

PART II. FROM OTHER OCEAN ISLANDS

Foreword

When Sarah P. Bunker's gifted young neighbor Gulielma Folger was urged to apply to study at Vassar College under the tutelage of her relative, Maria Mitchell, she asked why she should go to the mainland when there were still places on Nantucket she hadn't seen yet.¹

Whether in volcanic Hawai'i or on the sandbar that is Nantucket, a person who talks about feeling trapped on "the Rock" and suffering from "rock fever" is likely a relocated mainlander. There is something distasteful about describing these ocean islands as though they were prison clones of Alcatraz.

That is not to say that the island-born and island-raised are oblivious to the confines of their situation. Although island childhoods are often idyllic and retirement to an island a comfort, midlife can be a daily contention with limits on space, company, privacy, resources, and opportunity. Islands by their nature block the impulse to run free and far, unless under sail.

People leave their native islands in search of better lives. And islanders often— perversely— migrate to other islands. Many of them have a comfort level with island living that is not so easy to acquire later in life.

Nantucket's English settlers had sojourned awhile on the New England mainland before moving offshore, but they were aware of having come from a large island separated from the European continent by an oftentimes turbulent channel. They brought with them the on-island/off-island dichotomy.

In time they were joined by other islanders, migrants who came over the seas to Nantucket from Ireland, the Azores, and the Cape Verde archipelago. Nantucket's most recent newcomers are from Jamaica. Among the first to become a visible presence in Nantucket in the 1800s were young men who arrived from the heart of the Pacific.

¹ Maria Mitchell was appointed professor of astronomy at the recently founded Vassar Female College in 1865. Two years later Gulielma Folger graduated from Nantucket's Coffin School. Her rejection of a Vassar education is recounted in a 1943 letter from Lester Folger to William Gardner (Nantucket Historical Association MS. Collection 335, folder 292), but her rhetorical question has been passed down as oral history through three generations of Sarah P. Bunker's descendants. Vassar College records confirm that she did not matriculate there.

Chapter One

Across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans

Kanakas

Alas, our *kupuna kane* have already died.
Gone never to return to Hawai‘i
Farewell, birds that have flown from the nest
Young men that have flown to a foreign land
From the jagged cliffs
And the expansive flat lands
And the ocean sea mist.
These men who traveled in foreign lands
Gone, never to return,
Adversaries of the whale...

*Mele kanikau*²

During the century after the first English settlers came to Nantucket, European exploration of the Pacific got under way, first in the South Pacific and then ranging northward. It was in January 1778 that Captain James Cook found Kaua‘i, the northwesternmost of the island chain that came to be called the Sandwich Islands and later the Hawaiian Islands. In time the harbors of Honolulu and Lahaina became as familiar to Nantucket whalers as Madaket and Polpis harbors are to Nantucket scallopers today.

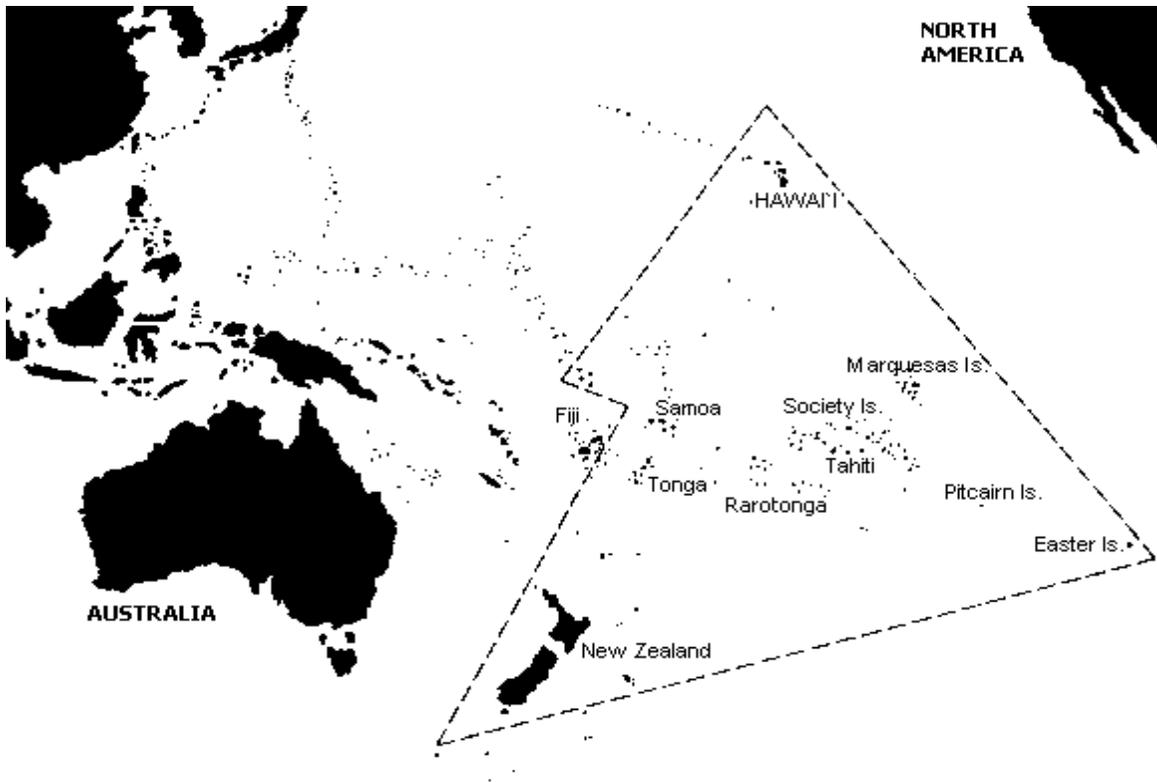
To Ferdinand Magellan and the captains of Spain’s Manila galleons, the Pacific Ocean had appeared vast and empty, but the explorers of the 1700s found it to be full of islands, most of them inhabited. A thousand years previously, Polynesian voyagers had found their way to Kaua‘i, Ni‘ihau, O‘ahu, Moloka‘i, Maui, Lāna‘i, Kaho‘olawe, and the youngest of the islands—the big island of Hawai‘i. They had come by a circuitous route—across the Pacific Ocean to Tahiti and the Marquesas, then north to the Hawaiian Islands, while others traveled southwest to New Zealand.³

The long voyage north had been relatively recent, and the memory of return voyages to Tahiti were still preserved in Hawaiian chants. The language of the people Captain Cook encountered on Kaua‘i had so little diverged from that spoken far to the south that knowledge of Tahitian served as a first means of communication between the English and Native Hawaiians.⁴ Despite some facility in communication, things soon went badly

² “Mourning Chant in Honor of the Deaths in Nantucket of the *kupuna kane* of Hawai‘i,” by Noelani Arista, Ikaika Hussey, and Lehuanani Yim, October 28, 2001. See Appendix 2a for the full texts in the Hawaiian language and English translation of two chants composed in 2001 in honor of Native Hawaiians who died on Nantucket during whaling days.

³ Nordyke 1989, p. 5.

⁴ “The longer Cook and his crew stayed in South Pacific waters, the more proficient they became in speaking Tahitian.... This ability to speak and understand Tahitian eased the way toward a rapid understanding between Cook’s crew and the Hawaiians—at least on a superficial level. As a matter of fact, the similarity of Hawaiian and Tahitian was one of the first things that several writers mentioned, with a touch of surprise, because of the great distance from Tahiti.” Schütz 1994, p. 41.

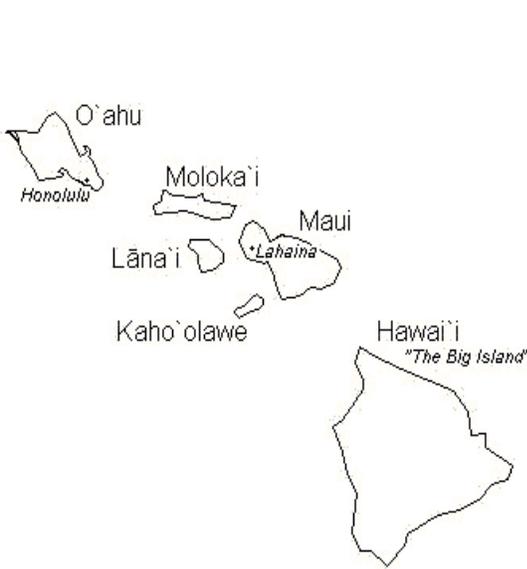


The Hawaiian Islands, called the Sandwich Islands by Nantucket whalers, are at the apex of what is known as the “Polynesian Triangle” of Pacific islands.

in the first encounters between Native Hawaiians and the English explorers, and people died in the ensuing conflict. One of those killed was Captain Cook.

This inauspicious beginning heralded much more fighting to come throughout the Hawaiian Islands. These islands had a two-class social structure—the ordinary working people and the rulers, the *ali‘i*. Each island or district supported its own aristocrats headed by a local chief. In the decades after Cook happened upon Kaua‘i, the ambitious rival chiefs Kamehameha of the island of Hawai‘i, and Kahekili of Maui became de-

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where in 1809 he turned up on the Yale University campus. Taken in, he survived nine years in New England, during which time he mastered English, underwent conversion to Christianity, and was baptized.⁶

Inspired by the young man, whom they called Henry Obookiah, the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions founded the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut. In the decade of its existence, it prepared forty-three Native Americans, twenty Native Hawaiians, a number of other Pacific Islanders, and two Chinese to return to their people as missionaries. In that context, Henry studied Hebrew and Latin and practiced translating the Old Testament into his own language, an exercise he said he found easier to do from Hebrew than from English. Mainly he was employed in devising a writing system for the language of Hawai‘i, and creating a grammar, dictionary, and spelling book, all of which have since been lost.⁷

One of the words in the dictionary was *kanaka*, which means ‘person.’

Henry Obookiah did not live to return to his native island, but his example inspired the First Company of Congregational Missionaries to the Sandwich Islands, men and women who sailed aboard the ship *Thaddeus* from Boston in October 1819. They were soon followed by more missionary families, who established churches throughout the Hawaiian islands—places of resort in years to come not only for Native Hawaiians but for the seagoing families of Nantucket whaling captains.⁸

The traffic was not all one-way from New England to the Pacific. Following the course of Henry Obookiah, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, collectively known as “Kanakas,” continued to come ashore at New England whaling ports.

In 1822 the *Nantucket Inquirer* reprinted a letter written from Nantucket to the *New York Christian Herald* urging the establishment of a seamen’s bethel in Nantucket. The article mentioned in passing “three *Heathen Youth*, who had previously belonged to our Sabbath School” who had set sail on a three-year voyage aboard a Nantucket whaling ship, in the course of which they would be educated and prepared “to carry the Gospel to their countrymen of the islands of the Pacific Ocean.” Another letter writer, who signed himself “Ferret,” expressed his opinion that the onboard schooling of these boys would not be the curriculum of the Cornwall School but would instead consist of practical lessons in whaling.⁹

⁶ Chappell 1997, pp. 38, 134–35. ‘Opūkaha‘ia was not the first Native Hawaiian to reach the United States. Others had come aboard ships involved in the fur trade, and four were available to accompany the first group of New England missionaries who sailed to Hawai‘i, in 1819. Schütz 1994, p. 99.

⁷ Schütz 1994, pp. 85–97.

⁸ Mary Buckingham Gulick died on December 12, 2001, in Nantucket. Her great-grandfather, John Thomas Gulick, was born on Kau‘ai in 1832, son of Peter Johnson Gulick and Fanny Hinckley Thomas Gulick, a missionary couple who went to Hawai‘i, in 1827. Descendants of Peter and Fanny Gulick served as missionaries in Japan, China, Mongolia, and Micronesia. John Thomas Gulick and Addison Gulick, Mary Gulick’s grandfather and father, were distinguished evolutionary biologists. Gulick 1932 is an assemblage of excerpts from John Thomas Gulick’s journals and contains firsthand descriptions of Native Hawaiian society from the mid-1800s to the end of the century.

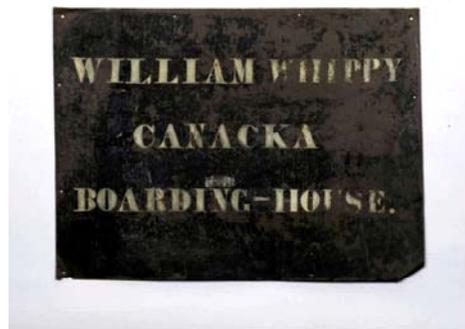
⁹ *Nantucket Inquirer*, April 18, 1822.

The following week the *Nantucket Inquirer* carried a front-page story announcing the resumption of a Sabbath School in “the South part of town” attended by “about thirty coloured youths” and the opening of one by the First Congregational Society with seven Native Hawaiians among 120 admitted scholars.¹⁰

Ferret was back in the *Nantucket Inquirer* on May 9 with an extract from another letter, purportedly from Nantucket, that had been published off-island, this time in the *Boston Recorder*. The letter stated, “Not many years ago there resided here [on Nantucket] twenty Society and Sandwich Islanders, who on stated evenings when it was clear, assembled in the streets, erected ensigns of idolatry, and in frantick orgies” worshiped their own deities, unrestrained by any townspeople. Ferret contended that the Pacific Islanders alluded to in the article were engaged in child’s play, and that they had been left alone because, “the idea that they were practicing religious rites never entered the heads of those who witnessed their innocent frolics.” He suggested readers let “all nations walk in their own ways” and wondered “why so much pains should be taken to represent this place [Nantucket] as a nest of people involved in heathen darkness and suffering for want of missionaries.”¹¹

The same issue of the *Nantucket Inquirer* carried a report on the transformation of Hawaiian society and the Hawaiian economy. It claimed that the frequent visits of American and English ships had turned Native Hawaiians from their own customs to imitation of what they observed among the officers and crews of the foreign ships, and that this process had been accelerated through the efforts of the recently arrived Congregational missionary families, who had already established a school to teach reading and writing. According to the correspondent, twenty-eight foreign vessels had stopped in the Hawaiian Islands in the past year, and the Hawaiians themselves now had ten square-rigged vessels of their own plus a number of sloops and schooners with which they carried on active interisland commerce. One of their ships had sailed with a Native Hawaiian crew under a white captain all the way to Kamchatka to trade salt for dried salmon. The writer concluded with the news that “On the south side of the Island of Woahoo [O’ahu] is one of the most commodious harbors in the world: no wind or waves ever enter there to endanger the safety of a vessel. There can be obtained refreshments of every kind, and a ship be repaired if needed—for this last year it has been a resort for all the Whale ships cruising in the northern latitudes, for refreshments and supplies.”

And so Honolulu would remain for a long time to come—a place for on-shore rest and recreation, a source of fresh provisions, and a recruiting ground for crew members



Sign for William Whippy’s Canacka Boarding-House in Nantucket’s New Guinea neighborhood. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association, 1992.212.1.*

¹⁰ *Nantucket Inquirer*, April 25, 1822.

¹¹ *Nantucket Inquirer*, May 9, 1822.

who sometimes “came here in one of our Whaling Ships from Round Cape Horn,” as did one “Sandwich Island Indian” who had the misfortune to die on Nantucket in 1837.¹²

As far as residents of Nantucket were concerned, Kanaka meant ‘male Pacific Islander,’ for whaling ships brought only young men, “single mariners,” halfway around the world. In 1825 the *Nantucket Inquirer* estimated “more than fifty natives of the South Sea Islands employed on board whaleships belonging to this port...many are now on the island.”¹³ During their time ashore they needed lodgings, and New Zealand-born William Whippey saw a business opportunity in providing for them. The sign for his “Canacka Boarding-House” is preserved in the collection of the Nantucket Historical Association.¹⁴

In 1824 the Nantucket whaleship *Oeno* departed for a voyage around Cape Horn. Because a sandbar blocked passage of heavy ships in and out of Nantucket Harbor, the *Oeno* sailed first to the Vineyard to be loaded for the outward voyage. The crew that signed on was made up in equal parts of white Nantucketers, “strangers” (what Nantucketers called anyone from “away”), and people of color. One of the people of color was a member of the Wampanoag Corduda family, certainly from the Vineyard, because there were no longer any Cordudas living on Nantucket. Another was “Henry Artooi,” a Native Hawaiian. Perhaps he had been living in a New Guinea boarding house, or possibly he joined the crew on the Vineyard. Whatever the case, Henry Artooi (probably Akui) had been born in the Hawaiian Islands and ended his days in Fiji, as did all but one member of the ship’s crew. Far out across the Pacific their ship was wrecked on Vatoa, or Turtle Island as it was then known, and after a while they were attacked by Fijians. Only Nantucket-born William Cary returned to tell what happened to the men of the *Oeno*. In his account, Cary set out inland in search of a safe hiding place. A Native Hawaiian crew member—Henry Artooi without question since he was the only one—followed along behind him for a bit and then turned back to the beach to meet whatever awaited him there. He was the last crew member Cary ever saw alive.¹⁵

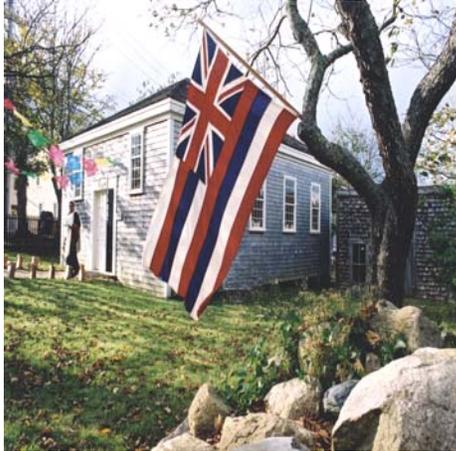
To Nantucketers, Kanakas were not only male but black. A list of mariners attached to the 1850 federal census for Nantucket has three racial categories: white, black, and mulatto. Crew members on Nantucket ships that year from Hawai‘i, included ten men identified as white, six as mulatto, and the remaining twenty-eight as black. Among the nonwhite Hawaiian crewmembers were one bearing the surname Swain, two Owens, and six Coffins. Four used Kanaka as a surname, six used Mowee [Maui], and one used Oahu.

¹² Private Record 62, list of deaths on Nantucket, Nantucket Atheneum.

¹³ Philbrick 1994, p. 182.

¹⁴ Just as with white Whippeys, the spelling of William’s surname varies across sources. It is spelled “Whippy” on the sign but “Whippey” in the 1840 census. Kanaka is spelled “Canacka” on the sign.

¹⁵ Cary’s letter informing Nantucket of what had happened was first printed in the *Nantucket Inquirer* on September 27, 1828. The editors of the *Nantucket Inquirer* added the crew list. Other newspapers picked up the *Nantucket Inquirer*’s story, and a collection of those articles appears in Ward 1966, Vol. 7, pp. 432–47. Cary’s full account of what happened on Vatoa, including his last sighting of Henry Artooi and his subsequent meeting with David Whippey, remained in manuscript until after Cary’s death. Eventually it was published in serial form in the *Nantucket Journal* in 1877, and then in pamphlet form in 1928 and 1949 under the title *Wrecked in the Feejees*.



In 1850 crewmembers on Nantucket ships from the Society Islands (including Tahiti) were evenly divided, five white and five black. All seven who had signed on from the Friendly Islands (including three who used Rarotonga as a surname) were categorized as black, as were one crewmember each from the Marquesas and Navigator's Islands and John Buttista (Juan Bautista) from Java.

On October 28, 2001, Native Hawaiian visitors chanted *mele kanikau* for men from Pacific islands who died and were buried on Nantucket during whaling days. The Hawaiian flag flew for the day at the African Meeting House. (Photo by Fred Clow).



As black men, Pacific Islanders ashore on Nantucket lived in New Guinea. An 1830 local census of Nantucket reports two young men named Jack and Harry (no ages given) living in the household of John and Elizabeth Gordon. Their names are followed by the letter "A" for 'alien' and the notation "Sandwich Islands."¹⁶ At the end of February 1832, a man described as a Kanaka was found dead under Coffin's barn on the North Shore. The dead man had come on a "whaleship from around Cape Horn," was a free man, and had lived "in Negro Town New Guinea."¹⁷ Perhaps this was the bitter end of Jack or Harry.

Five years later another Kanaka, a 35-year-old man who had come to Nantucket on a whaling ship, also expired at the end of February.¹⁸ A 21-year-old Kanaka had died the previous year in New Guinea, and in 1844 yet another died, in this case of tuberculosis at age 25. Twenty-four-year-old Joseph Dix, born in Hawai'i, but not identified as a

¹⁶ Other individuals marked with "A" in this census are Michael Douglass (known to be Cape Verdean); Michael DeLuce; John Leiva; and Manuel, Joseph, and Antone Roberts (also Cape Verdeans?); and Frederick Quoin (Quinn?).

¹⁷ Nantucket Historical Association MS. Collection 335, folder 51. This information is contained in a note written in the hand of Edouard A. Stackpole with no reference to the original source.

¹⁸ Atheneum Private Record 62, a list of deaths in Nantucket. This case is very similar to the 1832 case, but the day and year are different from the note among Stackpole's papers, and the details of place of death and residence in New Guinea are unique to Stackpole's note.

Kanaka, died in 1843 of tuberculosis, as did 31-year-old, Hawai‘i-born Thomas Clay in 1848. The same year, Hawai‘i-born John Smith died in Nantucket of typhus.¹⁹

In all, four identified Pacific Islanders and three more seamen born in Hawai‘i, are known to have died in Nantucket between 1832 and 1848. All across the Pacific, people of their parents’ and grandparents’ generations believed that, at death, their souls detached from their bodies, traveled to jumping-off places on their islands’ coasts, and from there, in the company of other souls, set off over the sea to the land of the dead.²⁰ Was there such a launching place for solitary souls cut loose on freezing-cold, faraway Nantucket? We have no way to know if other Hawaiian seamen were present to chant a *mele kanikau*, a mourning song, to encourage and comfort them on their way.²¹

Irish

“We’re going to America next week.”²²

By 1820 Pacific Islanders had dispersed over the world’s oceans and found their way as far as Nantucket. The chain of consequences that led to their arrival had begun with the introduction of long-distance maritime commerce and firearms to their home islands. A quarter century later, another massive dispersal from an island brought a new population to Nantucket’s shores, the Irish.

Once again the driving force of the migration was a foreign introduction, in this case the potato, a Peruvian plant that crossed the Atlantic and first arrived in Ireland in the late 1500s. The Irish subsistence crops up to then had been oats and barley, grains of limited nutritional value. The Irish soil and climate produced bumper crops of the highly nutritious potato, which in turn supported explosive human population growth. Despite oppressive and economically destructive English rule in Ireland, the population tripled between the beginning of the 1700s and 1845. With over eight million inhabitants, the carrying capacity of the island had been pushed to the brink, as the whole world would learn when a plant disease crossed the Atlantic and caught up with the potato in Europe. In 1845 it destroyed not just part of Ireland’s sustaining food crop, but most of it. The following year it happened again. English governmental policies exacerbated the disaster. A million people perished from starvation and disease in Ireland, and more than another

¹⁹ These deaths are recorded in the vital records of Nantucket with minimal information, namely place of birth, age, and cause of death. The lines in the death records for names of parents are left blank.

²⁰ Charlot 1983, pp. 90–96.

²¹ The 1811 burial of a Native Hawaiian who died of exposure in Oregon is described in Chappell 1997, p. 104. His Native Hawaiian crewmates buried food and tobacco with his body. After prayers, one of them sprinkled the others with sea water, and then they all left the grave site without looking back. Two chants for the Hawaiian dead on Nantucket were chanted on October 28, 2001. The texts appear in Appendix 2a.

²² Note from Richard Mack of Polpis to Frances Karttunen, May 15, 1999.

million fled—some to England, others to Australia, but most to Canada and the United States.²³

In Nantucket there had been precursors to the potato-famine refugees. As early as the mid 1700s, people with Irish names appear in town records. In 1743 Eleanor Boyle was accused of selling rum to Wampanoags. The court found that she had no license “to justify her in said sale of...rum, which is contrary to the peace...and to a law of this province.”²⁴

Four years later Henry Fitzgerald married a Nantucket wife and started a family that carried through many generations on the island. In the 1860s one of his descendants took a strong interest in the murder trial, conviction, and subsequent confession of African Nantucketer Patience Cooper.²⁵

Among at least a half dozen people listed for expulsion from Sherburne in 1763 for having taken up residence without permission was James McMurphy, who had come to the island from Newfield, New Hampshire. His presence, like that of other people sent packing by the selectmen, was deemed to be of potentially “bad consequences to the town if not removed.”²⁶ Yet James Murphy of Ireland, whether the same man or another, managed to settle in Sherburne and raise a family before dying on-island in 1775. His descendants appear in Nantucket genealogical records as late as 1905.

The “Indian sickness” that struck the island in the fall of 1763 was believed to have spread to the Miacomet Wampanoag community from the Newtown boarding house of Joseph and Molly Quinn. Writing of the catastrophe thirty-five years later, Christopher Starbuck remarked, “What is further very wonderful is that it should not spread among the white people, except with this Irish woman Molly Quin.”²⁷ Molly Quinn, for her part, denied that she had ever been sick, but Nantucketers seem to have been determined to lay the blame for the epidemic on the Irish. Stories that first appeared decades after the fact traced the infection to bodies washed ashore from an Irish plague ship and to infected Irish clothing brought ashore to be laundered.²⁸

By 1850 ninety Irish women and fifty-five Irish men were resident on the island. Although flight from the potato famine was at its height at the time, many of the Irish on Nantucket had left home in advance of the great emigration. Eight families had Massachusetts-born children who had already reached their teens by 1850.

²³ Crosby 1972, p. 183. For a thorough quantitative and analytical study, see Ó Gráda 1992, *passim*.

²⁴ Nantucket Court Records 1, p. 148.

²⁵ Information from the Eliza Starbuck Barney Genealogical Record; Stackpole 1946.

²⁶ Nantucket Court Records 1, p. 211.

²⁷ Nantucket Historical Association Collection 126, folder 2, contains three late-eighteenth-century letters concerning the 1763–64 epidemic. Stackpole 1975 reprints two of them from Christopher Starbuck to Moses Brown plus a report from Andrew Oliver, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, on the mortality of the epidemic. Starbuck’s reference to Molly Quinn is on p. 13.

²⁸ Christopher Starbuck repeats the story of the plague ship in both letters reproduced in Stackpole 1975. Little 1990, p. 186, rejects the plague-ship account, as did Shubael Coffin in a postscript to his 1798 report (the third letter in folder 2 of Nantucket Historical Association MS. Collection 126). It was to Shubael Coffin that Molly Quinn denied the story of having been infected with the disease herself.

The disproportion of women to men reflects the work available. In 1850 half of the Irish women on Nantucket were working as live-in domestics. As on the mainland, so too on the island Irish maids had become a status symbol in wealthy households. Nantucket's most prosperous families—those that employed cooks, maids, and laundresses—were slow in coming to terms with the island's economic depression and kept right on hiring servants.

African Nantucketers, however, were leaving as the Irish arrived. Already in 1840 one of the local newspapers carried an advertisement for “girls and women needed for house duties.”²⁹ Over the next ten years the number of black women and girls living on Nantucket dropped from 147 to 91. Nantucket families accustomed to being served by black domestics filled the growing void with Irish women.

According to the stereotype of the time, Irish maids were named Bridget, and the federal censuses support that notion. The 1850 census recorded ten women with the name Bridget resident on the island, three of whom were servants to Nantucket families. In 1860 the number of Bridgets had risen to fourteen, seven of whom were domestics. In 1870 the number of Bridgets employed as servants had dropped by one, but ten years later six new Bridgets had arrived, and three of them were living-in with Nantucket families.

Although a few came as seasoned housekeepers in their forties, most of the Irish women in service, whether called Bridget or Catherine or Mary, were in their late teens or twenties and single. In 1850 one in five could not read or write. About the same rate of illiteracy occurred among the Irish-born men and married women living on the island at the time.

Among the men were a mason, a cooper, a shoemaker, and a ropemaker. A few worked on ships or fishing boats, and more worked on island farms, but by far the largest number were employed as unskilled laborers at a time when Nantucket's labor needs were diminishing. For men there was no local demand comparable to that for women.

Despite the departure of many black men from Nantucket, the gender imbalance in New Guinea persisted. In 1850 there were 251 men and boys living there and only 91 women and girls. On the other hand, there were half again as many Irish women as Irish men on-island, and most of them were young and single. The Massachusetts law declaring all marriages between whites and nonwhites invalid had been repealed in 1843, opening the way for African-Nantucketer men and Irish women to marry. Rebecca Godfrey, born in Massachusetts of an Irish mother, became the wife of Nathaniel Godfrey, son of one of New Guinea's prominent black families. Their first child was born in 1852. By 1860 the family had left Nantucket.³⁰

Elizabeth Ann Barber, born in Ireland, entered into an interracial marriage before the law against such unions was dropped. Her husband, John Barber, had been born in Pennsylvania and moved to Nantucket in the 1820s. Between 1832 and 1836 John and Elizabeth Ann had three children. Then on January 26, 1839, Elizabeth Ann gave birth to triplets, only the second such birth in Nantucket's recorded history up to that time. The

²⁹ *Islander*, March 31, 1840.

³⁰ Information from Franklin Dorman (personal communication).

babies, given the names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, died in infancy.³¹ All the surviving Barber children were categorized as mulatto by the 1850 federal census. In 1850 the eldest, 18-year-old John Jr., was employed as a mason. In 1855 the Barbers had one more child, but Elizabeth Ann was widowed soon after, and by 1870 she and the children had all left the island. Only the grave markers of John Barber and their daughter Sarah Ann are still to be found in the cemetery behind Mill Hill as reminders of the family's residence here.

As the Barbers departed, however, another mixed-race family was beginning to expand in New Guinea. Between 1866 and 1878 seven daughters were born to William Owen, categorized as mulatto, and his Irish wife Julia.³² The 1870 census identified Annie and Carrie Owen as white, but the 1880 census categorized them and their sisters Lizzie, Martha, Charlotte, and the twins Priscilla and Winnie as mulatto.

New Guinea was home to a number of other interracial families in the 1860s and 1870s. One was the Snow family. Thomas Snow, white liquor-store owner, and his wife Lucretia had three children classified as mulatto by the 1860 census. Their live-in domestic servant was white and male. Also in the neighborhood lived Calcutta-born William Porte, his wife Christina, and their five children, all classified as mulatto.

The Nantucket school committee had once simply distinguished white children from children of African and Wampanoag heritage. By integrating public education in the late 1840s it had spared itself the dilemma of the greater ethnic diversity present in the latter half of the 1800s. The neighborhood name "New Guinea" was losing its significance, and sometime after 1858 the street leading from the Five Corners intersection to Surfside Road was renamed Atlantic Avenue.³³ Angola Street faded from memory to the point that eventually a misspelled sign reading "Angora Street" was placed on a nearby lane and allowed to stand for decades uncorrected as to place and spelling.³⁴

Housing left vacant by the exodus of African-Nantucketer families was taken over by Irish families, who became neighbors of black families even if they did not become kin by marriage. In 1850 George and Bridget Flood were living in New Guinea with their four Massachusetts-born children, and so were the widow Mary McNellis and her four teen-aged children. William and Mary Warren also lived in the neighborhood with their Ireland-born daughter and her three younger Massachusetts-born siblings.

The goal of many Irish families was to farm their own land, and New Guinea was just a station on the way. For the children and grandchildren of those who were successful, the next goals would be professional employment and public service.

³¹ The first triplets, born in Polpis in 1809, survived to live long lives.

³² The federal censuses are inconsistent in their information about both William and Julia Owen. The 1870 census says that William was Hawai'i-born, but the 1880 one gives his birthplace as Fayal, in the Azores. The 1870 federal census and the 1895 local census identify Julia as Irish, but the 1880 federal census identifies her as English. The 1880 one probably refers to nationality rather than place of birth.

³³ On maps printed in 1834 and 1858 "New Guinea" (without "Street" or "Road") is printed on what is now Atlantic Avenue. The current name appears on an 1881 map.

³⁴ Stackpole 1941, p. 31. It has since been renamed Candle House Lane.

By 1860 at least four Nantucket farms were Irish-owned and operated. Ten years later two more Ireland-born men had purchased farms.³⁵ Michael Nevins had a knack for building capital and growing a family. In 1870 he and his wife Catherine had six children



Charles Flanagan Sr. and Ruth Ann Flanagan with their children and grandchildren in performance at Nantucket's Unitarian Church, July 2000. Proceeds from the concert benefited a memorial scholarship for Charles Flanagan Jr., who died in 1989. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association* (photo from Flanagan family collection).

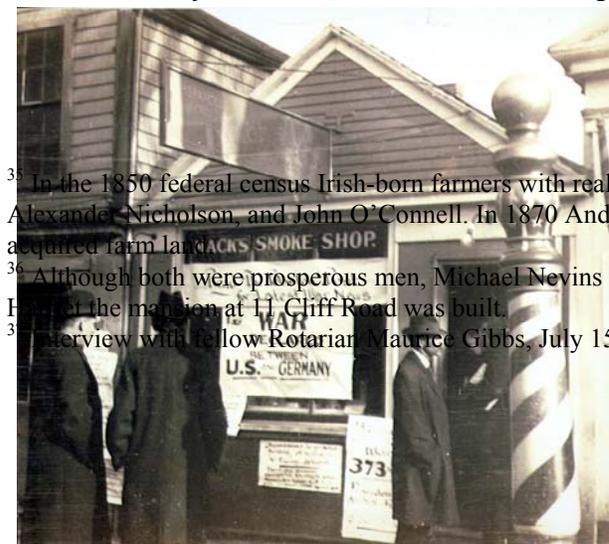
at home, and among the Irish living on Nantucket the sum of the value of the Nevins's real estate and personal estate was exceeded only by that of a wealthy cooper named Samuel King.³⁶ The ultimate legacy Michael and Catherine Nevins left to Nantucket was not monetary, however, but musical, through the instrument of their descendants, the Flanagan family.

In 1952, Charles Flanagan returned to Nantucket from service in the Korean War to teach English, bookkeeping, and music at Nantucket High School and to direct the choir at his church. Ruth Ann Murphy Flanagan brought a trained singing voice to their marriage, and their four children, Daniel, Catherine, Elizabeth, and Charles Jr., grew up singing harmony at home, on trips, in church, at the hospital, the Homestead, and Our Island Home, at fairs and receptions—wherever Nantucket people gathered in expectation of hearing their voices. Eventually a third generation of musical Flanagans and Stovers joined in. Over the years Charles Flanagan emerged as a model of island philanthropy, active in multiple service organizations and described as “part of the soul of this community.”³⁷ Daughter Catherine Flanagan Stover became Nantucket's town clerk in 1998 and as justice of the peace has performed countless weddings at lighthouses, on beaches, and in gardens all over the island.

In 1952, Charles Flanagan returned to

Members of other Irish immigrant families would also follow the course from hard farm labor to prosperity to positions of community responsibility. Back in 1870 dairyman Robert Mooney and his wife Julia were closing in on the Nevins family with five

Massachusetts-born children and an estate value of just fifty dollars less than that of the Nevinses. In the course



³⁵ In the 1850 federal census Irish-born farmers with real estate included James Collins, James Gillespie, Alexander Nicholson, and John O'Connell. In 1870 Andrew Johnson and Michael Nevins had also acquired farm land.

³⁶ Although both were prosperous men, Michael Nevins was not related to David Nevins for whose wife Robert the mansion at 11 Cliff Road was built.

³⁷ Interview with fellow Rotarian Maurice Gibbs, July 15, 2001.

of three generations they contributed to Nantucket a police chief of seventeen years' service, Lawrence F. Mooney, and then attorney/ law-maker Robert F. Mooney.³⁸

A family of McNamaras arrived in Nantucket between 1850 and 1860. They reported their surname as Mack on the 1860 federal census, tried to go back to McNamara ten years later, but subsequently reverted to Mack. Mary Mack was an octogenarian when they all emigrated from Ireland. Ann Mack was in her forties and had a grown daughter with her. Ellen Mack, nearly thirty and still single, immediately found work as a live-in servant for one of the Starbuck families on Main Street. Thomas and Dennis Mack

contributed to the support of the family by working as day laborers. Only the youngest members of the family could read and write. By 1870, Mary Mack and Thomas's wife Sarah had died, and the other Macks had moved on.

Thomas, father of two young children, remarried, and by 1886 Margaret Mack, also born in Ireland, had given birth to ten children. One of them, Robert Mack, served as one

of Nantucket's town assessors and then as registrar of probate in the 1920s. His youngest brother, Richard Mack, operated a newspaper and tobacco shop on Main Street. Richard Mack's nephew and namesake served on Nantucket Lightship 112 and later worked to bring the retired vessel to Nantucket, where for a number of years she was a colorful feature of the waterfront. Richard and Kay Mack's sons Daniel and Jerry currently serve on the Nantucket police force.

Barnard Collins and Rosanna Riley were in their teens when the potato famine struck. They fled and married on Nantucket. Rosanna was not yet twenty when the first of their nine children was born. Their daughter Agnes, born in 1857, married Robert Mooney Jr., Nantucket-born son of Robert and Julia Mooney. Her younger sister Emma, born in 1861, married into the Macy family, linking the Irish immigrants with the "descended Nantucketers." The son of Clinton and Emma Macy was Hiram Macy, a renowned builder during the economic reawakening of Nantucket as a summer resort. enowned builder during the economic reawakening of Nantucket as a summer resort.

John Killen, brought to the United States from Ireland at age five, spent the first part of his adult life operating coastal schooners. At age 55 he appears in the 1900 census as a dealer in coal, wood, and grain. Two years later he built an ice plant on Nantucket and acquired most of North Wharf and Straight Wharf. Late in his long and prosperous life he

³⁸ Robert Mooney owned substantial real estate by 1870, but he is listed in the 1870 and 1880 censuses as a laborer rather than as a farmer. In the 1900 census, when he was approaching eighty years of age and widowed, his occupation was given as a milk dealer. For the circumstances of the arrival of Robert and Julia Mooney on Nantucket in 1851, see Mooney 1988, and for the career of Lawrence Mooney, see Mooney 2000, pp. 76–77. A list of persons naturalized on Nantucket was compiled by the clerk of courts and published in the *Inquirer and Mirror* on October 10, 1936. According to this list, Michael Nevins became a citizen of the United States in 1854, and Robert Mooney did so in 1857. No woman appears on the Nantucket naturalization list before 1917.

turned to public service and died in office as a member of the Nantucket board of selectmen in 1927.³⁹

Bridget Hatch arrived in the United States as a teenager in 1880 and became a naturalized citizen eight years later. In early middle age she was widowed. Sometime after 1900 she brought her children to Nantucket, rented a house, and set about supporting her family as an “ice cream caterer.” By 1920 she was proprietor of her own ice cream parlor.⁴⁰

In the teeth of profound economic depression Nantucket had nonetheless offered opportunities to some hard-working, ambitious immigrants. There was only so much productive farm land available on the island, however, and with the passing of years fewer Nantucket families could afford live-in servants.⁴¹ As opportunity diminished, the Irish who had come to the island began to move on. Despite ongoing new arrivals, the total Irish-born population dropped from a high of 146 in 1860 to the 90s, then the 70s, and then the 50s. In 1910 there were equal numbers of Ireland-born and Canada-born people living on Nantucket, although some of the latter were the children of potato-famine refugees who had originally sailed to Canada. By 1920, the number of Canada-born residents of Nantucket had surpassed the number of the Ireland-born.

Irish families living on Nantucket before the mid 1800s did so without benefit of Catholic clergy. From the middle of the 1800s to the end of the century the island’s Catholics were served by mainland priests who made periodic visits by boat. It was not until 1897 that the island had a resident priest and a church building. For a century and a half, beginning in 1849, the priests serving Nantucket were almost without exception Irish Americans.⁴²

In the course of the 1900s the Irish presence on Nantucket became ever more attenuated as men and women left the island looking for better opportunities, and those who remained married non-Irish islanders. Then in the 1980s and early 1990s a new wave of Irish workers arrived. Once again they were mainly young and single, but unlike the potato-famine refugees, they came with the expectation (shared by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service) that they would take on short-term work, save their wages, and return to Ireland. The Northeast was dealing with labor shortages by filling jobs with Irish citizens on work visas.

These new Irish coming to North America were the beneficiaries of more than a century of Irish political, educational, and cultural nation-building. Most did not speak Irish Gaelic, but they held the Irish language in esteem, and many bore Gaelic names. They played Irish music for both fun and profit. Even traditional Irish step dancing found new expression in the glitzy entertainment of “Riverdance,” which played to huge and

³⁹ Federal censuses 1900, 1910, 1920. Killen served on the Nantucket board of selectmen from 1922 until his death. In 1922 he was also chairman of the School Committee. For a synopsis of his life, see Mooney 2000, pp. 15–16.

⁴⁰ Information from 1910 and 1920 federal censuses.

⁴¹ Forty-four Irish women were employed as live-in domestics in 1840. This dropped to thirty-two in 1860, and to fourteen at the turn of the century. In 1920 just one Irish-born woman is listed on the census as a live-in domestic servant.

⁴² See Mooney 1997 for a history of the Catholic church on Nantucket.

enthusiastic audiences across the nation. The old assimilationist pressure to jump into the melting pot had yielded to an Irish mystique that extended its benefits to the temporary workers.

For a century Nantucket's tourist season had extended from Memorial Day at the end of May to Labor Day at the beginning of September. Schools, colleges, and universities did not go back into session until after Labor Day, and students were readily available to work as "summer help"—waitresses, chambermaids, dishwashers, clerks, landscapers, baby sitters, and camp counselors. Then, at about the time Nantucket businesses succeeded in extending the tourist season in both directions—from late April to early December, schools moved their opening dates to late August in order to finish the fall term before Christmas. As a result of those changes, students got out of school too late and went back to school too early to meet Nantucket employers' needs. The Irish labor pool that was staffing mainland hospitals and tending its bars was not bound to the North American school year and offered a solution. Soon Irish flags began fluttering all over the island where young Irish men and women were renting rooms in Nantucket homes or crowding into rented houses for the extended tourist season. For the better part of a decade they provided most of the island's basic services and much of its off-hours entertainment.

It was inevitable that through marriage and through business opportunities some Irish workers—an estimated three hundred by the year 2000—would become permanent residents of Nantucket and begin their families here. On July 13, 1999, the Nantucket Cottage Hospital recorded the birth of Cían Eamon O'Mahony, son of Gillian Dwyer and Michael O'Mahony of Nantucket. All the grandparents were in Cork, Ireland. The *Inquirer and Mirror* did not flinch from printing a diacritic in the name Cían, and readers, not just those born and educated in Ireland, readily identified it with the name they might have spelled "Shawn" or "Sean." Much had changed since the days when all Irish women were perceived generically as "Bridget" and Irish men as "Patrick."

As the year 2000 approached, the Irish domestic economy began an expansion that was dubbed "the Celtic tiger," and it was no longer necessary for its citizens to work overseas. The Irish presence once again receded on Nantucket, yielding to seasonal workers from Jamaica.