeatedly swept the forests away.”

“A break in the land brings into view the deeply embayed haven of Holmes's Hole, one of the famous refuge harbors of our coast.”

"Huddled together so close that abuse and badinage can be plentifully exchanged by the crews, lie the motley throng: lumber ships from Maine, their decks piled high above the bulwarks with the yellow, fragrant spoils of the pine woods; colliers from Nova Scotia with voluble Frenchmen for crew, Frenchmen still in every word and feature though their ancestry is as long on our soil as the Yankee; coal ships from Philadelphia, manned with the typical tobacco-stained, taciturn American sailor. Along with these, a herd of vessels engaged in interminable and seemingly objectless wandering up and down the seas in search of hard-earned gains. Here and there trim, dandified yachts bring their white paint and polished brass into glaring contrast with the grime of utilitarian trade.”

“The trim little boxes of the sea-faring class will soon be overshadowed and blighted by the ambitious houses of the summer visitors, who have just begun to find out the attractions of this shore.”

“...the low shore of the eastern end of the island, whose interminable sand—its barrenness scarcely veiled by a thin copse of scrubby oaks—is engaged in a give-and-take struggle with the sea.”

“The old, old houses, once strong, now worn thin by the beat of the weather, the crazy out-buildings and fences, with two old, weather-worn people, form the sad homes on many of the little farms. Passing one of these as a storm was coming, we saw a painful scene.”

“So between the inefficiency of the old, and the lack of interest in the few youth who remain, an admirable soil continues to be entirely neglected. There are here at least fifty thousand acres of soil of a good quick quality, able to take place with the sandy loams of Belgium or the garden region of New Jersey, which have never been turned by the plow. This land, when in the rare cases of sales it has had a value set upon it, has brought of late years less than the price of government lands in Utah or Arizona.”

“There is an indescribable loneliness in this rugged land, with its sullen, helpless struggle against the sea.”

“In a commercial sense it is a place far advanced in decay: of all its whale-ships, which got from the sea the hard-earned fortunes of its people, there is but one left.”

"As soon as a mariner comes to fortune his first effort is to get a comfortable home, a big, square, roomy house, which shall always be ship-shape and well painted. I never thought so well of white paint before I saw these handsome houses, actually resplendent with a hue which is so often merely garish in such uses.”

“...Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard. Of these, the latter is very much the better, as it gives a rich soil, beautiful drives, brooks, and woods, features denied to its bleaker sister to the east.

Shaler, N. S. 1874. Martha's Vineyard. *Atlantic Monthly*, 34, 732-740.

(also see: Hine, C. G. 1908. *The Story of Martha's Vineyard*, Hine Bros., New York, NY above)

Shaler and Seven Gates

“There is always a cloud of sails along the horizon, marking the course of the shipping from Europe to all our ports south of Boston, and in the near distance shoals of fishermen and yachts vie with the gulls in their effort to vary the sober beauty of the sunlit water.”

Bramhall, Elizabeth 1988. *Seven Gates Farm: The first one hundred years*. Vineyard Haven, MA.

“.....Yet agriculture here, as elsewhere in Massachusetts, is in decay. One never sees a field newly won from the forest, while on every side are signs of the gain of the woods on the fields. There are many deserted houses and every little while there is a little pile of crumbling brick, or an old well.... The fields were once cultivated, but now the fences are falling away and a few sheep that browse on them are all there is to mark the presence of man.”

Bramhall, Elizabeth 1988. *Seven Gates Farm: The first one hundred years*. Vineyard Haven, MA.

“Shaler developed the Harvard Summer School for several summers the engineering class of Lawrence Scientific School, a department of Harvard, camped on his grounds and made use of them for practice in their work.” Bramhall, Elizabeth 1988. *Seven Gates Farm: The first one hundred years*. Vineyard Haven, MA. Page 23.

“Joseph Chase Allen reports on the summer school in a *Vineyard Gazette* of 1951:

It was an extraordinary thing, it was something that had never before occurred in the up-island hills. It brought strangers, many strangers into a locality where strangers were extremely rare in those days. Harvard camp was located in the Chilmark end of Seven Gates Farm. The camp was reached by a tortuous road, single-track for almost its entire length extending from North Road around hills and past swamps, through woods and eventually emerging in the clearing, next to Vineyard Sound. Local farmers brought milk, vegetables, eggs and lambs, and the meadows were filled with white tents, arranged in orderly rows, many of them topped with tiny crimson flags bearing the letter H. Sometimes baseball games were placed between the Harvard men and a Vineyard Haven nine and there were amateur theatricals in West Tisbury’s Agricultural Hall.”

Bramhall, Elizabeth 1988. *Seven Gates Farm: The first one hundred years*. Vineyard Haven, MA.

“ All along the road from the town of West Tisbury to the Menemsha Bight stand empty farm houses in the midst of over-grown fields. Here a little cottage clings to the precipitous hillside, big houses stand in valleys, all with paneless windows and shattered chimneys. Wild stuff is creeping over once cultivated fields.... The call of the city has depopulated once prosperous farming communities.....”

Bramhall, Elizabeth 1988. *Seven Gates Farm: The first one hundred years*. Vineyard Haven, MA.

Moby Dick – Herman Melville Citations

“Nothing will content them but the extremist limit of land... They must get just as nigh the water as they possibly can without falling in... There is magic in it... Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and own brother of Jove? Surely all this is not without meaning. And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.” *Chapter 1*

Yet, Nantucket was her great original – the Tyre of this Carthage;-- the place where the first dead American whale was stranded. Where else but from Nantucket, too, did those aboriginal whalers, the Red-Men, first sally out in canoes to give chase to the Leviathan?" *Chapter 2*

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by Massachusetts. Geological Survey, Edward Hitchcock - [Nature](#) - 1835 - 702

Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

If the traveller wishes to enjoy more of the peculiar scenery of Cape Cod, with some interesting variations, let him pass over to Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. The former island he will find to be an extended plain, 15 miles in its longest direction, and but slightly elevated above the ocean ; containing not one tree, nor a shrub of much size, except in the immediate vicinity of the village. Scarcely a dwelling will meet his eye, except a few uninhabited huts, scattered along the desolate shore, as a refuge to the shipwrecked sailor. Yet from 12000 to 14000 sheep, and 500 cows find nourishment on this island ; and in not a few places, especially in the immediate vicinity of the town, may be seen tracts of land of superior fertility. It will strike the traveller at once, as an interesting monument of industry, that nearly every part of the dwellings, stores, fee. for the accommodation of more than 7000 inhabitants, must have been transported from the Continent. And on acquaintance, he will find that they still retain the characteristics of industry and hospitality, for which they have long been known ; and that the usual concomitants of these virtues, general intelligence and strong local attachments, are not wanting.

Gay Head.

The most interesting spot on Martha's Vineyard is Gay Head ; which constitutes the western extremity of this island, and consists of clays and sands of various colors. Its height cannot be more than 150 feet; yet its variegated aspect, and the richness of its colors, render it a striking and even splendid object, when seen from the ocean. The clays are red, blue and white; the sands, white and yellow ; and the lignite, black; and each of these substances is abundant enough to be seen several miles distant, arranged in general in inclined strata; though from being unequally worn away, apparently mixed without much order. The top of the cliff is crowned by a light house, which commands an extensive prospect. Scarcely a tree is to be seen on this part of the island. It is owned and inhabited by the descendants of the Indian tribes, that once possessed the whole island. It will be seen in the subsequent part of my Report, that this spot possesses peculiar attractions for the geologist and mineralogist. During my last visit to the spot, three days were fully occupied in interesting researches.

Quote from: Benninghoff, W. S. 1948. The late quaternary vegetation of No Mans Land, off Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, Doctorial Dissertation, Harvard University.

“The first I/sland called/ Marthaes Vine/yard.”* See discussion below concerning confusion of names.), which was about three or foure leagues from the *maine*, captaine *Gosnold*, *my selfe*, and some others, went ashore, & going round about it, we found it to be foure English *miles in compasse* (No *Mans Land has four* and one-quarter miles of shoreline; Martha’s Vineyard is approximately 60 miles *in circuit*), without house *or* inhabitant, sauing a little old house made of boughes, covered with *barke*, *an olde piece of a weare* of the Indians, to catch fish, and one or two places, where they had made fires. The *chiefest trees of this island are Beeches and Cedars*; the outward parts all ouergrown with lowe bushie trees, three *or foure* foot in height, which beare some *kinde* of fruits, as appeared by their blossoms; Strawberries, red *and white*, as *sweet and much bigger than ours* in England, Rasberries, Gooseberries, Hurtleberies (huckleberries), *and such*; *an incredible store of Vines*, as *well in the woodie part of the Island*, where they run upon every tree, as on the outward parts, that we could not *goe* for treading upon *them*: also, many springs of excellent sweet water, *and a great standing lake of fresh water*, *neere* the sea side, an English mile in compasse, which is maintained with the springs *running* exceedingly pleasantly thorow the woodie grounds which are very rockie. Here also in this Island, great store of Deere, which

we saw, *and* other beasts, as appeared by their tracks; as also diuers fowles, as Cranes, Hernshawes, *Bitters*, *Geese* Mallards, Teales, *and* other fowles, *in great* plenty; also, great store of Pease which grow in certeine plots all the island ouer. On the *North side* of *this* Island *we found* many huge bones and ribbes of Whales....

* *Photographically reproduced in Banks, 1911. pg. 79.*