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Painting by Chas. Hubbard circa 1840s. Reproduced with permission of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian.

Cape Poge Light

PART I

By Arthur R. Railton

A four part story of the Cape Poge Light Station will appear in the next four issues of the Log.

From its establishment in 1801, and continuing up to the present, the history of the Cape Poge station reflects almost the entire history of the American lighthouse service, which was established in 1789. The trials and tribulations of the keepers and their families, logistical problems, low pay, changing technology and a niggardly service are all reflected in the story of the Cape Poge Lightstation.

The series is reprinted from the Dukes County Historical Society's quarterly magazine, *Intelligencer* with permission from Arthur R. Railton.

Remote and Lonely

Standing on the extreme northeastern tip of Chappaquiddick island, Cape Poge Lighthouse, even today, is remote and isolated. In 1801, when the first keeper, Matthew Mayhew, and his family moved into the tiny dwelling provided by a parsimonious Department of the Treasury, it must havè seemed as isolated as a frontier outpost. Their enemy was not the "Savage," but the savage sea.

Keeper Mayhew felt so insecure that even a quarter of a century later, in 1825, he wrote to Henry Dearborn, Superintendent of Light Houses for Massachusetts:

". . . it is my opinion that it would be expedient for the dwelling house to be moved the present Summer. If we are not in danger of falling immediately down the clift, it is very unpleasant, particular to females (Keeper Mayhew knew well how storms affected "females," as living with him, besides his wife, were five daughters), to be thus situated in storms when the Sea is beating with such violence as for the spray to fly against and over the House and no other dwelling house within 5 miles for a refuge . . ."

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The history of Cape Poge Light is a story of human courage, independence and dedication. It is the story of a penny-pinching government agency that seemed almost heartless in its attitude, an agency that showed little understanding of the problems faced by keepers, as at Cape Poge, who lived in remote stations, miles from their closest neighbors.

Even a century later, in 1921, the isolation at Cape Poge continued to bother keepers. By that time it had been made a two-man station, but in an economy move the government was planning to cut it back to a single keeper. Henry L. Thomas, head keeper then, was concerned about losing his assistant and sought the assurance of the government that he would be able to get help in an emergency. Frank J. Morse of the Light House Service wrote to Thomas, making it sound very simple:

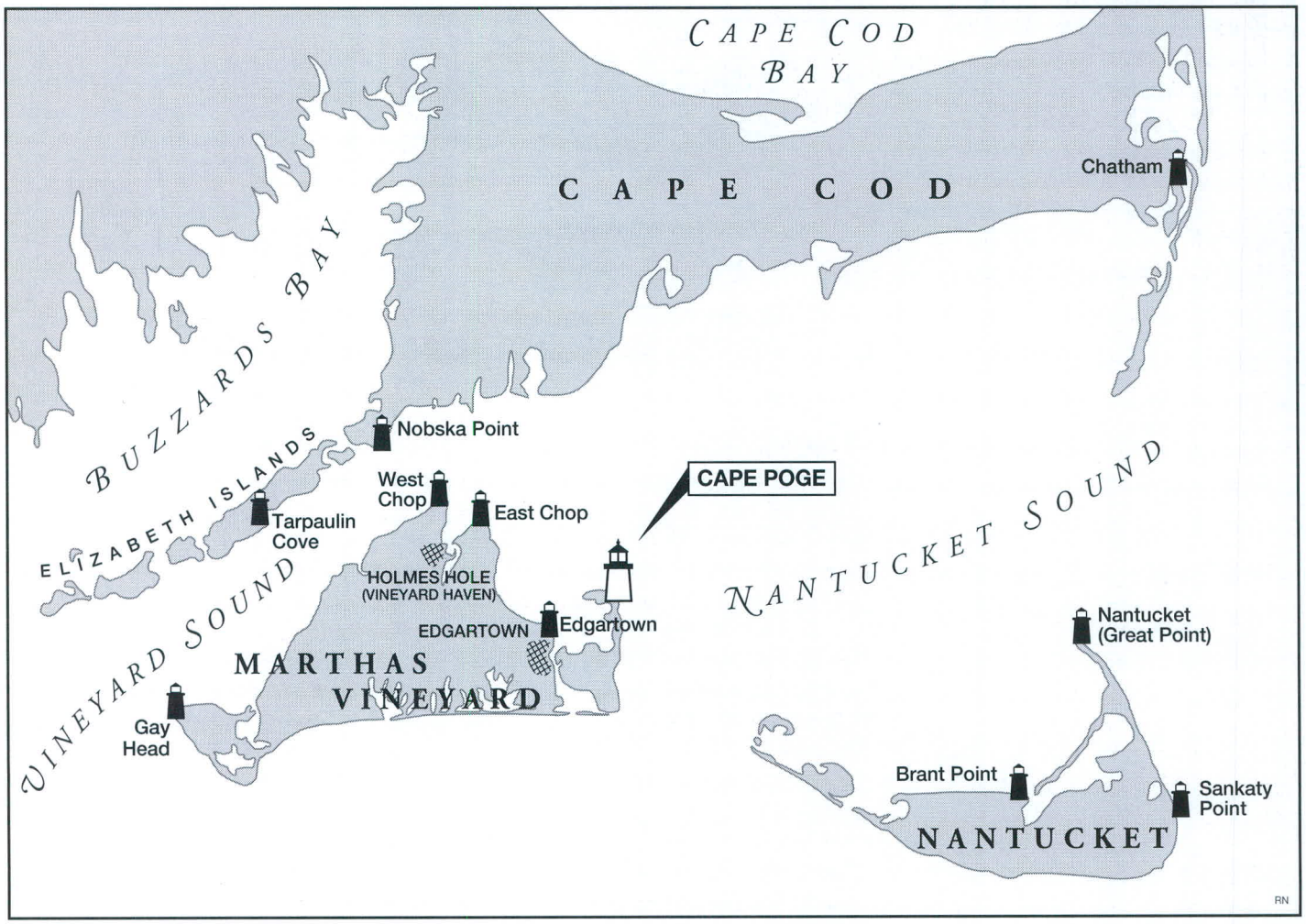
> "Relative to sickness: I do not think you need fear any trouble on that score, for a flag set union down should bring you help within the hours of daylight."

That primitive call for help, a flag hoisted upside down, was still, even as late as 1921, the most expeditious means the keeper had of summoning aid in an emergency.

Cape Poge Light became the Island's second lighthouse after Congress, on January 30, 1801, appropriated $2000 for the construction of a lighthouse and dwelling on the tip of Chappaquiddick. That was about two years after Gay Head Light had begun operation. The measure was backed by commercial interests in nearby Edgartown, anxious to attract some of the coastal shipping that was filling Holmes Hole harbor. A letter appeared in a Boston newspaper, the *New England Palladium*, echoing local sentiment. The unnamed letter writer, and Edgartown "Customer," quoted Capt. James Brackett, Jr., about the Cape Poge lighthouse proposal:

> "I had the honour [the Captain wrote] of being consulted by the Hon. B. Lincoln, Esq., respecting the building of a Light House on Cape Poge. From the wrong representation of Old Town Harbour that had been made to me, I was inclined to object against building the Light. I was never inclined to go into the harbour till a few days past. I was piloted by Mr. Fisher; and I must confess, I was very agreeably disapointed, finding it a harbour secure against all winds, and particularly useful for vessels bound to the eastward. I am certain it will meet the approbation of masters, as well as merchants, and owners of vessels, as it will save great expense of cables, anchors, etc., which necessarily attends them in Holmes Hole."

On March 6, 1801, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ceded to the United States four acres on Cape Poge's



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tip that it had bought from John Worth, Marshall Jenkins, Martin Pease and Joseph Huxford for $36 for the "purpose of erecting a Light House on the same." The Rev. Joseph Thaxter, "Parson" Thaxter in history, was the Commonwealth's agent in the transaction (before entering the clergy, Thaxter had been active in politics in his home town of Hingham, Mass., [also Lincoln's home town] and they probably were friends. They both served in Washington's Army. It is likely that Lincoln, being told to build a lighthouse on Martha's Vineyard, would have asked his old friend for help).

The Federal agency that accepted the land and that was responsible for the fledgling lighthouse establishment was the Treasury Department, which, as the sole collector of customs duties, was quite familiar with coastal shipping. The Commissioner of Revenue in the Treasury Department, William Miller, ordered Benjamin Lincoln, Collector of Customs in Boston, on March 21, 1801, to proceed with the project, explaining:

> ". . . because the [total] Expenditure for completing the Establishment cannot exceed 2000 dollars, it will, I presume, be impracticable to obtain any other than a substantial frame Pyramid with appendages which are necessary for preserving the oil and accommodating the keeper."

Lincoln, a retired Revolutionary War General, agreed that the project had to be kept inexpensive:

> "Limited as you are by the sum of $2000, the works must be so reduced as not to exceed in expense that sum . . . a good framed octagonal Pyramid, 35 feet high, 19 feet base, 7 feet at top . . . well covered with boards and shingles and a dwelling house 15 feet wide and 32 feet long with a cellar 10 by 13 feet, will be sufficient. . ."

Commissioner Miller, in July, approved the proposal for the Treasury Department and ordered General Lincoln to

> ". . . give your friend at Martha's Vineyard instructions to have the preparatory arrangements which were submitted in my former letter immediately attended to . . . the season having advanced very far."

The "preparatory arrangements" included the publication of advertisements calling for bids to construct the lighthouse and keeper's dwelling. The *Columbian Centinel*, a Boston newspaper (and other papers, no doubt) on August 15, 1801, published the complete specifications, with construction to be completed by November 15, 1801.

Apparently there already was a light of sorts on Cape Poge, although we know of no other reference to it except in these specifications. In the description of the keeper's dwelling, a one-story frame building, the specifications as published stated that it was to be

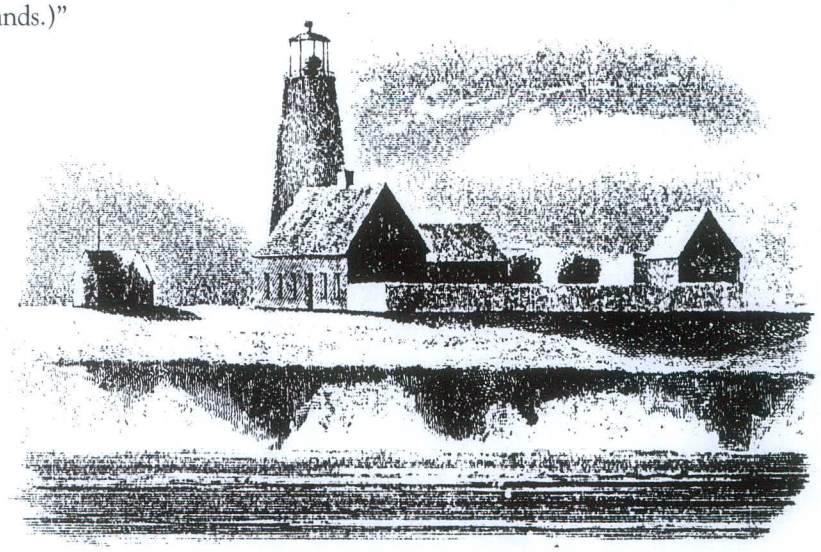
> ". . . placed within about 60 or 70 feet of the Light-house (which is to be erected where the beacon now stands.)"

The lowest bidder for the project was a Hingham contractor, Duncan McBean Thaxter, who was awarded the contract for $1950. The contract apparently contained an error in one specification, as Lincoln informed Miller that

> ". . . the lantern is [not] to be six feet diameter, it should have been 4½ feet. . ."

With the contractor's bid of $1950, plus the land cost of $36, the total came to $1986, leaving not enough to pay the commission that General Lincoln had coming to him. He must have complained to Miller about it because in December he was authorized to take his commission from another account (collectors got a percentage of monies spent, amounting to about 2 percent).

Below—Drawing of Cape Poge Light Station from an 1859 U.S. Coast Survey chart.



Telescopic View of Cape Poge Lt. S.W.¼ W. (Compass)

We have found no record of who had built the "beacon" or who tended it, but obviously one was there, thus Cape Poge may have had the Island's first "lighthouse," predating Gay Head. perhaps, as at Tarpaulin Cove on Naushon island, the Nantucket shipping interests had erected and provided oil for the beacon to guide their vessels through the shoals. A light at Cape Poge would be as useful to vessels heading to a from Nantucket, especially to those coming up from the south, as to those entering Edgartown, indicating that political pressure on Congress may have come from Nantucket as well as from Edgartown.

On November 23, 1801, Commissioner Miller notified the Secretary of the Treasury that the Cape Poge Light was completed and a keeper must be appointed. General Lincoln had proposed Cornelius Huxford and Miller so informed the Secretary. He was a brother of Joseph Huxford, one of the sellers of the land (Joseph and another brother, Samuel, were Revolutionary War soldiers, a fact that perhaps influenced General Lincoln's choice). It is not known what happened, but on December 7, Miller informed General Lincoln that President Jefferson had turned down his recommendation and had appointed

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Matthew Mayhew keeper at a salary of $200 a year. Lincoln was told to send oil to Edgartown so that the light "may be lighted immediately."

We don't know on precisely which night Cape Poge Light was first lighted, but it was sometime late in December 1801. Just as at Gay Head, confusion soon arose over the chain of command. Keeper Mayhew wrote to Collector Edward Pope in New Bedford requesting certain supplies for the lighthouse, that city being the place from which Vineyarders usually got their supplies. Pope, anxious to enlarge his domain (and thus his commissions), sent Mayhew's request along to Miller in Washington, but the Commissioner quickly straightened him out:

> "Benjamin Lincoln is over Cape Poge, not you, and the letter from Edward (sic) Mayhew asking you for supplies is wrong. It should go to B. Lincoln."



Although no photo of the original Cape Poge keeper's dwelling survives, it probably resembled the original Marshall Point keeper's house in Maine (above). Photo courtesy of the Marshall Point Historical Society.

General Benjamin Lincoln, an old army buddy of George Washington, had considerable political clout. When he retired from the army, he had been appointed Collector of Customs in Boston by his friend, George. Being at a major port, the Boston Customs Collector was among the highest paid Federal employees. Even after Jefferson became president, Lincoln managed to stay on, despite his strong opposition to Jefferson's party.

It could very well have been politics that gave the keeper's post to Matthew Mayhew rather than to Cornelius Huxford, General Lincoln's choice. Jefferson was very unpopular along the sea coast and especially in Massachusetts; he may have been trying to build his standing with the influential Mayhews.

Whatever the reason, Mayhew got the job on the isolated, windswept spot. It was a long way to town by land so within a year he asked that the government provide him with a boat so he could sail to Edgartown for mail and supplies rather than make the long walk along the beach. His request was approved on November 3, 1802, provided the boat could be purchased for under $70.

Jefferson's Secretary of Treasury, Albert Gallatin, began in 1804 to take increased interest in the lighthouse established, being at that time run by his Commissioner of Revenue, William Miller. Keepers were complaining about the low wages and the Secretary seemed to suspect that the system was not fair:

> "The size of the Light House [Gallatin wrote to General Lincoln] has generally been considered the principal criterion, but . . . the degree of comfort, convenience, and sometimes incidental profit arising from the situation; or the reverse of all those [should be considered]."

Keeper Mayhew, at inconvenient, remote, uncomfortable Cape Poge, was surely entitled to a raise, if such criteria were used. He did have, to use Gallatin's words, a small source of "incidental profit arising from the situation." But it was causing a problem for him as he wrote to the Secretary:

> "I presume it is supposed that the Keeper of the Light House should reap some profit from the land belonging to the public. In its present situation, I derive little profit from it. It would yield some profit if it was fenced. The place where it stands is sandy. The sheep and cattle that come round it for shade keep the sand loose and the high winds which are frequent and continually blowing away the sand [so] that in a short time it will endanger the foundations of the house. Believing it to be for the public interest as well as some profit to me, I wish if it should be judged best, that the land may be fenced. This is the only thing that will keep the sheep and cattle from undermining the foundation of the house. . ."

Keeper Mayhew estimated the cost of the fence to be $50 and he had the letter countersigned by a prestigious group: Jeremiah Pease, Collector of Customs; Thomas Cooke, Justice of the Peace; Beriah Norton, J.P.; William Mayhew, J.P.; and Joseph Thaxter, the "Parson."

He got his fence, but it took more than three years, not being approved until 1808.

Whether it was Gallatin's interest in wages that prompted it we don't know, but Keeper Mayhew did get a raise in January 1807:

> ". . . You are hereby authorized [Gallatin wrote to Lincoln] to allow an addition of $15 to the salaries of each of the keepers of Portland, Cape Cod and Cape Poge Light Houses. . ."

The act of governmental generosity brought Keeper Mayhew's annual salary up to $225, or $4.33 a week, housing provided. For that he worked a 24 hour day, seven days a week, with no vacation.

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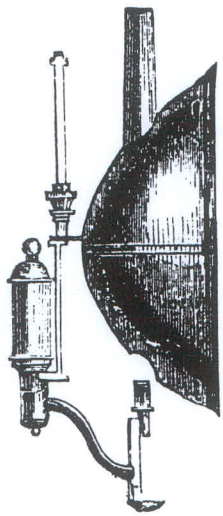
By 1809, General Lincoln had resigned and Henry Dearborn was Collector of Customs in Boston. Dearborn took a very active interest in the lighthouses under his supervision and soon became a major influence on the government's actions. Early in his term he wrote to the various keepers, asking for specifications of their beacons; such data apparently was not readily available in his files. Keeper Mayhew's response from Cape Poge on May 14, 1809, gives us the first information about the kind of lamp in the tower. (Keeper Mayhew is a poor speller. Some of his letters obviously were written by someone else because the spelling is excellent. This one is obviously his.):

> ". . . The haith of the Lantern is 5 feet 7 inches, wedth of Lantern is 4 feet 6 inches, as to the lamps, I use but one which is 12 inches broad and 6½ inches deep with eight nosses. . .
>
> ". . . I take the liberty of mentioning that I stand in grate need of a half bolt of Duck for a sail as I have about five miles to go to get my necessary supplies."

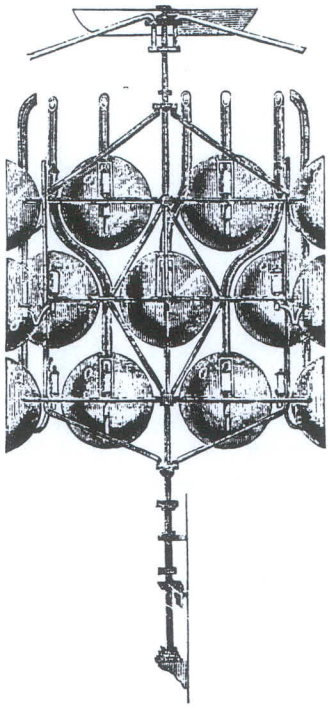
The lamp that he described was obviously the primitive spider lamp without chimneys. The "nosses" must have been his term for wicks (probably "noses").

In June of that year, again responding to a Dearborn request, Mayhew wrote that his "annual consumption of oil averages at about 543 gallons, some years more, some years less."

Dearborn's data collection may have been prompted by Secretary Gallatin, who at the time was negotiating with Winslow Lewis, a former sea captain, who had patented a lamp for lighthouses and was eager to sell to the government. His lamp, a rather crude copy of the Argand lamp widely used in Europe, consisted of a silvered reflector inside which a wick lamp with chimney was mounted. It gave, Lewis claimed, more light than the spider lamp, such as was in use at Poge and elsewhere, and burned only half as much oil. That was not so miraculous as it might seem because the spider lamps had eight wicks burning with no chimneys or reflectors. they were smokey and wasteful. A chimney would direct an air flow over the wick, increasing its efficiency, and a reflector would bounce the light rays toward the horizon. Lewis also added a crude lens to the front of the lamp to increase, he said, its intensity. The lens, however, did nothing but make "A bad lamp worse," it was discovered later. At the time of the negotiations, however, the assembly seemed most scientific.



Side view of a parabolic reflector and lamp. The oil reservoir is at left.



Lamps and their reflectors were placed on frames. Some were stationary and others, like the above, rotated producing a flash.

Captain Lewis offered to sell his patent to the government and to supervise the installing of his lamps in all the nation's lighthouses for $24,000. To test the design, Gallatin had Lewis put his lamps in the Boston Harbor lighthouse, a fixed beacon, and in Cape Cod lighthouse, an eclipsing light. The lamps did, the test showed, reduce consumption by 50 percent and mariners reported they were brighter.

So good were the results that in July 1811 Gallatin wrote to Dearborn to tell him "I feel disposed to extend [the system] as fast as the appropriations will permit to all our light houses." But later that year Gallatin changed his mind, writing to Dearborn that he could not authorize extending it because of its cost. Apparently the bill that Lewis presented for refitting Boston Light, $887.50, was much higher than Gallatin had expected. Also Gallatin, in the Jefferson style, may have felt that lighthouses were primarily a service to the shipping interests who therefore should bear part of the costs. Although he was satisfied it was an improvement, he wrote to Dearborn, he would not "direct its being extended to any other Light Houses."

Unaware of these high-level decisions, Keeper Mayhew on remote Cape Poge was having his own problems. He wrote to Dearborn on December 17, 1811, that he needed a new boat and, he said, a bigger one than the first, "a boat sufficient for my use would cost $120," nearly double the cost of the other.

Thomas Cooke (Cooke was Mayhew's brother-in-law having married his sister, Elizabeth) of Edgartown, a Customs officer, went to Boston a few months later and confirmed Mayhew's need for a new boat, so on May 30, 1812, Dearborn forwarded the request to Washington:

> "Matthew Mayew (sic), Keeper of Cape Poge Light House has petitioned for a new boat as the one he had hitherto had is worn out. Mr. Cook (sic), the Collector of Customs of Edgartown, was in the office this day, who had been requested by the Keeper to state the condition and the necessity of a new Boat. He says she is not worth repairing and that it is absolutely necessary that Mayew should be

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furnished with one as his local situation is such that he cannot do without a new Boat—shall he be furnished?"

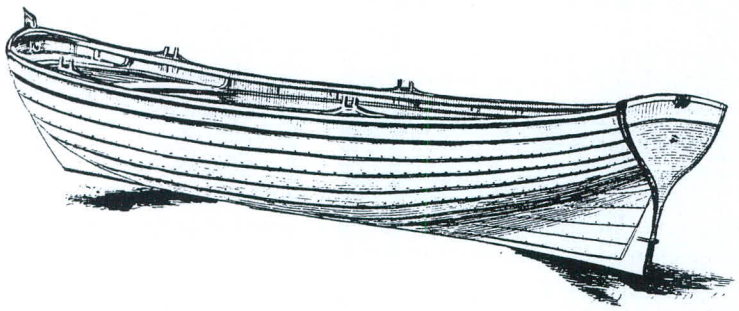
On the bottom of the letter there is the notation:

"Authorize, limiting the price. A.G."

Gallatin's clerk passed along the Secretary's approval to Dearborn in this manner:

". . . you are hereby authorized to furnish the Keeper of Cape Poge Light House with a new boat, provided the expense does not exceed $70."

So much for Mayhew's request for a larger boat!!!



When President Madison took over from the stingy Jefferson, there was less pressure to hold down expenses. In June 1812 a contract was signed with Capt. Winslow Lewis authorizing him to refit the nation's lighthouses with his lamps. He was to be reimbursed for his patent by being given the oil he said his lamps would save; one half of the previous year's consumption, a substantial payment which amounted to about 24,000 gallons of sperm oil a year (sperm oil was worth more than $1.00 a gallon).

By the fall of 1812, Lewis was moving down the east coast installing his lamps and apparently had made the change at Cape Poge by October 24 (he may not have installed his new lamps at Poge until 1816 as an 1820 report gives that date, but Keeper Mayhew was breaking chimneys in 1813 and the older lamps didn't use chimneys), when Keeper Mayhew wrote to Dearborn complaining about his house. In the letter he mentioned Captain Lewis ("Luis"):

"The dwelling house is small and ilconvenient, their is but two small rooms without any place to put our iron ware, we are obliged to put it up garet or down sellar and but one way outdoors except we pass out of the window which is offen the case. In storme weather the house is so small that it is not in my power to acomedat peopel that comes hear by distress of weather . . . Allow me a small addition to the house. The Expense would be about 130 dollars. Capt. Luis is abel to inform you wether my Request is just or not as he has ben hear."

This was the same complaint that had been made by Keeper Skiffe about his Gay Head dwelling house. He, too, had "no place to put iron ware."

Mayhew requested in the same letter, almost as an afterthought, that he be sent 30 squares of 6 by 8 inch glass and a diamond to cut it. "The glass I have won't fit the sashes of the Lantern." What the wind blowing through broken windows in the lantern did to the new Lewis Lamps and reflectors must be left to our imagination.

But new window glass wouldn't solve the major problem that Mayhew faced in the lantern, the many-paned glass enclosure that protects the lamp from the weather. The keeper asked Dearborn in February 1813 for "sum more tube glasses . . . it is not in my power to prevent the tubes from brakeing."

The problem, he explained, was the smallness of the lantern. It was, as we have read, only 4½ feet in diameter. Apparently most lighthouses of that size had larger lanterns and Commissioner Miller seemed to think that Poge would have one also. General Lincoln, in holding down the cost, corrected that false impression in his earlier letter to Miller. Had the extra width been retained, it would have eliminated Mayhew's problem:

"The Lantern is so small that i am obliged to stand in the gangway that leads into the lantern to trim my lamps with the scuttel open which causses so much wind to com into the Lantern that makes the blaze of the lamps to flair which strikes against the tubes and causes them to brake. Was the Lantern so large to admit of the lamps being trimmd with the scuttel shut i think the tubes wold not be so liabel to be broke."

Mayhew's problem was set aside as much larger concerns were occupying the minds of Gallatin and the Administration. The country was at war with England, hostilities having been declared a few months before, in June 1812, after months of conflict over shipping embargoes, impressment of sailors and "freedom of the seas." Although we were at war, the lighthouse establishment seemed little affected until nearly a year later. On April 20, 1813, Dearborn wrote to Secretary Gallatin:

"The last of March I gave directions to the Collector of Nantucket (oil for the lighthouses in the district was stored on Nantucket, but was purchased from a variety of sources) to distribute the oil in his possession to the several Light Houses, but as our coast is infested with enemy cruisers, I this day directed him not to send this oil away until further orders. There being now about three years stocks of oil on hand at the several Light Houses, presume you will not be dissatisfied with this measure."

The war stopped Lewis from refitting the nation's lighthouses, but it did not keep him from criticizing the way keepers were wasting the oil, thus making it appear that his lamps were not, as he had promised, using only half as much as the old style. He told his friend Dearborn in June 1813 that he planned to asked the Secretary to give him custody of 23,000 gallons of oil, enough for a year's supply, and he would dole it out to the keepers, thus being able to control the wastage with, Lewis wrote, "much less trouble to the Treasury Department."

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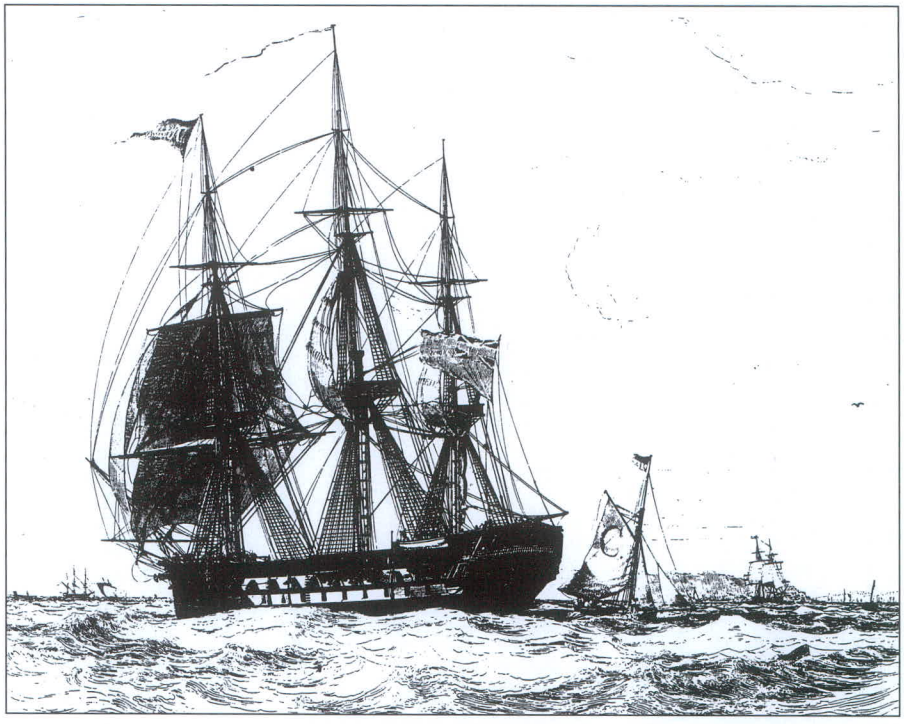
Dearborn agreed that keepers were wasteful and wrote to the Secretary that the Lewis plan should be adopted because

"Most gross abuses have been practiced in the articles of oil. It is not as good or as well secured in sufficient casks as the contractors for its supply engage, and the keepers have it in their power to waste, sell, or otherwise dispose of a large quantity of oil annually and without its being possible to prevent it. . ."

Dearborn was suggesting that those keepers whose lights had been refitted with the Lewis lamps had an excess of oil on hand and thus were tempted to sell it or use it for personal comfort, such as for lamps in the house. The Lewis proposal, it seems, was not accepted, perhaps because the war was building up and the administration had bigger problems than a few barrels of oil. Lighthouses were even being sacked, Lewis notified the Treasury:

"The keeper at Gull Rock Light House (Long Island Sound) informs me that 28 July [1813] a boat from a British man o' war took all lamps and reflectors, 'by the order of Sir Thomas Hardy'. Should I replace them?"

A few weeks later, Dearborn reported that he would no longer ship oil from the Boston depot to the Islands, but would send it to Barnstable and ship it across from there. He did not want to "risk capture by the enemy around Cape Cod."



British raids on New England were becoming more frequent and Dearborn wanted the lights turned off (In July 1813, Hanna Smith described a naval battle between two "stupendious barques" which she watched off South Beach). In July 1814, he proposed to the Treasury that the beacons on Cape Cod (and other places) be extinguished "as they are of great advantage to the enemies' ships on this coast and serve to direct their barques into the ports and bays on their nocturnal predatory expeditions."

The war was very unpopular, especially in New England, where the commercial interest opposed it. The lighthouse establishment did not seem in any hurry to extinguish the beacons. Then a month later, the British marched into Washington, D.C., chasing President Madison out of town and setting fire to the Capitol, the White House and several other buildings. Shortly afterwards, the British fleet raided the port of Baltimore and on the night of September 13, 1814, the "Star Spangled Banner" was written as the rockets red glared. That day, Samuel H. Smith, Commissioner of the Revenue, writing from fire-blackened Washington, informed Dearborn:

"You will be pleased to cause the lights in the Light-House establishment under your superintendence to be forthwith extinguished."

The order came down to Cape Poge and Keeper Mayhew complied, reporting back on October 4, 1814,

"I have caused the light under my care to be Extinguist. The apparatus and other publick property I have removed about four miles . . . to the dwelling house of Mr. Samuel Huxford where they are deposited in his cellar."

Thus, in a tiny cellar on Chappaquiddick, the Government's property was secured from the enemy. Two and a half months later, the war officially was over, with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814. The fighting continued, however, because the word of the signing did not get back to Washington until February 14, 1815. Presumably some weeks later the word filtered down to Cape Poge and Keeper Mayhew hauled his "apparatus" back four miles over the beach, installed it in the tower and relighted his lamps.

When Captain Lewis visited Cape Poge Light the following September on his annual visit, he took up the three-year-old request of Keeper Mayhew for an addition to his house. On September 30, 1815, Lewis reported to Dearborn:

"I have lately visited Cape Poge. . . The dwelling house . . . has only 2 rooms, 15 by 12 feet, no chamber, kitchen, bed-room or closet in it. An addition of 15 feet to this small house would make it tenantable for the Keeper's family. The Light House is wood and wants painting, it having never been done but once, which was when it was built."

Keeper Mayhew, now 50 years old, and his wife, Magdalen, had raised a family of eight children in a two-room dwelling on the windswept point of Cape Poge. For 14 years, they had enjoyed the enviable life of a lighthouse keeper!

It took about a year, but on August 3, 1816, Commissioner Smith in Washington informed Dearborn that he was

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". . . authorized to enlarge the dwelling house of the Keeper of Cape Poge Light House, 14 by 14 feet, provided the expense shall not exceed $250 and to paint the Light-House and dwelling house provided the expense shall not exceed $120."

Keeper Mayhew, learning of the new addition, decided to request something more. He enlisted, once again, the help of Thomas Cooke, who wrote to Nathaniel Tracy, Deputy Collector in Boston and probably the official with whom Collector Cooke regularly dealt on Customs business, explaining that Mayhew would like it if, in the

". . . contemplated addition to the dwelling house that there may be an outside door put to the end that is to be added . . . the house has just one outside door . . . [and that] faces to the eastward. That in the prevalent gales of wind from that quarter his family frequently are obliged to have the wood and water, etc., past in at one of the lee windows on account of difficulty attending the opening of the door in strong gales. Mr. Coffin, the contractor, is willing to complete the door without additional expense to the government in case it would be approved of by Mr. Dearborn."

Keeper Mayhew's belief that he had to call on his distinguished brother-in-law for help in having a door installed at no cost to the government is evidence that red tape was as strong then as today. A remote lighthouse keeper, left to his own resources by the establishment in so many of his responsibilities, did not feel he could make such a simple decision himself or even request such a decision himself.

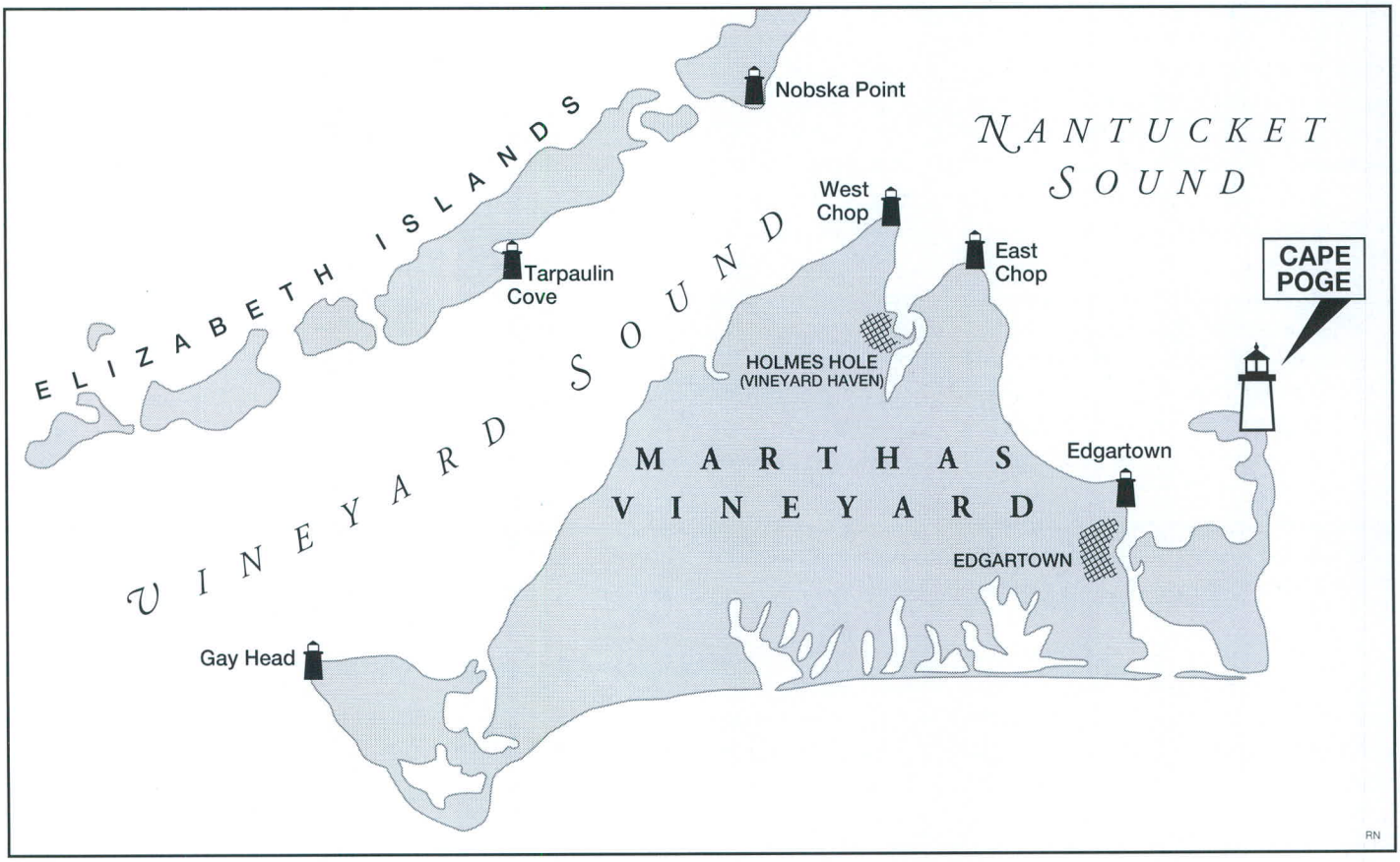
We don't know if he got the door, but in any case the addition, with or without the door, was completed October 11, 1816, and contractor Coffin so informed Dearborn.

It was in that year, 1816, that the residents of Holmes Hole (Vineyard Haven), by far the busiest harbor on the Island, decided it was time to demand a lighthouse on West Chop. It was bad enough that Edgartown had a lighthouse, but Congress had just appropriated money for a lighthouse at Tarpaulin Cove. A double insult! After all, Holmes Hole was the major harbor in the area. A group of citizens headed by Thomas Dunham petitioned Congressman John Reed in February, asking him to have Congress approve a lighthouse for them. Holmes Hole, they wrote, was "the right place" for it:

"When a Light House was erected at Cape Poge, many people were surprised that it was not erected on the West Chop. Seeing two Light Houses erected or to be erected, one ten miles to the eastward of the right place and one twelve miles to the westward of the only place where a Light House can be brought to any certain point to clear the Shoals, they could not refrain from stating to Congress their reasons and petitioning for an alteration."

The lighthouse at Tarpaulin Cove, they argued, would be a "misapplication of the public's money as they feel confident that the public will be better served by having the light on the West Chop of H. Hole."

The petition paid off and in its next session Congress authorized a lighthouse at West Chop. A contract was awarded to the same man who had built the Cape



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Poge Light, this time, however, the amount was $4850, more than double the amount paid at Chappaquiddick. (Holmes Hole won the battle, in a way. The West Chop Light began operation Oct. 3, 1817, one day before Tarpaulin Light.)

On Cape Poge, Keeper Mayhew, now luxuriating in his three-room house, reported to Dearborn that the lighthouse tower needed repair and that locally he could not "find anyone that is capable of doing the business, as our mechanics are not acquainted with such." The deck atop the tower and the many-windowed lantern around the lamp were in such bad condition that Mayhew felt the work required a skilled lighthouse workman. He hoped that, at the same time, the lantern could be enlarged so he could trim the lamps while inside the enclosure, echoing his complaint of four years earlier. Winslow Lewis agreed, writing Dearborn June 27, 1817, that the

> ". . . deck is somewhat decayed—a new lantern is what is most wanted. [It is] now only 4 feet diameter. A new lantern 6 feet diameter and a new deck will cost about $700."

With the memory of the recent war still fresh, another and perhaps more powerful argument was made for increasing the size of the lantern, as Commissioner Smith in Washington wrote to Dearborn:

> "Mr. Lewis make the following representations: 'Cape Poge lantern is one of the smallest in the United States, being only 4 feet in diameter. The deck of the lantern is now decayed and must be new. I should recommend that when the new deck is laid, a new lantern of 6 feet diameter be put on. As it is now ascertained that Ships of War can pass through the Vineyard Sound with more safety than to go outside the Shoals, this light will become of more importance."

The defense of our seacoast had become important as the nation settled back behind its shores in a growing mood of isolationism. The defense argument helped, and the new deck and enlarged lantern were authorized, not, however, to exceed $700. The keeper could now trim the wicks in calm air.

There were 55 lighthouses on the coast in 1817, all under the supervision of Winslow Lewis, who was increasingly being criticized by politicians and ship owners. The lights, they said, were not up to the standards of those in Europe. Lewis had lived up to his promise to reduce oil consumption, but the brightness was inadequate. The nation burned 24,731 gallons of oil in 1817, compared to an estimated 52,000 gallons that would have been consumed with the old lamps. As the number of lighthouses increased, Lewis was getting so much more income under the 50 percent arrangement that Congress cut him back to one-third.

In May 1819, perhaps to dull the growing criticism, Commissioner Smith sent out the first detailed instructions the keepers had ever received. Included was the requirement that a daily journal be kept at each station and that each quarter year a summary report be sent in of the important occurrences. The keepers, however, did not quickly fall into line, forcing Dearborn to issue a follow-up directive:

> "It is expected that you will in future strictly comply with the instructions . . . for failure to do so will subject you to the penalty mentioned in the [earlier] letter."

Salaries of keepers had been increased sharply (Mayhew was now making $350 a year, nearly double his starting pay of $200) and the establishment apparently decided it could expect more from them.

In almost every session, Congress appropriated funds for another lighthouse or two. There were, by 1820, 70 lighthouses in operation. The nation was increasingly dependent upon its coastal shipping. In 1815, more than 140 cotton mills were operating whtin 30 miles of Providence, R.I., with coastal schooners being the major means of supply. Every port city was demanding its own lighthouse, often as much for civic pride as navigational necessity. Congress obliged in many cases, especially where the political pressure was great. The lighthouse establishment was growing like Topsy and President Madison decided something had to be done.

He turned the responsibility for lighthouses over to the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury Department, Stephen Pleasonton. It was the first time a separate department had been given the exclusive responsibility. At the local level, however, there was no change as Customs Collectors were still in charge.

Pleasonton was deluged with the complaints of ship owners and masters, many about Winslow Lewis and his lamps. Nevertheless, Lewis still had loyal supporters, one being Dearborn, who wrote to Pleasonton on November 22, 1822:

> "In justice to Capt. Lewis, I must observe that I have found him attentive and ever ready to rectify any imperfections in the lamps and zealous to keep the establishment in fine order and when any injury accrues or defect in the light arrives, it is generally from the want of intelligence or attention in the keepers."

Dearborn wasn't the only one who supported Lewis and, despite the growing criticism, the Captain stayed on as the government's expert on lighthouse construction, lamps, oil and other details. As a result of his broad and unparalleled experience, he eventually became the principal advisor to the Fifth Auditor, helping make decisions that, no doubt, did Winslow Lewis no harm.

Lewis nonetheless endured some embarrassing indiscretions, like the one involving a lighthouse he had built in Florida, where serious financial misappropriations and irregularities were revealed. Lewis claimed he was not personally aware of the fraud and that he greatly regretted it. He expressed his regret to his friend Dearborn, who wrote to Pleasonton that Lewis showed "deep mortification and indignation at the fraud which it has been found was practiced by his associates in the contract for building the Light House at St. Marks."

It was not fraud or indiscretions that worried Keeper Mayhew on Cape Poge, it was the encroaching ocean. The winter of 1824-5 was particularly stormy and in the spring Keeper Mayhew, still a very poor speller, graphically described the conditions in his quarterly report:

> "I hear with trance mit to your

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office a copey of my daily Journal with my quaterly account—

Takeing into view the situation of the United States property at Cape Poge, I think it my inddispensible duty to acquaint you theirwith, in the year 1800 there was of the Land 4 acres and now their is about 2 acres, the land whashes away very fast. The distance from the dwelling house to the edge of the bank is 40 feet. I have known 14 feet of the bank to wash away in one tide. Consequently, it is my opinion that it would be expediant for the dwelling House to be moved to present Summer. If we are not in danger of falling immediately down the clift, it is very unpleasent, particular to females to be thus situated in storms when the Sea is beating with such violance as for the spray to fly against and over the House and no other dwelling House within 5 miles for refuge. Should it meet your approbation and will have it accomplished, it would be very gratifying to your,

Obedient Servant,

Matthew Mayhew"

Dearborn got an estimate of the cost and sent the letter along to Pleasonton:

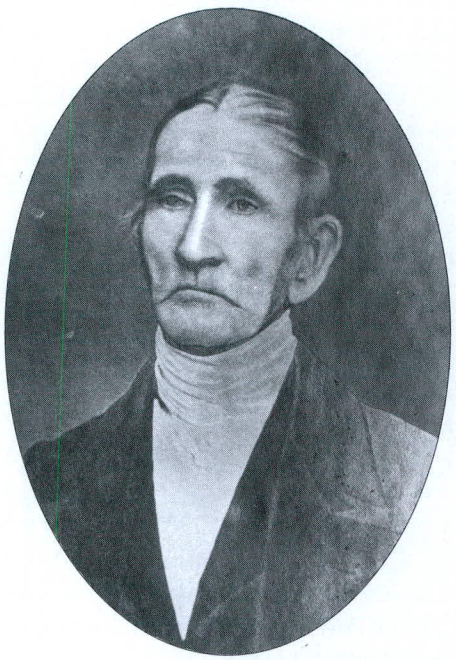
"He [Mayhew] states it will cost about two hundred and twenty dollars [to move the house]. More land will be required & as it can be procured, as he alleges for fifteen dollars per acre, I recommend that four additional acres be purchased."

On April 29, 1825, the Fifth Auditor authorized the move and the purchase of four acres of land "provided it can be got at a rate not exceeding $15 per acre."

Land was cheap in those days, but not so cheap as Keeper Mayhew thought. Moving the house, which he had said would cost $250, was accomplished by Thomas Mayhew (the keeper's brother) for $220, a saving of $30, but part of that saving was absorbed in the higher land cost, as Dearborn explained to Pleasonton:

"I directed the Keeper of Cape Poge Light House to purchase four acres of land at fifteen dollars per acre, but I received the enclosed letter this morning from which you will perceive that the owners asked twenty dollars and, as the sum was so small, I have authorized the Keeper to take it at that price, trusting that it will meet with your approbation."

It did meet with the Fifth Auditor's approbation. The whole project was completed with an alacrity that was unusual. Whether it was Mayhew's vivid description of the family "falling immediately down the clift" or the growing criticism of the lighthouse establishment that did it, we don't know, but something shook up the Fifth Auditor. The project took less than two months to complete.



Stephen Pleasonton, Fifth Auditor of the Treasury, was in charge of our lighthouses from 1820 to 1852. Library of Congress photo.

Not only were the Mayhews in danger of falling down the cliff, so too, many Vineyarders thought, was the Nation. The Federalists, the dominant Vineyard party, had already fallen, making the election of 1824 a one-party contest among candidates of the Republican Party (the present Democratic party). Five Republicans ran for president and none received a majority of the Electoral College. General Andrew Jackson, the military hero, received the most, with 99, second was the New England favorite, John Quincy Adams, with 84. The other three candidates received a total of 78 votes. Henry Clay, the Kentucky statesman, one of the other three, announced his support of Adams over Jackson. The election was thrown into the House Representatives where Clay's support was decisive and Adams was elected. It turned out to be an unsatisfactory solution. The country was not behind its new leader and, because he was not a "politician" willing to compromise, little was accomplished during his term. Thus the stage was set for an overwhelming victory in 1828 by General Jackson. The nation, which, until now, had been controlled by the established folk, was turned over to the "common man."

On Cape Poge, the political "revolution" went unnoticed. To Keeper Mayhew it meant only that Winslow Lewis no longer came around once a year, bringing new lamp parts and adjusting his "apparatus." Lewis was bitter about his removal. It was, he felt, totally political. (And it was indeed, Jackson having discovered the "spoils system.") Lewis wrote to his buddy, Pleasonton, on June 16, 1830, stating that the government still owed him money for the "bad oil" that he had replaced with "good oil" at his own expense:

". . . . having closed my connection with the Light House establishment after 16 years of hard service, rather poorer in my pecuniary affairs than when I commenced, and having rather too far advanced in years to commence new pursuits . . . [I request that I be given the oil I replaced]."

Pleasonton must have agreed because we learn from our Edgartown diarist, Jeremiah Pease, that on November 20, 1830, he (Pease) "went to Capoge (there are many ways to spell Cape Poge) to get 2 bbls. of oil for Winslow Lewis. Got the oil and put it on board sloop *Toleration*, Capt. Wheeler." (A most appropriate name for the vessel involved in such a mission!)

Lewis had not been responsible for the "bad" oil that had been bought under competitive bidding by the government. He had merely delivered it. But he was responsible for the "bad" lamps that he had sold the government. These lamps were increasingly being attacked by mariners who had seen the brilliance of European lighthouses. In

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Edgartown, mariners were critical of the Cape Poge lighthouse, stating that its reflectors were too small. It was not that the Lewis reflectors were too small, they were improperly shaped. Instead of being optically parabolic to redirect the lamp's rays, they were bowl-shaped, or, as one critic years later described them to Congress, "about as parabolic as a barker's washbasin."

Pleasonton, anxious to defuse the mounting criticism of the Lewis lamps which were in virtually every one of his lighthouses, approved the Edgartown request on July 2, 1832:

> "I have received your letter of the 27th ult., enclosing the recommendations of sundry persons at Edgartown that large reflectors should be substituted in the Cape Poge Light House for those now in use there. As you inform me that the old reflectors are nearly worn out and it will consequently be necessary ere long to provide others of some kind, I perceive no objection to the accommodation of the people of Edgartown with refletors of the largest size. You are authorized accordingly to procure and have them fixed. If the contractor could be prevailed upon to receive the old reflectors at a moderate price in part payment, it would be very agreeable, but this is not to be made a condition."

Pleasonton, an auditor, always kept his eye on the expense side of the ledger!

With the increasing prosperity of the whaling industry, the Edgartown Customs Office was growing rapidly and early in 1834 it had become large enough to be given responsibility for the area's lighthouses, including those on Nantucket island and the south shore of Cape Cod. John P. Norton, the Collector of Customs, was given the additional duties of Superintendent of Light Houses. This doubtless made Keeper Mayhew's life much simpler, but sadly, he wasn't able to enjoy it for long.

On December 20, 1834, Jeremiah Pease wrote in his diary:

> "Matthew Mayhew dies at about 6 o'clock this morning, aged about 69. His corps is brought up from Cape Poge this afternoon."

We don't know if the death was sudden. We don't know if he had tended his lamps that night or not. We do know that at just about the hour he would have climbed the five flights of stairs to the lantern on that cold December morning to extinguish the light, his own life was extinguished.

Neither of his two sons sought to take over, the usual practice at the time. But the position was not so lonely that it was not eagerly sought. Capt. Lott Norton, an Edgartown mariner in his 60's, quickly drew up a petition asking for the job and had it signed by ten distinguished Vineyarders, one Nantucket man, plus the three Edgartown selectmen. It was presented to Collector Norton at the Customs Office, who forwarded it to Washington. Among the signers were such well-known men as Leavitt Thaxter, Dr. Daniel Fisher, Chase Pease, Frederick Baylies, Jr., William Jernegan, Isaiah D. Pease and Peter Pease.

Pleasonton acted quickly and on December 31, he wrote to Collector Norton that Lott Norton was the new keeper and that he should be informed "of the necessity of his residing and being himself steadily in the house provided for the Keeper."

News of his appointment reached Lott on January 9, 1835, but Jeremiah Pease tells us that the new keeper couldn't get out to the station until January 12th "because of the ice."

It is not known who operated the light from December 20, the day Keeper Mayhew died, until January 12, the day the new keeper arrived. Perhaps the widow; perhaps no one.

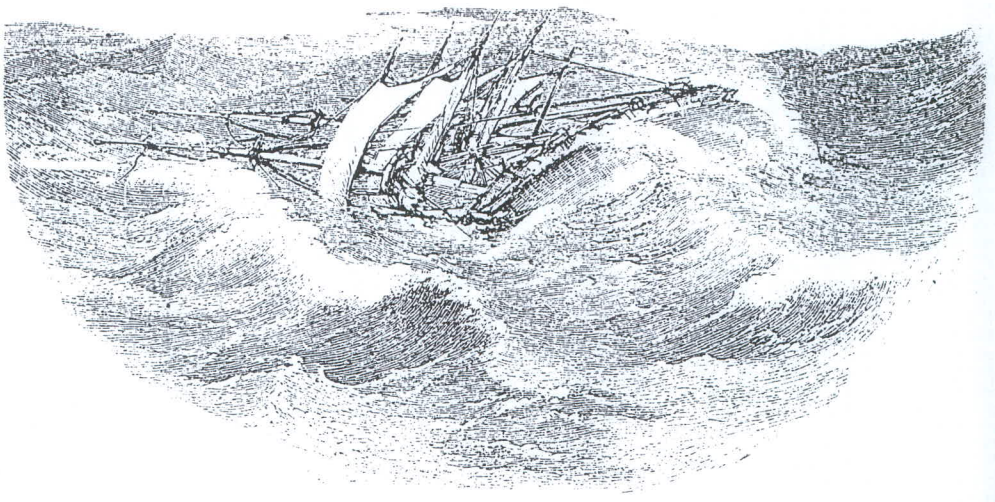
The question takes on tragic importance when we read Jeremiah Pease's diary for January 6, 1835, six days before Lott's arrival:

> "Wind NE. Gale. Some snow. 20 vessels arrive here. The Schooner *Hudson*, Capt. Shearwood, cast away on Cape Poge this morning. Part of the crew got on shore much beat out. Some badly frozen, one of which dies after reaching the Light House. The Capt. and 2 passengers remain on board all night. The vessel being full of water, the gale continuing and very cold, the passengers froze to death at night."

In his diary the following day, Jeremiah notes that the Captain was rescued. "The schooner was from New York bound for Boston, she had been part way over the shoals and was returning when cast away."

Had the light been operating? We don't know. We do know that the dependable, experienced Keeper Mayhew was not there that night. He died three weeks before.

For 34 years, one-half his life, he had lived and worked on that lonely isolated tip of land with his wife, raising eight children. No keeper after him would hold the post as long. And surely it must be conceded that when, only days after death took him away from his station, three strangers lost their lives in the icy cape waters, a truly tragic epilogue was addended to his life's story.



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Painting by Chas. Hubbard circa 1840s. Reproduced with permission of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian.

Cape Poge Light

PART II

By Arthur R. Railton

A four part story of the Cape Poge Light Station will appear in the next four issues of the Log.

From its establishment in 1801, and continuing up to the present, the history of the Cape Poge station reflects almost the entire history of the American lighthouse service, which was established in 1789. The trials and tribulations of the keepers and their families, logistical problems, low pay, changing technology and a niggardly service are all reflected in the story of the Cape Poge Lightstation.

The series is reprinted from the Dukes County Historical Society's quarterly magazine, *Intelligencer* with permission from Arthur R. Railton.

Remote and Lonely

On the 12th of January 1835, the wind fell off after weeks of frigid northerlies. It became, according to Jeremiah Pease's diary, "very light and calm, thaws all day." Edgartown harbor, which was "filled up with ice a half mile below the [Harbor] Light House," began to open up. By the next morning, the wind had swung to the southwest, "the ice . . . goes out at noon or most of it."

That was what Lott Norton of Edgartown had been waiting for. He was the new Keeper of Cape Poge Light, replacing the late Matthew Mayhew. His appointment had arrived on the 9th, but the solid ice cover had kept him from getting to the station "conveniently."

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Jeremiah explained it in his diary, January 13, 1835:

> Br. Lott Norton and part of his family sail at 10 o'clock for Cape Poge, having received the appointment of light Keeper on the 9th, but could not get there conveniently on the account of the ice until today. He commences this afternoon.

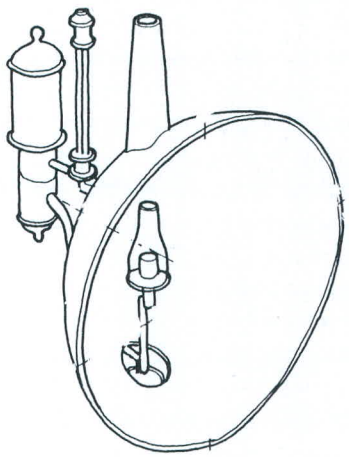
Who made up the "part of his family" that went along, we don't know. Lott was 63-years-old, with five unmarried children. Most of the grown children must have stayed in Edgartown as there were only three rooms, with two fireplaces, on the first floor of the Keeper's dwelling, plus "a chamber" (unheated) upstairs — hardly luxurious accommodations. The Keeper slept in a front room on the first floor, the house being so placed on the site that "the lantern may be seen from the front windows." Keepers at one-man stations like Poge did not watch the light all night; they trimmed the wicks at about 11 p.m., made sure there was enough oil, and went to bed, awakening occasionally to look out the window and check the light.

Keeper Norton, no doubt, considered his new post a comfortable place in which to spend his last years. Young men were rarely appointed as Keepers. The position was considered "an easy berth for the needy, or for those who are incompetent to perform more laborious service."

What he didn't know was that a rebellion was building up against the lighthouse establishment and that the next 20 years were to be the most tumultuous in the history of the service. Even Cape Poge, remote and isolated though it was, would feel the waves.

Since 1833, Edmund and George W. Blunt, publishers of *Blunt's Coastal Pilot*, had been trying to convince the government to do something about its primitive lighthouses. They bombarded Congress with complaints and in 1837 the lawmakers placed a moratorium on new lighthouse construction until a study of the existing beacons could be made.

On Cape Poge, keeper Norton was not aware of this, but he was very aware of the encroaching ocean. Like his predecessor, Keeper Mayhew, he watched apprehensively as the waves ravaged the cliff below the lighthouse. In the spring, his first at the station, he asked John P. Norton of Edgartown, the Superintendent of Light Houses for the area, to request that a stone wall be built to slow down the erosion. Norton sent the request to Washington and on October 12, 1836, Fifth Auditor Stephen Pleasonton, the Treasury Department official responsible for lighthouses, wrote Edgartown that he agreed with the necessity of building a stone wall under the cliff at Cape Poge Light House . . . provided the



Oil lamp with a parabolic reflector. Oil reservoir to the rear.

expense is not to exceed $120, as estimated.

The stone wall was built, but it turned out to be no match for the waves and, in 1838, Superintendent Norton reported that the lighthouse

> must be moved about 12 rods nearer the dwelling house between now and the 30th of September, otherwise it will be under the Clift. It now stands about 30 feet from the Clift on loose soil.

When Lt. Edward W. Carpender of the U.S. Navy, taking part in the Congressional ordered survey, visited Poge in the fall of 1838, he reported that they were "moving the tower." His report gives a detailed description of Cape Poge Light:

> This light is on the eastern entrance to Edgartown harbour, 55 feet above the level of the sea. They were in the act of moving the tower (which is of wood) a few yards back, the sea threatening to undermine it. This is an exceedingly useful light, not only as a guide to Edgartown harbour, which is the resort of an immense number of vessels, but to the trade entering the "shoals" from the southward, and to vessels crossing them in all directions. It, however, is of no more importance than Monomoy Light and, being twice the elevation of that light, requires less a greater number of lamps . . . accordingly, I recommend the suppression of the upper series, consisting of 5, and the more compact arrangement of the lower, consisting of 6 lamps. The reflectors are 13-inch. The dwelling here, as well as tower, is of wood. The tower is 40 feet high, and, not having been built sufficiently strong, has suffered from the action of the wind. It will, however, last for many years, though, when the time comes for rebuilding it, advantage ought to be taken of the present site for the use of more durable materials . . .

The survey, important though it was, didn't appease the Blunts. They demanded a comparison test between the Winslow Lewis reflector lamps, then in use here, and the Fresnel lens from France. Congress appropriated funds, but not enough. Pleasonton informed the Blunts that he had only $1000 and that the Fresnel unit would cost $2,026, so he couldn't proceed. Blunt wrote that he would pay the difference. "I regret not being informed earlier," he added.

Congress continued to stall, asking for more data, ordering the Treasury to hire an outside engineer to examine 70 lighthouses in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Treasury Secretary Walter Forward hired Isaiah William Penn Lewis, nephew of Winslow Lewis and a civil engineer. His report was devastating. He tore apart the establishment, stating that "the present Lighthouse system is founded in error." He quoted various Keepers, all in criticism.

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Leavitt Thaxter, son of "Parson" Thaxter, had been made Superintendent of Light Houses in Edgartown when the Whigs took over the White House in 1841, replacing John P. Norton. After reading the Lewis report, "being somewhat alarmed," Thaxter visited the lighthouses and talked to the Keepers who had been quoted. He reported to Pleasonton in Washington:

> The Report of Mr. Lewis respecting the lights under my superintendence is incorrect and exaggerated in most instances; and the statements signed by the Keepers were drawn up by him and urged upon them contrary to their convictions of the truth.

Pleasonton was pleased by Thaxter's initiative and the defense of his establishment:

> [Your] report is full and satisfactory and I am very glad to perceive that it puts an extinguisher upon the many false statements made by I.W.P. Lewis concerning these lights.

Thaxter's support of Pleasonton seemed to bear fruit. He had requested $190 for a new boat for Keeper Norton because the Boat belonging to the Cape Poge Light House is very old and unsafe, being "nail sick," rotten in many places, and not worth repairing.

Pleasonton, despite his reputation for stinginess, approved the new boat immediately, a rare event. He also quickly approved Keeper Norton's request early in 1843 for an additional room on the dwelling, telling Thaxter:

> At Cape Poge you will cause a room to be added to the dwelling of 10 or 11 feet square in consequence of the dwelling house being small. In cases where painting and whitewashing are required, it would be proper to furnish the Keepers with paints, oil, etc., and let them do the work themselves. For whitewashing which requires considerable labour they ought to be allowed from 15 to 20 dollars . . . painting and other small repairs they ought to do without compensation.

But he was still the Fifth Auditor: the day after writing the above, he again wrote to Thaxter:

> Inform me what disposition the Keeper of Cape Poge Light House has made of his old boat.

As Congressional pressure increased, Pleasonton asked Thaxter (and the other Light Superintendents, no doubt) to report on the opinions of Congressmen in the area concerning lighthouses. Thaxter replied in June 1843:

> Mr. Burnell, who is the only member of congress within 60 or 70 miles, lives in Nantucket and, as I learn, is quite unwell. I am assured that the pilots and masters of vessels in this region will speak well of the Light Houses in these waters.

The Lewis report had listed Cape Poge light as one of those "found in a state of partial or complete ruin." Pleasonton seemed eager to blunt the criticism and in June 1844 he ordered Thaxter to

> send me a plan and estimate of a [new] frame tower at Cape Poge. If the expense is inconsiderable, I will cause a new one to be built, otherwise the repairs must be made which you indicate to be necessary.

Leavitt Thaxter wasted no time. He went to Boston to talk to Capt. Winslow Lewis, now 73-years-old and still building lighthouses on a contractual basis. The old man drew up a set of specifications, including a new lantern and lamp, items that Pleasonton had not mentioned as being in need of replacement. Thaxter explained when he sent in the specifications:

> The lantern in the Tower, in former years, was greatly neglected, consequently its strength and stability are much impaired by corrosion and it is advisable to build the whole new.

The estimated cost, according to Lewis, was $550 for the new tower and $1150 for the new lantern and lamps. No fool, Lewis added that if both jobs were done by the same contractor (namely, Lewis), the cost would be $1600 instead of $1700. On July 10, 1844, Winslow Lewis signed a contract to complete the work by September 1, for $1600. The specifications called for a wooden octagonal tower, 30 feet high (5 feet lower than the old one), shingled with pine shakes and resting on a rubble-stone foundation two feet deep. Atop it, a new lantern was to contain 11 lamps equipped with 14-inch reflectors and mounted on an iron chandelier in two rows. So much for Lt. Carpender's survey trip with his recommendations that the new tower be built of "more durable materials" and that only 6 lamps be used in the lantern. Pleasonton and Lewis were still in charge.

Lewis and his workmen moved fast and Thaxter informed Pleasonton on July 27, 1844, that the job would be completed ahead of schedule:

> The Cape Poge Light House will be completed in all next week. The most judicious location of the tower brings it within 18 feet of the Dwelling House and I have agreed to pay Mr. Lewis $45 for building a covered way [to it]. I have also authorized him to furnish the Burners with his Patent caps at an expense of $19.50, both of which I trust will meet with your approval.

Thaxter clearly enjoyed a happy relationship with Pleasonton, being able to make such decisions involving additional expense without objection from Washington.

Keeper Norton, 72-years-old, was not in good health and lived only a few months after the tower, with its covered walkway to the house, was completed. He moved into Edgartown during his final illness and on November 20, 1844, Jeremiah Pease wrote in his diary:

> In the evening returned and visited Br. Lott Norton. Had a very interesting conversation with him relating to his situation and Eternity. Found his faith strong in the blessed Redeemer. He died about 12 o'clock this night. His death was peaceful.

Leavitt Thaxter officially notified Pleasonton three days later:

> I have to state that Capt. Lott Norton, the faithful and efficient Keeper of Cape Poge Light House, died last Thursday night. His son, John R. Norton, has the charge of keeping the light at present.

Within a few days, Pleasonton had named a replacement: another Norton, although not one closely related to Lott. He was Capt. Aaron Norton, 59-years-old, who was married to Lucy Fisher.

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There were changes in Washington, as well. In 1844, the Whig candidate for President was narrowly defeated by a Democrat, a "dark horse," James K. Polk (the Whig slogan was "Who is James Polk?"). Joseph T. Pease, son of Jeremiah and a staunch Democrat, saw his chance and began lining up support for taking over the post held by Whig Leavitt Thaxter. His friends on the Democratic Town Committee wrote to former Massachusetts Governor Marcus Norton (soon to be Collector of Customs at Boston), on January 10, 1845:

> Joseph T. Pease, Esq., of this place, who intends making application for the Office of United States Collector of this Port, at the proper time, is a young man of the strictest integrity and of the highest responsibility; that he is Chairman of our County Committee and has been from his Youth, a constant and efficient supporter of Democratic principles, men and measures. We hope he may receive your favorable notice.

Democrat James K. Polk was inaugurated in March and Joseph was right there to watch. He must have met the right people in Washington because by summer it was openly discussed in town that young Pease would be named Collector. Leavitt Thaxter, no innocent about politics, recognized his fate. In a letter to Pleasonton, he described his soon-to-be successor as a "very worthy and capable young man." On August 5, 1845, the newspapers confirmed the appointment and Joseph Thaxter Pease took over the office in September.

In one of his first letters to Washington, Pease urged Pleasonton to approve some major expenditures at Cape Poge:

> It is seven years since the outside of the house was painted and an addition lately put thereto was never painted. Also, the boat is hauled up on the beach (on account of the ice) from December until March and is more injured by storms and frost than from use; I recommend a boat house for her protection.

Pleasonton was not pleased by the pressure from the new man in Edgartown and wrote back that he should

> defer repairs until the next year unless it be to stop the windows at Cape Poge from leaking which I suppose can be done by the Keeper himself.

The next month, a November storm brought disaster to the Keeper's boat. Pease wrote Pleasonton:

> The Keeper of Cape Poge Light . . . informed me that . . . his boat had foundered at her Moorings and was almost entirely worthless . . . one side of her, together with the Keel, and nearly all the inside ceiling are gone; one or more holes have been made therein by coming in contact with the rocks . . . unfit to repair. As this Keeper has to transport his supplies, including his wood, from this place to Cape Poge in his boat, I do not see how a boat smaller than the one he has heretofore used can be made to answer his purpose.

Pease estimated that a new one built in Edgartown by Mr. Morse would cost



The 1844 tower in 1878 (earliest known photo of the Cape Poge Station). The near half of the dwelling (to the right of the keeper's family) was constructed in 1843. The far half (right of chimney) is the original 1801 house. The structures to the left of the tower are probably a storage building and boat house. The walkway between the "new" dwelling and the tower was constructed in 1844. Keeper Edward Worth is shown outside the lantern. National Archives photo, courtesy of the author.

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between $180 and $200. Pleasonton, in character, said that was too much for a 17-foot boat. A boat like that, he wrote, should cost only $6 a foot, making it $102 plus $18 for sails. Total cost: $120. Pease should try a New Bedford builder and if he wouldn't meet that price, to have it built in New York.

The boat was to have a 17-foot keel, a centerboard, two oars, a sprit mainsail of light cotton duck. James Beetle in New Bedford offered to build it for $150. Pleasonton relented a bit and wrote that the offer "appears reasonable . . . not exceeding $150." That was December 31, 1846. In March 1847, Pease informed Pleasonton that Beetle had backed out of the deal. He had thought it was to be 17 feet over-all, not 17 feet at the keel, and he "couldn't build one like that for $200, nor would he." Pleasonton, weary of the whole business, pencilled on Pease's letter: "have boat built at Edgartown — $200."

The Keeper of Cutter Hunk Light had also been authorized a new boat and it, too, was to be built in Edgartown. Pease felt it wise to explain something about the speed with which things get done on the Vineyard and wrote Pleasonton:

> As none of our boat builders shops have more than two men in them, I presume you will not think seven weeks an unreasonable time to require in which to complete them.

Penny-pincher that he was, Pleasonton was always trying to cut oil consumption. He wouldn't agree with the complaints about poor oil. It was not the oil, but the Keepers, that were at fault: "They keep the flame too high," he claimed. "It should be no more than 1¼ inches high." Pease took the Keepers' side in the argument:

> I believe all the Keepers who have exceeded the average quantity have been appointed within four years; being anxious to maintain good lights, perhaps to excel, I think they have kept the wicks screwed up to the highest point possible, thinking by that means to show a greater degree of light.

Unlike Thaxter, Pease did not hit it off well with Pleasonton, who seemed to have little patience with the young man. Pease, it turn, had been involved with lighthouses for years, his father being a Keeper, and he objected to Pleasonton's attitude that he knew nothing about them. Their exchanges were never cordial. Collector Pease did, in fact, seem often to be in opposition to Pleasonton. His brother, William Cooke Pease, was a



Stephen Pleasonton, Fifth Auditor of the Treasury, was in charge of our lighthouses from 1820 to 1852. Library of Congress photo.

well-thought-of young officer in the Revenue Service who visited many lighthouses and met many Collectors. He regularly wrote Joseph about what he learned so the Edgartown collector was well informed on the politics of the establishment. Pleasonton, no doubt, was aware of that fact.

And Pleasonton had reason to be wary, being continuously criticized in Congress and the press. In many ways, he was a tragic figure. He had brought order to the nation's lighthouse establishment which had a confused and disorganized beginning. He was not an engineer, he was an auditor; and yet he was being criticized on technical matters. Furthermore, it was his life's work that was being challenged.

He didn't have to put up with Collector Pease for long. In November 1848, the Whigs returned to the White House when Gen. Zachary Taylor became President. Pease, a Democrat, was removed and Leavitt Thaxter, Pleasonton's Whig friend, was once again in the Customs office on the second floor at the corner of Main and Water Street (above today's drug store). There was also a change at Cape Poge: Keeper Aaron Norton was replaced by Edward Worth, a Whig.

Congress, still controlled by Democrats, created a Light House Board in March 1851, charging it with the responsibility of investigating, once and for all, the continuing criticism of the Pleasonton establishment. A year later, it presented Congress with a massive document supporting the charges against Pleasonton who wrote to Leavitt Thaxter, asking for help:

> The Light House Board created by Congress have, I understand, made a report very unfavorable to the Light House establishment. I wish you, therefore, to obtain the opinions of as many pilots, captains of vessels and steamers as you can as to the quality of our Lights and send them to me as soon as you can. I have reason to believe that our Lights are perfectly satisfactory to all navigating people and, if so, their opinions will have more weight than those of persons having no interest in them other than a desire to obtain control of the funds appropriated for Light House purposes.

A few weeks later, Pleasonton wrote directly to the President, enclosing statements from mariners who praised his work:

> The great object [of this attack] was to introduce the French lenses into out Light Houses, which do not suit this country and for that reason I opposed and still oppose the employment of them.

His campaign failed. In that month, September 1852, Congress created a Board to supervise the nation's lighthouses. Its members were: two Naval officers; two Engineer Corps officers; two civilians "of high scientific attainments"; and two junior officers of the Navy and

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Engineers to act as secretaries. Fifth Auditor Stephen Pleasonton, after nearly 30 years of work, was relieved of his post. The *Vineyard Gazette* shed no tears:

> We are very glad to learn that Mr. Pleasonton has lost his office. It is astonishing that our Government has kept a regular antediluvian old Granny like Pleasonton in office for almost half a century.

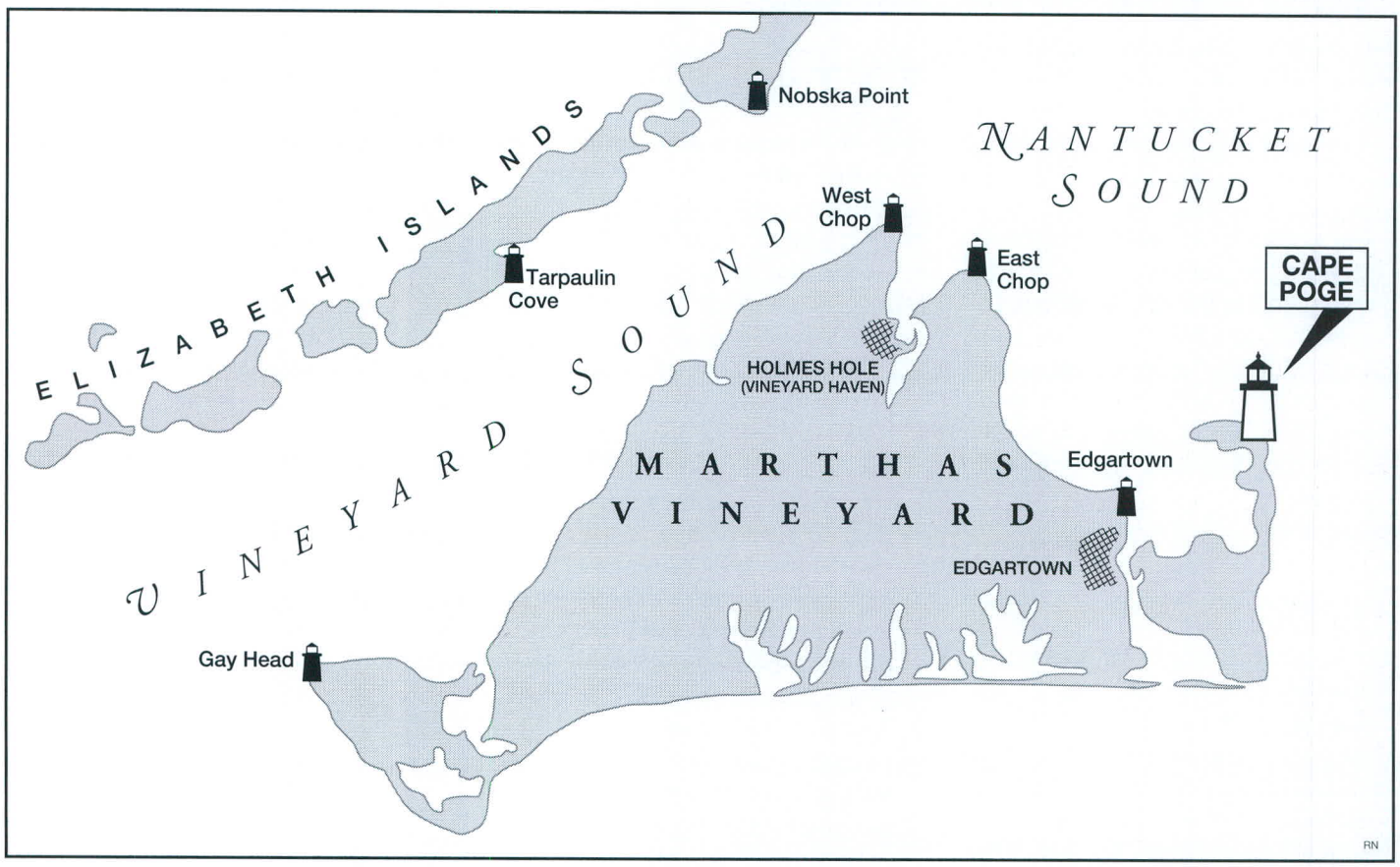
It was a Presidential election year and, after only one term, the Whigs were soundly defeated by little-known Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, Democrat. Keeper Edward Worth of Cape Poge Light, a Whig, was a man of good humor. He sent a thanksgiving turkey to his friend, Democrat Edmund Luce of Edgartown, along with the following rhyme:

> The heavens have been made to ring
> With the names of Pierce and King;
> Cape Poge has shook from shore to shore
> With the mighty cannon's roar;
> And the victory you have won,
> And heav'n on earth with you's begun!
> Edmund, give thanks, and cook this fowl,
> It is superior to Loon or Owl.
> Give thanks, Edmund, pray and sing
> That you have elected Pierce and King.

Keeper Worth had a sense of humor, but it was not enough to overcome the handicap of being a Whig. He lost his job in May 1853. Daniel Smith was named the new Keeper of Cape Poge Light. Mr. Smith, it would seem, was a Democrat. Former Collector Joseph Thaxter Pease, a Democrat, was returned to office, "under peculiar circumstances," his father wrote. Joseph, not one to waste a political opportunity, packed up and went to Washington, probably to make friends among the members of the new Light House Board. When he returned to Edgartown, he tried to replace his father as Deputy Collector of Customs with another Democrat, Constant Norton. Jeremiah, his father, called on higher authority and won out, keeping the post.

Whatever was behind his attempt to replace his father, Joseph Pease didn't stay on as Collector very long. About a year later, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came his way when Dr. Daniel Fisher, the wealthy oil and candle entrepreneur in Edgartown, along with several other businessmen, announced plans for a County bank. In August 1855, the Board of Directors selected as the bank's first cashier, Joseph T. Pease, Esq., "a perfect gentleman . . . [with an] untarnished reputation, until recently Collector of this port." Constant Norton, whom Pease had tried to have appointed in his father's place as Deputy Collecctor, was named Collector of Customs and Superintendent of Light Houses for the district.

Congress, in reorganizing the Lighthouse Establishment, ordered the Light House Board to install those "French lenses" that Fifth Auditor Pleasonton disliked so much. In 1856, Fresnel lenses for Cape Poge, West Chop and Tarpaulin Cove were ordered from Sautter & Company of Paris, at a cost of 2604.15 francs each. All were 4th Order lenses, the size standardized for harbors and bays. The new and sparkling Fresnel (a fixed lens, not a revolver as at Gay Head) was installed at Cape Poge in 1857, probably



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int he summer or fall.

In August of the previous summer, a tragedy had been averted at Poge when a young girl drifted out to sea in a small boat while her mother was visiting the Keeper's wife.

The *Gazette* of August 15, 1856, told the story:

> FORTUNATE RESCUE: On Wednesday last, while Caroline Coleman, a girl of 13 years of age, was playing in a small boat about 6 feet long, on Cape Poge beach, she was taken from the shore by the tide and carried three or four miles out to sea. The son of the light keeper, after running three miles, procured assistance, and Elijah P. Smith and others, took a boat and rescued her. When she was found the boat was half full of water and in a little while probably have sunk. The little girl told her deliverers she never expected to see any one again.

The boy who ran to Wasque to call her rescuers was 11-year-old Joshua Smith. The girl's father published a thank you in the *Gazette:*

> A CARD
>
> The undersigned would take this method to tender his sincere thanks to the gentlemen who rescued his daughter from the perilous situation to which she was exposed by drifting off to sea from Cape Poge, alone in a small boat, on the 13th of August, instant.
>
> CHAS. H. COLEMAN 2d.

Mr. Coleman forgot to thank Joshua, son of Keeper Smith; or perhaps he blamed him.

Late in October, 1859, there was another change in keepers at Cape Poge when Capt. George R. Marchant of Edgartown, a 58-year-old mariner, took over from Keeper Smith. We don't know the reason, except that the Smiths moved to Fairhaven (perhaps to a lighthouse there). Captain Marchant was the brother of Edgar Marchant, owner and editor of the *Vineyard Gazette*, providing the newspaper with an insider's view of the lighthouse service for the first time.



5th order fixed Fresnel lens. USLHS Photo.

When the Fresnel lens was installed in 1857, it came with a new lamp. Instead of the 11 individual lamps, used in the Lewis system, there was only one lamp with one circular wick. It apparently didn't work right and was replaced in 1859 with another lamp which, according to the *Gazette*, was even worse:

> A new lamp placed in the lantern of the lighthouse proved to be a very poor one and it has required the utmost attention on part of the keepers ever since to keep it in burning trim. Of late, the light has been constantly watched during the entire night, with as much care as a nurse would bestow upon a sick child, and it has been found necessary to trim, or alter it, in some particular every half hour. On Tuesday last, a new lamp (said to be the latest improvement) was put in the lantern, but it went out three times before midnight and seems to be no better than the other.

Difficulties with the lamp continued and on December 23, 1859, the *Gazette* reported that the manufacturer had come to examine it:

> Mr. Funke, the original maker of the Franklin Lamp now in use at Cape Poge, arrived at the Cape on Wednesday for the purpose of adjusting the difficulty . . . Mr. Funke found that it had not been properly set in the lens, and after adjusting it, it was found to work well during the whole night.

Despite the presence of the *Gazette* editor's brother at Poge, there was little printed about the light during the next few years. There was little published anywhere about lighthouses. The nation was torn apart in the war between the states, the Civil War. At least 20 lighthouses were damaged or destroyed in the conflict. More than 50 lighthouses were darkened by the government when it was thought the beacons might help the Confederacy. By 1866, most of the lights were back in service and things were normal again.

There was nothing normal about what happened off Cape Poge on January 7, 1866, and on the four days that followed. On Sunday, the 7th, the schooner *Christiana* went aground on Hawes Shoal in what the *Gazette* described as "the most terrific storm" in many years. The temperature dropped below zero with gale force winds. Five men and one boy were forced into the schooner's rigging when the vessel sank in the raging sea. Edgartown harbor was icebound and the waves were such that no small boat could be launched from Cape Poge. It was not until Thursday, January 11, that a boat made it to the wreck, finding one man clinging to the mast, incredibly, still alive. He was the first mate, Charles F. Tallman from Osterville. He lost most of each foot and part of each hand due to exposure. After his recovery, he became a well known figure in Cottage City, operating a small newsstand near where the Flying Horses are today. The long delay before his rescue caused some harsh criticism at the time.

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Some time after the *Christiana* tragedy, Keeper Marchant was removed and former Keeper Edward Worth returned. Worth, you will recall, was the poetic Whig with a sense of humor who lost his post when the Democrat Pierce became President. We don't know if the Marchant removal was political or not.

In 1867, a boat house was built on Cape Poge Pond, more than 20 years after it was first proposed by collector Pease. Located on the protected pond beach, it meant a long walk over loose sand for the Keeper. One plan shows it as 3000 feet away.

But that long walk must have seemed less of a burden after the Light House Board later that year authorized an assistant keeper for the station and appointed Keeper Worth's son, Jethro, to the position. Thirty-years-old, he had recently married after returning from serving in the Navy during the Civil War. There was more good news: Keeper Worth's wages were increased from $350 to $565 a year and the new assistant was raised to $400 a year. The increases were not so large as they might seem: the war had brought a sharp inflation.

With the additional keeper at the station, the dwelling was again too small. It took two years, but in 1869 a room was added. It was 12 by 13½ feet, hardly more than a gesture at accommodating a second family. The 1869 annual report told a familiar story:

> The site has suffered to such an extent from encroachments of the sea that it had been deemed advisable to make timely provision for the removal of the buildings inland, by the purchase of a little more than four acres of land . . . Immediate necessity of removal is not apprehended, and the light-keeper has been instructed to give prompt notice of further encroachment.

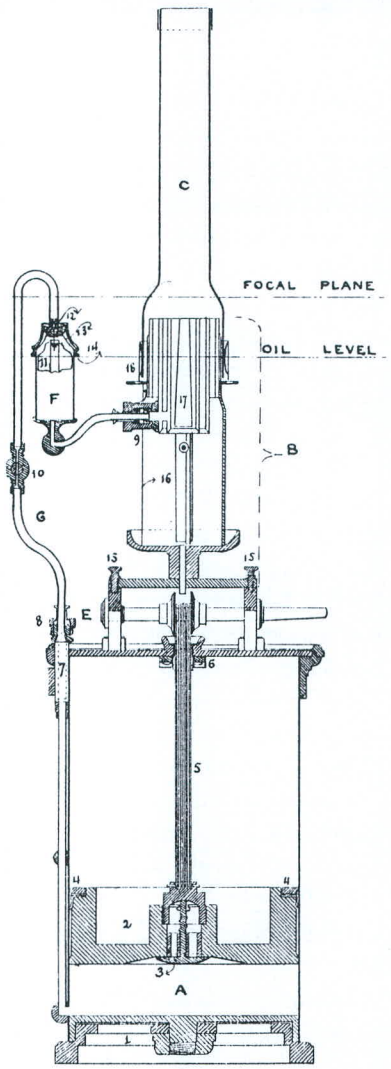
If there was anything that the Board didn't have to do, it was to instruct the Keepers to be aware of the encroaching ocean! Additional land was purchased in 1870, but nothing was done about moving the buildings for several years.

The cliff continued to wash away, but nothing was being done about moving the buildings so Keeper Worth thought it was time to keep a record of the encroachment. On January 1, 1874, he measured the distance from the east corner of the house to the edge of the cliff "and found it to be fifty feet."

Shortly after dark on March 10, 1874, the schooner *Hardscrabble* ran ashore on Cape Poge Beach about a mile west of the lighthouse. The journal reports that:

> Cape Poge Light was seen plainly by those on board about an hour before going ashore and also at that time.

Keeper Worth must have made that entry on the next day after talking with the crew who came ashore:



Oil lamp typical of the type used in 4th and 5th order lenses.

> Above Schr. was first seen from this station at about 5:30 a.m. At about 9 a.m., Revenue Cutter *Hamilton* tried to haul her off but failed having got the hawser foul of her Screw, disabling her. *U.S.S. Verbena* . . . towed her [the *Hamilton*] into Edgartown. At about 8 p.m., the wind blew a gale . . . and the Schnr. took fire, being lime laden. The crew and wreckers were obliged to leave the vessel and come to this station for shelter, the weather being extreme cold.

On the third day, the schooner burned to the water's edge as the crew watched from the lighthouse. It was not until two days later that the crew was able to leave Cape Poge:

> Vessel's crew left this station for Edgartown. The cargo . . . consisted of about 1200 brls. of lime and 200 brls. of potatoes, all of which are a total loss.

Keeper Worth, on New Year's Day 1877, dutifully did his measuring, recording the "distance from the east corner of the house to the cliff — 39½ feet." One year later, January 1, 1878, he did it again: "Measured distance from house to edge of bank and found it to be 36 feet."

In four years, the ocean had moved 14 feet closer, yet nothing was being done. Since 1867, the lighthouse had been burning lard oil, sperm oil having become too expensive. In 1878, an even cheaper oil was squirting out of the ground in Pennsylvania, bringing another change:

> July 2, 1878 — S.V. Poor (lampist) . . . dismounted the lens and fitted it to be used in connection with a "Kerosene" oil lamp. Rec'd. 3 lamps, 48½ gallons of Kerosene Oil, five yards wicking, 12 chimneys, one measure and funnel. Commenced burning Kerosene on the evening of this day.

The new lamp burned well, "no trouble," the Keeper wrote. On the next night, it again burned well, "with the exception of a chimney warping over and causing it to smoke." Kerosene had taken over.

The ocean was taking over Cape Poge and in its 1879 annual report, the Light House Board stated about Poge:

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The sea has washed away the whole of purchase of 4 acres of Aug. 20, 1801 . . . and nearly all of purchase of 4 acres of June 6, 1825.

The Board asked for funds to rebuild the Poge establishment and Congress appropriated $5000 to replace the original 1801 dwelling, which had been added to three times, with a double set of quarters. Mr. Seely of the Light House Service arrived on August 13, 1879, "to make arrangements . . . for landing material to build a new house at this station." The new dwelling was finished on December 9, but it was not until April 15, 1880, that the two Keepers and their families moved in. The old house and barn were then torn down by the keepers who, the Board said, could "have the wood for fuel, etc."

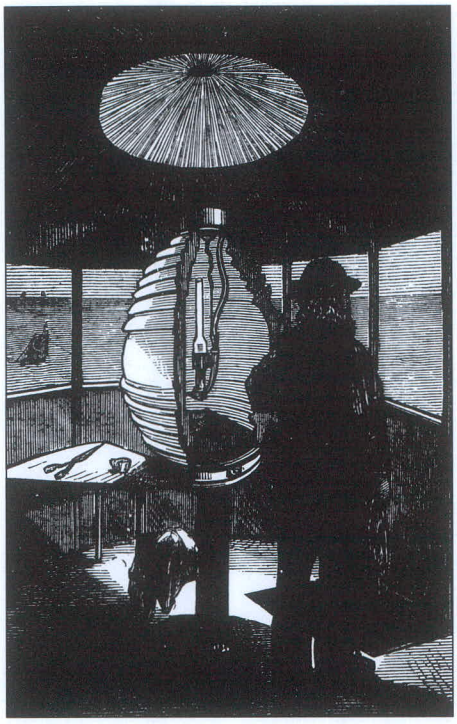
On February 23, 1881, the supply vessel *U.S.S. Verbena* dropped off "one Library (No 14) for the use of this station." The establishment, after years of indifference, had started in 1876 to distribute small boxes of books, 40 or 50 books per box, to those lightships and lighthouses it determined to be "inaccessible off-shore stations." Now, five years later, even such "accessible" stations as Cape Poge were receiving books. It would be interesting to know what the titles were but that's a research project of its own.

One title we know Keeper Worth received that year was a book of *Laws and Regulations Relating to the Light House Establishment, 1880*. This may have been the first comprehensive book that Keepers ever received on the subject.

Another vessel went aground that fall on September 18, 1881:

> At 8:30 p.m., Schr. *Carrie W.* of Eastport, Maine . . . ran ashore half mile to the westward of this station. Light *seen* and *known*. Reason of disaster: miscalculation of distance, the weather being thick and stormy at the time. The above schr. cargo consisted of "Down East fruit" — herrings and sardines.

The captain and crew came ashore the next day, spending the night at the station. Two days later, the schooner was floated off the beach by wreckers for $500.



Increasingly solicitous of its Keepers, the Light House Service, on November 5, 1881, delivered to the station "one Cook Stove and furnishings complete." There were, of course, two families at Poge, but only one stove was sent. Keeper Worth should have suspected something. The next year, on August 22, 1882, that something occurred. Father and son made this joint entry in the journal:

> The office of "Assistant Keeper" at this station is abolished by the Hon. Secretary of Treasury and the late Assistant promoted to "Acting Keeper." Mr. Edward Worth, late Keeper of this station, retires (after a continuous Service of over sixteen years) at the age of *Seventy years and three months*.
>
> I, Jethro Worth, who this day take charge of this station as "Acting Keeper," have served continuously from July 1, 1867, to August 22, 1882, as "Assistant Keeper," being a period of over *fifteen years*.

On September 6, 1882, the separation occurred:

> Edward Worth (late Keeper) moved his furniture and family this day.

Another era had ended at Cape Poge. The 70-year-old Keeper, the humorous poet and Whig who had sent a turkey to his democratic friend on Thanksgiving 1852, packed up his belongings and left his station in the care of the "Acting Keeper," his son, Jethro. On December 2, Jethro proudly wrote:

> Having passed a successful examination, received my full appointment as Keeper of this light station. Jethro Worth.

Keeper Jethro Worth was 45-years-old. He and his wife, had a son, Edward, then 10-years-old. They didn't stay on Poge for long; a much less lonely station became available the next year and they took it:

> October 11, 1883 — Turned over all public property to Mr. Geo. H. Fisher, late ass't. keeper of Cross Rip Lightship.
>
> I shall proceed to Edgartown and take charge of the Harbour Light. Jethro Worth.

Directly under that entry:

> I, George H. Fisher, take charge of this station as acting keeper. Jethro Worth (late keeper) moved his furniture and Family this day.

The change must have been welcomed by both families. Cape Poge, remote though it was, must have seemed like heaven to Fisher, fresh from service aboard the Cross Rip Light Vessel; and to the Jethro Worth family the lighthouse on Edgartown harbor, a pleasant stroll from town, must have provided a whole new way of living. On January 24, 1884, Acting Keeper Fisher received his "full appointment as Keeper of this Light Station," having passed the required examination.

The Light House Board steadily improved the Keepers' lot. On March 12, 1884, Keeper Fisher "received one Medicine Chest from the Inspector." Then, on June 23, he received a "uniform suit, likewise a working suit." The Board explained the move in its annual report for 1885:

> The Board has at last succeeded in clothing all the male light-keepers . . . in a neat, appropriate, and economical uniform . . . It . . . will aid in main-

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taining [the Service's] discipline, increase its efficiency, raise its tone, and add to its *esprit de corps*.

It didn't help the female Keepers, of course. At tourist spots like Gay Head or Nobska Point, the uniform was worn with considerable pride, but at remote Cape Poge, where most visitors dragged themselves ashore from a wreck, it served more as free clothing, a welcome addition to the Keeper's meager salary.

Another perquisite was on the way and, after four years at Poge, on August 31, 1887, Keeper Fisher

left this station on leave of absence for one week.

This is the first mention of time off in the journals. Perhaps it was the first time that Keepers, who worked seven days a week all year round, were given a vacation. He probably went to Nantucket where his mother, in failing health, was living. One year later, September 11, 1888, he again left on leave, indicating that the annual vacation had become routine:

Leave of absence for one week, leaving station in charge of my son, H.B. Fisher.

If these leaves were indeed official vacations, it is strange that the Service didn't feel obligated to provide a substitute keeper.

Keeper Fisher kept a good journal. Its entries were clear and terse, with only an infrequent personal reference. In the back of the book, he listed "Dates of Official Visits to the Station." The routine seemed to be that there were from four to six visits annually, including one official inspection (later, inspections became more frequent). The other visits were by supply vessels, mechanics and occasionally an engineer. In most years, there was only one visit during the winter, usually in December, with none from then until March. It was a lonely spot during the long, stormy winter months.

For what seems to be the first time, in 1892, the station was provided with "four charts showing position of Cape Poge Light and its vicinity." Along with the charts came instructions on how to measure for uniforms — apparently, the new uniforms weren't fitting too well. Some things however, never changed:

March 4, 1892 — The small house that stood to the East of the Light House went down the bank in the gale of last night. The bank has washed away during this late gale from 3 to 5 feet in different places around the government land.

Keeper Fisher, despite his terseness, occasionally used rather poetic imagery in describing the weather. Such phrases probably were idiomatic at the time: "a smothering snowstorm," "light, baffling airs," "squally with tempest." The gale that sent the small house down the bank was accompanied by "a smothering snowstorm."

On July 13, 1892, Keeper Fisher received a telegram from Nantucket with word that his mother was "sinking rapidly." He left the station at 5 p.m., for Nantucket, returning on the 17th. Again on the 29th, a telegram arrived: his mother was dead. He "left the station at 2:30 p.m. for Nantucket leaving wife and son in charge." He returned on August 2nd.

By 1893, the ocean, as it always does, had won out and a new tower was authorized. The construction was a major operation that summer, but in its annual report for the year, the Light House Board made it sound rather simple:

A new temporary light tower, made necessary by the washing away of the bank, was built 40 feet distant from the old one. The old tower, which was very much out of repair, was taken down and the light was removed to the new tower.

In his journal, Keeper Fisher describes what happened in detail, but he never suggests that it was a "new temporary light tower." This 1893 structure is the one that still stands today on Cape Poge. Could it be that when it was built it was thought of as only temporary by the Light House Board?

There is something equally confusing in Keeper Fisher's activities at the time. During the month that the workmen were there building the new tower, he was hard at work on the old one:

Keeper whitewashing [old] tower outside. Workmen on new tower.

Keeper painting window frames and sashes in old tower.

Keeper painting old tower stairs.

The new tower, temporary or otherwise, was erected 40 feet from the old one. The old lantern (the glass-enclosed room inside which the lamp and lens are



Cape Poge tower in the 1960's with the east shore of Marthas Vineyard in the background. U. S. Coast Guard photo.

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mounted) was to be used on the new tower. The transfer had to be accomplished during daylight of one day so the light could operate without interruption. Keeper Fisher explains how it was done:

> June 23, 1893 — Workmen putting up staging from one Tower to the other. At 10 a.m., Mr. Johnson (Lampist) arrived here. Commenced cutting away the boarding in Lantern to loosen bolts that hold the old Lantern down.
>
> June 24 — The Tower Lantern moved from old tower to new. Put in place at 3:30 p.m. and lighted at Sunset for the first time on new Tower. Mr. Johnson moved Lantern. Set one new pane of Glass, repaired a broken hinge to Lantern door.

That lantern, a heavy 10 sided "greenhouse" with a cast-iron roof and ventilator ball, containing a heavy glass Fresnel lens, was inched across the staging from the old Tower to the new one, a distance of 40 feet. All this taking place 35 feet above ground, using nothing but man power. And Lampist Johnson and crew accomplished it, breaking one pane of glass and one hinge in the process! A good day's work!

One week later, the workmen "pulled the old tower down," the Tower that the Keeper had freshly whitewashed and containing freshly painted stairs and window sashes. Could the old stairs and windows have been used in the new tower? If so, that would make them even older than the 1893 structure — an important historical point. It does seem unlikely, however, but why did Keeper Fisher paint them?

Three years later, with the new tower safely back 40 feet, Keeper Fisher wrote on December 17, 1896:

> Two stones of the foundation of the old Light House has gone down bank.

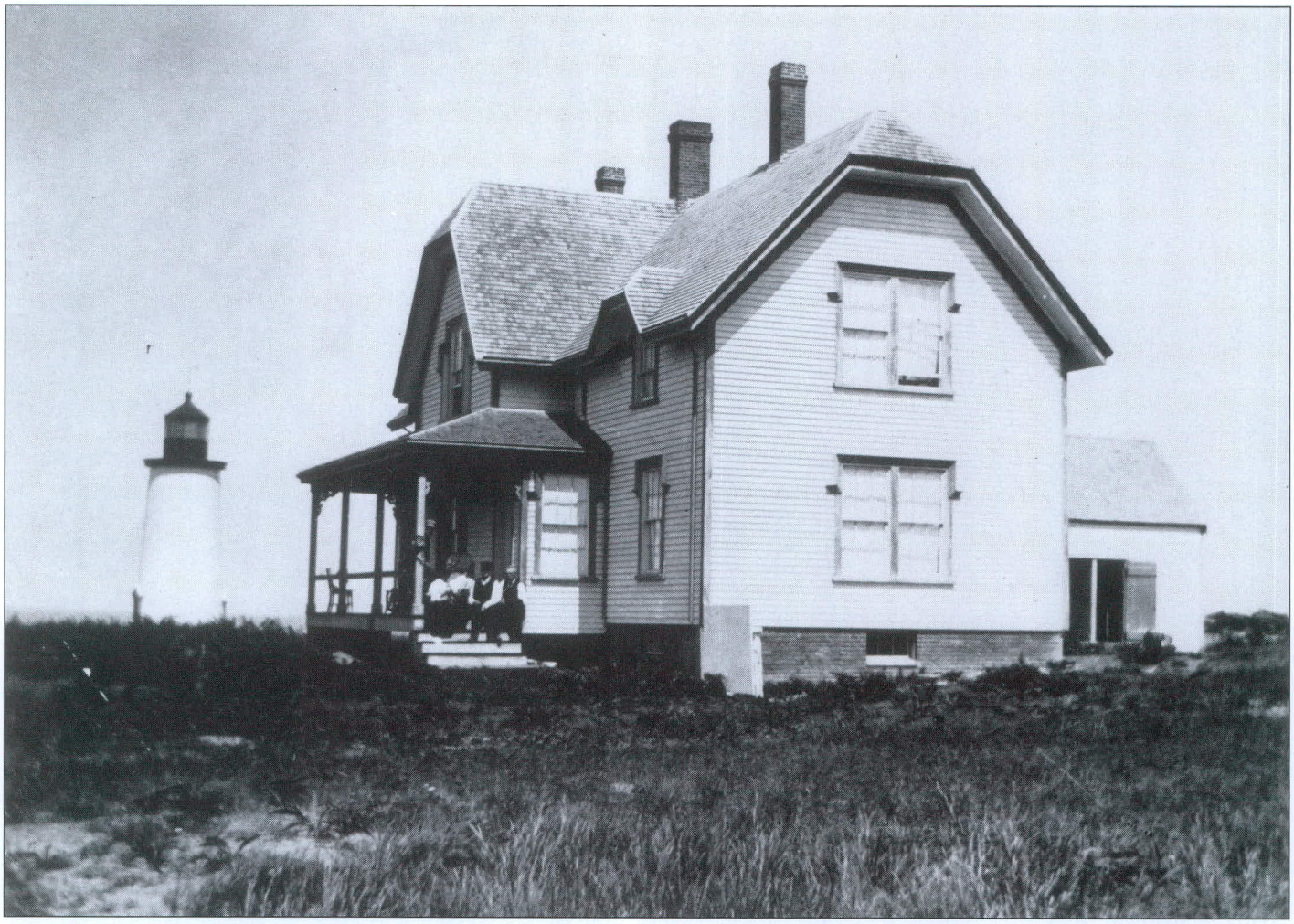
The following day's entry:

> Two more stones of the old foundation have gone down bank.

There was something symbolic about the old foundation going down the bank in 1896. That same year, the spoils system, the foundation stone of the lighthouse service for nearly a century, was also washed away when President Cleveland placed the establishment under Federal Civil Service.

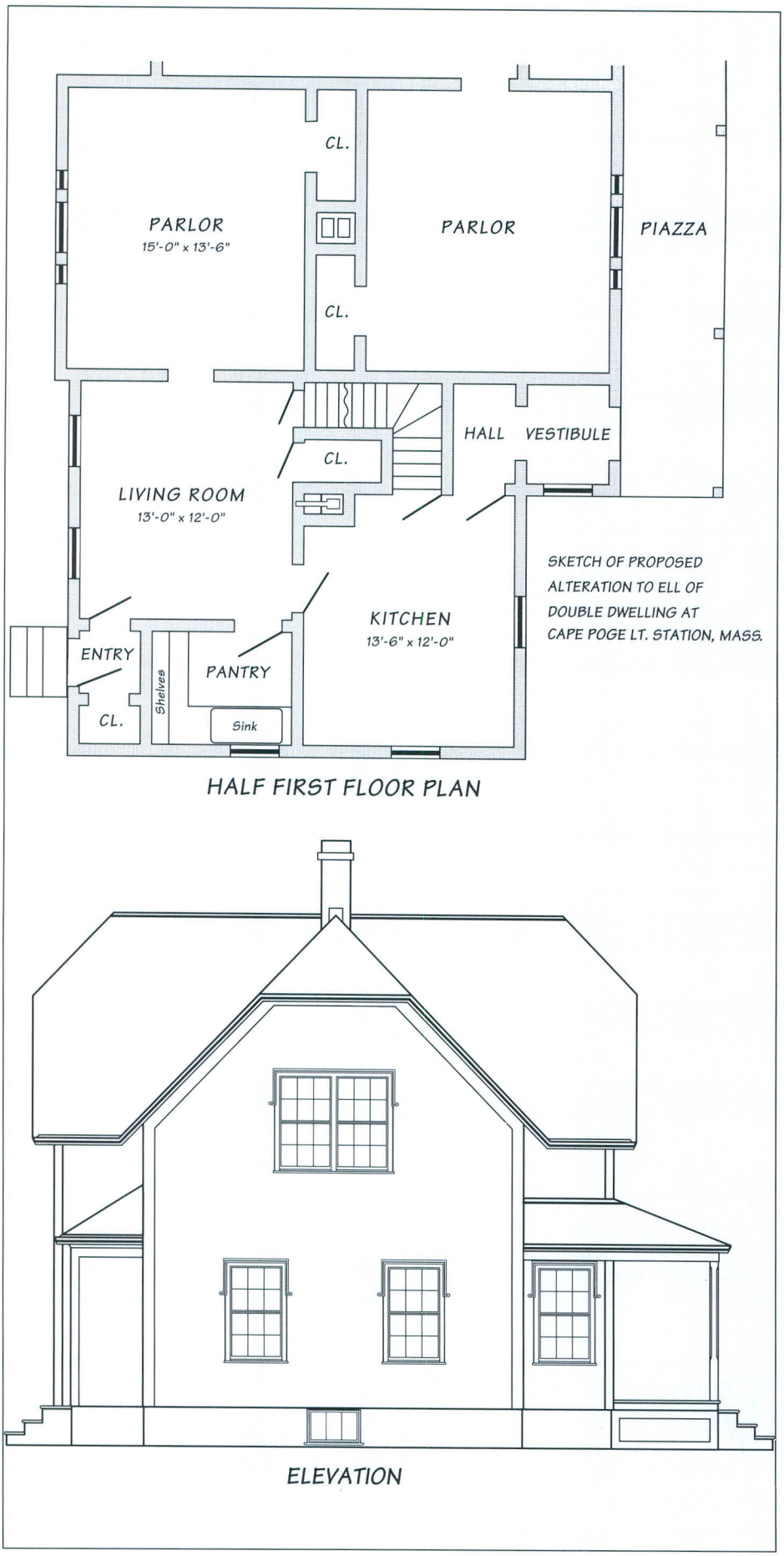
Many vessels ran aground off Cape Poge because of a confusion between the fixed white light at Poge and the fixed white light on the Corss Rip Light Vessel. In 1898, the Board decided to end the confusion by giving Cape Poge Light a flashing characteristic, one red flash and two whites. Keeper Fisher described the changeover:

> June 9, 1898 — Two workmen (machinists) arrived here at 9 a.m. with a new lens and fixings for putting in a Flashlight at this station. They are



The "new" keeper's dwelling constructed in 1896. Note the keeper and his assistant. Dukes County Historical Society photo circa 1920.

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now at work in the Light House.

June 11 — This Light changed from a fixed White to a Flashing red and white and Lighted for the first time at sunset.

The "new lens and fixings" were made by Chance Brothers of England. The base was a 19½ inch drum that rotated every 30 seconds atop a raceways containing 29 bearings (19 thrust and 10 radial). A weight at the end of a steel cable powered the clockwork that rotated the lens. The Keeper wound up the weight inside a 35 foot dropbox, giving a running timer per winding of between 5 and 6 hours. There were six panels of prisms and lenses, two having red shields in front of them. The lens rotated sending out a 0.7 second white flash, then a 4.3 second eclipse, followed by a 0.7 second red, etc. We don't know if a new lamp came with the Chance lens. Probably, the Kerosene lamp that had been installed in July 1878 was retained.

The flashing charcteristic added another chore to the Keeper's life: at last every five hours he had to crank up the weight. That meant he had to get out of bed every night, on long, winter nights, perhaps twice. Clearly, not a pleasant chore, especially in a howling winter gale. Normally, a rotating light station was manned by two Keepers because of this extra work. Cape Poge was not.

Keeper Fisher didn't like it and thought the clockwork should run longer. On June 27, 1898, the District sent a man over to work on it:

> Mr. Sommes (Machinist) has been making repairs about the running gear in Tower so as clock would run longer time.

When he left the next day, Mr. Sommes had "made clock in Tower to run Seven hours." But even that must not have satisfied Keeper Fisher. On August 23, after 15 years on Cape Poge, he sent in his resignation:

> Rec'd from Inspector office a letter stating my resignation was excepted *(sic)* from Sept. 1st, 1898. My Successor, Mr. Dolby from West Chop Station, will probably relieve me by that date.

The Lighthouse Service didn't believe in much overlap and on August 30th,

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Keeper Fisher "transferred all gov't property . . . to Mr. Geo. E. Dolby, late ass't. keeper at West Chop Station." The next day, Keeper Dolby made his first entry:

> Having all Government property turned over to me this day by the late Keeper Geo. H. Fisher, I now take Charge of this Station.

Two months later, the U.S.S. *Myrtle* anchored offshore and landed lumber and brick, along with four "labaras" (laborers). The four men worked from November 3 until January 26, a poor time of year on Cape Poge for outdoor work, on a major renovation of the station. The annual report described it this way:

> A set of quarters in the dwelling was rearranged, much better adapting it to being kept warm, and a well was driven in the cellar. The yards were filled and graded, concrete walk laid, plumbing put in order, and 96 feet of drains laid. The boathouse was rebuilt and enlarged. An oil house was built. Various repairs were made.

The new boat house hadn't been planned. It became necessary, as we learn in the journal, when a storm destroyed the old one while the workmen were there:

> November 27 — Bank washing badly. Fences blown down. Boat House blown down and carried away. Lost one pare of Oars, two double blocks and fall which belonged with blocks used for hauling up boat . . . steps moved from Tower. Tower rocked very badly. A three-masted schurner is ashore between Cape Poge and Edgartown. Very heavy sea on the East side of Cape Poge.

The renovation of the dwelling was completed in January and presumably the Dolby family, about whom we know little, spent a warmer and more pleasant winter. That summer, tragedy struck the home and on July 21, the journal entry reads:

> Keeper's little boy Arthur died at 1:30 a.m. of Hart trouble, another boy sick.

The following spring, a most welcome announcement came from the Light House Board:

> Received Letter from Inspectors office stating that a Assistant will be appointed at this station and what is needed.

When the Steamer *Azalia* anchored off the point on May 11, 1900, bringing the new assistant, the Dolby family must have watched with great interest. He was Alfred A. Howard and along with him came a new stove, a lamp and 1½ tons of coal.

Tender Azalia depicted on rear cover

There is no mention of other household furnishings or family. It is not until January 22, 1901, that we learn he is married:

> Mr. Howard, Assistant Keeper, went from the Station at 9 a.m. for Taunton with his wife for the Hospital, she being sick for some time. Mrs. Dolby went with them to Edgartown.

It is not obvious what the Keeper meant by his writing error (he crossed out the word, mild). Perhaps he thought she was not as sick as she claimed. While the Howards were away we learn that they have a child:

> Assistant child sick. Sent for Dr.

Two days later, Mr. Howard returned. We are not told when Mrs. Howard came back.

These were heady times to be an American. For the first time, the United States was a "world power." Our war vessels roamed the seas:

> July 8, 1901 — Passed this station at 11 a.m. Battleships *Kearsarge*, *Massachusetts*, *Alabama* and a number of small steamers. Proceeded East.

The battlewagons sailed west the next day. Again on August 9 there was naval action as "Three Battleships painted white and one which looked like a Cruiser went West."

We had just defeated Spain in Cuba and had taken over Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. During the war, we had annexed the Hawaiian Islands. We had taken part, along with other nations, in quelling the Boxer Rebellion in China. It is no wonder that Keeper Dolby could recognize battleships by name.

Then in September 1901, president McKinley was assassinated and the flamboyant Teddy Roosevelt took over. There's not a mention in the journal of the McKinley assassination, no mention of the flag being at half-staff or of a period of mourning.

Mrs. Dolby and her children had spent the winter in Edgartown, returning to Poge on June 6, 1902. The day after their return, there is a surprising entry in the journal:

> Keeper packing up things. Getting ready to move.

On June 25, 1902, the Steamer *Azalea* arrived "to take on board Keeper and Family and household effects and left, en route for Nantucket at 2 p.m. All well." One week later, the *Azalia* returned and "landed Keeper Wallace A. Eldredge, Family and Household Effects."

Dolby had been Keeper only four years, the shortest tour on Cape Poge since it started. There were other changes coming. On January 13, 1904, the Inspector, during a visit, asked Assistant Keeper Howard "if he would accept the Keepership of Great Point Light and he accepted." The Howard family left two days later and his replacement, a Mr. Westron, arrived on February 1. He didn't stay long. On June 3, 1904, the journal recorded:

> Mr. Westron informs me that he sent in his resignation.

There must have been unpleasantness between the two men because on June 14:

> Ass't Keeper Westron left this Station this a.m. for Boston without notifying me.

He didn't come back and three weeks later Mr. J.E. Barrus arrived to become the new Assistant Keeper. His family and household goods followed, arriving on July 12, 1904.

Mr. Barrus stayed at the station for the next 15 years, one of the longest tours in Cape Poge history. He was promoted to Keeper in 1908. His son and his wife both died on Cape Poge, as we will see in the third and final part of this history of Cape Poge Light.

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Painting by Chas. Hubbard circa 1840s.
Reproduced with permission of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian.

Cape Poge Light

PART III

By Arthur R. Railton

From its establishment in 1801, and continuing up to the present, the history of the Cape Poge station reflects almost the entire history of the American lighthouse service, which was established in 1789. The trials and tribulations of the keepers and their families, logistical problems, low pay, changing technology and a niggardly service are all reflected in the story of the Cape Poge Lightstation.

The series is reprinted from the Dukes County Historical Society's quarterly magazine, *Intelligencer* with permission from Arthur R. Railton.

Remote and Lonely

Sometime in December 1901, Cape Poge Light had its 100th birthday, but there was no celebration. Keeper George E. Dolby didn't mention the anniversary in his journal; he probably was not aware of it.

In those 100 years many improvements had been made inside the lighthouse tower. The first lighthouse, in 1801, had a multi-wick, smoky spider lamp that burned sperm oil inefficiently, its light growing dim by dawn. One hundred years later, a concentric-wick kerosene lamp burned bright and clean within a jewel-like lens of precisely ground optical glass that rotated to send brilliant red and white flashes to the horizon.

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The equipment had been improved, but not much had been done for the Keepers. They were still isolated, without communications. In winter, they still had to walk miles along a windswept beach for their mail and supplies. In summer, it was less arduous, they could row or sail to town, but in summer everything was easier on lively Cape Poge. In emergencies, they were better off than the earlier Keepers, there now being two of them at the station, but they still had to rely on a flag hoisted upside-down to signal for help, a signal, as Keeper Thomas was to learn, that was about as effective as shouting into the wind.

The beacon had entered the 20th Century, but for the Keepers and their families little had changed.

Then in 1904, things began to improve. That fall, two carpenters, along with a load of hardware and lumber, arrived to spruce up the living quarters. They shingled the house, dug a new well, installed a new pump (still a hand pump, of course) and cesspool and, perhaps most important of all, on November14, 1904:

Carpenters finish water closets.

There was no change in the winter weather, however. Severe storms continued to wash away the bank below the tower. On January 25, 1905, "the worst NE gale and snow of the season...washed away fifteen feet. Tower stands sixteen feet from edge of bluff." The harbor froze over and Mr. Jeffers came for a visit, driving his team across the pond early in February. Two days later, an "iceboat came out and brought the mail." Twice that month the steamer *Uncatena* tried to get into Edgartown, but couldn't. Then on March 5, 1905:

"Steamers *Uncatena* and *Mackinac* got into Edgartown after a hard battle with the ice. Five weeks today since the *Uncatena* has been to her dock."

When spring came, with it came tragedy:

"April 9, 1905 — Everett (the Ass't. Keeper's son) went out in the dory and we think he is lost, as we found the dory tipped over at her anchor. April 10 — Power boats came out the a.m. to try and get Everett with trolls, but there was too much wind and they had to give up.

April 11 — Mr. Barrus left this station this p.m. on route for Boston with son's remains. Found body this a.m. close to the dory by Capt. Ripley, Tom Pease and a Mr. Fisher."

It was a sad spring on Cape Poge.

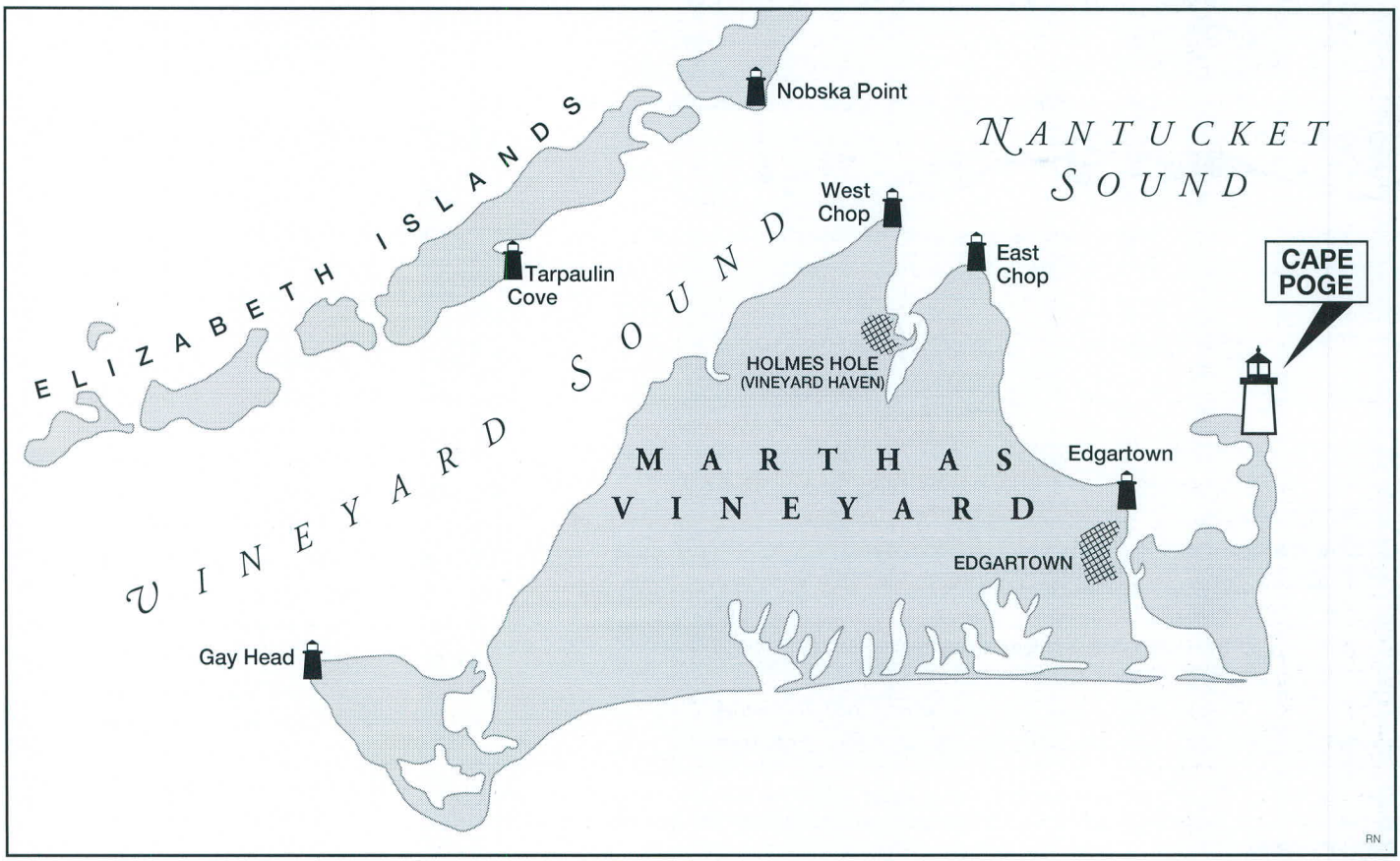
During the winter of 1905-06, several vessels ran aground on the shoals off Cape Poge, one in March:

"March 20, 1906 — Schooner *Rose Mueller* ran ashore on east side of station at 5 p.m. Crew reached shore about 6:30 p.m. and stayed overnight at Station. Assisted crew in rescuing personal effects & provisions. Ass't went to Town with mate, absent from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. to telegraph ship owners.

March 23 — Agent of vessel arrived this a.m. & he had decided to unload the ice & try to get her off. Crew at work throwing the ice overboard.

March 24 — The crew of Revenue Cutter *Mohawk* are at work on the vessel taking out the ice. They also have a crew of men from the island at work.

March 25 — Wrecking crew started to haul vessel off at 11 a.m. Floated her at 1 p.m., the *Mohawk* started with her at 3:30 p.m. for New Bedford with wrecking crew on board at the pumps."



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The ocean continued to cut away the cliff and in October 1907, the *Myrtle* "landed lumber to move the tower." The job was finished by October 11, when "carpenters put down sand anchors" to brace the tower against the strong winds. Such cables are still in use.

The next winter was another rough one and on January 24, 1908:

"Worst storm of winter up to this time. Dike broke through at the South End of pond, cutting off teams from getting here except by beach, five miles further around pond."

A few weeks later:

"Keepers walked to town over the ice... Keepers and Mr. Mayhew broke through the ice in coming from town, lost some goods & mail."

It was just another hazard of winter at Cape Poge. The following summer was pleasantly uneventful, except for a period in which "the Board of Health quarantined station...Ass't. Keeper's son has scarlet fever." Then on October 31, 1908, Keeper Wallace A. Eldredge was transferred to the Wing's Neck Light in Buzzard's Bay, after six years at Poge. He turned the "property over to Mr. Barrus as my successor." The Assistant Keeper had been promoted, but it was ten days before ex-Keeper Eldredge and family could leave. A northeaster made it too rough for the *Verbana* to come close enough to load their household furnishings. The new Assistant Keeper was Charles H. McKay. He and Keeper Barrus faced their first major emergency on February 20, when:

"The machinery stopped at 3:40 a.m. Could not make it revolve, had a fixed light until sunrise. Found something like was in the bearings. Took them out, cleaned them and the Light is revolving good again."

That spring, the *Verbana* took "the sailboat to New Bedford to have an engine installed," marking the end of an era. When she returned six weeks later with "our power boat," the journal gives us no hint of the joy that must have come with the motor! Life was becoming more civilized on the tip of Cape Poge. There was another breakthrough in April 1910 when:

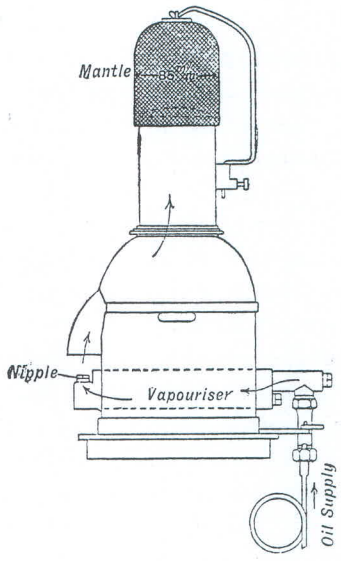
"The Ladies went to new Bedford today. Came home on the night boat."

A one-day shopping trip to New Bedford must have seemed miraculous to the Keepers' wives. There was evidence that even the Establishment was softening its hard-nosed attitude. That year, when the Inspector made his annual visit, he wrote in the journal:

"Houses at Poge should both have bath rooms and hot water heaters. Wm. BUCHANAN, Insp."

The bathrooms may not have come that year, but a major improvement in the lighthouse did. It was an incandescent oil-vapor lamp that

"...burns vaporized kerosene under an incandescent mantle, giving a much more powerful light with little or no increase in oil consumption. The kerosene is stored in a suitable tank and is forced by compressed air ...into the vaporizer...a few strokes of the pump once or twice a night serve to maintain the required pressure. The kerosene is converted into vapor by a preheating torch when starting the lamp and subsequently by the heat of the mantle itself. The vapor...ignites as a blue flame in a Bunsen burner under the mantle, which is thereby brought to a brilliant incandescence."



For several nights the Keepers, no doubt, wished for the old reliable wick lamp as they struggled with the "brilliant incandescence." By December, they had learned to operate it and had time to enjoy the holiday (with no time off, of course):

"Had a good old Christmas dinner today, with Ducks and all the Fixings."

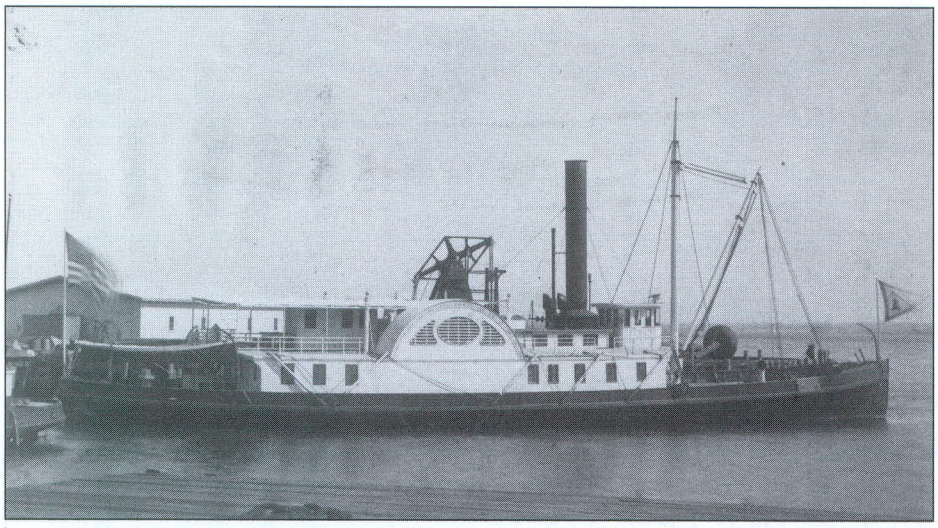
Spring, once again, brought sorrow:

"March 23, 1911 — Keeper's wife very sick.

March 24 —Dr. Worth and Mrs. E. T. Vincent came today. Mrs. V. to stay a few days with Mrs. Barrus. Mrs. Barrus had a very bad night.

March 25 — Mrs. Barus, wife of Keeper, passed away at 6:15 p.m.

March 26 — The remains were taken to Edgartown this a.m. The funeral will be held at No. Bellingham, Mass., former home town of Mrs. Barrus, March 29."



The Lighthouse Service tender *Verbana* was a dead ringer for the *John Rogers* pictured above. Note the large lighthouse service flag pennant flying from the jack staff. National Archives photo.

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Mr. Mayhew, a "neighbor" on Chappaquiddick, filled in for Keeper Barrus, who returned on March 30.

The vaporizer of the new lamp continued to malfunction, causing frequent "smoak ups," as Keeper Barrus spelled them. The old kerosene wick lamp was kept trimmed and used often. Soon, more than the vaporizer was causing problems: the revolving lens that had been installed in 1898 was beginning to show its age. Made by Chance Brothers of England, it rotated every 30 seconds on bearings which, after 13 years of service, were wearing out. On November 26, 1911,

"The revolving parts in lantern working very bad. Stopped four times last night, had to turn by hand. Sent to office for someone to come and fix it."

For four nights, the Keepers kept the lens rotating by sheer muscle, an exhausting task on the long nights of late November. On December 1, the new bearings arrived and the Keepers installed them, enabling Barrus to write that "the revolving macarnism in tower running nicely."

Widower Barrus had been looking for a housekeeper and on June 30, 1911,

"Mrs. R. Thayer and little girl come to live at this station with Keeper." One week later,

"Mr. W. Thayer was at this station to see his wife and little girl." On August 26, "Mrs. Thayer who was here keeping house for Keeper went back to Boston."

Early in October, the Keeper took his annual leave, George Mayhew replacing him at the station. Whether Barrus went to see Mrs. Thayer or not we don't know, but ten days later,

"Mrs. Thayer arrived at this station to keep house for Keeper." Her stay was brief. Nine days after she arrived,

"Mrs. Thayer left for parts unknown." It was not a good year for Keeper Barrus; he seemed fed up:

"July 28, 1911 – Keeper absent from 11 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. for mail, supplies, etc. Out in gail of 70 miles an hour, lost sail – torn to ribbons –rubber coat blown to pieces on his back. No more for me, thank you! J. E. B."

For the next three years, there were continuous mechanical problems, the Keepers having to push the lens around on several occasions. The vaporizers were troublesome as well. Then, on a rainy night in July 1914, Keeper Barrus, looking out his window at 10:30 p.m., saw that the light had gone out again:

"Keeper in running to tower, slipped on the wet plank and fell, breaking bone in ankle. Managed to get in tower and start the Light. Remained until 12, then called the Ass't keeper. The ankle is swollen badly and very painful today...Made a set of crutches...attended to usual duties."

There is something heroic here. On the tip of Cape Poge, two men work frantically to keep the light burning, some nights having to turn it by hand, some times despite painful disabilities, and the world remains unaware. Even those sailing past, depending on the light, have no idea of the heroics going on in that tiny lantern, atop a 35-foot windswept tower. These were unsung heroes, these Keepers.

They were heroes in other ways also:

"April 15, 1915 – The tree-masted schooner *Roger Drury* of St. John's ashore 2½ miles south of this station at 2:30 this morning. Signals of distress. Keepers went out to her in Humane Dory. The Revenue cutter came to her and the Keepers returned to station."

But there was good news on occasion. Christmas 1915 must have been made a bit brighter when, on December 22,

"Keeper and Ass't Keeper received notice their salaries would be increased January first 1916 from $600 to $642 and $480 to $516, respectively."

These were the first increases in annual salaries in years. On April 3, 1917, the Keeper received "Confidential Letter No. 2," as he noted it in the journal. He had failed to record receipt of Number 1, but the letters probably were related to the approaching war with Germany, which began April 6. The war had little effect on Cape Poge and when Keeper Barrus was ordered to display Form No. 119 at his station, it must have seemed less than urgent:

NOTICE TO VISITORS:
No admittance until
Further Notice.

At no time, war or peace, was the flow of visitors to Cape Poge something to cause the Keepers concern; their most recent visitor had been the stork:

"May 5, 1917 — NE gale with rain. Ass't Keeper went to town for Dr. Nevin. Arrived at 6:40 p.m. Capt. John Prada reports the roughest trip to Cape Poge he ever had.

May 6 — At 1 p.m., a daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins. This is the first Birth at this Station on Cape Poge on Record."



Lonely Cape Poge tower, all that remains of the station, in 1982 prior to its relocation. Photo courtesy of Dukes County Historical Society.

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Dr. Nevin, doubtless, hoped it might be the last! Assistant Keeper E. H. Hopkins, who had replaced Mr. McKay in 1913, had more than an infant daughter to keep him up nights:

"June 23, 1917 — Revolving parts of lens working poorly, stopping every few minutes. Returned 4 vaporizers and one set of Balls and Bearings for repair.

July 4 — Revolving parts of lens stopped at 1 a.m.

August 27 — Drum on clock in tower became loose at 3:30 a.m. Had a fixed light from 4:25 a.m. to daylight. Keepers made repairs this a.m. September 7 — Drum of the Clock in tower became loose at 8 p.m. last night. Uneven flashes for one hour while making repairs.

October 24 — NE Gale with rain. Clock working stiff and revolving part stopped every few minutes last night. Keepers pushed the lens around most of the night. The high tide of last night washed the wood left by the tender all along the beach. Keepers working all day trying to save what they can."

They needed that wood as December was unusually cold and the Keepers used up both their wood and coal supplies early. Solid ice cover prevented the supply vessel from bringing more.

"December 17 — Keepers picking up drift wood. It is very cold and the rooms are damp. Can not keep a fire but a part of the time. No fuel." It was not a good time for the infant girl. Relief came a week later when the *Azalea* landed two tons of soft coal. The winter's fury continued:

"December 30 — NW gale, snow. The worst storm this winter. Cannot see 1/4 mile in any direction.

December 31 — N to NW gale with snow. The coldest weather I have seen since I have been at this station."

There was no celebrating New Year's Eve, it seems.

With spring, the weather improved, but the tower did not. The tower had settled out of plumb, causing trouble with the rotating lens unit. Workmen spent a week bringing the tower back to vertical and repairing the worn rotating parts. New guy wires were anchored in the sand to steady the tower. Finally, on June 21, a spring-is-here entry:

"Ass't. Keeper went to town for supplies. Took his family with him. This is the first time Mrs. Hopkins has been off this station since _____. [Keeper Barrus never filled in the date, but Mrs. Hopkins, had not been away from the station since fall.]"

It must have been a happy day for the Hopkins family as they motored into Edgartown harbor in the catboat. Town folks watching, probably envied them and their relaxing life on Cape Poge, far from the hustle and bustle of the world, with no worries about the war. Oh, for the relaxing life of a lighthouse Keeper!

Adelbert Barrus, the Keeper's son, who had grown up on Cape Poge, had joined the training ship, *U.S.S. Nantucket*, as a cadet. When she sailed past Poge on May 6, his father proudly noted the fact:

"*U.S.S. Nantucket* passed this station bound west. Keeper's son Adelbert is a cadet on board."

The war ended without a mention in the tersely written journal. The entry on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918 was routine:

"Fresh NE wind, clear. Keeper went to town for supplies."

In March 1919, Keeper Barrus, after 15 years of Poge, was transferred to Edgartown Harbor Light, a most pleasant change for the lonely widower. He left Cape Poge April 2, and the next day, incoming Keeper H.L. Thomas made his first journal entry:

"Received this station in very poor condition, Keeper's side. Thomas, incoming Keeper."

J.E. Barrus, outgoing Keeper, living alone for nine years, had not been a good housekeeper, it seems.

A few weeks later, Assistant Keeper Hopkins was promoted and transferred to Long Point Station as Keeper, leaving on April 27. A Mr. King, whose first name we never learn, replaced him.

Henry L. Thomas, the new head Keeper, kept a good journal. He wrote legibly and made few spelling errors. He seemed eager to record events. Perhaps it was because he had more to report: he was a workaholic. He spent two months cleaning, whitewashing and painting the quarters that Barrus had left "in very poor condition." Before the end of May, he and Mr. King had varnished the tower floor, painted the tower stairs and inside walls as well as the tower deck. The dwelling sitting room got two coats of Apple green paint, the oil house was whitewashed. They found time to make a screen door and window screens for the house. Mr. King painted his front room. Together, they made a flagpole, painted the motor boat, cleaned and painted its engine, made a cement step for the oil house and keeper Thomas still had time to record on June 28, 1919:

"Keeper 54 years old today."

There was time, too, for another baby girl at the station, born to Assistant Keeper King and his wife at 3:15 p.m. on July 10.

On September 12, 1919, the daughter of Secretary of Commerce William C. Redfield visited the station. She was surely the most distinguished visitor the Keepers ever had. The Lighthouse Service came under the Department of Commerce, so her father was their commander-in-chief. No doubt, she was well treated.

Meanwhile, the painting continued. The front hall got "white, two coats." The woodshed was converted into a barn and in October the Keeper went to town "to get his horse," so he could ride instead of walk to the ferry landing when the pond froze over. Mr. Thomas was a real drillmaster, keeping his assistant busy every day, and all day. Perhaps that explains these entries:

"April 26, 1919 — Keeper called for watch 12 mid. At 12:05 light stopped. On investigation found clockworks out of gear. Turned light by hand till sunrise. Mailed Ass't. letter to office. April 30 — Letter from Office. Regulation fully carried out and Ass't. not found delinquent.

July 11, 1920 — Keeper found Ass't. asleep on his watch and clock run down, 2 a.m., fourth time.

July 13, — Keeper went to town with official mail. Ass't. sent in his resignation.

July 14 — At 11:15 p.m. found light most out. Ass't again asleep.

July 28 — At 3:15 a.m. found Ass't asleep. Keeper finished watch."

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Life was falling apart for Mr. King, Assistant Keeper. On August 2, the journal records, "Mr. King (Ass't.) household goods attached for a grocery bill." The end came two days later:

"August 4, 1920 — Mr. King left stations this morning for good, 9 a.m." It wasn't until September 21, six weeks later, that Keeper Thomas got a new assistant, Albert S. Smith. Perhaps the delay was due to the fact that the District office had plans to make Cape Poge a one-man station. When Keeper Thomas heard the rumor a few months later, he wrote to his supervisor, Frank J. Morse, in Boston, asking if it was true. He received this letter in reply, which he carefully copied into the journal, but not until November 1922, nearly two years after receiving it:

"Yours of January 3rd., at hand.

Nothing definite has yet been done relative to making your station a one-man station, but I will, in strict confidence, tell you that in all probability it will be made one. However, Keeper, do not let that cause you the least uneasiness, for in many ways there will be advantages to it. Should this come about, automatic alarms, both to the light and lens, will be installed so that a bell will be rung in your bedchamber should either lens slow down or the light change from its even tenor. I will see to it personally that you get the best possible rig. With this, you can turn in at your regular time and a visit at the tower at midnight to wind up lens and pump up oil tank will be all that is necessary. Your station then will be much superior to either Tarpaulin Cove or Bird Island, for at these stations not only do they have the revolving lens, but a fog signal which makes it necessary for them to keep an eye on the fog in addition to the light. Relative to sickness: I do not think you need fear any trouble on that score for a flag set union down would bring you help with the hours of daylight, much quicker that at earlier of the above-named places.

FRANK J. MORSE, 1st. Ass't. Supt.
2nd District"

Just before Christmas, nearly a year later, the ax fell:

"Ass't. Keeper got notice that this station would discontinue assistant keeper January 1, 1922."

It couldn't have been a happy Christmas for Keeper Thomas, but perhaps his very important visitor brought cheer:

"Governor Mayhew took dinner with keeper and Mrs. Thomas."

On January 5, the tender *Anemone* "arrived 10:30 a.m., took Ass't. Keeper to Bishop & Clerk's Station," leaving Keeper Thomas alone on the station. He didn't stop working:

"Cleaning up former Ass't. Keeper's side, etc. Found bed bugs." True to his promise, Ass't. Supt. Frank J. Morse brought a mechanic on January 16 to install the automatic alarms. But Keeper Thomas was not happy with the new arrangement and it didn't help when he had an accident while tending the light on January 29:

"Keeper got hurt with tower door, 2 a.m. blowed against him.

January 31 — Keeper sick, result of being hurt.

February 1 — Keeper walked to Mr. Pease's farm. He took his auto and took me to town. $1.00

February 4 — Keeper went to town, walked to dike, from dike to town in auto. $2.00"

He seemed depressed at the lonely station and not up to full strength after the accident, hence his references to paying for rides into town out of a salary of less than $2 a day. He must have felt a little better on February 26:

"Used the horse today, first time for 3 weeks (some life!)."

Had he read the 1922 Annual Report by the Commissioner of Lighthouses that went to the Secretary of Commerce, he surely would have felt better. Among the very important happenings reported for that year was:

"Henry L. Thomas, Keeper, and Albert S. Smith, Assistant Keeper, Cape Poge, Mass., assisted in floating a large sloop-yacht that had run aground on the reservation. Also the yacht Dolly, which had run aground."

Those two yachts must have had some influential people aboard to rate mention in the Annual Report. The rescues hadn't sounded very heroic as Keeper Thomas had described them:

"July 12, 1921 — Keeper & Ass't. rendered assistance to Slp. Yacht, *Ladrone*, of New York, ashore NW of this station.

July 22, 1921 — Keeper & Ass't. rendered assistance to yacht *Dolly* ashore on ledge."

The Commissioner's Annual Report never describe the steadfastness of Keepers, the monotony of their lives, the all-night vigils to keep a faulty lamp burning or a stalled clockwork rotating, or the long, frigid walks along a windswept beach to pick up the mail and supplies. Such actions were not worthy of record. But "rendering assistance" to a New York yacht on a July afternoon — that was!

Keeper Thomas, still ailing from his accident, went to the United States Public Health Service Hospital in Vineyard Haven for an examination on March 10, 1922. He gives us no hint as to why he went, but he does record that the trip took 8 1/2 hours. Health was not his only worry. The ocean was moving closer and talk of moving the tower began. At the bottom of the March page, Thomas provides two unrelated bits of history:

"The last time the tower was moved: Oct. 3, 1907 (50 feet). Boat No. 13 was built by W.T. Beetle of New Bedford in 1895 (old, 27 years)."

In May 1922, Superintendent Morse and a crew arrived to move the tower 95 feet inland. It took only three days.

The Keeper's health problems continued and in October this journal entry had an ominous note:

"Went to town to see Dr. Worth, PHS, for examination. Not O.K."

His loneliness must have been relieved a great deal on January 5, 1923, when he "installed a Radio for Receiving." He now had a means of hearing weather forecasts and news as well as having some entertainment on those long nights of vigil. He still had no way to call for help except by flying his flag upside-down. With his failing health and with no assistant, he needed communications more than ever. Regularly, he puts the time it takes him to get to town in the journal:

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"Walked to town for mail, etc. 7 hours the trip, 20 minutes in town." The motor boat, which helped in warmer weather, had frequent engine trouble and the *Azalea* carried her away for repairs. The year 1923 was a painful one for him both physically and mentally and it must have been a morale booster when on Thanksgiving Day Governor Mayhew and Dr. William Andrews came for dinner. Once again, he does not explain why they chose Cape Poge or who they were.

While Keeper Thomas and his wife were on their annual 10-day leave in November 1924, Superintendent George E. Eaton made his yearly inspection visit. The station was being operated by a substitute keeper, Mr. Craig. Superintendent Eaton didn't like what he saw:

"Dwelling needs painting, grounds around boat house need cleaning up. Remove oil, Kerosene and gasoline. Are prohibited from being stored in other than oil house. Remove from barn. Clean up & stow boat house articles. Paint dwelling in spring. Restow and clean up barn."

Shocked by the devastating report, Keeper Thomas defended himself in the journal when he returned:

"Station went all to pieces in ten days absent. Additional Keeper used 3 quarts of Alcohol in 9 days. Supt. inspected this station while Keeper was on his leave of absence (Craig sub.), he said he was told not to [do] any work." His bad luck continued and on December 23 when taking the motor boat to Edgartown for the mail:

"Keeper got his nose broken by motor. Dr. Nevin fixed it up."

The accident must have happened while he was cranking the engine. Broken nose or not, two days later, he entertained that important visitor again:

"December 25 — Ex. Gov. Mayhew had Christmas dinner with Keeper."

The elements still bombarded the unprotected buildings on the windswept tip of Cape Poge and when a fierce gale blew up on February 27, 1925,

"Motor boat dragged the mooring, pounded bottom so it took rudder off. 9:25 p.m. the house shook so that the Mrs. and I swayed in our chairs and lamp on the table like to went over. Also lens stopped."

During the first two months of 1925, he carefully tabulated the time and distance involved in his trips to town: "Walking to town for mail, 147½ miles, average time on the road, going and coming, 4 hours. Jan. 1 to Mar 1." The unfavorable inspection report of the previous fall bothered him and he spent April painting the house, as Superintendent Eaton had ordered. Then in May, while renailing shingles on the tower, he fell from the ladder, hurting his back and shoulder badly. He was alone at the time, his wife being off-Island for 10 days. It was a bad fall, but it wasn't until September that he had his shoulder x-rayed: "Found shoulder O.K., joint stiff." His pain didn't keep him from going out in a gale to help a drifting boat on November 18, 1925:

"Assisted power boat *Gertrude D* of B. Three days adrift. N.W. Gale. Elmer Dodge, owner, Engine broke down and no food or water."

Another severe storm hit on February 4, the radio reporting winds of more than 70 miles an hour. Both the *Pollock Rip* Lightship and the *Nantucket* Lightship pulled their moorings. A few days later, Keeper Thomas came down with a severe cold:

"February 9 — Keeper sick with a bad cold and with high blood pressure.

February 10 — no better (Grip) performing duties poorly (T.101).

February 11 — Tender at light ship, set flag for him. No response. (T. 100-101)

February 12 — No Dr. Can't come. High winds (pond frozen over) T. 100-101.

February 13 — Not able to attend to duties. Set flag for aid. Union down. No response.

February 14 — Keeper some better. Mrs. T. is sick. (God be with us.)

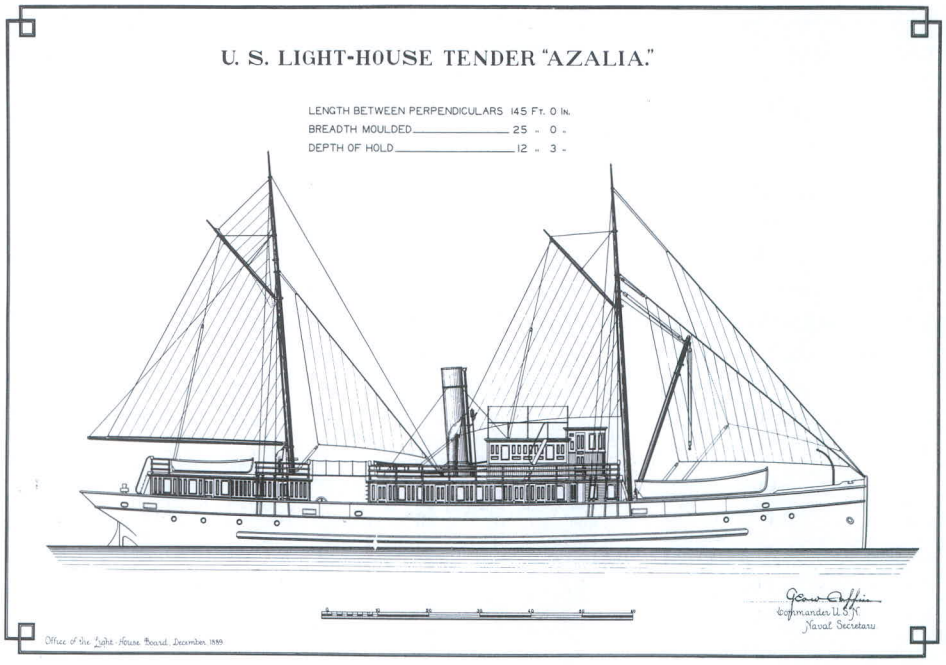
February 15 — Very weak, attend to duties under difficulty.

February 16 — Keeper better. Mrs. Thomas still very sick."

For some weeks after that, he was unable to go to town and a local boatman (Captain Backert?) brought the mail, the Keeper paying him $5.00 a trip. By summer, though, he was again scraping and painting, often mentioning that his shoulder was giving him problems. On October 1, 1926, he was understandably not happy when the town cut an opening in the East Beach:

"Cape Poge is an Island by itself. Finished digging today. Keeper marooned when pond is frozen over from Dec. to March."

The extra work from having no assistant, plus his weakening condition, is



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taking its toll. His handwriting grows sloppy, difficult to decipher. For days, only ditto marks ("Routine work") are used for his daily entries. Mrs. Thomas is not well either and the doctor orders her to spend the winter in Edgartown. Keeper Thomas faces a winter alone at the station. That was too much. On November 17, he hired a helper:

"Clifford Allen came to day, stay till Mar. 3 (Paid by Keeper)."

Superintendent Morse's reassuring letter back in 1920 about the advantages of a one-man station must have had a hollow ring. Keeper Thomas was paying out of his own pocket to make it a two-man station again. It was fortunate that he did:

"December 16 — Keeper knocked out. Shoulder gone, caused from fall from tower, May 8, '25.

January 30 — Keeper knocked out. Old complaint.

February 16 — Went to town for Medical aid (lead poisoning)."

This is the first hint we have of what might have been causing him to lose his balance, to fall and stumble so often: could he have lead poisoning? If so, was it all that scraping and painting that was causing it? Sick or not, he had a light to tend:

"February 20 — Lens stopped rotating 11 p.m. turned by hand till sunrise. Balls crushed under lens."

The following week he walked to town (6½ hours) to see the doctor, who said he had a "bad case of bronchitis." Keeper Thomas blamed it on having been up all night with the balky lens. On March 29 he again went to the doctor's:

"Went to town for slight operation on lip — small (C). Doctor not ready. *Azalea* landed 210 g. oil."

The (C) had an ominous look and two weeks later, its meaning became clear:

"April 15, 1927 — Went to town for an operation. At 1 p.m. it took to bleeding. Went back to town to the Dr., took 2½ hours before he could stop it. Started light 30 m. late. (Cancer). The result from the fall from the tower, May 8, 1925."

Thomas maintained that his problems began with the fall from the ladder. A law passed by Congress in 1916 had made Keepers eligible for the first time for "medical relief without charge at hospitals and other stations of the Public Health Service," so his health care was free, but he seemed to feel he had to show his ailments were job-related.

On Labor Day, he and his wife took their annual 10-day leave. Once again, the substitute keeper was not up to the job. He had troubles with the vapor lamp, being forced to haul out the old reliable oil-wick lamp. Thomas was not happy with what he found when he returned:

"Additional Keeper smoked the lantern up, left it for the Keeper to wash up on his return from leave *(some mess)*. Also he cracked the lens."

It took him two days to clean things up and he wrote to the Superintendent complaining. His shoulder still bothered him, but that didn't stop him from laying 165 feet of concrete walk to the Oil House. He dropped a cement bag on his leg, causing another problem: it "removed the keep cap out of place." There was more:

"Unable to take motor boat out of the water. Can't use right arm. It is still useless from that fall from tower, May 8, 1925."

In December, his wife went to the hospital for an operation. While there, she talked with another lighthouse worker:

"December 28 — Lighthouse Employee got after the Mrs. for the Keeper taking this station without Assistant. Sup't ordered it."

On the bottom of the page, Thomas explained further:

"Thomas, Keeper of this station, have received letters of criticism for taken this station without an Ass't. Letters were not signed so I could not answer them. *I did not ask for it.*"

The journal continued to chronicle the health problems of the Keeper and his wife. Operating a rotating-light station without an Assistant Keeper was hard work even for a healthy man. Thomas and his wife were both ill, yet nothing was being done to help them. Did the Boston office think Thomas was just a chronic complainer? A hypochondriac? It would seem that way. But he was sick and for the next year, the journal is spinkled with entries like these:

"February 17, 1928 — Started to town. Vicinity of beach go exhausted. A gunner came to stay with me.

March 6 — Sent Form 76 to office for six days leave (operation).

March 14 — Capt. Willoughby came down with Mr. Carew to relieve me.



The keeper and assistant on the steps of the Cape Poge residence circa 1920. Photo courtesy of Dukes County Historical Society.

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March 21 — Returned from sick leave (operation).

July 30 — Dr. Nevin tested my kidneys, found left one bad.

August 7 — Keeper was hurt on cranking the motor. Had a hart spell.

October 3 — Keeper sick with blood poison in left hand caused by cement (working on cement walk).

January 13 — [In wife's handwriting] Keeper not feeling well.

January 15 — Very sick man. The temp. this morning 102, 6 p.m. 103.

Mrs. T is also sick. No way of getting a Dr. at present.

January 16 — Keeper not able to light up. In bed. T. 104."

The darkened lighthouse got the attention of the Establishment. A substitute Keeper arrived on the 18th and two days later, the *Azalea* brought a doctor, who ordered Keeper Thomas not to go out of the house for a week. When the substitute Keeper left two days later, Thomas went back to work, doctor's orders notwithstanding.

The light was not cooperating; it continued to give trouble. In December 1928, a month before the doctor came, a crew had installed a new pedestal and clockwork mechanism. Two days after they left, the lens began acting up, vibrating the tower so much that two mantles in the lamp were shattered in one night. The next night, the clockwork stopped and Keeper Thomas, weak as he was, rotated the lens by hand all night — 15 continuous hours. The mechanic came back, but after he left, again the clockwork stopped on "account of tower vibrating."

After the doctor's visit, he was told to submit a report on his illness. He did so February 4, 1929, asking for a transfer. He got no response however and the couple had to get through another Cape Poge winter. The next summer, when the Superintendent made his inspection, he and Thomas discussed a transfer and there must have been some promise made because Thomas wrote after the visit: "Last winter at this sta."

Someone in Boston must have considered Cape Poge a difficult station, worth talking about. In November, two reporters from Radio Station WEEI in Boston came down to interview the Keeper. The journal doesn't state that they stayed overnight, but if they did, they got a good story:

"Light went out 7:15 p.m. Relief valve plugged up. Put (oil-wick) lantern in. Started lens agoing, cleaned valve, replaced it and started light. O.K. in 35 minutes.

Four nights later, he had more trouble:

Light went out 6:30 p.m. Put in another vaporizer. 8 p.m. light out again. Vaporizer plugged up. Very poor oil."

That was the first complaint about poor oil since the days of sperm oil. Thomas was having great difficulty climbing to the top of the tower, a climb of four flights. On November 19, "Keeper hurt his knee on tower stairs again. Can't use the leg." He managed to get to the doctor two days later and was told to apply for a month's leave (he doesn't say whether he did — in any case, he didn't get it). At the bottom of the page for November, he added:

"Keeper walking around on three legs. One is wooden, one cracked knee cap (hurt it on tower stairs)."

On three legs or two, he had the energy to rescue a disable launch, three miles off the station, towing her into Edgartown. But his leg continued to give him trouble:

"December 10 — Keeper in bed today. Arthritis in left leg. Dr. said nothing can be done."

Christmas brought cheer when Superintendent Atwood of the Edison Electric Company sent him a "fine Pipe, also the Mrs. a two-pound box of candy. We were well remembered at Christmas."

Somehow, despite his leg problem, they made it through the winter. The summer of 1930 was not so lonely. The lighthouse started to have visitors: on July 8, 50 persons came to see it. The total for the summer was more than 200 visitors! The world, at least in summer, had discovered Cape Poge. Perhaps the radio station's reporting had inspired the day trippers.

As we have seen, Keeper Thomas was responsible for the nearby Life-Saving Station of the Massachusetts Humane Society. Apparently, it was being discontinued because on July 16, 1930, he recorded:

"I sold the Humane Building & Equipment for the Society to Mr. Swartz."

Another winter arrived and, in spite of his expectations, he was still on Cape Poge. Something was happening, however, as he received three letters from Keepers asking questions about his station, his salary, and other matters. Then, on December 30, the news he had been waiting for came:

"Official letter stating I am to be transferred to Edg. Sta. Feb 1, 1931."

He was so eager to leave that on January 1, he was already "packing my household goods (some job!)" On January 22 and 23, he carted his possessions to the boat house for transport to Edgartown Light. The temperature dropped and he began to be concerned — the pond was freezing over:

"Ice making in the pond. Motor boat to go on the ways if it is down to 20 above tomorrow."

Maybe he wouldn't be able to move his things after all. But for once, his luck was good. The temperature climbed to 40 degrees for three days and on January 31, 1931, he made his final entry:

"Cape Poge, Edgartown, Mass. Thomas, Keeper from April 1919 to Feb. 1, 1931. I, Henry L. Thomas, have this day turned the station over to Markus Pieffer as Keeper in good condition. END."

But he couldn't leave it at that after nearly 12 years of hard work and dedication. He added another paragraph:

"RECORD—

I took charge of this station April 1, '19 & I leave Feb. 1, 1931. The light has not been out and never a smoke up in the eleven years and 10 months."

It was slight exaggeration, as we have seen, but one he surely was entitled to. He completed his statement with a flourish, making a graceful series of swirls that filled the page.

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The new Keeper, Marcus Pieffer, was less informative, his journal entries being mostly "Routine work." According to an article published some years later, he had been "a seaman since his early youth and [was] skillfully trained in lighthouse work and boating." Whatever his training, he seemed to know how to eliminate the many problems that had plagued Keeper Thomas. No longer did the light go out, or the clockwork fail. Night after night, things ran smoothly, or so the journal reported. Then suddenly, on May 10, 1938, with no warning, we read:

"Packing up furniture."

The June 2 entry is in a different handwriting:

Mr. Pieffer left station, 3:30 p.m. Mr. Dubois reported at 1:30 p.m. Cape Poge had another new Keeper: Joseph H. Dubois. He is more forthcoming and the journal becomes more interesting. His first week was spent "moveing household goods from the boat house to the dwelling (by wheel barrow and trailer (hard work)." He learned something about the isolation of Cape Poge:

"Plymouth Coupe stuck in sand. Walked from Chapaquid dike. (Later) No success with Ply. Coupe at Tom's Neck. (Later still) Pull Coupe out with Tractor."

On June 22, 1938, for the first time in 137 years, the journal records an irrelevant event: "Joe Louis retains title, knocks out Schmeling 1 rd."

Dubois was a workaholic, like Thomas. Every day, he was painting, varnishing, cleaning or repairing. That summer, he helped several small boats in distress, noted that some visitors complained about the mosquitoes, and that "Mr. Crowell's Ford Coupe; (1929 Model) short circuit ignition caused fire. Coupe badly burned." He was not easily excited. The famous 1938 hurricane, which ravaged much of the Island, didn't seem to impress him:

"September 21 — Fresh S.E., becoming Strong to a Hurricane. Considerable land washed away, tide rose over 100 ft. past boat house, considered 100 mile an hour wind velocity."

Some years later, the *Vineyard Gazette* ran a story about Cape Poge Light, stating that during the 1938 hurricane the folks in Edgartown were concerned that the lighthouse would be washed into the sea. They needn't have worried; Keeper Dubois didn't seem a bit concerned.

In November, he noted that "a bridge was built across the opening." He doesn't give details, but it must have been across the opening that had been dug through East Beach near Shear Pen Pond. The hurricane had virtually closed it up anyway.



Cape Poge tower in 1975 with summer cottages in the background. Official U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Like Keeper Thomas, Dubois was not in the best of health. We don't know what his illness was except that he made several hospital stays, one for the removal of a growth from his groin. One of his stays ended on July 1, 1939, and he recorded in the journal that on that day the "Lighthouse Service was consolidated with Coast Guard."

In the spring of 1940, he went to the hospital in Chelsea, coming back on duty April 18. Within a few days he was cleaning, painting and repairing on a daily basis. He refurbished the no-longer-used quarters of the Assistant Keeper and by the end of May, he had had enough to complain:

"Sundays and Holidays, week days, every available means employed in order to catch up work. No paint during winter, laid up in hospital for a period of three weeks, March & April, and a 2-man station with only one man, trying to do five years' work in one."

There were some events that relieved the monotony of work:

"June 22 — Aeroplane drops weather device on Parachute. Pick up and forward to Harvard University.

July 13 — Dr. Self and friend arrived 30-foot sloop. Occupy Bartlett Camp.

July 14 — Mr. & Mrs. Averill & friends Occupy Little Beacon.

August 4 — One hundred and fifty years Coast Guard."

Our collection of journals ends on August 17, 1940, and after that date we have little information about the activities at the Cape Poge Light station. Keeper Dubois remained on duty until October 1943, when the light was automated. During World War II, a Coast Guard Patrol unit of 24 men and dogs lived at the station, patrolling East Beach 24 hours a day. A two-way radio was installed in the station, although according to one source, it was so unreliable that the Coast Guard put in a telephone line.

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At the end of the war, the station was abandoned. When automated, the light was changed to a fixed white flasher, powered by storage batteries, alter changed to air-depolarized cells which power the high-intensity light for more than a year without replacement. The 3.05-ampere lamp, controlled by a photoelectric switch, comes on automatically when the daylight fades, sending white flashes out through a 300-millimeter plastic lens. Edgartown Harbormaster John Edwards makes regular trips to the light providing maintenance, replacing the batteries on schedule, installing new bulbs when needed (there is an automatic bulb changer loaded with six bulbs, when one burns out another automatically moves into position), washing salt-encrusted windows and polishing the lens.

The empty dwelling was sold in 1954 to Robert Marshall of Chappaquiddick, who tore it down and built some cottages with the lumber. In tearing it down, he made a surprising discovery: the outside walls were lined with about 20,000 bricks set in plaster, as insulation between the studs. It must have been done in 1899, the last major renovation, "much better adapting it to being kept warm."

The wood-shingled lighthouse, still braced by guy wires, was now alone on the point. The ocean continued to encroach and in August 1960, the tower, built in 1893, was moved back 150 feet to its present site. But the ocean never stops eroding and in 1982, when Wayne T. Johnson of Brockton, Mass., a lighthouse enthusiast, measured the distance from the base of the tower to the edge of the bank, it was only 38 feet.



Cape Poge gets relocated in the winter of 1987. On the day of the move the tower was just 13 feet from the edge of the eroding cliff. An Army Skycrane heavy-lift helicopter was used to effect the move. Because the helo has a lifting capacity of 20,000 lbs., and in that the tower was estimated to weigh 19,000 lbs., it was moved in two pieces. First the 5,000 lbs. lantern room was removed and placed on the ground. Then the tower was relocated 500 feet inland. Finally the lantern room was lifted and placed on the relocated tower. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

There is no Keeper out there now to sound a warning by writing to Washington, as Keeper Mathew Mayhew had done in 1825, that "if we are not in danger of falling immediately down the clift, it is very unpleasant, particular to females to be thus situated..."

But we must hope that some one is watching and worrying about the tower, an ancient structure that has survived for so long and that has, inside its shingled walls, so much history.

We must hope that some one is keeping watch.

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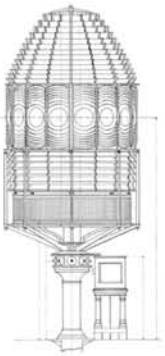
KEEPERS, CAPE POGE LIGHTHOUSE

1801	Matthew Mayhew
1834	Benjamin C. Smith (12 days)
1835	Lott Norton
1844	Aaron Norton
1850	Edward Worth
1853	Daniel Smith
1859	George Ripley Marchant
1866	Edward Worth
1867	Edward Worth
	Jethro Worth, Ass't.
1882	Jethro Worth
1883	George E. Fisher
1883	George E. Dolby
1900	George E. Dolby
	Alfred A. Howard, Ass't.
1902	Wallace A. Eldredge
	Alfred A. Howard, Ass't.
1904	_____ Westron, Ass't.
1904	J. E. Barrus, Ass't.
1908	J. E. Barrus
	Charles H. MacKay, Ass't.
1913	E. H. Hopkins, Ass't.
1919	Henry L. Thomas
	_____ King, Ass't.
1919	Albert S. Smith, Ass't.
1921	Becomes one man station
	Henry L. Thomas, Keeper
1931	Marcus Pieffer
1938	Joseph H. DuBois
1943	Light Automated



A new batch of lighthouse Christmas cards has just arrived and will provide you with an excellent variety for those Christmas mailings. The top box contains four selections. Lower right is an artist's idea of the West Quoddy Head tower with a wreath. And for the nautical minded we are carrying a NOEL lightship card, lower left. Prices for the Christmas cards are in this issue's Bulletin.

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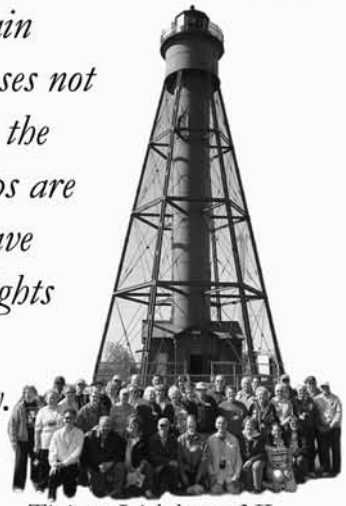
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