

PART III. NANTUCKET AND THE WORLD'S PEOPLE

Foreword

Nantucket's English settler families were not the first inhabitants of the island, nor has there ever been a time when their progeny, the "descended Nantucketers," were the only residents. Sarah P. Bunker, who serves as the *leitmotif* for these Nantucketers, lived in a house built hard by a Wampanoag burial site and inherited a basket made for her father by Abram Quarry, Nantucket's "last Indian." When she was a girl, her father—a sea captain in the China trade—was in the habit of receiving crewmen and foreigners at home, and he employed live-in "help" to assist with the care and upkeep of what was grandly known as "the Pinkham estate." Years later, in the straitened circumstances of her widowhood, Sarah P. supported the household by nursing injured, sick, and dying people of "all sorts" as Nantucket's bone-setter Zaccheus Macy had done a century earlier.¹ As she lived out the last decade of her life in her upstairs room, what reached her ears from downstairs day in, day out was the incomprehensible conversation of her granddaughter-in-law's relatives from Finland. Sarah P. knew full well that on Nantucket there were strangers to be found wherever one turned, not just in sailors boarding houses and the servants quarters of descended Nantucketers' houses.

Parts I and II have followed the history of the Wampanoags who were in possession of the island before the English came; the Africans who were brought here by the English; and many people who came from other islands in the employ of Nantucketers. In Part III we will meet more people who came from far and not so far to adopt Nantucket as their home.

While Nantucketers in general have partitioned the world geographically into on-island and off-island, Quaker Nantucketers sorted the world's population into two kinds: themselves and everyone else. Everyone else—Bostonian and Bantu, Presbyterian and Portuguese, Maori and Methodist, Freemason and Finn—constituted the "world's people." As early-eighteenth-century Quaker tolerance hardened into nineteenth-century rigidity, Nantucket's Friends began to exclude each other, expelling people from Meeting for marrying the world's people, for socializing with the world's people, for imitating the fashions of the world's people. However would the shades of departed Quakers judge the Nantucketers of the twenty-first century?²

From 1725 until 1850 the descended Nantucketers, a great many of whom were also birthright Quakers, constituted the overwhelming majority of the island's population, but during the mass immigration period of 1850–1920 Nantucket was right in step with the rest of the United States. In 1910 fifteen percent of the population of the United States was foreign-born. By 1920, fourteen percent of the

¹ Writing of his career, Macy asserted that among those he helped were "strangers and some blacks and all sorts, rich and poor, old and young, good and bad." (Z. Macy, "A Short Journal," 1792, Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 96, folder 44, p. 7.)

² The history of Quakerism on Nantucket from its rise to the moment it suspended its activities is covered in detail in Leach and Gow, 1997. Proscribed worldly practices ranged from "attending a place of music and dancing" to vaccination against smallpox. For some examples of activities for which members of Nantucket's meeting were "labored with" and sometimes disowned, see Appendix 3a. Ultimately, factions of the remaining Friends mutually disowned one another, forming competing Meetings. An informational marker formerly in the Quaker cemetery at the corner of Madaket Road and Quaker Road stated that in the Orthodox Quaker view, the members of the Hicksite Meeting were "heretical Friends." Scientist Maria Mitchell and social activist Anna Gardner, both raised in Quaker families and imbued to the core with Quaker principles, sought their spiritual home elsewhere, in the Unitarian Church. As Quakerism in Nantucket imploded, the island's churches in general found their membership rolls expanding with ex-Friends.

Nantucket population was foreign born. Back in 1830, when the island's population was recorded as 7,310, roughly four percent of the island's residents were classified as nonwhite. After a century of dramatic fluctuations, the population in 1930 stood at 3,678, with Cape Verdeans and African Americans together accounting for about seven and a half per cent.³

The Depression years of the 1930s and the prewar days of the early 1940s were uncharacteristically static. Few children who entered the Nantucket public schools in the 1940s had not been born on the island even if their parents or grandparents had come from "off." The second half of the twentieth century was, however, a period of great population growth. By the close of the century, "Where are you from?" had become a standard conversational opening gambit, and descended Nantucketers began to seem and feel exotic.

Nantucket men (and some captains' families) who went to sea in whaling days had observed firsthand the world's geography and the variety of the world's people. Pacific Islanders, Asians, Africans, and the great panoply of peoples known as *mulattos* and *mestizos* held no mystery for them. Even the Nantucketers who stayed at home—Sarah P. Bunker and her young neighbor Gulielma Folger, for example—knew a great deal about the world's people, because despite the selectmen's efforts to deport the uninvited, they have always been coming to the island.

Racial, ethnic, and national diversity were unsurprising to the descended Nantucketers. What would amaze them is the variety of people who have made their permanent home on the island and the extent to which they have been able to become part of the island community.

In general, the new Nantucketers of the twentieth century have not converged in a particular part of town. Ethnicity has not determined the churches or the social organizations they have joined. There have been Armenian Congregationalists, Norwegian Catholics, Jewish Episcopalians, and Italian Jews who have also been Masons, Redmen, Oddfellows, or—most recently—Rotarians. While stereotyping has become nigh impossible, quick assimilation has also meant Nantucketers have never quite gotten to know where some of their neighbors (or their own grandparents) came from or what forces pushed them across the sea to this small island where they put down new roots. In this, we are all more insular than we should be.

Scandinavian, Dutch, and Latvian fishermen have not yet been recognized in Nantucket's public history, nor have Armenian rug merchants, Greek grocers, or Jewish restaurateurs, yet Nantucketers born in the twentieth century grew up with all of these and more. The current surge of East Europeans, Central Americans, and Southeast Asians finding employment on Nantucket comes on top of centuries of international migration to the island. Here are some stories from Nantucket's cosmopolitan history.

³ The 1830 federal census recorded 279 nonwhite residents of Nantucket. The 1930 federal census recorded 278. The percentage change has to do with the much lower general population in 1930 rather than with absolute numbers of residents classified as nonwhite.

Chapter One

From the Far Antipodes

China

Forty years after the last execution on Nantucket, there was another death by hanging on the island. It happened in 1809—the same year that a desperately displaced Native Hawaiian boy is said to have been found weeping in desolation on the Yale University campus.⁴ That year a Chinese man known as Quak Te, thinking himself abandoned on Nantucket, succumbed to despair and took his own life.⁵

In consideration of the fact that “Quak Te, of Nantucket, a Black man deceased, having while he lived, and at the time of his decease, Goods, Chattels, Rights, or Credits in the county aforesaid, lately died intestate,” Judge of Probate Isaac Coffin ordered an inventory of what had been found in his room. The inventory identified Quak Te as a mariner and placed a total value of \$72.67 on his belongings, \$41.60 of this being in cash held by the deceased. He was also in possession of a sleeping bag and a very large wardrobe. Among the clothes listed in the inventory were four pairs of “Nankeen trousers” and three “Nankeen jackets,” a “China coat” and a pair of black pantaloons, three waistcoats, a greatcoat, and more. This was not what would be found in the sea chest of an ordinary seaman.⁶

Who was poor Quak Te, and how had he come to such a sad end on a November day in Nantucket?

In 1807, Chinese merchant Punqua Wingchong and his servant had come to Nantucket on the ship *Favorite*, a vessel owned by a consortium of Nantucket ship owners.⁷ Among the Nantucketers entertaining Punqua Wingchong was Keziah Coffin Fanning, who described her guest as “a Chinaman that came with Mr. Whitney last fall from Canton. He is a merchant there. He is the color of our native whites.”⁸

Relations between the United States and England had been deteriorating, and while Punqua Wingchong and his servant were visiting Nantucket, President Thomas Jefferson imposed a foreign trade embargo that blocked them from returning to Canton.⁹ After a long, frustrating stay on Nantucket, the merchant traveled to New York to appeal to John Jacob Astor to help him get home. Astor prevailed upon President Jefferson to allow a ship with cargo to sail for Canton in the summer of 1808, and Punqua Wingchong took passage home aboard her.

But what about Punqua Wingchong’s servant? Apparently he was left behind on Nantucket to look out for his master’s wardrobe until his return. That return was long delayed, however. It was only after the War of 1812 that Punqua Wingchong returned to the island, not once, but twice. On his second visit, in 1818, he stayed with Betsey Cary, and left his name in her lodging book.¹⁰

⁴ The story of this Hawaiian boy, who was called Henry Obookiah, is recounted in Part II of *The Other Islanders*.

⁵ Private Record 63, Nantucket Atheneum, entry for 1809: “Quack Te a Chinese hung himself it is supposed.”

⁶ Documents concerning “Te, Quack” are incorrectly indexed under H in Nantucket Probate Book 5. The order issued by Isaac Coffin is on p. 222, and the inventory itself is on p. 229.

⁷ The *Favorite* was owned by Paul Gardner, Jonathan Paddock, Daniel Whitney, and Phillip Coffin.

⁸ Jehle 1994, pp. 72–73. Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 2, Folder 3. Diary entry for January 10, 1808, in bound volume: “History of Nantucket.” Spelling and punctuation modernized.

⁹ For a description of the causes and consequences of the embargo of 1807–09 and its successor, the Non-Intercourse Act, see O’Connor 1968, pp. 8–13.

¹⁰ According to Betsey Cary’s “List of Boarders,” Punqua Wingchong of Canton, China, paid \$3.25 for lodgings on April 20, 1818 (Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 10, Account Book 536: Lodging Book 1816–1829).

It was all too late for Quak Te. He had waited for his master for over a year, frugally rationing out the cash he had been left for board and lodging. Then, as late autumn darkness enshrouded a Quaker town apprehensive of war, Quak Te had found his abandonment on Nantucket unendurable and made his exit by hanging himself in his rented room.

Decades passed after Punqua Wingchong's stay at Betsey Cary's lodging house before any Chinese again resided on the island. With the end of the China trade and the collapse of Nantucket whaling, there was no reason to come. But as Nantucket became a summering place for well-to-do city dwellers, demand for services of all sorts arose. The summer people required others to do their cooking, gardening, caddying, housekeeping, and laundry. Nantucket's Azorean, Cape Verdean, and African American families assumed these services, but there remained, nonetheless, a niche for Chinese laundrymen.

The aging Chinese men who hand-washed and pressed the clothing and household linens of the nation's well-to-do had been brought to the United States as contract workers to take part in laying railroad tracks from coast to coast. Through their labor an overland alternative to the long voyage by ship came into being, and wooden ships—many from Nantucket—were abandoned to rot in west-coast harbors. In a sense, the Chinese laborers, having done their part, were left to rot as well.

To begin with, the supposedly temporary workers were concentrated mainly on the west coast. When their contracts were up, they renewed them or went to work as miners or as agricultural workers in California. Like so many other immigrants to the United States, they endured hard labor and great deprivations in order to send remittances to those who had stayed behind.

Many of those men hoped to bring their families to the United States. The snowballing volume of Chinese immigration and the decrepit conditions of the urban Chinatowns that sprang up around the country alarmed United States voters and lawmakers, however, and in 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, cutting off further immigration. Chinese men in the United States were prevented from bringing their wives and children to join them, and—having sent most of their earnings back to China—they did not have the means to go home. As a result, the populations of Chinatowns remained overwhelmingly male (twenty-seven men for every Chinese woman in 1890, still four men for every woman in 1930). The two sources of employment for stranded Chinese men were laundries and restaurants. Because they required less initial investment, laundries became ubiquitous.¹¹

In 1900, the Chinese laundry on Nantucket's Main Street was operated by two men who had come to the United States a decade before the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Middle-aged Lee Wah and his

¹¹ Sowell 1981, pp. 136–43.

elderly employee Han Leon lived on the premises, washing and ironing day and night. Ten years later they had passed on the business to a younger man, Charles Leung, who had arrived in the country just a year before Chinese immigration was stopped. Until 1919

Leung operated the Canton Laundry in the building presently occupied by Murray's Liquor Store. In the spring of 1920, Henry and Mabel Rosen expanded their housewares store to occupy the whole building, and Leung moved his business up the street. Approaching sixty years of age, he was still living a solitary life of the sort that had overwhelmed Quak Te more than a century earlier.

By 1930 the Chinese laundry business had moved to a rented building at the foot of Main Street. Hot Chin and Harry Der told the census enumerator that both of them had been born in California of Chinese parents about a decade after the Chinese Exclusion Act came into force. Eight years later the Canton Laundry was being run by Wing Gee Der and Wing Jaa, who were also offering take-out Chinese food three evenings a week.¹² With them was Wing Gee Der's son, Ning Der, who had arrived a year earlier from Canton and been enrolled in the Academy Hill School. Legislation in the 1930s had finally permitted limited immigration from China to resume, reuniting separated family members.

At the age of fifteen Ning Der was placed in the second-grade classroom at the Academy Hill School. By the fall of 1938—having been tutored in English by the pastor of Nantucket's Summer Street Baptist Church, the Reverend N. Bradford Rogers, and by Mrs. Rogers—he had advanced to the fifth grade, and from there he moved at the normal rate of one class a year through his sophomore year in high school.¹³

At the time, woodworking classes for boys were held at the Coffin School. During a class change that involved going from one school to the other, Ning Der suffered a potentially catastrophic injury described in a news story headlined, "Nantucket's Chinese Boy 'Ning' Will Not Lose His Eyesight:"

An unfortunate accident occurred on Monday afternoon when Ning Der, the popular little Chinese youth, was struck in the right eye by a wooden disk, thrown by a careless boy. The accident occurred

CHINESE FOOD

At NO. 4 MAIN STREET

Carry out

Monday, Thursday, and Saturday

**FRIED CHICKEN
And CHOP SUEY**

dec 10-3 mos.

Advertisement for Chinese take-out food. *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 10, 1938.



SPECIAL NOTICE!

After April 1st the Store now occupied by the Chinese Laundry will be opened with a full line of CROCKERY, DISHES, GLASSWARE, KITCHEN WARE, TIN WARE and FURNITURE.

WATCH PRICES COME DOWN.

ROSEN'S

Postoffice Square Nantucket, Mass.
Where you always get bargains.

Advertisement for the opening of Rosen's store, replacing a Chinese laundry. *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 24, 1920.

¹² Advertisement placed on the front page of the *Inquirer and Mirror* on December 10, 1938, to run for three months.

¹³ In the annual list of students enrolled in Nantucket public schools, his name is spelled as both "Ning" and "Nging." In 1939 he is listed as "Nging H. Der"

while a class was en route between the Coffin School and Academy Hill school. The wooden disc, scaled through the air, shot off at an angle and struck Ning Der squarely in the eye.

For a time it was thought that the youth would lose the eye. Dr. George A. Folger, School Physician, after an examination at the Hospital, 'phoned an eye specialist in Boston, making arrangements for Ning's transfer to the Memorial Hospital in that city. On Tuesday, the injured boy was placed in a police car, which had been detailed to rush him to Boston. As soon as the boat reached Woods Hole, the car sped over the roads with Officer Wendell Howes at the wheel.

The latest information received indicates that Ning's eyesight will be saved. This is cheering news, as the alert little Chinese boy has been virtually adopted by Nantucketers, and his happy personality and never-failing courtesy have attracted the attention of summer visitors, also. His father, Gee Der Wing, operates the Canton Laundry, at the foot of Main Street.¹⁴

Despite the description of him as a "little" boy, Ning Der was in his teens at the time. His classmates recall him as a slight, graceful boy who enjoyed playing basketball at Bennett Hall. They also recall his engaging personality.

While in the Nantucket public schools Ning Der constructed a model of Nantucket's Unitarian Meeting House. Completed in 1939, when its maker was seventeen years old, the large model with its turkey-egg dome was stored out of sight for many years but is now exhibited in the rear of the church itself. The informational text with it quotes one of his teachers as saying, "Ning was never satisfied with halfway measures. He went to the church and recorded its dimensions; he counted the rows of shingles in the walls and the number of shingles in a row; he counted the panes in the windows." His translation of these meticulous observations into a precise scale model produced a community treasure.

In 1942, as World War II raged on land and ocean alike, Wing Gee Der found his own opportunity to serve the community. In late May of that year forty-two men were rescued on the open sea south of the island. Their vessel, the S.S. *Poseidon*, had been torpedoed by a German submarine in the vicinity of Bermuda, and they had drifted in two lifeboats all the way to Nantucket.



Ning Der and his model of the Unitarian Church. *Courtesy of the Unitarian Church (photo by Estelle Coggins).*

¹⁴ A clipping of this article is in Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 64, Scrapbook 78. There is no date on the clipping, and the incident has not been located on microfilm of the *Inquirer and Mirror*. Possibly it is from another newspaper. The 1938 Nantucket street list and the newspaper both report Ning Der's father's name as Gee Der Wing, but the family orders the elements of his name as Wing Gee Der.

Nantucket boatmen—recently recruited as a civil patrol—sighted them, picked them up, and brought them ashore. Upon landing, the men were taken to Bennett Hall, which functioned not only as a basketball court, but also as a community meeting hall and emergency shelter. Of the forty-two rescued crewmen, thirteen were Chinese, and Wing Gee Der, who was fluently bilingual, was called upon to serve as their interpreter.¹⁵

1943–44 was the last school year Ning Der was registered in Nantucket High School. By then the grandfather of the little three-generation family was in failing health, and they gave up the Canton Laundry in Nantucket to move to Boston’s Tremont Street. Gradually other members of the family—Ning Der’s mother and a brother and sister—arrived from Canton and

Hong Kong to join them. Ning Der found wartime work in Boston as a radio engineer and married Ada Clark, a young woman he met through his former English tutors, the Reverend and Mrs. Rogers. After the war the couple moved to Bernardston, Massachusetts, where Ning Der was employed as custodian at two public schools until an accident in 1968 took his life at age 47. Of Ning and Ada Der’s five children, the youngest was only nine years old at the time of his father’s death.¹⁶

If Ning Der had stayed with his Nantucket High School class, he would have been twenty-three years old at graduation. After his departure the Nantucket schools saw no more Chinese children for quite a while.



Laundryman Wing Gee Der, lower left, with a group of Cape Verdeans. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

¹⁵ Wartime restrictions on publishing limited news coverage of the rescue to a story two months later in the July 20, 1942, issue of the *New Bedford Standard-Times*. There may be an indirect reference to the event in an *Inquirer and Mirror* article on the many uses of Bennett Hall printed on May 30, 1942. It is described in Mooney 2000, p. 85. Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 335, folder 746, contains three letters of gratitude from the captain and officers of the sunken vessel. Ellen Gibbs Holdgate, great-great-granddaughter of Sarah P. Bunker, recalled the event: “There was a lot of excitement. A whole bunch of some kind of refugees were sighted off-shore, and they looked like Japs. They were in big yellow life rafts. When they were taken ashore, they were put up in a gym, as it was the only place large enough for all of them. There must have been at least a hundred. They seemed friendly and would motion with their hands for a cigarette and smile at all the little kids peeking through the fence at them. But boy, were they well guarded!”

¹⁶ Private communication from Ada M. (Der) Andrews and Leland Der, widow and son of Ning Der.

India

Both Nantucketers and Vineyarders were wont to regard off-islanders as “strangers,” and strangers from faraway places might perforce find homes apart from the islands’ English population. Suriname was originally a Dutch colony in South America. The Vanderhoop family of Martha’s Vineyard descend from a man from Suriname who married into the Aquinnah Wampanoag community. By 1859, he and his wife Beulah had nine children ranging in age from 4 to 21. Today the surname Vanderhoop is pervasive among Aquinnah Wampanoags.

In Nantucket the entrepreneurial Porte family had a similar history. The stranger from whom they descended was Calcutta-born William Porte, who came to Nantucket as a seaman and later was employed as a cook on the steamboats serving the island. Classified as “black” in the 1850 census, he had married the widow Christina Newell, whose parents—Ezekiel Pompey and Lydia (Corrington) Pompey—had been scions of Nantucket’s original New Guinea families. By 1850 William and Christina Porte had acquired real estate of substantial value and were taking in boarders. They were also two of the thirty charter members of the Pleasant Street Baptist Church, a reorganization of the African Baptist Society under the recently arrived Reverend James Crawford. In 1852 William Porte took over as church clerk.¹⁷ During the next decade the couple appears to have transferred part of their property to Christina’s twice-widowed mother Lydia, who maintained a separate household until late in life.

Death persisted in carrying off the men and boys in the family, leaving the women on their own. “Our little brother” Crawford Porte died as an infant in 1860, the first to be laid to rest in the family plot. Two years later Louis Philippe Newell, Christina’s son by her first marriage, died six months short of his twentieth birthday and was buried next to Crawford. His half brother, William Porte Jr., succumbed to tuberculosis at age twenty-three and was buried beside Louis Philippe. William Porte Sr. himself only lived to the age of fifty-three.

After William Sr.’s death in 1866, Lydia moved in with Christina and her surviving children and lived with them until her death in 1880. She had been born in 1797, and in her life had witnessed the rise and the decline of Nantucket’s original African community. Her daughter Christina Porte lived on until 1895, and in the last year of her life was photographed in front of the family house on Atlantic Avenue.

¹⁷ “A true copy of the original records” of the Pleasant Street Baptist Church, 1848–58. Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 84, folder 29. Their son Crawford was probably named for the Rev. James Crawford.



Christina Porte in front of the Porte family’s house at 5 Atlantic Avenue circa 1895. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

The business sense of the Portes passed on to William's and Christina's daughters. Ellen, Emma, and Ida Porte advertised themselves as coatmakers, dressmakers, and "tailoresses." In time Ida became a chiropodist, and the unmarried women were joint owners and operators of a beauty shop.

There was another Porte daughter. Philena "Lena" Porte, the eldest, was mother of three children—Lottie, Christine, and Lincoln. Lena was unmarried and, unlike her business-minded younger sisters, she had no stated occupation. She and her children lived with her mother just past Five Corners, where Pleasant Street

bisects the old New Guinea neighborhood, and she is thought to have worked as a domestic servant in the opulent Hadwen House at the other end of Pleasant Street, at the corner of Main Street—then and now the most elegant address in town.

The 1900 census lists the birthplace of Christine's and Lincoln's father as "unknown."¹⁸ By then their grandmother Christina had died, Lena and Lottie were missing from the census, and young Christine and Lincoln were living with their aunts. There are no headstones for Lena and Lottie in the family plot, so it would appear that they had left the island, never to return.¹⁹

Following her aunts' example, Christine remained unmarried and was employed early on as a housekeeper and store clerk, later as a physician's bookkeeper. At age 21 Lincoln Porte went to work for the post office, retiring after forty years of service interrupted only by World War I.²⁰

Over the years, a reclassification of the Portes took place, demonstrating to what extent race has been a social construct in Nantucket as everywhere else. To begin with, not only was Christina Porte, descendant of African slaves, considered black, but so was her Calcutta-born husband. For that matter, the people boarding in their New Guinea household were all classified as black, too. Nonetheless, in 1870 the Portes'



World War I veterans on the steps of the Methodist Church, November 1919. Lincoln Porte stands in the middle of the fourth row from the front. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

¹⁸ Lincoln Porte's death certificate concurs. His father's name and birthplace are listed as unknown.

¹⁹ There was a history of tuberculosis in the Porte family. Possibly first Lottie (before 1895) and then Lena (before 1900) left the island to go to a sanatorium, but to date no documentation has been found.

²⁰ See Appendix 3b. Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 266 contains two letters written to his family by Lincoln Porte from France in 1918.

five surviving children were all considered “mulatto,” according to the federal census of that year. Ten years later Lena, Ellen, and Emma Porte were classified as black once again, while their sister Ida remained classified as mulatto, and Lena’s daughter Lottie was classified as white. Coming forward to 1920, the census enumerator of that year overwrote what appears to be IN (for “Indian”) with W for all the surviving Portes. Ten years later, Lincoln Porte was considered unambiguously white for the purposes of the federal census, and so he remained until his death at age 86, when, on his death certificate, he was described as white for all eternity.

As the Porte women died—Ellen in 1912 at age fifty-nine, Christine in 1935 at age fifty-three, Emma in 1949 at age ninety-three, and Ida in 1961 at age ninety-eight—they were buried with their family members in the “colored” cemetery behind Mill Hill. Only Lincoln, who as a young man had moved away from the New Guinea neighborhood and bought a house on Lowell Place, lies elsewhere, buried with his Irish-American wife in Prospect Hill Cemetery.

The couple was childless, but when Lincoln Porte married the widow Ellen (Shea) Snell, he adopted her young son George. George Snell’s children recall Lincoln Porte as a kind grandfather, perhaps doting all the more on his grandchildren because he himself had been motherless by the time he was six years old and fatherless all his life. Because of the pall of illegitimacy that he still perceived as hanging over him, he stipulated in his will that his funeral should not be public.²¹

Apparently it was the stigma of birth out of wedlock rather than of race that caused Lincoln Porte to avoid publicity. His wife was reportedly discomfited by the very existence of his aunts and sister, but his adopted son and grandchildren took it in stride that he came from a black family. With their profound genealogical pre-occupation, descended Nantucketers—Sarah P. Bunker’s great-granddaughter among them—shared the knowledge and considered it a curiosity. People who knew Lincoln Porte at work or through the many men’s social and service organizations to which he belonged never thought of this grandson of an African-Nantucketer and a mariner from India as anything but white.



Employees of the Nantucket Post Office in 1925. Lincoln Porte is third from right. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

²¹ Private communication from Georgia Ann Snell.

The Philippines

As early as the 1860s crewmen aboard the South Shoals lightship passed their time weaving baskets. A distinctive style evolved that apparently owed much to the craft of coopers, whose barrel- and cask-making techniques were adapted for creating sturdy baskets with staves, hoops, and wooden bottoms. The basket makers achieved symmetry by securing the bottom to a cylindrical wooden block—typically a section of an old ship’s spar—and shaping the basket around it as they wove. The staves were generally of wood, and the weaving material was rattan, the imported material usually used for caning chair bottoms. The products of this method were both esthetically pleasing and nearly indestructible.²² They ranged from diminutive single-egg baskets to capacious laundry baskets, and there was considerable latitude for inventiveness in form and materials. Handles varied with size and intended use. Sewing baskets sometimes had wooden or woven lids.²³

When they left the lightship, men brought their basket molds, tools, and talents home and continued the craft on land. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, as Nantucket was shifting from a maritime economy to summer tourism, lightship baskets—selling for a few dollars apiece—became an item in curio shops, especially those on or adjacent to Centre Street’s “Petticoat Row.”²⁴

Nantucket’s basket makers were men—mostly retired mariners or their sons and grandsons—but artist Elizabeth Rebecca “Lizzie” Coffin, one of the guiding lights in the redirection of Nantucket’s Coffin School, sought to open the craft to women. In 1895 a girls club named the Goldenrod Literary and Debating Society had been founded on the island. In 1903 Lizzie Coffin secured financial support from the town to offer a basketry course for members of the Goldenrod Society, and she herself took winter lessons in making the classic rattan baskets.

Founded in 1827 to provide private education and nautical training to the sons of the descended Nantucketers, the Coffin School had run out of students and exhausted its endowment by the end of the century, and it closed in 1898. Lizzie Coffin formulated a new industrial purpose and coeducational curriculum for the institution, which reopened in 1903 as an adjunct to the Nantucket Public Schools. The new Coffin School offered day and evening classes in mechanical drawing, woodworking, and metalworking for boys and men, sewing for girls, and basketry for women. Over the winter of 1904–05, Nantucket women working with a woman instructor produced over 150 baskets—not only rattan lightship baskets, but some made from local materials, including beach grass, and with a variety of weaving and decorating techniques.²⁵ Most of the baskets were sold the following summer. Coffin believed that this was the beginning of a rising new cottage industry that would ensure income to Nantucket women, but after that first year nothing more seems to have come of it. All the renowned basket makers whose names and products

²² Some baskets have been in regular use for a century and are none the worse for wear. A jingle about these baskets runs: “I was made on Nantucket./I’m strong and I’m stout./Don’t lose me or burn me/And I’ll never wear out.”

²³ E. U. Crosby 1940, pp. 65–72; Seeler and Seeler 1972; Wood 1994.

²⁴ Late-nineteenth-century newspaper advertisements for and photographs of shops offering “rattan baskets” or “lightship baskets” include Mrs. Folger’s Shell Shop; Phoebe Clisby’s shop; and Jacob Abajian’s Oriental Bazaar on Petticoat Row. Chenoweth’s Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe just around the corner also offered them for sale.

²⁵ Booker 2001, pp. 106–12.

later became so important to collectors continued to be local men. Despite Lizzie Coffin's optimism, significant change in the traditional basket business would not come until after World War II with the arrival on-island of the Reyes family.

José Formoso Reyes was born in 1902 in the rural northwest of the Philippine island of Luzon. Like most Filipinos, his parents were of mixed heritage: Malayan, Chinese, and Spanish. The education of both his parents was limited to what was available locally, but his self-educated father's devotion to Bible studies had led him well beyond the school basics. Forsaking the Philippines' traditional Catholicism, Eugenio Reyes served as a Methodist lay minister in his small town for the better part of two decades. To his son José, the oldest of ten children, he conveyed his dedication to learning.

In their small town José faced the same educational limitations that his parents had. At best it was possible to go as far as the second year of high school. There was no way to acquire professional training without leaving home.

Born in the first years of United States colonial rule in the Philippines, José Reyes made his way out into the greater world. At age twenty-two he was able to go to Portland, Oregon, where he graduated from high school and was admitted to Reed College to prepare for a teaching career. Supporting himself by working as a private cook for a family while attending college, he earned a bachelor's degree with highest honors. Reed's first Asian graduate, he received a scholarship for further education, which he applied to a master's degree program at the Harvard School of Education, completing his studies in 1932.

During his college years, he had met Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Ham, daughter of a Yankee family relocated to the Pacific Northwest. Her family returned to New England after Betty's sophomore year at Reed, but with José's arrival in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the young couple reunited and married. After receiving his master of education degree, José returned to the Philippines seeking a teaching position. Betty soon followed her husband. Their four children were born in the Philippines: their daughter Francina in Manila; middle children Jacquelyn Anne and Paul in Baguio, where José was organizing a foreign language department for the Philippine Military Academy; and their youngest, Robin, back in Manila shortly after Jacquelyn Anne's death from pneumonia in Baguio.

The years of the Reyes children's births coincided with the transition of the Philippines from a colony under American civilian governors to a commonwealth with its own constitution and democratically elected Filipino president. But these heady times in which men like José Reyes could help build their country's infrastructure were gravely endangered.

In 1941 war with Japan closed in on the Philippines. A year later, when José's and Betty's youngest child was still an infant, Japanese forces occupied the Philippines, and the United States army withdrew.

José, who had fought with the Philippine Scouts in the holding battles against the Japanese on the Bataan Peninsula, managed to escape south. Concealing his connection with the United States, José made his way home and, just before the retaking of the Philippines by the United States, managed to move Betty and the children away from their dangerous proximity to Manila. Nonetheless, the family barely survived a strafing attack and came close to starvation before General Douglas MacArthur was able to make good his promise to return and liberate the Philippines.

In 1945 the Reyes family arrived in the United States, and in time José was granted citizenship. Although they maintained contact with relatives and friends in the Philippines and visited with some regularity, the Reyes family had concluded their life overseas and embarked on a new life on Nantucket.

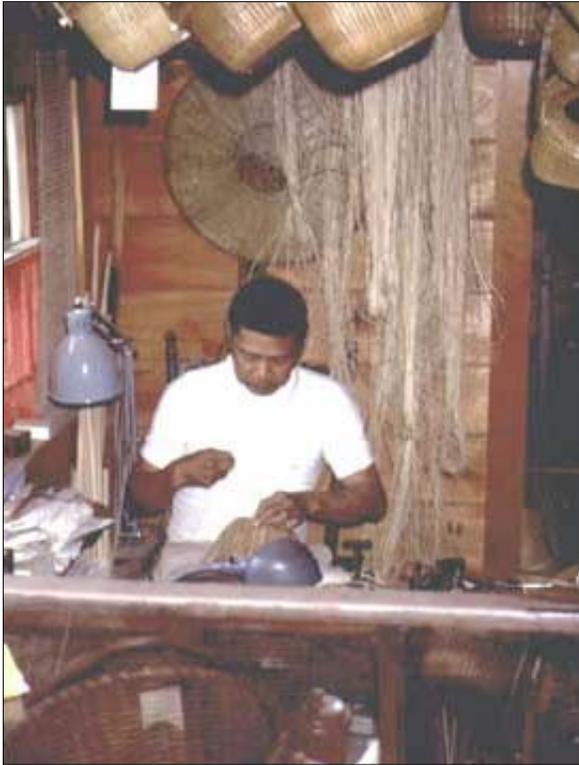
While they were recovering from the trauma of their recent experience, Betty Reyes's mother arranged a Nantucket summer vacation for the family, and they decided to stay. After renting in various locations, they bought a house on the edge of the old New Guinea neighborhood. The York Street house was greatly in need of repair, but it was roomy and had a backyard with space for growing vegetables. The giant leaves of Betty's rhubarb patch resembled a piece of Philippine jungle transplanted to New England.

Life on Nantucket was not to be easy, however. In a cold climate money was needed for heating oil as well as electricity and running water. The garden could not feed the family through the long winters, and the growing children had many needs.

With a master's degree from the Harvard School of Education and years of teaching experience in the Philippines, José had reason to expect that he would be hired to teach in Nantucket High School. Instead, he found himself working as a house painter, while Betty and the children picked berries and made jams and jellies to sell. José returned alone to the Philippines for over a year to settle matters there. During his absence and for years after, Betty—who was a registered nurse—worked shifts at the Nantucket Cottage Hospital while caring for the family. Francina went to work early to help out and to earn money to pay for her own nurse's training.

The experience of immigrants leaving behind professional careers to work at low-paying unskilled jobs in the United States is nothing new and continues unabated, but it is a situation that everyone seeks to escape as quickly as possible. With teaching not an option, José Reyes turned to basket weaving, a craft with which he was familiar from his childhood in rural Ilocos Sur. Mentored by aging Nantucket basket-maker Mitchell Ray, José set to making his own rattan baskets.²⁶ Adding experimental covers and lids to baskets of various shapes, he created women's handbags. The handbag design that proved unimaginably commercial had a lid that replicated the construction of the bottom of the basket, with weaving radiating out from a central disk.

²⁶ Captain Charles Ray, grandfather of Mitchell "Mitchy" Ray, had been among the basket makers on the South Shoals lightship. From Mitchy Ray José Reyes received many of Charles Ray's lightship basket molds.



José Reyes in his workshop in the 1940s. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

It was probably because of the decorations on the lids—simple ebony or ivory whales on wood to begin with and then ever more personalized plaques and carvings—that the handbags became first a fad and then an industry involving the whole Reyes family.²⁷ Waiting lists for custom-made baskets grew from months-long to years-long. New sizes and shapes appeared with ivory fittings, while lid decorations became ever more elaborate. A collector's trade in Reyes baskets developed, and the rest is history.²⁸

Baskets engaged and rewarded the Reyes family in a way that high-school teaching never could have. Moreover, the popularity of the Reyes baskets as status symbols and collector's pieces has incubated an islandwide basket-making industry of just the sort Lizzie Coffin had imagined so many years before. In the year 2000 there were dozens of men and women making baskets for sale in shops

and many more Nantucketers making them as a hobby. Spin-off industries are the crafting of fittings and decorations for basket lids and the weaving of tiny golden baskets to be incorporated into jewelry. In all their forms, the baskets have become so sought after and so high priced that Chinese imitations have flooded gift shops on-island and off, and a guild, the Nantucket Lightship Basket Makers and Merchants Association, has been formed to authenticate genuine Nantucket-made baskets.

In his Nantucket life, José Reyes was an enthusiastic joiner. Although his father Eugenio had been a Methodist, José joined Nantucket's Congregational Church, where he belonged to the men's club and sang in the choir.²⁹ He was, moreover, a Rotarian and a 32nd degree Mason. He also worked with Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts on the island, and although he never taught in the Nantucket schools, he was active in the Parent/Teacher Association.

José Reyes died on Nantucket in December 1980. In 2001 Paul Reyes donated his father's workshop to the recently established Lightship Basket Museum, where it has been reassembled in the museum building on Union Street, just blocks from its original York Street home.

²⁷ Muriel Sayle originated the idea of putting a whale on the lid. Her husband Charles Sayle carved the first whale and many more thereafter.

²⁸ Celebrity was already associated with lightship baskets. Mitchy Ray made them on commission for a senator from Maine and for Charles Lindbergh. The tradition continued, with Queen Elizabeth II of England receiving one of José Reyes's baskets on the occasion of her coronation.

²⁹ This is the same church that had once offered Sunday School instruction to young whalemens from the Pacific Islands temporarily resident on Nantucket.

Thailand

Lightship baskets have also figured in the highly diversified entrepreneurship of Chin Manasmontri, the founder and for some time the sole member of Nantucket's Thai community. Born in Bangkok in 1951, Chin grew up with disadvantages that have hobbled vast numbers of children in that place and time. His mother was Thai, but his father was Chinese, and throughout history ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia have been the targets of much the same sort of prejudice that Jews have experienced in Europe and the Americas. The ethnic Chinese are for the most part industrious and thrifty businessmen, and among them, there have always been some who have amassed great fortunes. The resulting envy and malice on the part of non-Chinese have victimized all the ethnic Chinese, poor and rich alike, for centuries.

According to an interview he gave to *Nantucket Magazine* in 1994, Chin's father deserted the family while Chin was still a small child, and by age twelve he was a factory laborer contributing to the support of his family by working for pennies a day. Like José Reyes before him, Chin managed to extract himself from a life of limitations and drudgery by leaving the country of his birth.

In the Viet Nam war era, it was not difficult to find an opportunity. Working as an agent for an Air Force officer who sought to set up an export business on the side, Chin made himself so indispensable that his employer sent him to the United States to attend school and improve his command of English. Chin made a visit to Nantucket with no expectation of staying, but two decades later he was still on the island. Sarah P. Bunker's great-granddaughter was a Nantucket restaurant proprietor who employed him during his first year on-island, took a liking to him, and supported his endeavors.

Beginning with landscaping and restaurant-kitchen work, Chin launched his own small business empire on the island, culminating in a restaurant/workshop/residence complex at the end of a street named Chin's Way. It was a unique workplace where one could in principle enjoy a meal with a bottle of Thai beer, buy a ready-made lightship basket, and have a chair reupholstered all at the same time.

To make the lightship baskets, carry on the upholstery business, and staff the restaurant, Chin brought members of his family from Thailand, nine of them in all, and another fourteen Thai workers to Nantucket. Like Chin, a number of his employees were children of ethnically mixed marriages who would have been stigmatized had they gone on living anywhere in Southeast Asia. Chin had been subjected to prejudice because of his Chinese father. Among the employees whose resettlement in Nantucket he sponsored, five were children of Thai mothers and American servicemen.³⁰

After a quarter of a century on the island Chin himself returned to Thailand, taking his capital and his business experience with him. Lightship baskets had been one revenue source in Nantucket, but he had hit upon another craft, one that had remained unexploited for more than a century. Chin looked beyond bas-

³⁰ Woodward 1994, pp. 12–15.

kets and saw sailors' valentines as the next compelling item for collectors of Nantucketiana.

Sailors' valentines are boxed arrangements of shells that returning seamen brought home to Nantucket as gifts for mothers, sisters, wives, and prospective brides. At least one has made its way into the permanent collection of the Nantucket Historical Association. Contrary to local lore, seamen did not personally collect shells in the course of their voyages and pass shipboard hours assembling them into elaborate representations of floral bouquets. In the nineteenth century, sailors' valentines were made by residents of Barbados, Trinidad, and St. Lucia for sale to men aboard ships stopping at their islands.³¹

Today, newly crafted sailors' valentines are ubiquitous in Nantucket shops and galleries, and a good proportion of them bear Chin's signature. They are now produced in Bangkok and exported to Nantucket, where they represent the latest of his far-flung enterprises.

For several years after his arrival in Nantucket, Chin and his extended family were the only Thai residents of the island, but by the time he returned to his native land, about ten other families had established themselves on the island and founded a cluster of Thai businesses. One of them, the Lucky Express convenience store, is locally famous for its record of selling winning lottery tickets to Nantucketers.

Nantucket's New Year's baby of 1995 was Wisima Samantha Nipatnantaporn, daughter of Thai residents of the island who found their own way to Nantucket. Patama Thairatana, Samantha's mother, came to Nantucket for a summer job after graduating from college in Houston, Texas, in 1987. Her intention was to use her earnings for a plane ticket home to Thailand, but instead she became a year-round resident of the island. Six years later she and Viroj Nipatnantaporn had a business together and started a Nantucket family of their own.

Japan

In the 1890s the village of Siasconset became home to what was known as "the Actors' Colony." Fleeing from the summer heat of New York City, theater folk took refuge in the oceanside village that Edward Underhill, its most indefatigable developer and promoter, advertised as ever cool and salubrious.³² In a 1904 photo album of the village and its exotic residents, a man in a white jacket identified only as "Japanese servant" appears twice, once lighting a cigarette for playwright Harry Woodruff and again serving tea to Woodruff and his guests.³³ This unnamed man probably traveled to the island with the Woodruffs for some weeks in the summer and returned with them to the city for the fall season.

Most of a century passed before Nantucket gained a Japanese-born year-round resident with a name known to all. It was in 1993, years after Chin Manasmontri had introduced Nantucketers to Thai food, that

³¹ Among a number of different pieces of evidence for this conclusion, one of the most convincing is that all the different shells used in the fabrication of sailors' valentines are local to Barbados and its immediate environs. (Fondas 2002, pp. 7-9)

³² Underhill's 1895 promotional brochure *'Sconset in a Nutshell* states, "Sconset has the coolest and purest air—'Sconset has no noise; no mosquitoes; no malaria."

Yoshi Mabuchi added sushi to the island's cuisine. When Yoshi and his partner came to Nantucket, they already had a dozen years of experience operating a restaurant in eastern Connecticut, which—like Nantucket—had been without a Japanese restaurant until they opened theirs in New Haven.

Yoshi was born into wartime Japan in 1943, and like the Reyes family on the other side in World War II, Yoshi's family came close to starvation during the war and in the immediate postwar years. In time, Yoshi, the youngest in the family, attended high school in Tokyo and then earned a degree in mathematics from Tokyo Science University.

Conceiving a great desire to broaden his horizons, Yoshi set out working his way around the world, finding short-term jobs in many places, some of them profoundly inhospitable to itinerant labor. Worldwide, one of the most likely places for an alien to find work has always been in restaurant kitchens, and by the time Yoshi, at the age of thirty-three, ended up in New York City, he was a skilled restaurant worker. In the course of less than a decade Sushi by Yoshi has become a Nantucket institution—available in his tiny establishment across from the police station, by catering and take-out, and even from the supermarket. As a dedicated church member and supporter of local organizations, Yoshi has contributed to his adopted community in ways far beyond the culinary.³⁴

Growing up Asian on Nantucket

The new century has witnessed a phenomenon in the United States, the adoption of Chinese babies by American families. Prior to 1990 the number of adoptions from China was under fifty per year for the entire nation. By the year 2000, the annual number of adoptions from China had reached above five thousand, and virtually all the adoptees have been girls.³⁵ In just a few years they have formed a cohort numbering over thirty thousand (and continuing to increase) who will move through the nation's schools together, become teenagers together, be targeted as a group by advertisers, and enter the United States job market in a wave. Nantucket will take part in this social experiment. On October 21, 1999, a headline in the *Inquirer and Mirror* read: "Adopting a new way of life: Nantucket parents hoping to adopt are looking to China." At that time four Chinese girls had already been adopted by families living on Nantucket, and there was the prospect of more.

These girls' experience will be different from Ning Der's. He was "Nantucket's Chinese boy," the only one in town, living in a family of Chinese men. The island's newest Chinese residents live in non-Chinese families, but they will see each other every day at school. They will be integrated into the Nantucket community as no Chinese has been ever before in the island's history, and at the same time they will have the advantage of strength in numbers.

³³ McIntosh 1904.

³⁴ In her "Life Before Nantucket" series, Mary Miles published an interview with Yoshi Mabuchi in *Yesterday's Island*, August 21, 2000. There the difficult circumstances of his early childhood in war-time Tokyo are detailed.

³⁵ Rojewsky and Rojewsky 2001, pp. 3–4. On March 23, 2003, the *Boston Globe* printed a news story originating in the *Beijing Morning News* that reported, "Police found 28 baby girls hidden in suitcases aboard a long-distance bus in southern China, apparently being smuggled for sale." The discovery was made in the Guangxi region, which the report characterized as "one of the country's poorest areas." Despite the reputability of adoption agencies that match Chinese children with adoptive parents from the United States, marketability of girl babies presents a troubling matter with which adoptees and their American parents will need to come to grips in the future.

Besides one another, they will see children who resemble them more than the adoptees resemble their parents and most of their classmates. The 1999 article about Chinese adoptions on Nantucket mentioned that a Cambodian child was expected to arrive soon, and a glance at the Nantucket telephone directory reveals the names of Thai families. Nantucket's Thai children, some of them already in school ahead of the Cambodian and Chinese adoptees, are growing up in Thai families resident on-island. As languages, Chinese, Cambodian, and Thai are as unlike as can be, and the nations can hardly be said to share a common history or culture; yet as Nantucket's Asian children pass through the public schools, they will appear to most Nantucketers to constitute an identifiable, unitary group.

The children of José and Betty Reyes grew up with a Filipino father and an American mother, first in desperate wartime circumstances in the Philippines and then in a Nantucket household. Nantucketers found the Reyes children exotic and would not let it pass unremarked. In a booklet about José Reyes and his basket business, Paul Whitten wrote, "The Oriental features are quite prominent in José's charming and attractive daughter, Francina." Of her brothers, Whitten wrote, "The Reyes boys with their Filipino coloration and American features, along with their stalwart athletic physiques, have grown into handsome young gentlemen." Francina married one of Sarah P. Bunker's great-great-grandsons, and of their daughter Whitten observed that she "has absorbed just enough of her Filipino and American ancestry to mold her features into a beautiful doll-like child."³⁶ The stereotypes of the beautiful doll and the warrior-athlete have been and remain a burden for Asian-American children. Such perceptions on the part of Nantucketers in the past imposed unwelcome self-consciousness on the Reyes children and grandchildren, and may yet prove troublesome for a new generation of children growing up on the island.³⁷

There has been a positive shift of culture, however, both on the island and in the nation. Today there are support groups and scores of books available to parents and their children to answer questions and deal with issues that in past generations went unaddressed. In an electronically posted reader's review, Katy Robinson wrote "As an adult Korean adoptee . . . I was excited to read *Kids Like Me in China*. . . . I only wish a book such as this one would have been available when I was a child growing up in Salt Lake City—often feeling like I was the only Asian and the only adopted person in the whole world."³⁸

Over the years there have been, in fact, several different Asian-Nantucket childhood experiences: Ning Der as the sole Chinese student in school but living in a Chinese household; the Reyes children living in a bicultural household; Nantucket's Thai children growing up in Thai homes and going to school with other Asian children; and adopted Chinese and Cambodian children growing up in non-Asian families but seeing other Asian children in school each day. Once again, as throughout the island's history, who is a Nantucketer is being redefined.

³⁶ Whitten 1960. Unnumbered pages.

³⁷ See Rojewsky and Rojewsky 2001, p. 119, on the "China Doll" syndrome and expectations about athletic and intellectual giftedness.

³⁸ Posted on the Amazon.com website in spring 2003.

Chapter Two

A Song Across the Sea

Jewish Presence on Nantucket

Nantucket and Newport, Rhode Island, have a long-shared history of maritime contacts and Quakerism. It was from the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Newport that Nantucketer Elihu Coleman had to seek approval to publish his momentous condemnation of slavery in 1733. Permission was granted even though some Newport Friends owned slaves and profited from the transatlantic slave trade. Nantucket Quakers and their Newport brethren continued at odds over slavery for decades.

Nantucket differed from Newport in another conspicuous way. A prominent feature of Newport is its Jewish cemetery and Touro synagogue, the oldest synagogue in the United States. Newport has been the home of a Jewish community since 1658.

By contrast, from its inception in 1659 until the time of the American Revolution Nantucket remained a closed community managed by a corporation of proprietors who struggled to prevent non-shareholders from establishing themselves on the island. Throughout the 1700s the town's selectmen expelled groups of newcomers who attempted to settle and set up businesses on-island without permission. The dominance of Quakerism on Nantucket, with its members' intent to keep apart from the world's people, strengthened the resolve of the island community to exclude "strangers."

In June 1870, Dr. John Givon, a physician born in Germany, was living on the island with his wife Mahalia, who had been born in Georgia, and their two New York-born daughters. The name Givon, which is ultimately derived from an Arabic word for 'hill,' is used as both a surname and a given name in Jewish families. At the time of the census, the Givon family was living with an elderly Nantucket couple, Zenas and Lydia Fish, who were also providing housing for the principal of the Coffin School, Edward B. Fox. According to the census, Josephine Givon, 16, and Felicia Givon, 10, had not attended school during the past year, implying that the family had either just arrived on the island or that they employed a private tutor for the girls. The Givons' substantial wealth, as recorded in the census, would have made for an especially comfortable life on economically depressed Nantucket, but the family does not appear in subsequent censuses.

There is no certain record of Jewish presence on Nantucket until the 1880 federal census. In that year Wendel Rothenberg—a Russian-born dry-goods merchant—was living in the Springfield House hotel. The 1890 federal census returns were destroyed in an archive fire, but Nantucket's Coffin School records for 1893–94 show young Israel Rothenberg enrolled as a student, indicating that Wendel brought his family to Nantucket and stayed for more than a decade.

By 1900 the Rothenbergs had moved on, but German-born Max and Annie Pearlstine had come with their two Massachusetts-born children to live on Nantucket. Max Pearlstine had been in the United States since 1883, but he was illiterate and had not taken any steps toward becoming a citizen. His wife Annie could read and write, however, and their children were in school. The census taker reported Max's occupa-

tion as junk dealer, a business that was undoubtedly far from lucrative for nine out of twelve months a year. By the time of the 1910 census the Pearlstines, too, had departed.

In the meantime Max Doroff, born in Odessa, Russia, had come to the island. Identified in the 1910 census as “Yiddish,” he had arrived in the United States as a child in the mid-1880s and been naturalized a decade later. He found a wife in Maine, and the two of them came to Nantucket to live in rented quarters and to work. To begin with, Max Doroff did odd jobs while his wife Isabelle cooked for a family, but in the 1914 and 1919 Nantucket business directories his occupation was listed as “bootblack.”³⁹ So it was in the 1920 federal census, and so it remained. Despite appearing in the 1927 Nantucket business directory as proprietor of a shoe store, when Max Doroff died in Nantucket in 1950 at the age of 75, his “usual occupation” was still given as bootblack.

In the decade after the 1910 census the Doroffs had been joined on the island by Henry and Mabel Rosen from Poland and by Russian-born Emile Genesky.⁴⁰ The Rosens had both come to the United States as children in 1889 and had been naturalized in 1915. They had two Massachusetts-born children, and—like Wendel Rothenberg before him—Henry Rosen supported the family as a merchant. In 1914 he operated a clothing store on the corner of Main Street and South Water Street, and by 1919 he was also proprietor of a grocery store on Middle Pearl (India) Street. On April 24, 1920, the *Inquirer and Mirror* ran an advertisement announcing the opening of his store on “Postoffice Square” (Lower Main Street) offering “a full line of crockery, dishes, glassware, kitchen ware, tin ware, and furniture” in “the Store now occupied by the Chinese Laundry.” Rosen had taken out a mortgage for the Main Street property, but by 1930 the family had moved off-island.

Emile Genesky, on the other hand, became an enduring player in the Nantucket business community. According to the *Inquirer and Mirror*, the Geneskys were “a pioneer Jewish family in New Bedford” where they had prospered in the clothing business, were involved in the founding of a synagogue, and belonged to “every Jewish organization in the city.”⁴¹ Expanding the family business to Nantucket in 1908, Philip Genesky, founded the City Clothing Company (“Men’s Clothing and Furnishings”) on Main Street, and put his son Emile in place as proprietor, assisted by James Genesky as clerk. Emile and James lived together initially, and then Emile was on his own to run the Nantucket store.⁴²

On March 4, 1916, an emergency notice appeared on the front page of the *Inquirer and Mirror* that the City Clothing Company was being forced to vacate because the building it occupied was to be torn down within a few days. The following week Emile Genesky placed another notice that the business would move to temporary quarters in a recently vacated store on Centre Street’s Petticoat Row. Most of that March 11 issue of the *Inquirer and Mirror* was given over to reports of a tremendous snowfall that had paralyzed the town. Before Genesky had even opened the door at his new location, one dyspeptic newspaper article declared the inadequate snow removal along Petticoat Row a disgrace and blamed it on

³⁹ *The Nantucket Directory*, 1919, and *Lothrop’s Nantucket, Massachusetts, Blue Book and Directory*, 1927.

⁴⁰ Despite the census information that the Rosens had come from Poland and Emile Genesky’s family from Russia, their old-country origins were not so far apart. The Geneskys came from Yanaveh, a town located in the vicinity of the city of Minsk in Belarus [western or “White” Russia] not far from the Polish border.

⁴¹ “Death of Philip Genesky,” *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 17, 1937.

⁴² Although their father founded the business in 1908, the Genesky brothers do not appear in the 1910 federal census for Nantucket. Emile alone appears in the 1920 census. The clothing store brought together Emile Genesky and David Sarnoff in a lifelong friendship. See Appendix 3c.

“the foreign element” that had moved onto the block.⁴³ Three months later, the writer of an ambivalent article listing the openings of the summer businesses remarked, “Verily Petticoat Row is becoming almost a Midway. It is certainly an attraction from one point of view.”⁴⁴

These newspaper articles coming on the heels of an apparently unforeseen eviction from Main Street oozed hostility toward foreign-born businessmen, but Emile Genesky forged ahead. His March 11 notice in the *Inquirer and Mirror* mentioned that the Centre Street location would be temporary until a new building was ready for occupancy, and that promise was repeated in advertising throughout April. The new premises went up on the site of the building that had been demolished, and when his business reopened at 62–64 Main Street to an enthusiastic reception by the *Inquirer and Mirror*, it had a tonier new name, the Toggery Shop.⁴⁵

Brought to the United States from Russia as an infant, Emile Genesky had still not taken the final steps to becoming a citizen when, in February 1918, he was elected to the Nantucket Board of Selectmen and a few months later was appointed Special Justice of the newly created Nantucket District Court.⁴⁶ Genesky served a term on the board of selectmen while making a place for himself among Nantucket’s businessmen. In 1924 the *Inquirer and Mirror* wrote of him, “Since coming to Nantucket and engaging in business a number of years ago, he has been eminently successful and enjoys the respect of the entire community.”⁴⁷

The former Hicksite Quaker Meeting House on Main Street had been moved in 1884 to Brant Point and incorporated into a sprawling wooden hotel. In 1905 the Wauwinet Tribe of Red Men, a fraternal organization that was very popular on Nantucket, bought the large building, had it rafted back across the harbor, and re-sited it on South Water Street to serve as a lodge room, dance hall, and moving-picture theater. After some years the movie operation, under the name Dreamland Moving Picture Theatre, was taken over by a partnership of Emile Genesky, John Anastos, Orison Hull, and Eugene Perry. According to their obituaries, all the partners took enthusiastic interest in the enterprise.

Opportunities for expansion continued to present themselves. Having replaced an old building between Orange Street and Fair Street with a new one to house his Toggery Shop, Genesky entered into a partnership with the Anastos brothers in 1928 to build another commercial building on the south side of Main Street. One of the old wooden buildings razed for this project had once housed the Reverend James Crawford’s barbershop.⁴⁸ The partners went on to build houses on Easton Street and nearby Harbor View Way.

After his marriage in 1924, Genesky made New Bedford his primary residence, but he continued his business activities in Nantucket and maintained a summer residence on the Cliff until his death in 1957.

⁴³ “‘Petticoat Row’ Disgraced,” *Inquirer and Mirror*, March 11, 1916. Armenian rug merchants Jacob Abajian and Vartan Dedeian were already established on Petticoat Row before the great snow storm of 1916, making it unclear which foreign element the writer of the article intended to criticize.

⁴⁴ *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 17, 1916. Up to these closing sentences, the article appears positive, characterizing two of the Petticoat Row shops as “attractive.”

⁴⁵ The business bears the name to this day, despite its sale to the Murray family in 1945. See Appendix 3d for the newspaper story about the opening of the new Toggery Shop in late June 1916. Prior to 1916, the Geneskys do not appear on the list of Nantucket property owners. Apparently the premises for the City Clothing Company were rented. With the opening of the Toggery Shop, Emile Genesky appears on the property-owner list, implying that he purchased the site where the old building was demolished and erected the new one for his business. This marked the beginning of an expansive real estate and building business that he carried on in both Nantucket and New Bedford throughout his life.

⁴⁶ The 1920 federal census reports that 34-year-old Emile Genesky had taken out citizenship papers but had not yet been sworn in as a citizen of the United States of America.

⁴⁷ “Miss Saunders Engaged to Emile Genesky,” *Inquirer and Mirror*, February 16, 1924.

⁴⁸ *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 7, 1928. See Appendix 3e for a description of the replacement of the old wooden buildings by the new building.

Immediately upon completion of his surgical training at Massachusetts General Hospital in 1927, Jacob Fine came to Nantucket to fill in temporarily for one of the island's physicians. His intended brief service on the island extended to more than three years, and thereafter Dr. Fine returned to practice on the island during the summer months for eleven more years. Late in life he wrote and circulated a manuscript in two parts: "The Nantucket Story" and "Nantucket Personalities." In "The Nantucket Story" he locates Emile Genesky's clothing store as "directly across from Ashley's Market on the other side of Main Street, corner of Fair Street," and states that Genesky was one of fewer than five Jews on the island. Unless Dr. Fine only counted adult men and did not include himself, he undercounted.⁴⁹

In 1930 the town had several Jewish clothing stores. The proprietor of one was Russia-born William Kaplan, a widower whose late wife had also been born in Russia. In rented quarters, first on South Water Street and then on North Liberty Street, he shared living space with three sons, Benjamin, Donald, and Oscar; his married daughter Shirley and her husband, Louis Jones; and a grandchild. Louis Jones's mother had also been born in Russia, which may have strengthened the ties that bound this multigeneration household. Benjamin Kaplan sold clothing in his father's store, while son-in-law Louis Jones was proprietor of a shoe store.

Morris Colinsky, born in Bialystok, Poland, also operated a clothing store, assisted by young Seymour Kaplan. Unlike Wendel Rothenberg, the Pearlstines, Max Doroff, the Rosens, the Geneskys, and William Kaplan—who had all arrived in the United States in the wave of immigration of the late 1800s—Morris Colinsky had come as an adult just before World War I, applied for citizenship without delay, and been naturalized. Seymour Kaplan (who was not one of the North Liberty Street Kaplans) had been born in Massachusetts, but his father came from Grodno, Russia, not far over the border from Bialystok.

Another Jewish family, the Bilskys, operated a dry cleaning business, Beacon Cleaners and Dyers, on Union Street next to the Town Building, and Rose Bilsky offered women's ready-to-wear apparel at the Roseby Shoppe on Main Street. Shortly after the 1930 census was taken, members of the Levine family, eventual operators of the Nobby Clothes Shop on Main Street, arrived.

Paul and Minnie Levine—not relatives of the Levines on Main Street—opened a shop at 44 Centre Street. Paul Levine had been born in Poland, and like many other young men, fled from conscription into the army. Making his way to England, he apprenticed as a tailor there. In Nantucket he advertised himself specifically as a ladies' tailor, but in the depths of the Depression he also sold ready-to-wear men's clothing. On June 22, 1935, his advertisement in the *Inquirer and Mirror* offered "a full line of the latest summer sport coats. We also make clothes to your measure." An advertisement of September 9, 1950, offered "Suits made to order on short notice." It is recalled that Paul Levine would take apart a suit overnight,

⁴⁹ Fine manuscript. The reference to Emile Genesky and the number of Jews resident on the island is on p. 36 of "The Nantucket Story."

make a pattern from the pieces, and reassemble it for return to the owner the next day. After his death in 1955 at the age of seventy, his wife Minnie maintained her ties with the island where they had lived and worked for twenty years.⁵⁰

A boating accident in the summer of 1934 nearly wiped out Nantucket's Jewish business community. William Kaplan, Morris Bilsky, Hyman Levine, Max Roy, and Jack Bernstein went bluefishing with Merwin Blount, Herbert Sandsbury, and James Dennis of Nantucket aboard Captain George Studley's boat *Northern Light*. In the opening between Smith's Point and Tuckernuck a wave broke over the *Northern Light*, washing everyone but Sandsbury and Studley overboard. Studley and Sandsbury managed to pick up six of the seven men in the water, but Dennis, a sixty-eight-year old fisherman, drowned.⁵¹

Among the rescued men was Hyman Levine, one of nine children born to Nathan Levine and Nellie Cohen Levine. Nathan and Nellie had been born in the 1860s in Poland. In 1882 they married and immigrated to the United States, where Nathan Levine began his new life as a peddler with a horse-drawn cart on the streets of New York. From there he extended his operations both south and north. The first three Levine children were born in New York, the next four in Pennsylvania, and the last two in New Bedford. Several members of the next two generations of the family came to operate businesses on Nantucket: a clothing store, a gift shop, and an art gallery.

As a whaling town, Nantucket had an attraction for the Levine siblings. New Bedford whaling had continued into the 1920s, long after the last whaling voyage left from Nantucket. Through marriage the Levines were connected to a New Bedford haberdasher who outfitted whalers with foul-weather gear and held a share in the last square-rigged whaleship, the *Charles W. Morgan*. When Nathan Levine disowned his son Israel for marrying outside Judaism, Israel changed his name to Morgan after the ship and passed the name on to his son. Young Morgan Levine in turn married the granddaughter of a New Bedford whaling captain and became a keen collector of maritime art.⁵²

It was through family connections to William Kaplan, another of the men who narrowly escaped with his life when the rogue wave washed over the *Northern Light* in 1934, that Simon and Rose Kaufman came to Nantucket to open the Green Coffee Pot Café. Its first location was on India Street (on the block then called Middle Pearl Street), but in 1936 it moved to South Water Street where "Cy's" endured as a core Nantucket institution until 1978. Now operating as the Atlantic Café, it retains the Cy's sign on the back of the building facing Easy Street. Murals in the dining room dating from the days of the Kaufmans have also been preserved.

⁵⁰ Another tailor was Harry Novack, who had a shop on South Water Street in the late 1930s. He is said to have been a talented musician.

⁵¹ "Smith's Point Opening Again Takes a Life," *Inquirer and Mirror*, August 4, 1934. Jack Bernstein was visiting from New Bedford. Max Roy was described as a resident of Nantucket.

⁵² To handle the volume of business conducted during the summer on Nantucket, owners of stores and restaurants on-island would call on nephews and in-laws to come from the mainland in the summers to help out. Morgan Levine and his first cousin Melvin Lash both worked for their uncle Hyman Levine at the Nobby Shop, while many relatives of the Kaufmans worked a block or so away at the Green Coffee Pot. These individuals, with their memories of their grandparents, aunts, and uncles, and their seasonal view of family businesses, have provided much information for this chapter.

According to Zelda Kaufman Zlotin, in the introduction to her cookbook, *Once More at Cy's*, her parents came to the island from Fall River with a \$600 loan from Rose Kaufman's father, Frank Cohen.⁵³ The Cohens had immigrated to the United States shortly after 1900, when Rose was a toddler. Coming from a cattle-raising area of Russia, the Cohens established themselves in Sioux City, Iowa, in the corn-and-cattle heart of America's Great Plains. When Rose grew to young womanhood, however, she was sent to Fall River, Massachusetts, to what one of her family members has described as an arranged marriage to Simon Kaufman.

What connection might have existed between the Cohens in Iowa and the Kaufmans in Fall River to bring about a marriage between the two families is obscure. Jacob Kaufman and his wife had immigrated to Fall River from Poland. Their four sons were born and educated in Fall River, where young Simon began to learn the restaurant business. When Frank Cohen advanced Simon and Rose the capital to open their own restaurant in the depths of the Depression era, they moved to Nantucket with their two daughters and infant son and went to work. As they grew, the children were put to work at the Green Coffee Pot, as were relatives who came to help at the restaurant in the summers. In time, the next generation of Kaufmans worked there too. The extended family all lived at 9 Gay Street, where for years there were minimal kitchen facilities, because family members took all their meals at the restaurant.

Gregarious Simon Kaufman was popular among his many customers, business associates, and friends. One of the passions of his life was his membership in the Wauwinet Tribe of Red Men, which had its meeting hall upstairs in the Dreamland Theatre, next door to the Green Coffee Pot.⁵⁴

The Kaufmans were also noted for the broad range of their charitable contributions to island organizations. It was a sorrow to his family and to Nantucketers beyond his family when Simon Kaufman suffered a stroke in his early sixties and died a few years later.

Rose Kaufman survived her husband by twenty-one years. For thirteen of those years their daughter and son-in-law, Zelda and Milton Zlotin, operated the restaurant and Rose managed the kitchen. Zelda wrote, "She was in the kitchen until the last day seeing that the soup, chowder, and 'glop' for the slaw were all made as she wanted and that the omelets were made correctly."

Eight years before Rose's death the Kaufman family corporation, which owned Cy's Green Coffee Pot, closed its doors and sold the business. To celebrate the restaurant's long life Zelda Zlotin collected her family's recipes, menus, and Green Coffee Pot memorabilia into *Once More at Cy's* and dedicated it to her family's next generation.

Turning the pages, one sees at a glance that the Kaufmans' restaurant was not a kosher establishment or even a classic delicatessen. Although the Green Coffee Pot advertised that its meals were "served with

⁵³ Zlotin n.d., p. 7 (but no number is printed on the page).

⁵⁴ "Restaurteur [*sic*] Dies, 66, Noted for Charities," *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 29, 1965.

real rye bread,” lobster and shellfish dominated the menu. Baked ham and broiled pork chops shared billing with roast lamb. At one time take-out chop suey and chow main were also on offer.⁵⁵ To her recipe for matzo balls, Zelda attached the note, “I learned to make these after we retired.”

The Kaufmans and the Zlotins, solid members of the Nantucket community, had to contend with being identified as Jews without having a Jewish community to support them. Members of the family were aware of low-level anti-Semitism that sometimes spiked into something more overt during the 1930s and again in the 1950s. Talk around the Green Coffee Pot’s bar could turn ugly, and some people did not patronize the restaurant because the owners were Jews. But as Robert Kaufman, one of the Kaufmans’ grandsons, remarked, “Now certain people wouldn’t come into the restaurant because of who the proprietors were. Certain people didn’t like the patrons. There were anti-Semites who didn’t come in, but not everyone who didn’t come in was an anti-Semite. That’s the point I want to emphasize. Some people had some good reasons for not coming in.”⁵⁶

As World War II engulfed Europe, Nantucketers were made aware of where virulent hatred of Jews could lead. In 1942 the Nantucket Chamber of Commerce hosted a talk by a former professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin who had been forced to leave Germany in the great flight from Nazism.⁵⁷ Dr. Fine, who had become the secretary of a group of Boston physicians preparing to resettle refugees from Germany, wrote, “On the local scene I found that pleading the cause of these victims of Nazi cruelty did reach sympathetic ears among the natives as well as the visitors. . . . I was pleading the cause of the underdog, i.e., the victims of the Nazis, and finding willing listeners on the island.”⁵⁸

At war’s end crude prewar anti-Semitism had been dealt a blow by the revelation of the horrors of the Holocaust, but another sort of anti-Semitism took its place on Nantucket as New York office workers, many of them Jewish, began taking summer vacations on the island. In 1957 Preston Manchester, operator of the Ocean House—a hotel that was popular with the young vacationers—and the Upper Deck—a bar



Simon Kaufman, proprietor of Cy’s Green Coffee Pot. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association (photo by Louis Davidson).

⁵⁵ For the Chinese take-out items, see the advertisement in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 1, 1935. The rye bread was regularly mentioned in advertising in the *Inquirer and Mirror* in 1937–38.

⁵⁶ For a further excerpt from an interview with Robert Kaufman recorded on August 15, 2002, see Appendix 3f.

⁵⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 23, 1942.

⁵⁸ Fine manuscript, “Nantucket Personalities,” p. 41.

on Main Street—threatened to put both his businesses on the market because of “the attitude of the townspeople of Nantucket towards Jews.” At the same time the New England Regional Office of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith took an interest in the exclusion of Jews from some organizations on the island and the obstruction Jews were encountering in attempting to purchase houses on Nantucket.

Despite these problems, Jewish families became summer residents, and a number of businessmen and retirees took up year-round residence. Gradually, Nantucket’s Jewish population grew. In 1951 Morgan Levine, who as a teenager had worked in his uncle Hyman’s clothing store, opened the Four Winds Gift Shop upstairs over Nantucket’s last blacksmith shop. The first Passover *seder* known to have been celebrated on the island took place in the home of Morgan and Sarah Levine.

In 1983 notices for a July Sabbath service in Grange Hall were posted, and a hundred and fifty people turned out. Two hundred attended Nantucket’s first Rosh Hashanah service held that year in the Congregational Church. A rabbi from Boston University came to the island with his family for three winter months to teach lessons on Judaism and the Hebrew language. At last, a Jewish congregation was established on Nantucket, with Morgan Levine serving as its first president.

Today Congregation Shirat Ha Yam (Song of the Sea) has a permanent home in the Unitarian Meeting House and holds services from spring into mid-autumn. Its religious education classes have been supported by the sale of “Nantucket red” *yarmulkes* (skull caps) embroidered with whales and of scrimshaw *mezuzot* carved by artist David Lazarus, whom Morgan Levine promoted as the “yiddische scrimshanderer.” For *Tashlich*, people gather at Brant Point lighthouse to cast bread on the channel.⁵⁹

When Simon and Rose Kaufman died on Nantucket, their bodies were returned for burial to Fall River, but today Nantucket, like Newport, has a Jewish cemetery.⁶⁰

But what of those Newport Jews of whaling days? The Polish, Russian, and German Jews who have lived on Nantucket in the past century were Ashkenazim, Eastern European Jews whose Yiddish language is an offshoot of German. They became part of the great general migration to the United States and Canada that began in the late nineteenth century. The Newport Jews, who arrived in the 1600s seeking religious refuge in what became Rhode Island, were Sephardic Jews from Portugal, whose language was Spanish-based Ladino. Spain took the lead in expelling its Jews, and Portugal followed, forcing the Sephardim into conversions or exile. One of the places the Sephardim found to go was Newport, where they established a congregation in 1658 and dedicated Touro Synagogue in 1763.

One of the forces behind the building of Touro Synagogue was Aaron Lopez, who had been born in

⁵⁹ Clendinen 1983; Rosenthal 1989; Landberg 1997. *Mezuzot* are boxes containing lines of scripture that are mounted beside entrances to Jewish homes. *Tashlich* symbolizes the year-end casting off of sins and misdeeds with prayers for forgiveness.

⁶⁰ Nantucket Jewish Cemetery Association, Issue 1. August 12, 1997. There is one more Nantucket household that the 1930 federal census identifies, perhaps incorrectly, as of Jewish heritage. The 1920 census lists the home language of Adolph and Emily Ottison and Emily Ottison’s mother Catherine “Katrina” Feierabend as Lettish, but the 1930 census (which elsewhere contains a number of language identification errors) says that the Ottisons, Katrina Feierabend, and their boarder Fred Matison all spoke Yiddish. In that same year Fred Matison married Minnie Rosenthal Jurowitz of Roxbury.

Portugal in 1731 and carried the name Duarte (Edward) Lopez until he and his wife Anna managed to escape the strictures of the Inquisition and depart for North America in 1752. Once in the freedom of the American colonies, the couple changed their names to Aaron and Abigail, were remarried as Jews, kept a kosher household, and observed the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays. In time the Lopez family established a very large household in Newport, and Aaron Lopez became, in the words of his biographer, a colonial American merchant prince.⁶¹ A decade into his new American life Lopez appealed to Sephardic communities in London, Curaçao, Suriname, and New York for funds for the construction and furnishing of the beautiful synagogue that still graces Newport today.⁶²

Nantucket was very much on the mind of Aaron Lopez, who maintained close ties with Nantucket's premier businessman William Rotch and often partnered in business enterprises with his brother Francis. Early on, Nantucket whaling assumed great importance to the far-flung and highly diversified Lopez business empire. Aaron bought spermaceti and oil from Nantucket whalers and manufactured candles for export. His great concern was that Nantucket businessmen not begin manufacturing candles from their whale oil, but of course they soon did. By way of competition with the Nantucketers, Lopez began building ships and had his own whalers out on voyages right up into the days of the American Revolution, when five of his whalerships were seized by the British off the Azores.⁶³

There was a dark side to the accumulation of Lopez family wealth. Around 1762 Aaron Lopez entered the slave trade, providing Jamaica not only with kosher products for Kingston's Jewish community but also African laborers for the island's plantations. In 1765, as reward for successful delivery of a consignment of slaves to Kingston, he allowed the captain and mate of one of his ships to keep a number of Africans for themselves. At the time of the American Revolution, the Lopez household in Newport included six slaves, and another six served in his father-in-law's household.⁶⁴

Trying to resolve the contradiction between the evident charity and tolerance manifested in the many good works of Aaron Lopez and the lack of evidence that he ever for a moment questioned the morality of trafficking in slaves, his otherwise admiring biographer could only describe Lopez as a man of his time, who—despite daily contact with Africans in his own household—never perceived them as fellow human beings.

How Lopez squared this business with his Quaker associates, the Rotches, is unknown. It must be remembered that despite the ringing denunciation of the trade by Nantucket's Friends, there were Africans held in slavery on Nantucket at the time Lopez entered the trade, and the latest known manumission of slaves on the island dates to 1775, when Friend Benjamin Coffin finally bowed to pressure to free the two-generation family living in slavery in his household.

⁶¹ Chyet 1970, *passim*.

⁶² Although Touro Synagogue is today the oldest synagogue in the United States, it was predated by one founded in New York City in 1695 (Sowell 1981, p. 76). The New York Jewish community maintained close and supportive ties with the one in Newport.

⁶³ Chyet 1970, pp. 27–28, 46–51, 82–83, 145–51.

⁶⁴ Chyet 1970, pp. 70–71, 158.

Nantucket did not offer a home to Sephardic Jews who established themselves in Newport, but there is another Nantucket connection to the Sephardim via the Cape Verde Islands.

In 1932 Lottie DeLuz, wife of John M. Deluz, died on Nantucket. According to the death certificate, she had been born on the Cape Verdean island of Fogo in 1889 to Henry and Catherine Hebrew. “Hebrew” is an odd surname in any case, and particularly odd to come from a Portuguese colony. Yet Cape Verde is presently in the process of recovering its Jewish heritage, seeking to understand why there are Jewish cemeteries on most of the islands, including Brava and Fogo—the two islands that contributed the most immigrants to southern New England.⁶⁵

Like Newport, the towns of the Cape Verde archipelago were destinations for Sephardic Jews expelled from Portugal after 1500. Richard Lobban, scholar of Cape Verdean history, writes that “The numbers expelled at this time were so great that the term ‘Portuguese’ almost implied those of Jewish origin.”⁶⁶ Despite Portuguese attempts to restrict their commercial activities, the Jews they had expelled to the margins of their empire became financially and culturally indispensable to Cape Verde. Among their enterprises was the African side of the trade that supplied wealthy Newport masters with their slaves.

A second pulse of immigration to the Cape Verde islands began in the 1850s, with Jewish men from Morocco and Gibraltar arriving to work in the leather trade. Unlike the nineteenth-century emigrants from Eastern Europe to North America, these men were, once again, Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jews, whose linguistic assimilation to Crioulo-speaking Cape Verde was relatively easy. The Jewish cemeteries on the islands date to this tide of migration, not back to the first settling of the islands.⁶⁷

Mainly men, the Jewish immigrants of the second wave married into the local population, and their children and grandchildren grew up in the Cape Verdean Creole milieu. Observance of Jewish traditions waned, but vestiges and recollections lingered. When the great migration of Cape Verdean families to New England began around 1900, it is certain that some of the immigrants were grandchildren of those Sephardic Jews who had migrated from Morocco and Gibraltar a half-century earlier. Surely Lottie Hebrew DeLuz was not the only person to bring a thread of the Sephardic fabric at last to Nantucket—one more melody in the Song of the Sea.

⁶⁵ See www.jewishgen.org/atl-caribbean/caboverde for the International Jewish Cemetery Project–Cabo Verde; www.umass.edu/specialprograms/caboverde/jewslobban for “Jews in Cape Verde and on the Guinea Coast,” by Richard Lobban, presented at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, February 11, 1996; and www.umass.edu/specialprograms/caboverde/jewswerlin for “Jews in Cape Verde” by Louise Werlin, n. d..

⁶⁶ Lobban 1996. There are no page numbers in the on-line publication of this article.

⁶⁷ Araújo 2000. pp. 13, 30; Lobban 1996.

Chapter Three

From the Old Ottoman Empire

In condemning the European slave trade of the eighteenth century, Nantucket's Elihu Coleman wrote, "Now although the Turks make slaves of those they can catch, that are not of their religion, yet (as history relates) as soon as they embrace the Mahometan religion, they are no longer kept slaves, but are quickly set free, and for the most part put to some place of preferment." In his essay Coleman favorably compared the policy of the Islamic Ottoman Empire, which—irrespective of race or ethnicity—rewarded religious conversion to Islam, with the Christian practice of his time, which imposed conversion on enslaved Africans yet nonetheless kept them in bondage.⁶⁸

Between the 1300s and late 1600s the Turks of whom Coleman wrote had expanded their rule from a small state entirely within Anatolia (present-day Turkey) to include most of the Balkan peninsula, eastern Europe as far north as Hungary and thence to the western shore of the Black Sea, Egypt, the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, and the Red Sea coast of Arabia. Their vast holdings went by the name of the Ottoman Empire, after their first sultan, Osman.

The Ottomans spread their religion—Islam—and their language—a variety of Turkish, not Arabic—throughout their empire, but they did not impose either. With Turkish as the language of administration, it was in everyone's interest to be able to communicate with the empire's bureaucrats. Those who did not learn Turkish were at a practical disadvantage. Likewise, Christians and Jews were free to continue to practice their own faiths and to have their own representatives before the Ottoman government. On the other hand, the subordinate position of those who chose not to convert to Islam meant that they enjoyed fewer civil rights and paid higher taxes than their Moslem neighbors.

Until the practice was abolished in 1637, the Ottoman government periodically imposed a "child tax" on non-Muslims. Young boys would be taken from their families and sent to the Ottoman capital of Constantinople for religious conversion and service to the empire. Some were educated to return to their home areas as local administrators, and others were trained to become members of the empire's elite military corps known as the janissaries.⁶⁹

By the early 1700s, when Coleman penned his comparison of Ottoman and European forms of human bondage, the expansive power of the Ottoman Empire had been checked by alliances of European states. The first blow had been struck in the 1571 Battle of Lepanto when the Papal States of Italy and Venice together with Spain obliterated the Ottoman naval fleet. A bit over a century later, in 1683,

⁶⁸ Coleman 1825, p. 17 [originally published in 1733].

⁶⁹ Lapidus 1999 provides an overall history of the Ottoman Empire with an excellent map. The child tax and the formation of the janissaries are treated on pp. 376–77. A comprehensive history of the Ottoman Empire is Kinross 1977. See pp. 26, 33, 47–52.



Maximum expansion of the Ottoman Empire.

Austrian and Polish armies defeated an Ottoman effort to seize the city of Vienna. Over the next two centuries, as the spirit of nationalism arose among subjugated peoples, pieces of the empire broke off to become sovereign states. Finally, when—in the wake of World War I—the armed forces of several European nations occupied what was left of the empire for several years, a leader who adopted the name Kemal Atatürk led a nationalist movement that in 1923 did away entirely with the Ottoman Empire and replaced it with the Republic of Turkey.⁷⁰

The twilight years of the Ottoman Empire were the dawning years of Nantucket’s new summer-based economy. Stores on Main Street and adjacent blocks offered curios and souvenirs to tourists and furnishings for the homes of summer residents. There was growing demand on the island for fancy fruits, candy, and ice cream as well as for amusements. Refugees from the lethal disorder of the expiring Ottoman Empire saw business opportunities and security on Nantucket and embraced them.

In the nineteenth century the first block of Centre Street as it leaves Main Street had come to be called Petticoat Row in recognition of the Nantucket women proprietors of the stores there. In the spring of 1916, however, the *Inquirer and Mirror* complained that Petticoat Row’s “fame has given place to the foreign element who open their stores only during the summer months.”⁷¹ At that time and on past the middle of the twentieth century Petticoat Row was never without entrepreneurs from lands of the old Ottoman Empire: Prapione Abajian’s New York Variety Store at 15 Centre Street (later Antoon Khouri’s store);

⁷⁰ Kinross 1977, *passim*.

⁷¹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, March 11, 1916.

Carekin Proodian, optician and jeweler at 17 Centre; Jacob Abajian's Oriental Bazaar at 19 Centre from 1884 to 1937; Vartan Dedeian's Oriental rugs at 21 and 23 Centre; and across the street A. D. Zorub's "fancy goods" store at 14 Centre.⁷²

Armenians

Armenians are neither Turks nor Arabs, and their traditional religion is not Islam. Geographically they have been favorably situated for commerce along the western reaches of the ancient Silk Road, which brought goods from Asia overland to the Mediterranean Sea and thence to all of Europe. That very location on an intercontinental trade route made them vulnerable to attack from all quarters. Over millennia, as great empires rose and fell, the Armenians were ruled by Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks. From time to time an autonomous or independent Armenian state would emerge. The Armenians adopted Christianity very early, and a cleric of the church developed a specifically Armenian writing system that became a cornerstone of subsequent ethnic identity. When they were attacked by Persians in A.D. 451, the Armenians staunchly defended themselves and their Christian faith. The man who led them in battle against the Persians was Vartan Mamikonian, and to this day Vartan remains a favored name for Armenian boys.

Just as the Armenian alphabet and the name Vartan have endured, so has Armenian Christianity, despite centuries of Ottoman incentives to convert to Islam. The disadvantages attendant on remaining Christian in the Ottoman Empire were endured by the empire's large Armenian minority, who had been famous as merchants before the arrival of the Turks. The Armenians continued to cultivate their fertile lands and raise livestock; to trade in fruits, oil, cotton, and wine; and to move goods between Asia and Europe. Then, in the late 1800s, their situation became untenable.

Governance of the Armenians had been divided since the 1600s, when Persia took eastern Armenia away from the Ottomans. In the 1820s the Persian part was annexed to Russia. From that moment on, the Ottomans feared that the Armenians within their empire would declare their independence, and that Russia would support Armenian nationalism. Beginning in 1894 the Ottomans, using another of the empire's minorities—the Kurds—as henchmen, launched a two-year campaign of ethnic cleansing to rid themselves once and for all of the Armenians. The fortunate managed to flee as refugees to the far ends of the earth, where, ironically, they were often called "the Turks." Hundreds of thousands of those who did not escape in time died.⁷³

For the survivors of the killings of the 1890s and their children, more doom lay over the horizon. Turkey and Russia were on opposite sides of World War I, and once again the fear of Armenian complicity

⁷² On March 16, 1935, the *Inquirer and Mirror*, in response to a query about how many women had been in business on Petticoat Row in the past seventy-five years, listed the names of twenty-four businesswomen. On March 16 the newspaper republished the list with three additions. Neither list contained the name of Prapione Abajian, proprietor of the New York Variety Store, among "the estimable ladies who have conducted establishments on Centre Street" whose names "may call to the minds of some of our readers some pleasant memories." Both lists contain the names of married women, so the fact that Prapione Abajian was the wife of Jacob Abajian, who had his own separate establishment on Petticoat Row, should not have been grounds for excluding her from the list.

⁷³ Kinross, pp. 557–63 and the chilling last sentence on p. 607: "Their [the Armenians] proximity to the Russians on the Caucasus front furnished a convenient pretext for their persecution on a scale far exceeding the atrocities of Abdul Hamid, through the deportation and massacre of one million Armenians, more than half of whom perished."

with Russia gripped the rulers of the Ottoman Empire. In 1915 they deported the Armenians living within their borders south to the desert of what is now Syria, where—deprived of shelter, food, and water—a million men, women, and children perished. In a scenario eerily like the ones played out in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s, urgent reports of the killing were made by diplomats and missionaries, but the Western nations were ineffective in stopping it. For non-Armenian Americans, memory of the holocaust of 1915 lingers on in parents’ admonition to finicky children to clean their plates in memory of “the starving Armenians.”⁷⁴

Jacob Abajian reached safety and lived a long life. He had been born in the town of Harput on October 27, 1860, and at the time of his death was approaching his seventy-seventh birthday. For fifty-three years he had been proprietor of the Oriental Bazaar on Petticoat Row, where he sold rugs, embroideries, paintings, porcelain, silver, curiosities, and island souvenirs. When he died on Nantucket in 1937, the *Inquirer and Mirror* wrote that he “held the honor of being the oldest business man in Nantucket.”⁷⁵

Nantucketers born in the 1920s who knew the Oriental Bazaar in its last years recall the establishment as dusty, ill-kept, and redolent of a smoky fragrance they suspect to have been hashish. But in its heyday Jacob Abajian provided furnishings for the hotels, cottages, and summer homes being built as the island’s new economy took wing. He was a master of marketing through the weekly newspaper. On August 29, 1889, five years after the Oriental Bazaar opened for business, his advertisement in the *Nantucket Journal* offered “Japanese, Chinese, and Egyptian arts and very fine Turkish, Persian, and Afghanistan rugs, carpets, embroideries,” together with attar of roses and “fine silverware from the Far East.” Moreover, he promised to subsidize round-trip train fare to customers who came in from Siasconset and offered a free year’s subscription to the *Nantucket Journal* to anyone spending more than a hundred dollars in his shop. Purchases would be packed and shipped “anywhere in America.” Five years later, in the off-season, he placed an advertisement to notify customers well in advance that when his shop opened in May, he would offer—in addition to the carpets and silverware—“Ten principal views from ’Sconset and Nantucket, sent to the far East to be put on fine China and Porcelain.” In conclusion he states, “From Constantinople and India I have the finest and most superb curiosities ever seen in this country.”⁷⁶

ESTABLISHED 1888.

ORIENTAL BAZAAR

Will open for the season June 1st, 1890, with a choice line of

Turkish, Persian and Japanese Rugs, Carpets, Hangings and Embroideries,

And a large assortment of

Antique Silver, Jewelry, Porcelain, Crockery, Attar of Roses and Curiosities.

J. ABAJIAN, Native Armenian,
CENTRE ST., NANTUCKET,
and UNION ST., NEW BEDFORD.

Oriental Bazaar

21 CENTRE STREET,
J. Abajian Proprietor,

JAPANESE,
CHINESE,
and EGYPTIAN
ARTS
and very fine

TURKISH,
PERSIAN
and AFGHANISTAN
**RUGS, CARPETS,
EMBROIDERIES,
ATTAR OF ROSES**

—AND—
Fine Silverware
—FROM THE—
FAR EAST.

Return ticket to 'Sconset free to all parties from that village who purchase \$50 worth of goods and whoever purchases goods amounting to more than \$100 will have the NANTUCKET JOURNAL sent them free for one year. Goods carefully packed and forwarded anywhere in America. All goods at Wholesale Prices of New York and Boston.

Advertisements for Jacob Abajian’s Oriental Bazaar. *Nantucket Journal*, August 29, 1889 (bottom), and the *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 1, 1899 (top).

⁷⁴ Documentation of the Armenian holocaust is vast. Somakian 1995, *passim*, examines the stakes various nations and ethnic groups held in the “Armenian Question” in the period 1895–1920. Contemporary reports of the massacres commencing in 1915 are quoted on pp. 87–90 and the reaction of foreign diplomats and missionaries present on pp. 94–95. A summary of the international power struggles leading up to and through the destruction of the Armenians within the Ottoman Empire is on pp. 253–57. Somakian’s monograph also provides an extensive bibliography.

⁷⁵ *Inquirer and Mirror*, September 13, 1937. In this article the name of Jacob Abajian’s birthplace is spelled as “Harpoote,” but the modern spelling is either Harput or Kharput. In addition to his business on Centre Street, Jacob Abajian had for some years been owner of the building known as Progress Hall on South Water Street.

⁷⁶ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 7, 1893. According to the 1895 local census, a younger member of the Abajian family, Garabed Abajian, was assisting in the store, but he had left the island by 1900.

According to the *Inquirer and Mirror's* report of his death in 1937, Jacob Abajian had come to Nantucket in the summer of 1883 and told an audience at the Congregational Church “of the persecutions of the Armenians by the Turks and of the hardships his people were obliged to endure.” He was truly fortunate to have left Harput when he did. Located close to the upper Euphrates River, Harput is said to have existed for four thousand years. It encompassed the ruins of an ancient castle, a Christian church and monastery, and one of the oldest mosques in Turkey. In 1895, within two years of when Abajian wrote his confident advertisement of exotic wares from his homeland, Harput was the scene of one of the opening massacres of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks.

Despite the shock, some of Harput's townspeople held out, keeping to their land and seeking to endure as they had in the past. Then came the 1915 mass deportation. In 1959 the town was still described as having a population of a few thousand, but when solar-eclipse watchers passed through in 1999, they reported only a hundred and fifty people still resident in the area. When asked what had happened to Harput, Turks are reported to have responded that it had been abandoned in the previous century for the convenience of a more modern village nearby. Armenians, on the other hand, told the visitors that it had been wiped out by government forces in 1915.⁷⁷

In 1883, the year that Jacob Abajian made his first visit to Nantucket, Carekin Proodian was born back in Harput. While he was still a boy, the Proodian family managed to leave and re-establish themselves in Massachusetts where Stephen P. Proodian and his sons carried on the family jewelry, engraving, and watch-repair business. Just as Philip Genesky had seen opportunity in Nantucket and set up his son Emile in business on Main Street, so Stephen Proodian used Harput connections to reach out to the island. He sent young Carekin to do watch repair on the Centre Street premises of Jacob Abajian's Oriental Bazaar.

Repairing watches in the summer, Carekin Proodian worked his way through South Bend Indiana College of Optics. Then he opened his own store on Petticoat Row next door to the Oriental Bazaar, advertised as a jeweler and optician, and prospered. In 1923 he married Araxy Tenazian, the daughter of an Armenian family in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Like himself, his bride had been born before her family fled their home country, and both Carekin and Araxy were naturalized citizens of the United States. The couple bought a house on Gardner Street, which had belonged to descended Nantucketer John B. Folger, and a second home in Florida, where they spent a few months each winter. Like Jacob and Prapione Abajian, the Proodians remained childless. Like Jacob Abajian, Carekin Proodian took pride in his United States citizenship and his right to vote in Nantucket. Like Emile Genesky, Lincoln Porte, and José Reyes, he found great satisfaction in being a member of a Masonic lodge.

For over forty years Carekin Proodian went to his store every day, including the last day of his life. One Friday in 1948 he came home from work, went to bed, and died in his sleep. Following his funeral at

⁷⁷ The news story “Eclipse Chasers Gather in Turkey” was posted on the web site of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians and can be read at www.oia.net/news/articles/1999-08-016.

the Congregational church on Centre Street, he was accorded Masonic rites at Prospect Hill Cemetery, where a large Proodian family monument was erected. He had not lived as many years as Jacob Abajian, and he had not equaled Abajian's fifty-three years in business, but for an Armenian of his generation to die of old age in his own bed was an enviable achievement.

Both Abajian and Proodian had for some years managed off-island stores in the winter—Abajian in New Bedford and Proodian in Boston—but both gave up the stores in order to become full-time residents of Nantucket. A third Armenian merchant on Petticoat Row, Vartan Dedeian, had his primary business in Chicago and opened his Nantucket store in the summers, selling not only “a choice line of Oriental rugs,” but also “antiques, old silver, household effects, furniture, &.”⁷⁸ He started in a single store on Petticoat Row and expanded to occupy two adjacent stores at 21 and 23 Centre. A large sign advertising the Dedeian business was painted on the gable of 25 Centre facing Middle Pearl (India) Street.

Apparently there was more than enough demand on Nantucket for rugs, silver, and curios to sustain two competing stores side by side on Petticoat Row. Nor were they the only stores of their kind. An undated photograph taken some time before 1916 shows a sign for Bezazian Bros. Oriental Rugs on the west bay of the Folger Block on Main Street, where H. M. Macy Dry Goods had been located in 1895. Farther downhill, the Nantucket Employment Agency at 50 Main Street offered “Nantucket Souvenirs. Oriental Rugs and China,” and in 1914 the C. F. Wing home-furnishings store on the south side of Main Street offered Tyvan rugs for sale.⁷⁹ In the heady days leading up to World War I, it seems that everyone yearned for a fine carpet and a curio collection from the lands of the old Silk Road.



Vartan Dedeian's sign on the gable of the building at the corner of Petticoat Row and India Street, March 1916. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

⁷⁸ Advertisement in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 1, 1916.

⁷⁹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 1, 1916. Yet another rug merchant resided on Nantucket in 1900. The federal census for that year lists Vincent Gurji, born in Turkey but a naturalized citizen of the U.S.A., living with his Canadian wife in rented quarters on Milk Street.

Syrians

The Armenians were by no means the only Christians within the Ottoman lands. Expanding out of Anatolia, the Ottomans claimed the whole eastern Mediterranean coast including Syria, from which they were expelled only at the end of World War I. Across the deserts of northern Syria, where the Armenians had been herded to die in 1915, lay the cities of Aleppo and, farther south, Damascus. In 1918 Antoon J. Khouri was born into a large Christian family in Damascus. His older brother George left Syria and by 1927 had opened yet another oriental rug store on Petticoat Row, downstairs at 20 Centre Street. The rest of the Khouri family followed George to America in the 1930s, and Antoon finished his education in the Boston schools, earning a degree in accounting from Bryant and Stratton Business School while working in the family oriental rug and dry goods business.⁸⁰

His first visit to Nantucket came in the summer of 1939, when he exhibited his merchandise at the Sea Cliff Inn and carried it door-to-door in suitcases.⁸¹ The next year, as the clouds of war gathered, he entered the U. S. Army and served as a radio technician for five years.

Following World War II, Antoon Khouri returned to Nantucket and operated out of boarding houses until a vacancy occurred at 15 Centre Street, in the location that had once been Mrs. Abajian's New York Variety Store and later a shoe store. For the next thirty-five years it housed his business: Antoon J. Khouri: Linen-Lingerie-Children's Wear-Hand Made Oriental Rugs. The Khouri store offered exquisitely smocked and embroidered children's clothes, trousseau items, and table linens that became cherished heirlooms for summer residents and year-round Nantucket families alike.

Antoon Khouri and his wife Lillian (Haddad) Khouri maintained their family home in Wellesley, where he was an active member of the Church of Saint John of Damascus as well as hold-



Antoon Khouri's store on Petticoat Row. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

⁸⁰ The Khouris were not the first Syrians to reside on Nantucket. The 1920 federal census lists Mary G. Petus, 35, a dry-goods merchant renting a room on the island. According to the census, she had arrived in the United States at the age of five, been naturalized at age thirteen, and was married, but her husband was not living on the island.

⁸¹ Other places he exhibited his wares were the Jared Coffin House and hotels in Siasconset.

ing membership in a veterans association and a Masonic lodge. In time the Khouris bought a summer home on Nantucket. Located behind Sarah P. Bunker's home on Cliff Road, the little house was one of Nantucket's many "barn conversions." Having once been the carriage house for Sarah P.'s family, it had been made into a cottage for two generations of her descendants before its sale to the Khouris, who renovated the aging building for themselves and their four children. In Nantucket Antoon Khouri continued his Masonic commitment as a member of Union Lodge F. & A. M.

Since his death in 1995, members of Antoon Khouri's family—his wife and son Arthur—have maintained contact with Nantucket, expertly cleaning and repairing antique rugs for the Nantucket Historical Association and other clients.⁸²

Greeks

Greece was absorbed by the Ottoman Empire in the mid-1500s, but its inclusion was heavily contested. Armed rebellion broke out before the end of the 1700s, and an outright war of independence began in 1821. Over the next several years England, Russia, and France intervened against the Ottomans in support of the Greek cause. Notably, the English poet Lord Byron joined the Greek insurgency in 1823 and died the following year. The Greeks achieved complete separation from Ottoman control in 1832.

Independence brought no peace, however. The nationalism that had been simmering throughout the 1700s in the Balkan region flared in the 1890s, and Greece joined in war against the Ottoman Empire. From then until the end of the empire in 1923 there was almost continual warfare to force the Ottomans out of Europe.⁸³

In those fraught times great numbers of Greeks emigrated from their home country to the United States and Canada, where they worked in textile mills and shoe factories or at whatever work they could find. Immigrants who had the good fortune to accumulate some capital operated grocery stores, bakeries, candy stores, restaurants, and other small businesses.

In Nantucket Greek-owned business had its locus on the south side of Main Street halfway uphill between Union Street and Orange Street. In 1901, at the invitation of merchant C. A. Chenoweth, George Anastos and Nicholas Kaleavas came to the island to operate a sidewalk fruit stand. At night their produce was moved into Chenoweth's "Old Curiosity Shop," which was then located in a wooden building that had been erected on Main Street after Nantucket's Great Fire of 1846. When Chenoweth moved his business to Middle Pearl (India) Street, the New Bedford home-furnishings business of C. F. Wing took over the Main Street location and continued to let the fruit merchants use part of the building for night storage. By 1909

⁸² The Khouris continue to clean and repair antique and handmade rugs for Nantucket hotels, guest houses, inns, and summer residents. Personal communication and obituaries from Mrs. Antoon J. Khouri.

⁸³ Kinross 1977, pp. 127–28, 440–52.

Kaleavas was proprietor of a fruit store and a “confectionery” indoors at 26 Main Street, and George Anastos was employed as a clerk there. Both were living on the premises. The next year George’s younger brother John Anastos, twenty-two years old and single, came to the island to work in the retail fruit trade, and George moved to Boston to handle the wholesale side of the business.

The year 1912 brought open war between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, and John Anastos and Nicholas Kaleavas went home to Greece to fight against the Turks. Kaleavas was killed and John Anastos was wounded. Upon recovery, he continued in business with his brother George, providing fresh fruit to Nantucket. The Anastos brothers retained the business name Kaleavas for some years after taking over the store at 26 Main Street, expanding its offerings to “Choice selected Fruits, Nuts and Candies, Ice Cream and Soda, Fine Confections”⁸⁴

In 1920 the Anastos brothers were still renting the premises at 26 Main Street, wedged between the Masonic Block building on the corner of Main and Union Streets and the C. F. Wing Company home-furnishings store. A fire in the fall of 1925 led to the razing of the old buildings and the construction of a pair of nearly identical two-story fire-resistant commercial buildings for the Wing Company and the Anastos brothers. The side-by-side home-furnishings store and fruit store held grand openings a week apart in May 1926.⁸⁵

Having had their own start as clerks in the fruit store, the Anastos brothers took on other Greek immigrants as employees. In 1919 Constantinos Nicoletos had been living on the premises at 26 Main Street and working as a clerk, and the 1920 federal census lists John Nicoletos boarding with John Anastos and working as a fruit salesman. Unmarried, John Nicoletos had arrived in the United States in 1899 and been naturalized. His younger brother Harry came a few years later, leaving his family behind in Varsara, Greece. Unlike John, he did not take out citizenship papers, apparently intending to return home to his family, but when his wife died during his absence, he brought his sons to join him. At some point a third brother came to Nantucket to join the family group.

In the spring of 1925 the Nicoletos brothers opened their own business on the south side of Main Street just a few doors west from the Anastos brothers. Both businesses advertised fruit, confectionery, and ice cream. Across the street on the corner of Main and Federal, Roger’s and R. G. Coffin’s drug store offered ice cream too. All this competition with its attendant print advertising required distinctive names. The Nicoletos brothers named their business “The Modern,” and when the Anastos brothers opened in their new building, they called it “The Spa.” In 1927 the Nicoletos brothers announced the installation of a skylight and a new piano at their establishment.⁸⁶

Shortly after making these improvements at The Modern, John Nicoletos made a trip home to

⁸⁴ A history of the Kaleavas and Anastos enterprise appeared in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 29, 1926. For retention of the Kaleavas name after the death of Nicholas Kaleavas, see the advertisement in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 27, 1916.

⁸⁵ Mooney 2000, pp. 48–49; *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 29, 1926. See Appendix 3g for a description of the Anastos grand opening.

⁸⁶ Advertisement in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, March 26, 1927.

Greece, and while there fell seriously ill. Nonetheless, he traveled back to Nantucket to continue managing the business, which he did until his death in 1931. A member of Union Lodge, whose meeting hall was just a few doors down Main Street from The Modern, John Nicoletos was buried with Masonic ritual.⁸⁷

While Harry Nicoletos's sons and yet another brother, George Nicoletos, worked in The Modern, another young Greek named Demos Ronderes assisted at the Spa and lived upstairs, sharing quarters with John Anastos, who was still unmarried.⁸⁸

Long though this bachelorhood was, however, it was not permanent. The 1938 Nantucket street list includes Greece-born housewife Athena "Anna" Anastos, twenty years younger than John. George Anastos, on the other hand, had married Lilika Popodopoulus years before. The couple resided in Boston, where their son C. George was born in 1916.⁸⁹

C. George Anastos received his education at Boston Latin School, Harvard College, and Harvard Law School. Graduating from law school in 1941, he served in the U. S. Army Air Corps during World War II, then practiced law in Boston before moving on to the U. S. Justice Department. After additional service to federal and Massachusetts state governmental agencies, he was appointed Nantucket District Court judge, a position he held until retirement (from which he was subsequently recalled). Residing in both Nantucket and Wellesley, he involved himself deeply in community affairs.⁹⁰

The ascent of the Anastos family in a generation from war-torn post-Ottoman Greece to a seat of judiciary power in the United States was counterbalanced by descent of the family business on Nantucket's Main Street. After the repeal of prohibition in the 1930s, it acquired a liquor license. In 1944 the "Confectionary Spa" at 26 Main Street was still offering ice cream, sodas, pies, and candies, but also "sandwiches of all kinds, draught beer, ale." The fruit store had given way to the Spa Cafe at 28 Main Street, offering fish dinners, steaks, chops, lobsters, and cocktails. The side-by-side Spa complex was advertised to summer tourists as a "delightfully cool place" just three minutes from Steamboat Wharf.⁹¹



Staff supper at the Spa Cafe in the 1950s. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association (photo by Mary J. Barrett).*

The wharves used by commercial fishing boats were even closer, and it became the custom for fishermen coming off the water to head directly from their boats to the Spa to drink beer. While the

⁸⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 24, 1931.

⁸⁸ The Nicoletos household was a large one. The 1930 census also lists a young unmarried woman with the Greek surname Nicoletos who was working as a bookkeeper. She had arrived in the United States at about the same time as Harry's sons and is identified as John's daughter. Mysteriously, she is also identified by the census as being French Canadian. In 1930 Harry Anastos was proprietor of a restaurant on the island, and the household also had a lodger, Scotland-born John Kenney, who was working as a restaurant cook.

⁸⁹ Father and son had mirror-image names: George C. and C. George. The father's middle initial is sometimes listed as C and at other times as K, since transliteration from the Greek alphabet can go either way. It stood for Cosmo.

⁹⁰ "Judge C. George Anastos dead at 76," *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 30, 1993.

⁹¹ *This Week in Nantucket*, September 11, 1944.

restaurant side held out as a place where families might still go for a reasonably priced meal, the former ice cream parlor devolved into a rough workingmen's tavern.

Late in the 1950s John Anastos retired to Greece, and at the close of 1961 the Anastos family sold the business and the building to the Nantucket Historical Trust.⁹²

Besides the businessmen on Main Street, other Greek families lived on the island. In 1931 Christy and Mary Psaradelis moved to the island from Boston and enrolled their children in school. Their son James began in the 'Sconset school and continued on through Cyrus Peirce and Academy Hill Schools to Nantucket High School, followed by his younger sisters and brother. Christy Psaradelis had been born in Tripolis, a town in the heart of the large island of Peloponnisos at the southern tip of Greece. In Boston Christy married Mary Melanes, daughter of a Greek father and an American mother. Their families were in the wholesale produce business in Boston, and in 'Sconset Christy carried on as a gardener and florist until his retirement in 1951. Although Mary's mother was not Greek, the Psaradelis family maintained the language, at least between Christy and Mary, so that when Nicholas Petumenos arrived on Nantucket in 1947, he sought them out for company.

Born in Laioti, near Corinth, in 1897, Nicholas Petumenos had left home for the United States as a teenager. His immigration was sponsored by an uncle who lived in the Midwest, and while still in his teens Nicholas operated his own bootblack shop in Youngstown, Ohio. Later he received training in removal of spots and stains from clothing in preparation for dry cleaning. In the mid 1940s he was married with three children and working as a garment "spotter" in Westerly, Rhode Island, when a consortium of Nantucket businessmen with plans to open a new dry cleaning plant on Nantucket met him and invited him to bring his expertise to the island.

They reached an agreement that Nicholas Petumenos would spend a winter on-island before making a decision about moving his family from the mainland. His wife and children joined him in the summer of 1948 but left in the fall for the children to return to their mainland schools. Dryshoal Cleaners arranged for a local flight service to fly Nicholas to Connecticut every other weekend to be with his family. The next summer the family relocated permanently to Nantucket and enrolled the children in the Nantucket public schools. In the fall of 1949 they purchased a spacious house at the intersection of Gull Island Lane, Centre Street, and West Chester Street, next to the North Shore Restaurant. The proprietor of the North Shore was Esther Gibbs, great-granddaughter of Sarah P. Bunker. Dorothy Petumenos rented rooms to summer visitors who had no farther to go than next door for meals at the North Shore. So it was that Sarah P.'s descendants and the family of Nicholas Petumenos became long-time neighbors.

Nicholas Petumenos was the only Greek-speaker in his family or in the neighborhood, and so he turned to Nantucket's other residents who had been born in Greece for the chance to maintain his native

⁹² "Sale of Nantucket Spa and Cafe," *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 12, 1962.

language. Two and a half years before his death, he was called upon to put his language into service on the occasion of a maritime disaster.

In mid-December of 1976 the *Argo Merchant*, an oil tanker bound for Boston, ran aground southeast of Siasconset. Although registered in Liberia, the vessel was owned by a Greek company, commanded by a Greek captain, and manned by thirty-eight Greek crewmen. Responding to the distress call, the Coast Guard immediately lifted more than half the crew members from the ship by helicopter. After pumps failed to keep the engine room from flooding, more men were flown ashore the next day. Hopes to refloat the *Argo Merchant* came to nothing, and in less than a week the tanker broke apart, spilling the cargo of oil into the sea.⁹³

A temporary security and reception area was set up for crewmembers taken off the *Argo Merchant* and flown to Nantucket. Serving as interpreter between the authorities and the rescued Greek seamen was seventy-nine-year-old Nicholas Petumenos.⁹⁴

Hungarians

Hungary came under Ottoman rule earlier than Greece and emerged from the empire earlier as well. During their aggressively expansionist period, Ottoman forces defeated the Hungarians at the Battle of Mohács in 1526. Fifteen years later the Hungarian capital of Buda fell, and over the next hundred and fifty years two-thirds of Hungary was taken into the Ottoman Empire. Another piece of it was made into a duchy under Ottoman “protection.” Only the northwest remained outside the Ottoman sphere, ruled by members of the Hapsburg dynasty.⁹⁵

To be ruled by an Austrian was nearly as alien to the populace as to be ruled by Turks. Distant linguistic cousins of the Estonians and Finns, the Hungarians (who call themselves Magyars) were neither Middle European nor Turkish of language or history.⁹⁶ Pressed by aggressively expanding populations in an area much farther north and east, one group of Magyars had come over the Carpathian mountains to the plains bordering the Danube River and another into the area in northern Romania known as Transylvania. Around A.D. 1000, after trying unsuccessfully to push on farther into Germany and Italy, the Magyars finally settled on the vast, flat plains of present-day Hungary, became farmers, and adopted Christianity.

In the 1300s and 1400s western European culture flourished among the Magyars, and Gothic architecture graced their cities’ churches, universities, and libraries. Then, after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Hungary became a frontier, exposed to attack by the Ottomans, who ultimately prevailed and began converting the Magyars’ churches into mosques. It was not until nearly 1700 that the Magyar capital of

⁹³ *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 16 and December 23, 1976.

⁹⁴ Information provided by Barbara Petumenos Thomas.

⁹⁵ Kinross 1977, pp. 185–86, Vuorela 1964, p. 345.

⁹⁶ Kinross is mistaken in stating that the Hungarians and Turks were related peoples (p. 15) and elsewhere suggesting that the Hungarians were Slavs (p. 85).

Buda and the university town of Pécs on the opposite side of the Danube (known together as Budapest) were finally rejoined to Europe. As in the case of Greece, however, emergence from the Ottoman Empire brought years of struggle for governance. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were rife with conflict. The twentieth century brought the devastation of two World Wars, the imposition of communist rule, and the brutal suppression of the Hungarian popular uprising of 1956.⁹⁷



Theresa (Szabo) Anderson, top left, with her family and children of the Östman family, summer 1930 or 1931. Clockwise from top center: Cora Östman, Hjalmar Alfred Anderson, Olga Anderson, Beatrice Anderson, and Edward Östman. The boy by the house is Frederich Östman, and the girl in the carriage is Marion Östman. *Courtesy of Olga (Anderson) Hansen and Grace Marshall.*

Theresa (Szabo) Anderson

had been born in Budapest in 1896, but she was living safely on Easton Street in Nantucket when Soviet tanks rolled through the streets of her hometown in 1956. Widow of a Norwegian fisherman, she had been for much of her adult life the sole Hungarian among Nantucket's year-round foreign-born population.

With great prescience her father, George Szabo, had brought Theresa and her sister Margaret to the United States before the outbreak of World War I. Settling in New Jersey, they found work with wealthy families. Young Theresa was engaged first as a nanny and then as a cook by a resident of Morristown who maintained a summer home on Milk Street in Nantucket. Having settled his daughters in the United States, George Szabo made repeated trips back to Hungary, and from his last one he didn't return.

In Nantucket teenaged Theresa married and had two children, born on the island as World War I raged over Hungary. The marriage bestowed the security of permanent United States residency, but it did not endure. In 1919 she married again. Her second husband, Hjalmar Alfred Anderson, had been a fisherman when he came from Norway, and he died a fisherman, killed in an accident at sea in 1941. Theresa was left with four children and nearly four decades of life still ahead of her on Nantucket.⁹⁸

In the federal censuses for Nantucket, Theresa Anderson firmly declared her nationality and first language as "Magyar," but no Magyar community existed for her on-island.⁹⁹ Living as part of Nantucket's

⁹⁷ Vuorela 1964, pp. 345–46, Kinross 1977, p. 350.

⁹⁸ Personal communication from Olga Anderson, daughter of Theresa (Szabo) Anderson.

⁹⁹ That the census enumerator first wrote down "Hungarian" and then added "Magyar" implies that Theresa Anderson insisted on it.

predominantly Norwegian community of fishing families, she had few opportunities to speak her own first language. But in that linguistic baggage so seldom opened she had brought to Nantucket a little heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Over the course of 1500 years the Magyars had met Turkic peoples several times, sometimes on friendly terms and sometimes decidedly not. Whatever the circumstances, the Magyars always acquired some new words from the Turks. In young Theresa Szabo's vocabulary were over three hundred words borrowed more than a thousand years earlier, before the Magyars ever saw the banks of the Danube River where her home city of Budapest would someday stand. Layered on top of them were another thirty or so words from the Ottomans' language, borrowed by Theresa's ancestors in the days after their 1526 defeat at Mohács. Theresa's mother tongue was a mobile history lesson brought to the United States and finally laid to rest in Nantucket in April, 1979.¹⁰⁰

Although Theresa Anderson was the sole Hungarian among Nantucket's year-round population until after 1950, another Hungarian, also born in Budapest in 1896, began forging ties with the island in 1925 and eventually made Nantucket his home too.

The formative years of Charles Sziklas were more privileged than those of young Theresa Szabo. While she was on a ship traveling to a nanny's job in New Jersey, he was concluding his college-preparatory education in Budapest and packing to go to the University of London. As the people of lands that had once been incorporated into the Ottoman Empire knew all too well, however, war is an implacable leveler. World War I cut young Charles Sziklas off from his country and his family and put him down in the same country where Theresa's father had placed her and her sister for safety's sake. His exile, like hers, became permanent, financed in part by the sale of family jewelry smuggled out of wartime Hungary by a priest who was a friend of the Sziklas family.¹⁰¹

It must have been strange for a young man from Budapest to find himself in Cleveland, Ohio, attending college while Americans of his age left their classes to go to fight in Europe. Having earned a bachelor's degree from Case Western Reserve University, Sziklas went to Harvard Medical School and for the next thirty years taught surgery at Boston University while practicing at many hospitals in the Greater Boston area. Most significant for Nantucketers was his pioneering work in emergency care for remote areas.

Like Dr. Fine, who began coming to Nantucket at about the same time, Dr. Sziklas brought surgical skills from Boston to Nantucket to supplement what the island's general practitioners could provide for their patients. Finding travel by steamboat or, on occasion, fishing boat from New Bedford far too slow and unreliable, he became the first flying surgeon for the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. After a quarter century of service, he and his American wife Charlotte moved to Nantucket full time in 1956.

¹⁰⁰ Abondolo 1990, pp. 589–90.

¹⁰¹ Personal communication from Robert Sziklas.

Their son Robert had married a Nantucketer, Molly Backus, and taught science at Nantucket High School, and the elder Sziklases' move brought them closer to their grandchildren.

All the Sziklas family members took active roles in Nantucket organizations. In particular, Dr. Sziklas was influential in the establishment of the Nantucket Rotary Club and served as its president. At the age of eighty-nine he addressed the annual meeting of the Nantucket Historical Association, telling of his early days as Nantucket's flying surgeon.

Born the same year as Theresa Szabo Anderson, he outlived her by a decade. According to his obituary, he was admired as a quietly humorous man who seldom spoke of his achievements or "about his life before he came to Nantucket."¹⁰²



Dr. Charles Sziklas. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association (photo by Louis Davidson).

Chapter Four

Continental

Italy

The Ottomans coveted the city states of Italy but in the end had to make do with seizing outposts of Italian trade in the Mediterranean. They advanced on Venice, coming within sight of sentries watching from the bell tower in St. Mark's Square, but they did not take the Italian city closest to the border of their empire, much less Rome or any of the Papal States. Nonetheless, Ottoman naval forces and pirates operating from the North African coast constantly harassed trade and menaced coastal cities.

¹⁰² "Historical Association elects officers, enjoys guest speaker," *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 30, 1987; "Dr. Sziklas, noted and respected surgeon," *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 13, 1989.

The name *Andrea Doria* is well known to Nantucketers because of the catastrophic collision of an ocean liner of that name with another liner, the *Stockholm*, off Nantucket in 1956. Ever since the massive air and sea rescue operation in July of that year, the sunken vessel lying on the ocean floor has exuded a fatal attraction for divers, more than a dozen of whom have lost their lives visiting her.¹⁰³

Less known to Nantucketers is the identity of the man in whose name the sunken liner had been christened. Andrea Doria was a Genoese naval commander against the Ottomans in the 1530s. A generation later, after the Ottomans seized the island of Cyprus, the Papal States, Venice, and Spain—in a rare moment of cooperation—combined forces to obliterate the massive Ottoman fleet. The Battle of Lepanto off the Greek coast in 1571 was the largest sea battle of the sixteenth century.

Frank Oddo was a person who would have known who Andrea Doria was and taken pride in him. Born in the Sicilian town of Alimena, Italy, in 1890, Oddo came to the United States in 1907. Before the age of thirty he was a naturalized citizen and a married man with three children, a business of his own, and a mortgage. He had come to the island to work for local businessman Charles Ellis but soon went his own way. In the 1920s he operated his shoe-repair business on Main Street in the location that was subsequently taken over by the Nicoletos brothers. Then he moved to Federal Street. Advertisements for his shop appeared regularly in Nantucket newspapers and business directories until his sudden, shocking death a month short of his forty-fifth birthday.

In the depths of the Depression, Nantucket families relied on fishing and hunting to feed their families. There were shotguns in most homes, and it was not uncommon for a gun accident to take a life. Typically there was no witness, and the community could only speculate on how it could have happened. Such was the case for the Oddo family. Frank Oddo was a member of the Knights of Columbus, and the organization places a flag on his grave each Memorial Day. Of Nantucket's Knights of Columbus, he was closest in origin to Italy's two great men of the sea, Andrea Doria and Christopher Columbus.¹⁰⁴

Balancing this tragic end to a story of immigration is a cheerful story of emigration from Nantucket to Italy.

The prosperous Jelleme family of Passaic, New Jersey, and Boston had a multigeneration connection to Nantucket through marriage and summer residence. An ardent sports fisherman, John Randolph Jelleme moved permanently to Nantucket in 1967 and lived here until his death at the age of ninety-five. His oldest son, Howard Jelleme, operated the Toscana construction and excavation company, whose large pieces of equipment are ubiquitous on Nantucket building sites. As much at home on the water as his father, Howard Jelleme once rowed lifeguard Jane Silva out into the rip off Great Point in a small boat to rescue two women and a child who had been carried offshore by the current.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ McMurray 2001, pp. 297–98, lists a dozen fatalities. Another diver to the wreck died after McMurray's book went to press.

¹⁰⁴ "Sad Death of Frank Oddo," *Inquirer and Mirror*, March 16, 1935.

¹⁰⁵ "Possible Tragedy at Great Point Averted By Rescuers and Radio Dispatch," *Inquirer and Mirror*, August 1, 1968.

After thirty years in business on the island, Howard Jelleme turned Toscana over to the next generation and moved to Tuscany to make wine. Returning to the island with the products of his second successful career, he has been featured at Nantucket's annual wine festival.¹⁰⁶

Spain

Frank Oddo's birthplace, the island of Sicily, only became a part of Italy in 1861. During the days of Ottoman efforts to dominate the Mediterranean Sea, the island—together with the Kingdom of Naples—was under Spanish rule, a compelling reason for Spain to join Venice and the Papal States in attacking the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto.

Although the whaling industry acquainted Nantucketers with Latin American ports, especially those on the west coast of South America, Spain itself remained out of the realm of Nantucket experience, and likewise there was virtually no Spanish migration to Nantucket. Morris Francis, whose surname would seem to place him among Nantucket's large Azorean population, appears in both the 1860 and 1870 federal censuses as born in Spain. A mariner, he had retired from the sea and acquired Nantucket real estate of modest value.

The presence on-island of another Spanish-born retiree, Paulino Echeverría, was recorded in the 1900 census. His wife had been born in New York, but her father was from Spain like himself. Having first come to the United States in his teens, Echeverría was still an alien forty-five years later. Over several generations the family lived in New York City and later in Morristown, New Jersey, while maintaining a summer home at 9 Cliff Road, next door to the Nevins mansion. Elderly Sarah P. Bunker was living out the last years of her life across the street at 12 Cliff Road when the Echeverrías first took up residence there. Gulielma Folger lived a few doors away. According to an interview with Helen Cash, Gulielma Folger "taught German, French, Italian, Greek, and Latin and learned it all here with the help of people who came to Nantucket. Will Lowe's wife helped with her French accent. Mr. Echeverría helped with Spanish."¹⁰⁷

Nantucket High School began offering Spanish as a foreign language in 1959. The family of the first teacher, Efrain Viscarolasaga, were Basque refugees from the Spanish Civil War, and the regional variety of Spanish taught was Castilian. Since then Nantucket's resident population of Spanish speakers has increased dramatically, the high school has a Spanish club, and there have been requests for such public services in Spanish as story hours at the Nantucket Atheneum's children's library. Although the speech of Spanish-speaking summer tourists may be distinctly Iberian, Nantucket's resident Spanish speakers are overwhelmingly from Latin America and speak New World Spanish.

¹⁰⁶ Aside from Frank Oddo, the recorded presence of Italian-born residents on the island is negligible prior to World War II. In 1900 an Italian scissors-grinder and his wife were boarding with well-known Nantucketer Billy Bowen, but lacking employment opportunities, Nantucket did not become a destination for Italians during the great immigration period between 1880 and 1920. Subsequently, the Depression only worsened the prospects for employment. Instead, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Italian organ grinders and scissors- and-knife sharpeners paid brief summer visits to the island. The former usually traveled with a monkey to collect pennies from the audience, and the latter could be heard walking the streets with portable grinding equipment, swinging a hand bell to alert customers. The sound of the bell would cease whenever a householder offered some work and resume as the grinder moved on. Children on the island looked forward to the day or two each summer when the Italian balloon man would arrive with his portable tank of helium and a rainbow cloud of balloons.

¹⁰⁷ Interview on September 23, 1942 with Helen Cash for the Nantucket Historical Association. The road defining the edge of Nantucket's North Shore neighborhood was called North Street until well after the building of the Sea Cliff Inn in 1886–87. As an amenity of the large wooden hotel, rails were laid for horse-car service from Steamboat Wharf to the inn, and the street name was changed from North Street to Cliff Road. Nantucketers persisted in using "North Street" for several decades after summer residents and patrons of the Sea Cliff Inn had taken to "Cliff Road." By the time the hotel was demolished in 1972, however, "North Street" had been forgotten, and "Cliff Road" was used by everyone.

France

Although Nantucketers did not establish business contacts with Spain, a small migration of Nantucket people did leave the island for France in the late 1700s. As Nantucket's whaling industry struggled to rebuild itself after the devastation wrought upon it during the American Revolution, William Rotch, Quaker pacifist and merchant extraordinaire, negotiated the establishment of a duty-free whaling port at Dunkirk, France, in 1787. With French guarantees of freedom of religion and exemption from military service, a number of families left Nantucket direct for Dunkirk, while a larger number of Nantucket whaling captains who had been operating out of London transferred their headquarters there, creating a little Nantucket colony on French soil. Friend Benjamin Johnson, one of three traveling Quakers who visited the Dunkirk colony, wrote in his journal that he found "upwards of sixty Friends, old and young, in this place, nearly all from Nantucket and in the same business."¹⁰⁸ As the French Revolution descended in all its violence, the Nantucket enterprise dissolved after just six years of existence.¹⁰⁹

Captain Thaddeus Coffin was one of the whaling captains who transferred with his family and a whaleship to Dunkirk, where his wife Mary gave birth to Thaddeus Jr. in 1789. The family managed to stay on for two years after the Rotches had fled back to England, but in 1795 Thaddeus Coffin finally "removed his family from the Republic of France," and took them to Nantucket.¹¹⁰

Young Thaddeus was just six years old when his family left France. He grew up on the island, followed in the footsteps of his father to become a master mariner, married Eliza Cartwright, and raised three children. The 1850 federal census shows one of his sons already following the sea and 67-year-old Dorcas Honorable—one of Nantucket's "last Indians"—boarding with the family.¹¹¹ Accumulating ever more wealth with the decades, Thaddeus outlived both Eliza and Dorcas to appear in the 1870 federal census. When he died on Nantucket at the age of 87, he departed from a long life as a prosperous businessman.

If Thaddeus Coffin Jr. was a childhood bilingual in English and French and retained an active command of the language into adulthood, there were other Nantucket residents with whom he could converse.

Jerusha Gardner—whose father, Captain Shubael Gardner, had been instrumental in the foundation of the Dunkirk colony—was born in France twelve years after Thaddeus, and her absence from Nantucket censuses over several decades of the nineteenth century implies that it took a long time for her to settle on

¹⁰⁸ Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 335, Folder 492, contains a typescript of the relevant excerpt from Johnson's journal.

¹⁰⁹ Stackpole 1953, pp. 117–18, 142–43, 160–69; Stackpole 1972, 83, 97–105. There are disagreements among authorities about how many families relocated from Nantucket to Dunkirk. Figures range from twelve (*Historic Nantucket*, Vol. 49, No. 1, p. 17) to just three in addition to the multigeneration Rotch family (Byers 1987, pp. 240–41). It is clear that not all the Nantucket families left France in 1793. In 1795 Benjamin Johnson reported sixty Nantucketers still there, and Captain Shubael Gardner's daughter Jerusha was born in France in 1801.

¹¹⁰ Nantucket Court Records 5, pp. 222–23. In 1817 Thaddeus Coffin Sr. found it necessary to renounce English citizenship and become a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. This suggests that he was resident abroad during the American Revolution. In his statement to the court in Nantucket, he asserts that he brought his family to Nantucket from France in 1795, remained on the island for eight years, went on a three-year whaling voyage out of England, returning in 1806, and had resided on Nantucket ever since.

¹¹¹ In her "Reminiscences," (1894–96, unnumbered pages), Eliza Mitchell wrote that Dorcas Honorable had lived "many years in the family of Capt' John Cartwright" It appears that she actually lived the last years of her life in the family of John Cartwright's daughter, Eliza Coffin.

Nantucket, but in the last years of their lives she and Thaddeus were both residing on the island, and they surely had memories to share.

Lewis Imbert, a seagoing man, was born a French citizen in Marseilles around 1800 and entered the United States as a child. He was sworn in as a naturalized citizen in Nantucket in May 1825, and in the summer of 1863 he served on the trial jury that convicted Patience Cooper of manslaughter in the death of Phebe Fuller. As an octogenarian he was still living on the island when the 1880 census was taken.

Frederick Folger, a cabinetmaker some fifteen years younger than Thaddeus Coffin Jr. and five years younger than Lewis Imbert, also survived to be counted in the 1880 census. He had been born in France, but there is no record of his taking an oath of naturalization. His wife and children were all born in Massachusetts.

Other Nantucketers born in France around the time of the existence of the Dunkirk colony were watchmaker John Smith (finally naturalized in 1839) and married women Eliza Macy, Deborah Baker, and Sarah Gouin.¹¹² Together, they certainly constituted a group of sufficient size for a nineteenth-century social club.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Nantucket residents of French birth had either been born in Dunkirk or come to Nantucket as mariners or both. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, as Nantucket's economy evolved away from the maritime industries, Nantucketers traveled to France for other reasons, and the world's people came to Nantucket as summer residents.

A number of Nantucket men brought home wives from France. Newly married Nantucket artist George Gardner Fish, on the other hand, took his wife Judith to Paris. They went in 1866, and during the year he spent there studying drawing and painting, their first daughter was born and named Madeleine for the church in their neighborhood. New York artist William Low came to Nantucket with his French wife Julienne. The widow Jane Turner, also born in France and a resident of New York, purchased a home on the island.

The Swift family in Siasconset had a live-in French servant, and German-born widow Leonie Bremil employed a French steward. An air of exoticism hangs over the Bremil household, where in addition to Heury DuBarry—variously described as steward and friend—there was also a young male cousin from Louisiana whose occupation was given as “paper florist.” These were world's people to be sure, and they undoubtedly set Nantucket tongues wagging. Unsurprisingly, they did not establish themselves on the island. According to the 1900 census enumerator, Leonie Bremil, whose household was occupying rented quarters, had no occupation of her own. By the time the 1910 census was taken, she and her companions had moved on.

¹¹² Except for Sarah Gouin, these Nantucket matrons just happened to have been born in France. Eliza Macy (1799–1869) was the daughter of Nantucketers Robert Inott and Judith (Folger) Inott. Robert's grandfather had come to Nantucket from England. His mother was a Nantucket Gardner. Eliza married James Macy in 1817. Deborah Baker (1793–1871), wife of “truckman” Jesse Baker, was the daughter of John Shaw and Deborah (Coleman) Shaw. Sarah Gouin and her son do not appear in the *Barney Genealogical Record*.

In 1860 aging Sarah Gouin was living on the island with her thirty-year-old Massachusetts-born son, Albert. As head of household, Sarah owned real estate of substantial value. Mother and son do not appear in the previous or following federal censuses, but perhaps their sojourn on Nantucket made the connection with the island that brought Paris-born Marcel Gouin to the island a half-century later.

Right after the 1900 census was taken, Marcel, a carpenter, took up residence in Siasconset with his American wife, Mary (Lowell) Gouin. In 1910 the Gouins, who now had two children, were still renting, but during the next decade they took out a mortgage and bought a house on New Street in 'Sconset. Marcel had also, after many years in the United States, been sworn in as a citizen, following the course of so many resident aliens who took out citizenship papers on the eve of World War I.

In the censuses and in Nantucket business directories as late as 1927, Marcel Gouin's occupation is listed as carpenter and builder, but in 1930 he emerges as a "saddle horse riding instructor," a distinctly more Gallic profession. His wife was employed as the Siasconset agent for the Martha's Vineyard Telegraph Co., with an office on Broadway. In 1930 she was operating a tearoom in the Broadway location, and later her daughter took over its management.

The Gouins' son, Marcel Jr., was born in the summer of 1900 and attended Nantucket public schools before being sent off-island to Tabor Academy, thence to a preparatory school in Annapolis, Maryland, and finally to the United States Naval Academy, where he was commissioned as an ensign in 1924. This was the beginning of a distinguished career in naval aviation, during which he was a flight instructor, commanded fighter squadrons off aircraft carriers in the Pacific in World War II, took command of an aircraft carrier, and then returned to Maryland as one of the first commanders of the Pautuxent River Flight Test Facility. Having achieved the rank of rear admiral in 1953, Marcel Gouin retired as vice admiral the following year. Nantucket's Gouin Village is named for him, and his career is honored with a photograph and a plaque at the Nantucket Memorial Airport.¹¹³

Germany

Nantucket's difficulties in retaining professionals from off-island is nothing new. The nineteenth century saw two German physicians resident on Nantucket, neither of whom stayed. In 1850 Dr. Morris Richter was living on-island with his family. He, his mother, his wife, and the oldest of their four children were all from Germany. The next two children had been born in New York, and the last child in Massachusetts. The three American-born children were all attending Nantucket schools.

With the collapse of the island's economy, the Richters joined the general exodus, and over a decade passed before Dr. John Givon took Dr. Richter's place, also remaining for less than a decade.

¹¹³ Lacouture 1986.

Frederick Derby, born in Hamburg and a mariner by trade, and his Massachusetts-born wife were living with a local family in 1850. By 1860 they had three children and a house of their own. Another German mariner resident on Nantucket in 1860 was Joseph Rosenwirth, who had found himself an Irish wife in the years after the potato famine. In 1870 Frederick Olderich was still able to find work as a cooper to support himself, his Massachusetts-born wife, and his two children. A decade later, when he and his wife had six children to feed and clothe, there was no longer any demand for barrels, and Olderich was working on the wharf unloading freight and luggage.

Lewis Henry Wendel, born in Prussia, went before the court in Nantucket and took the oath of naturalization in 1851. He had long since established himself permanently on the island with a Nantucket-born wife and daughter, whom he supported by carting freight. He was still living on the island as an elderly man in 1870.¹¹⁴

Another Prussian-born resident of Nantucket was Frederica Wilhelmina Rogers, wife of Nantucketer George Rogers. Although Frederica and George both lived into the first years of the twentieth century, the 1860 census reported Frederica as a single head of household with her two daughters—New York-born Imogene, 8, and Nantucket-born Martha, 2.¹¹⁵

Mary Cook, only seventeen years old in 1850, was the wife of a local dry-goods merchant, and Christina Russell, thirty years of age, also had a local husband. As a very young girl Mary Mynhardt had come to the island as a servant for the cosmopolitan family of artist George Gardner Fish, whose daughter Madeleine had been born in Paris. Mary was living with the Fish family in 1870 and was still in service a decade later.

In this cohort of the foreign-born, only men sought United States citizenship. Wives shared the status of their husbands—naturalized or alien. As woman suffrage became an issue (and well before women won voting rights), foreign-born women began to seek United States citizenship for themselves. Maria Fish, wife of Nantucket farmer Fred Fish, was naturalized in 1901. In 1910, she had the company of two other German-born wives who were close to her in age, Lydia Coffin and Frieda Harvey.

Earnest Nickel came from Germany to Nantucket via Ireland, arriving with his Irish wife May and two daughters, Alwina and Violet, in 1909. In 1910 Earnest was working as a laundryman on the island and had not yet had time to initiate the naturalization process. At some time during World War I the family moved on, leaving it unknown whether they, like so many others, sought United States citizenship during or right after the war.

¹¹⁴ His surname appears spelled variously as Wendell, Wendal, and even Kendal. His marriage to Eunice N. Rogers appears in Vital Records of Nantucket IV, pp. 117 and 493. The year of his naturalization is in a published list in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, October 10, 1936. (The court records of naturalizations after 1828 are missing from the Nantucket Town Building.) The *Barney Genealogical Record* identifies Wendel as “a Portuguese,” apparently following the William C. Folger genealogical records, but Wendel consistently identified his birthplace as Prussia. It is tempting to extrapolate from his name that his background was Wendish. Wends, speakers of a Slavic language, lived in communities situated along the Oder River in Prussia. In the mid-1800s, groups of Wends left Europe in search of freedom of religion and language.

¹¹⁵ The 1860 census for the Rogers household appears bungled. George Rogers is missing, and Frederica is identified as male. Her maiden name, which was apparently Topf, is listed as “Tampa.” The *Barney Genealogical Record* states that she was “of Germany,” and Unitarian church records provide her middle name and maiden name. Aside from the 1860 census, there is no evidence of separation of George and Frederica. Their daughter Martha married Francis E. Holdgate, and Francis Holdgate Jr. married Gertrude Brownell. Despite the fact that they shared a common surname and both married Prussians, I have found no genealogical documentation connecting George Rogers to Eunice Rogers, who married Lewis Wendel in 1834.

By 1930 a German family, the Lubigs, had come to farm on Nantucket. Walter and Gertrude Lubig had arrived in the United States seven years earlier and wasted no time becoming naturalized citizens and buying property. Young Margery Lubig joined her brother and sister-in-law in 1928 and went to work as housekeeper for a Nantucket widower with a young child.

Frederick and Meta Schmalz had also come to the island, bringing their Pennsylvania-born son and daughters and their children's spouses along with them. Although the Schmalzes had been resident in the United States for decades, in 1930 they had just taken out citizenship papers and were yet to be sworn in. Their daughter-in-law Anna, who had arrived in the United States from Slovenia in 1921, had already completed the naturalization process.¹¹⁶

German-born fisherman and homeowner John Stevens was living alone in 1930. He, too, had been naturalized. Automobile mechanic Paul Frank came from Germany to Nantucket via Vermont, where the first of his six children was born. Having arrived in the United States in 1909, in 1930 he had finally taken out citizenship papers. His English wife Winifred came to the United States later than her husband but had been naturalized ahead of him.

While still in his teens, Eugene Collatz gained experience working with refrigeration in the beer gardens of his hometown. His father was chief of police in Gluckstadt, a town downriver from the city of Hamburg, halfway to the coast where the Elbe River empties into the North Sea. In the wake of World War I Herman Collatz wanted his son out of Germany and away from the war clouds that still overhung Europe, so he arranged for a maternal uncle in New York to sponsor Eugene's immigration to the United States. Young Gene found work with a commercial refrigeration company and soon became a field manager. While installing a cold-storage unit for an apple orchard in Connecticut, he met the orchard manager's sister, Mildred Perun, herself a descendant of emigrants from Russia. They were married in 1934, and



Frederick and Meta Schmalz and their children, clockwise from upper left: Frederick Jr., Clara, Frieda, and Alma. Courtesy of Frieda Thurston.

¹¹⁶ "At Home in 'The Potted Plant,'" a profile of Frieda Schmalz and her family by Mary Miles, was published in *Yesterday's Island*, Vol. 33, No. 19, September 4–10, 2003.

shortly after their wedding another refrigeration project brought them to Nantucket.

To keep fish chilled from when they were caught on the offshore fishing banks until they were brought to market, the boats in the Nantucket fishing fleet carried hundreds of pounds of ice in their holds. In 1936 work began on converting Nantucket's gas-operated ice-making plant on Island Service Wharf to electrical power, and Gene Collatz was engaged to oversee the project. When the conversion was completed, he was offered the job of managing the plant.

He and Mildred found places to rent on Hussey Street and then on Sunset Hill near the Jethro Coffin House (the "Oldest House") just across the fields behind Sarah P. Bunker's old home. Finally they settled on the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Prospect Street, downhill from the one remaining windmill and on the edge of what had once been the New Guinea neighborhood.

Work for the Island Service Company proved congenial, and the birth on-island of their children in 1937 and 1942 attached the Collatzes to Nantucket. They became permanent residents, and Gene worked for the Island Service Company and Sherburne Oil Company until his retirement as chief engineer in 1969.

Adept at repairing electrical equipment, he developed a second line of work repairing radios, record players, and eventually televisions, while Mildred provided decades of substitute teaching services to the Nantucket schools.

Fishing and hunting, especially duck hunting, are popular on the coasts of the North Sea, and up until the entry of the United States into World War II, Gene enjoyed fishing, hunting ducks, and engaging in competitive target shooting with Nantucket men at the range in Legion Hall. When the United States



Wedding of Eugene and Mildred Collatz, 1934. *Courtesy of Mildred Collatz.*

entered the war, however, civilian shotguns were confiscated for government use, putting an end—for the time—to hunting.

For the German-born throughout the United States the war years were stressful. Skill in radio operation inevitably attracted the attention of security agencies. Gene Collatz underwent background investigation, his activities were monitored, and on occasion his son was taunted by other schoolchildren. Like many Germans and German Americans, he was rarely heard to speak German, did not seek to pass the language on to his children, and did not seek out the company of Nantucket's few other German speakers. Instead, through his work in commercial refrigeration and in his private repair service, Gene Collatz cultivated a large circle of clients and acquaintances among the residents of the island, both year-round and summer.¹¹⁷

Switzerland and Bohemia

In 1930 a young Swiss couple, Richard and Frances Jete, were living in Siasconset, where Richard was working as an upholsterer at the Treasure Chest shop. At the time there were two other Swiss residents of the island—Frances Scharf, who lived with her husband in Seamoor Cottage in Siasconset, and Wilhelmina Hansen, whose Danish husband worked on a farm in Polpis. Rudolf Scharf, who did carpentry and operated Hathaway's Laundry, was born in the United States, but his father was German-born, and his Swiss wife listed her home language as Swiss German. The Hansens lived a modest life, with Wilhelmina supplementing her husband's earnings by doing housework for a private family. Both Wilhelmina Hansen and Frances Scharf had become citizens of the United States, and the newly arrived Jetes had already begun the process.

Just as Theresa Anderson had identified herself as a Magyar rather than a Hungarian on the federal census, Emily Antosch also declared her ethnicity—"Bohemian"—to the census rather than her nationality, which was problematical.

Through centuries of European history the House of Hapsburg had ruled many different ethnic groups, including both Bohemians and Magyars. Between 1867 and World War I, as a temporary solution to complicated Hapsburg dynastic problems, a dual Hapsburg monarchy ruled twin kingdoms of Austria (whose residents included Austrians, Bohemians, Czechs, Slovenians, and Poles, among others) and Hungary (including Magyars, Germans, and others). After World War I, Bohemia—with its beautiful capital city of Prague—became the western province of the newly formed nation of Czechoslovakia.

¹¹⁷ Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 15, 1988, and information from Eugene Collatz Jr. and Judith Collatz.

Emily Antosch had left her home before World War I and resided in New Bedford before coming to Nantucket to work as live-in housekeeper for the Wood family on Gardner Street. The dilemma she faced in identifying herself for the census enumerator was that in 1930 the Austro-Hungarian Empire was long gone, and the new entity of Czechoslovakia had been formed only after her departure. Little wonder that she declared herself Nantucket's sole Bohemian.¹¹⁸

David Wood recalls their housekeeper's surprise that Nantucketers let perfectly good dandelions go to waste. In the spring Emily gathered them, boiled them in the Woods' kitchen, and made wine from them.

Poland and the Ukraine

Homemade dandelion wine would probably have appealed to Polish Ignatz Sikorsky and Ukrainian Nikita Carpenko, both of whom took up residence on Nantucket and were locally perceived as colorful characters.

Just as the borders of the Ottoman Empire and the Hapsburg Empire expanded, contracted, and shifted, so did those of the czarist empire of Russia. Great stretches of flat land unbroken by mountain ranges are broad highways for armies. As the Ottomans swept across the Hungarian plains, so have European powers swept back and forth across the flatlands south of the Baltic Sea. An Estonian once said that to live in those lands is to be like a bird that has built its nest on the yellow stripe in the middle of the road.

In particular, Poland is an entity that has come and gone over the years, occupied at times by Germans, at other times by Russians. Sometimes it has subsumed the Baltic state of Lithuania to the north, and sometimes they have been separate. A person might live his whole life in one spot and be described at different times as being from Poland, Russia, Germany, or Austria.

Such was the case of Ignatz Sikorsky, whom Dr. Jacob Fine took to be a Russian. Sikorsky had come to the United States from Poland in 1910, and ten years later he was resident on Nantucket, an alien employed as a live-in servant. In 1930 he was still on Nantucket, now a naturalized citizen but still single—living alone, paying modest rent, and working as a gardener for a private family.

In his "Nantucket Personalities," Dr. Fine wrote that Sikorsky was employed by Mrs. Grace Barnes, a formerly wealthy New Yorker of reduced circumstances (although not so far down on her luck that she had to manage entirely without servants). Sikorsky, whom Barnes chose to call "Enoch," kept house for her, tended her garden, and waited on table at her dinner parties attired in "embroidered blouses she bought and insisted he wear." Fine also mentions that Sikorsky made and occasionally sold floral sculptures made of brass.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ There may have been another Bohemian resident of Nantucket in the late 1930s, when Harry Novack operated a tailor shop on South Water Street. Novack is a surname common to Poland and the area once known as Bohemia and to families both Christian and Jewish.

¹¹⁹ Fine manuscript, "Nantucket Personalities," p. 20.

Besides the Jewish businessmen and their families, other Poles living on Nantucket in the first half of the twentieth century were tailor Vincent Kania and his wife Victoria and also Irene Coffin, wife of fisherman Edward B. Coffin. Irene, who was brought to the United States as a teenager in 1913, had been naturalized and married before age twenty.

Vincent Kania and his future wife Victoria had not known each other when they were both growing up in southern Poland. He had been apprenticed to a tailor in the city of Kraków, and she had been raised in a rural village. In his early twenties he set out to find a new life in America, and a year later she fled to America to avoid an arranged marriage. They met and married in Northampton, Massachusetts, and started raising their family in New Bedford. In the mid-1920s they moved to Nantucket, where they operated Island Cleaners and Dyers on Union Street. Their advertisement in the 1927 Nantucket business directory stated, "We do Dry Cleaning in one day service. We clean white flannel trousers in 24 hours. We also clean carpets, rugs, puffs, blankets, and furs. We do all kinds of darning, repairing, alterations and remodeling. We call at your house and deliver, on hanger, to you. Our calling and delivering is absolutely free of charge."¹²⁰ Vincent Kania also made clothes to order, and the Kania's oldest daughter did the bookkeeping for the business.

Although they had five Massachusetts-born children, Vincent and Victoria were still aliens when the 1930 census was taken. The family lived on Atlantic Avenue and the Kania children attended nearby Cyrus Peirce School.

The Kania's friend on Nantucket, Stanley Ozog, married Caroline Szopa of New Bedford in 1928 and brought her to the island. Like the Kania's, they were both from southern Poland, the area around Kraków known as Galicia. Stanley Ozog had served in the U. S. Army during World War I and afterwards was employed as an electrical engineer. In this capacity he came to Nantucket to work for the Gas, Electric, and Power Company. A year into the Depression, Stanley Ozog died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in their home on Vestal Street, and his widow returned to New Bedford. Soon afterward, the Kania's, too, returned to New Bedford. When they left the island, they sold their Union Street business to Morris Bilsky, who changed the name to Beacon Cleaners and continued to advertise "White Flannel Pants cleaned like new."¹²¹

¹²⁰ *Lothrop's Nantucket, Massachusetts, Blue Book and Directory*. 1927, p. 15.

¹²¹ *Inquirer and Mirror*; July 6, 1935.

The mallards that inhabit the pool fed by Consue Spring are the descendants of the pet duck of Ukrainian sculptor Nikita Carpenko, who came to Nantucket in 1930 and had his studio on the nearby lot bounded by Union Street and Spring Street. According to a short story among his papers, Carpenko—not being very knowledgeable about birds—originally called his pet “The Grand Duck Peter,” but had to change the name to “The Grand Duchess Petrina” when she began laying eggs. Today a duck-crossing sign at the bend of Union Street and a wooden shelter by the spring with a quarterboard reading “Ducky” serve Petrina’s countless progeny.¹²²

To Nantucketers Carpenko was as inexplicable as a character straight from the pages of Russian literature—a person of considerable talent and charm driven to act out two great stereotypes of that literature: the wounded survivor of an interrupted childhood and the sodden buffoon. That he told his life story to interviewers in almost exactly the same words that he used in writing and rewriting a third-person account of a boy named Niki makes it unclear to just what extent he invented himself and to what extent he was incapable of constructing any story that was not about himself. It is only possible to accept the information that appears on his death certificate as reliable because it was provided by his older sister, a sober and pious woman who joined him on Nantucket during the last years of his life. According to Luba Carpenko Chernitza, their parents were Andrew Carpenko and Nadezhda Kaminsky of the Ukraine.¹²³ Luba was born in 1895 and Nikita in 1898, and they came of age during the Russian Revolution.

From there Nikita Carpenko takes up his own story, stating that his childhood home was Poltava, a provincial capital of central Ukraine, due north of the Black Sea. In the heart of grain and cattle country, Poltava had seen little excitement since Czar Peter the Great utterly defeated an army of far-ranging Swedish invaders there in 1709. Carpenko tells of a dreamy seven-year-old boy who, in that landlocked town, was enchanted by ships and aspired to be a sailor and shipbuilder like Peter the Great. Sent instead to the same military boarding school as his older brothers, he was spared from hazing by the other cadets because of their respect for his unique talent for building model ships.

At seventeen he was sent on to training as a cavalry officer in the czarist army, still with no prospect of going to sea. The Russian Revolution ended his prospects as a cavalry officer as well. He told a reporter that he became a pilot and did some bombing runs before fleeing the Revolution via Siberia, Manchuria, and China and thence by ship at last to Seattle.¹²⁴ There he financed the beginning of his new American life by selling a ship model he had carried with him across Siberia and the Pacific. “From then on,” he wrote, “my future was tied up in ship models. Making them and selling them.”¹²⁵

From Seattle he moved to San Francisco, where he took art classes and had what he describes as a formative experience with a Dutch sailor and master rigger named Harry Vos. Vos, too, built model ships,

¹²² Carpenko’s original plans for the studio, the two-story building on the curve of Union Street currently bearing a sign reading “Tree House” are in folder 4 of Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 312. Folder 8 contains the typescript of the story “Quince Orchard Family,” and Carpenko’s sketchbooks with drawings of the duck are in folder 4.

¹²³ For his certificate of marriage, Carpenko gave his parents’ names as Andrey Karpenko and Nadedja Makovsky.

¹²⁴ *The New Yorker* (May 31, 1941) reported that he manually heaved bombs from the cockpit of a plane that had been abandoned by the French and once managed to drop one on Leon Trotsky’s railroad car. A different version of the story appears in one of his obituaries (*Town Crier*, May 19, 1961). Both that obituary and another (*Inquirer and Mirror*, May 19, 1961) state that while still in his teens he had been awarded the Cross of St. George for heroism in the service of the Czar.

¹²⁵ Carpenko’s autobiography, partly told in third-person and partly in first-person narrative appear in fragments in folders 5 and 8 of Collection 312.

and according to Carpenko, was an unsparing critic of Carpenko's efforts, claiming that he could not distinguish a cabin from a bathtub on one of Carpenko's models, slashing the rigging with a penknife, and making Carpenko do the work over until he got it right.

Responding to this mentorship, Carpenko gave himself over entirely to the art and science of model-building. Writing of himself in the third person, Carpenko said that, "he began to study, in order to learn more about the ships that he so loved. By this time, the ship models had begun to mean dreams that never came true. As he worked and learned more and more about the grace and beauty of the sailing ships, the models . . . took him in his imagination to strange lands. He was no longer so much interested in sea battles, but now he thought of the places where the ship had been, the strange ports, the strange cargo, the passengers as well as the sailors. He had so much love for the model ships and they meant so much to him that he now endeavored to make them as nearly lifelike as possible. . . . There was no dry mechanical workmanship about his models . . . but an imaginative artistry that made the models into something alive and seaworthy."

The 1920s were a period of intense activity in Carpenko's life. In a biographical note for an exhibition brochure, he dated his departure from Russia to 1921. During his apprenticeship to Vos in San Francisco he became a naturalized citizen of the United States, and by 1930 he had crossed the country and taken up residence in Nantucket just as the Depression descended on the nation and the island.

During the economic hard times of the 1930s, he managed to survive by living frugally while building his reputation as a master builder of ship models. An article in the May 1938 issue of *Yachting* featured his model of the ship *Argus* of New York. Two years later an article appeared in *The Rudder* about two models, one repaired by Carpenko and the other built by him.

In late spring of 1941 an exhibition of his work in Manhattan's Orrefors Gallery brought an abundance of positive publicity. Press releases described him as a specialist in American ships of 1750–1850 who dug clams during breaks from twelve-hour workdays in his Nantucket studio, where he also slept. A *New Yorker* article of May 31, 1941, expanded on the clam-digging angle to say that he located the clams with his bare toes. The May 31, 1941, issue of *Cue* also reviewed the exhibit. A model of the Hudson River packet sloop *Experiment* was commissioned for President Franklin Roosevelt.¹²⁶

Keeping company with Carpenko in his studio were Petrina the duck and a terrier named Lord Buckingham, both figuring in Carpenko's sketchbooks of the time. In the draft of a story, Carpenko proposes to the animals that they share their home with a princess, who turned out to be a Midwestern fellow artist named Margaret Deal. The couple married in 1944, and Peg, Nik, the duck, and the dog all appear in idyllic sketches and a Christmas card.

¹²⁶ "Model Maker to the President," *Humboldt Times*, Eureka, CA, June 29, 1941. Photocopies of this article and the others mentioned in this paragraph are in folder 9 of Collection 312.

The couple sought to write stories together, but publishers were discouraging. In the fall of 1947 they received a letter from Adele (apparently their agent) informing them that Whittlesey House had rejected one of their coauthored stories on the grounds that the publisher did not care for animal stories for adults. She held out the promise of taking the story to other publishers while suggesting that they instead produce a children's book on ship-model building. Adele described her pitch for this potential project in which she would promote the Carpenkos as "a most attractive couple, very excellent marriage, all kinds of lessons involved, their not trying to make each other over, the contrasts, the two nationalities." This was probably the impetus for the fragmentary third-person story of Carpenko's life that appears among his papers under the title "The Dry Sea."¹²⁷

The marriage was not so excellent, after all, and "The Dry Sea" appears to have been abandoned. After the frenetic years of the Russian Revolution, the flight across Siberia to China, the voyage to Seattle, and formation as an artist in San Francisco, Nantucket's slow pace during the Depression and the years of World War II proved less than healthy for a man of Carpenko's temperament. At some point he began to unravel like an old sweater. Peg divorced him.

At the end of the 1940s Carpenko had turned from model ships to sculpture. His new works, carved from whatever came to hand—broomsticks and table legs included—were mainly elongated heads reminiscent of both Modigliani's work and the *moai* of Easter Island. In the course of three years he produced over a hundred of them, exhibited his new work in New York's Guggenheim Museum, and had it featured in *Life Magazine*.¹²⁸

This turn led to business correspondence with museums and galleries about rights to sell reproductions and also to private correspondence with women who aspired to be sculptors themselves. Apparently he sent invitations to them to spend summers working in his studio, growing vegetables in his garden, and selling pottery.¹²⁹ In extant letters the women answered graciously but did not come. One correspondent wrote to him on behalf of herself and another woman that "There have been times when we were on the brink of accepting your offer of room and board and no attempted seduction. (Perhaps the threat of the revitalization of your 'love parts' scares us. We have enough problems already.)" Instead it was his widowed sister Luba who came to look after him.¹³⁰

Her brother had become a monumental drunkard. A bottle of Emily Antosch's dandelion wine would have been the least of it. One of Carpenko's stories opens with "Doctor Steve" emerging from a binge. "Doc's up and about again. Surely seedy and my, so thin. You'd think, wouldn't you . . ."¹³¹

A purchaser of one of his pieces of sculpture whom Carpenko dunned for nonpayment responded with a nasty letter that reads in part, "I would like to remind you that were it not for my wife's good offices

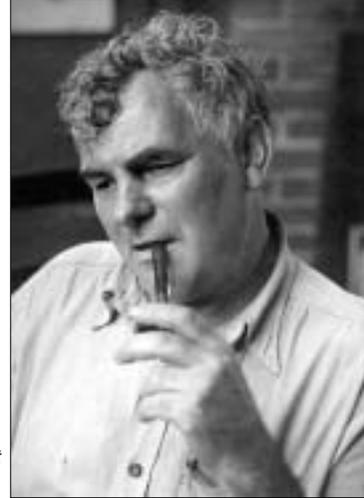
¹²⁷ Letter of October 4, 1947, Collection 312, folder 1. Adele's last name does not appear in the letter.

¹²⁸ A photocopy of the article in the February 11, 1952, issue of *Life* is in folder 9 of Collection 312.

¹²⁹ Beginning in the late 1930s the *Inquirer and Mirror* carried summer advertisements for the Norwegian Pottery Shop located at "Consue at the end of Lower Union Street." The shop offered modern Finnish pottery, Danish silver and porcelain, Swedish glass, and also bronze and copper art works. Margarethe Stigum, Shirley Rei Gudmundsen, and Nikita Carpenko appear together there on the 1939 and 1940 street lists, all designated as merchants.

¹³⁰ Business letters in folders 1 and 2 of Collection 312; letter of April 1, 1953, from Barbara Clayton of New York; letter of September 20, 1960, signature missing, in folder 1. Letters often include greetings to Luba.

¹³¹ The typescript of this story is in Folder 5.



Grand Duchess Petrina at Consue and a self-portrait with Lord Buckingham. Sketches by Nikita Carpenko. Portrait of Carpenko (photo by Louis Davidson). Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

one night several summers ago, you might at this time have been banned from the island of Nantucket. As I was informed by an authority of the local government, the instance in which we became involved through our own choice was your fourth, one relatively close to the other. . . . We will contact you as soon as practicable to discharge the indebtedness. Until then, I hope your health remains good, and that you have not reverted to the state in which we unhappily found you.”¹³²

Carpenko carved and polished a wooden head for his own memorial. On May 4, 1961, his sister found him dead in his studio. The death certificate reads “Sudden death. Presumably due to Coronary Thrombosis.” His body was interred in Prospect Hill Cemetery, and over his grave a Russian cross of wood was raised. Enclosed in glass at the center of the cross was his last wooden head.

Quiet, kindly Luba, a retired registered nurse, lived on for another sixteen years tending her brother’s studio and garden, and looking after the ducks before she too was laid to rest in Prospect Hill Cemetery.

At his death Nikita Carpenko had resided for over thirty years on Nantucket, longer than he had ever lived anywhere else. In time the great wooden cross on his grave rotted, sagged, and finally was removed. A man whose extravagance and prodigious appetites got him into hot water time and again, he would probably be vastly amused that his most enduring contribution to the place where he spent nearly half his life is a duck pond.

¹³² Letter from Bernard Sable, October 10, 1950.

Chapter Five

Fishing for a Living

*The weather was the subject of conversation all the time—morning, noon, and night! Among the fishermen and the wives too. Also the price of fish on a daily basis. And where the fishing was good or bad on the fishing grounds. When the boats had to go into dry dock for painting or repair, there was always despair because of lost income. It was a hard, hard life!*¹³³

Back in the 1670s Captain John Gardner set up a Wampanoag-manned codfishing operation to meet New York's demand that Nantucket pay its taxes with barrels of fish. Whaling, which got under way at the same time, proved more profitable and absorbed the labor of all the able-bodied Wampanoag men. After the Wampanoag population crash in the mid 1700s, Africans filled the vacant spaces in the whaleboats. As Nantucket whalers traveled ever farther over the oceans, they brought back to the island crew members collected from all around the globe. A half century after the demise of that industry, the prospect of making a living from the sea once again attracted a cosmopolitan population to Nantucket.

In the 1880s dory fishing for codfish and sharks was still going on from the ocean beaches of Quidnet, Siasconset's Codfish Park, and the South Shore. For two successive days in November 1876, fifty dories put out from the South Shore, bringing back as many as three hundred fish per dory. Launching through the surf and, worse, landing through the surf with a load of fish was dangerous business, and the dorymen blessed Captain Eugene Clisby, keeper of the Surfside Lifesaving Station, who kept a sharp eye out for returning boats.¹³⁴

By the 1890s there were many catboats engaged in what today would be called multitasking; in the summers they served the tourist trade with party cruises and regular transportation between the town wharves and the bathing beach, while in the winter they were used for hauling scallop dredges under sail. For deepwater swordfishing, the catboats were equipped with bowsprits from which the fish were spotted and harpooned. Later, when small gasoline engines became available, catboat owners dismasted their boats for more effective scalloping at the expense of what had once been their utilitarian grace and beauty.



Two women out for a recreational sail with John E. West. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

¹³³ Letter from Olga Hansen, January 15, 2003.

¹³⁴ Clipping in Grace Brown Gardner Scrapbook 12, Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 57; Andrews 1990, pp. 6–7; Morris 1996, pp. 67, 83–85. On March 26, 1927, the *Inquirer and Mirror* printed a letter from Leland S. Topham in which he wrote of Captain Clisby, “It was always pleasing on rough days to see the genial skipper on the beach waiting to con the dories through the breakers.”



Eugene Ruley's catboat *Frances E.* dismasted for work as a motorized scallop boat. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

In 1913 a huge bed of quahogs was discovered in the Chord of the Bay, north of the jetties. The quahogs immediately became an export item shipped to the mainland on the steamboats. The same winter that this discovery was made, a record catch of scallops was dredged up and shipped in kegs from Nantucket. In the meantime, fishing weirs set offshore were producing daily yields of mackerel, cod, pollock, bluefish, and bonita that were either sold locally or shipped in barrels to off-island markets. A fish-packing operation was established on Steamboat Wharf, setting a record on March 15, 1915, of 1,426 barrels of fish and shellfish dispatched to the mainland by steamer.¹³⁵

Instead of the years-long global whaling cruises of the past, the boatmen of the twentieth century either fished by the day in local waters or by the week on the fishing banks off the northeast coast. By the 1920s, the Nantucket fishing fleet included more substantial vessels than the dories and catboats of the past, and these fishing boats were captained and crewed by a mix of New Englanders and the foreign born. Among the latter were north Europeans and French Canadians who had come to make Nantucket their home port. These newly arrived men literally fished for a living, while some of their compatriots—women and men—worked on land, figuratively angling for a better life than what they had left behind.

Some of the fishermen and their families had emigrated from the coasts of the Baltic Sea. The longitude of their home towns was as far east as that of the inland towns of Poland, western Russia, Greece, and western Turkey whence had come the Geneskys, Kaufmans, Kianas, Bilskys, Anastoses, and Abajians—among others—of the same era. The latitude of the fishermen's home towns was well north of Nantucket's. They came from lands of ice-bound winters and summertime "white nights." They were, on the whole, a self-reliant lot.

¹³⁵ Morris 1996, pp. 60, 110–14, 122.

Latvians

The Baltic country of Latvia is sandwiched between Lithuania to the south and Estonia to the north, the three of them stacked on top of Poland and Belarus (“White Russia”). Finland lies north of them all—across the water from Estonia and facing west over the Gulf of Bothnia toward Sweden. During the 1800s famine was a nearly constant presence throughout the Baltic area, repeatedly inflicting starvation on its rural villages even as its cities industrialized. Yet despite what statisticians might term “excess deaths,” the populations grew beyond the lands’ carrying capacity for subsistence farmers and fishermen. Finland’s population, for instance, tripled between 1800 and 1900. By the end of the century landlessness had reached crisis proportions. Facilitated by

new railroads that made escape from the countryside possible, mass emigration from port cities on the Baltic carried thousands of working men and women away to the United States and Canada.

A half dozen Latvian families gathered in Prospect Hill cemetery in mid-February 1920 to pay their last respects to forty-year-old Max Egle. Since there was no Lutheran clergyman on Nantucket, his brother John Egle spoke movingly in Latvian to the assembled mourners. After presiding at his brother’s graveside, John Egle himself fell gravely ill, as did his wife Alma and their daughter Erna. The three of them came close to dying but eventually recovered. Other family members did not. Within days of Max’s funeral, the Latvians returned to Prospect Hill to lay to rest Katherine Duce and Max Egle’s thirteen-year-old son John.¹³⁶

Influenza had taken three members of the intermarried Egle and Duce families in a matter of days. George Duce’s wife Lena was Max’s sister, and George’s older brother Christopher was Katherine’s husband.



The Baltic countries and Fenno-Scandinavia.

¹³⁶ See Appendix 3h for John Egle’s own description of his brother’s last days and funeral.

They had come away from Latvia by stages, preceded by the oldest man and followed by the younger men and women. Christopher and Katherine Duce were the first. Christopher, 36 years old, arrived in the United States in 1906, and Katherine, 33, came the next year. In 1907, Max Egle, then 27, and George Duce, 25, came. The year after that, Max sent tickets to his brother John, 22, for passage to Boston from London, where the young man had arrived as a stowaway aboard a Finnish freighter. George's wife Lena got out that year with their daughter Alice, and Max's wife Pauline came with their son John. Max's future sister-in-law Alma Becker was the last to arrive in the United States in 1913. Although their immediate port of entry had been Boston, and they had quickly connected with the Latvian community in Beverly, Massachusetts, the Egles and Duces ended up in Nantucket.

In 1910 Max Egle was head of a Nantucket household that included his wife Pauline, his brother John, his sister Lena and her husband George Duce, and two four-year-olds, Alice Duce and little John Egle. That year all the men were fishing to support their families. Max, John, and George were shellfishing, and Christopher Duce, who lived apart from them, was a line fisherman.

Life on the open water was a practical skill acquired in Nantucket. The Egles had come from Tukums, a riverside town some thirty miles west of Riga, the Latvian capital. The coast of the Gulf of Riga lies at some distance from Tukums, and they had grown up in farming country.

In nineteenth-century Latvia the land was largely in the hands of absentee landlords—Baltic Germans, Poles, and Russians whose large estates were worked by Latvian sharecroppers, renters, and contract laborers. The local population was in the unyielding grasp of the estate owners, and the Latvians' alternatives were revolution at home or emigration to other lands. Russian suppression of rising nationalism in all the Baltic countries was carried out through the garrisoning of Cossack troops in cities and towns and terrorist reprisals against the small farmers and their families.

In 1978 Leeds Mitchell Jr. interviewed John Egle and wrote down his biography from school days in Latvia to old age in Nantucket.¹³⁷ The Egle family story leading up to several members' departure from Latvia is as thrilling in its details as Nikita Carpenko's stories of the Russian Revolution and flight from the Bolsheviks. As John Egle told it to Mitchell, his older brother Max had been subjected to a near-fatal whipping with the knout—a vicious punishment Russians used to intimidate their subjects—before he fled to America. As a teenager, John himself had been drawn into revolutionary activities, and in order to evade police interrogation he sought employment on an estate distant from Tukums. In the course of those early years he learned to speak German, Polish, and Russian in addition to his native language. Eventually, despite his best efforts to disappear, the authorities located him, and he had to take a last leave of his devastated parents and flee his home country. Members of the Latvian underground hid John Egle and a buddy in the coal hold of a Finnish freighter, and they sailed away, never to see Latvia again.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ The original interviews are preserved on cassette in the Nantucket Historical Association Research Library (CT-46-48 and CT-50). L. Mitchell's typescript synthesis from them is admirably faithful.

¹³⁸ L. Mitchell 1978, 7–19.

By 1910, with the exception of Christopher, the Egle and Duce men residing on Nantucket had taken out United States citizenship papers. Five years later all of them, including Christopher, had been sworn in as citizens, and so had their wives. While World War I raged on and Latvia was gaining its short-lived independence from Russia, the Latvian families in Nantucket were expanding. By 1920 Max and Pauline had two more children, and so had George and Lena, while John and Alma had their first. All the men but John, the youngest, had given up fishing for other occupations. Christopher and George were working as house carpenters, while Max was a machinist with his own shop. Christopher and Katherine owned their home with no mortgage. George's daughter Alice had married fisherman Lambertus Lamens, who had come from Holland in 1911. The census enumerator reported that everyone from youngest to oldest spoke English.

Then disaster began to pile on disaster. When the influenza pandemic of 1918 swept through Nantucket, it had carried off newspaper vendor and tobacconist Richard Mack, son of Irish immigrants. On a return visit to Nantucket in the winter of 1920 it took out its wrath on the Latvians, killing Max Egle, his son John, and Katherine Duce.

For the death certificate George Duce provided Max's parents' names, John Egle and Julia (Perkon) Egle, and his birthplace of Tukums. Christopher Duce gave his wife Katherine's birthplace as Courland (the peninsula west of the Gulf of Riga) and her parents' names as Ans Ikwild and Anna Jakobson. Just seven years later George Duce's wife Lena died of kidney disease, and the next year George himself succumbed to lung cancer. Christopher Duce then provided the death-certificate information that their father was Fritz Duce and their mother's name was Carlin (Minki) Duce. After their parents' death George's and Lena's three American-born sons—Harry, Waldemar, and Arnold—went to live with their married sister Alice and her family. By then, Harry was already employed as a fisherman.

Widowed Christopher married Olga Welk, a young woman half his age, who had arrived in the United States in 1923.¹³⁹ Compared to the five unfortunate family members who died in the 1920s, Christopher lived a long life, dying just short of his seventy-fifth birthday. In the end, however, John Egle's lifetime exceeded Christopher Duce's by a full quarter of a century.

As a young man John Egle simultaneously courted the sea and his bride Alma, whom he met among the Latvian community in Beverly. Having briefly tried working for wages on a dairy farm in Vermont and doing carpentry in Nantucket, he learned that he could earn much more by shellfishing. Investing in a boat of his own and building himself a rent-free shanty on Muskeget, he soon learned the sea in all its moods as he took his quahogs and scallops in to Steamboat Wharf and sailed in the other direction to the mainland to spend time with Alma. In the autumn of 1914 she paid a visit to Nantucket and to John's extended family, and in May of 1915 they were married. The next year Erna, the first of their children, was born.

¹³⁹ According to her death certificate and the 1930 federal census for Nantucket, Olga Welk Duce was born in Russia (which then included Latvia and Poland). Her mother's maiden name, Woiskousky, is apparently Polish. Olga's arrival in the United States was five years after Latvia achieved independence from Russia.

In 1930, when Christopher and Olga Duce owned a house on Pleasant Street worth \$5000, John and Alma Egle owned one on Easton Street worth twice as much, and John's occupation had been upgraded from fisherman to "private yachtsman."

In order to spend less time on the water and more with his growing family, John had gone to work in his brother Max's shop doing engine repair for the island's fishing fleet, while augmenting his income seasonally by operating the boats belonging to Nantucket summer residents. In the summer of 1920, months after Max's demise and his own close brush with death, he became captain of a new vessel built for Leeds Mitchell Sr., a wealthy owner of a summer home on Brant Point. For the rest of Leeds Mitchell's life and on afterward, John Egle was in what Leeds Mitchell Jr. described as "a symbiotic relationship" with the Mitchell family.¹⁴⁰

Of John and Alma Egle's three children, the eldest, Erna, married locally and remained on-island. A son, named for his father, lived only nine months. Their second daughter, Wilma, grew up, married, and moved to Vermont. For a while after that Alma rented rooms in their large Easton Street house, and then she and John moved into a smaller one that John built on the edge of the Lily Pond close to their daughter Erna's home. After fifty-seven years of marriage, Alma's death left John a widower.

John Egle was a man who seldom let others do for him. Like most other Nantucket family men, he hunted deer, rabbits, and pheasants to provide his household with meat during the 1930s and 1940s. He grew his own vegetables and flowers. He baked his own bread. He maintained and repaired his own boats. When he needed a house, he built one. When the walls of his house seemed bare, he painted landscapes for them. After Alma's death, he concentrated his time and attention on painting. His daughter, Erna Blair, was herself greatly admired for her ability to create unusual lamps and lamp shades. Her shop on the edge of the Lily Pond was a popular local business where she exhibited her father's work.

Over a dozen years, between the ages of 86 and 98, John Egle produced three hundred paintings, which were exhibited to acclaim locally and, in 1988, at the DeCordova Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Even



John Egle at fifty and at one hundred years of age. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.



¹⁴⁰ L. Mitchell 1978, pp. 29–38. For many Nantucketers, employment by the summer residents meant that their children played with their employers' children in the summer homes; their wives opened and closed the summer homes each year; and the summer residents provided venues for their employees' children's wedding receptions and other family events. See Appendix 3h.

¹⁴¹ *Inquirer and Mirror*; July 2, 1987, and March 3, 1988. In addition to the detailed Mitchell biography, the Nantucket Historical Association holds a copy of a booklet of family remembrances "To John Egle on his 100th Birthday" (Collection 269, folder 2) and audio cassettes on which he recorded his thoughts about his life (CT-46–51).



My Beloved Vista painted by John Egle in 1983. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

after the Nantucket Artists' Association honored him at age 97 for his accomplishments, he continued on robustly until his death at 101, by then the holder of Nantucket's famous Boston Post Cane, which is always in the keeping of the island's oldest resident.¹⁴¹

Among the Latvian families who had gathered to hear John Egle's words in Prospect Hill Cemetery in February 1920, were the Ottisons, who had come to Nantucket five years earlier. Adolph Ottison had left Latvia in 1904, and Anna Emily Feierabend followed in 1908. Their first child, Alma, was born in New Hampshire in 1912, and four years later their

son Albert was born in Nantucket. Between the births of the children, Emily's mother Catherine "Katrina" Feierabend joined them in the United States. After 1920 Latvia-born Fred Matison, who had been in the United States longer than any of them, also came to live with the Ottison family in the Pleasant Street home they had purchased. Young Alma Ottison married Allen Holdgate, who was barely older than she was, and the couple resided with her parents. Adolph Ottison and Fred Matison supported the large household by fishing. Between 1914 and 1930 elderly Katrina Feierabend had not learned to speak English and, despite assimilationist pressures during and after World War I, she did not seek United States citizenship.

Latvia, which had been incorporated into Russia in the 1720s, only gained national independence in 1918, after the departure of the families who settled in Nantucket. The federal censuses for Nantucket variously identified the Latvians on the island as Russians and Poles, and their first language as Russian, Polish, "Lettish," and even Yiddish, which was probably an error for Lettish.¹⁴²

All the Latvians who were born in the old country and died on Nantucket were interred in Prospect Hill Cemetery.

¹⁴² In the past Latvians have been called Letts, and their language Lettish.

Finns

In the 1800s Finland endured many political and economic conditions in common with Latvia. Over the course of six centuries as a province of Sweden, the land had been a bloody battleground, as the border between west and east constantly shifted back and forth according to the balance of power between the kings of Sweden and the czars of Russia. In the first half of the 1700s, at a time when Nantucket's English population was burgeoning, Finland's population was crashing. During two grim periods recalled as "the great wrath" and "the lesser wrath," a military scorched-earth policy drove the Finnish population into hiding in the forests for years on end. Destruction of food reserves, lost harvests, and severe winters without adequate shelter decimated the population. In 1808 Sweden finally ceded all of Finland to Russia.

As bitter as the 1700s had been, Finns have not remembered the 1800s fondly either. Whole villages starved to death in the 1860s, and even as late as the 1890s there was hunger in the countryside, as the Russian administration failed to ship food from where it was available to remote areas where it was needed. As in Latvia, the Russian government attempted to suppress a rising sense of national identity by building garrisons in towns around the country and bringing in Cossack troops to intimidate the local population. A russification policy was put in place: Russian was declared the official language of the country, schools were supposed to be conducted in Russian, Russian-language street signs went up in the towns, and Finnish men were conscripted to fight in the Russian army against the peoples of Central Asia.

Finland's own language diversity exacerbated the situation. Unlike Latvian—a language with affinities to both Russian and Polish—Finnish is historically unrelated to either Swedish or Russian. Its linguistic relatives are Estonian, spoken to the south across the Gulf of Finland; several minority languages spoken in northern Fenno-Scandinavia and in Russia; and—more distantly—Hungarian.¹⁴³ As Finnish nationalism gathered force in the 1800s, one of its rallying cries was, "Swedes we never were. Russians we can't become. So we must be Finns!"

Yet the language map was not so simple. During its long period as a province of Sweden, the language of church and education in Finland had been first Latin and then Swedish. Having a Swedish surname and speaking Swedish had become indicators of class. Town folk, estate owners, clergymen, and bureaucrats were Swedish speakers. For centuries Finnish speakers had been dependent on them for getting things done—everything from securing employment to bringing suit in court to getting married, naming one's children, and burying one's dead. The published literature of Finland had been written in Swedish. Yet as the wave of Finnish nationalism gathered force, many Finnish intellectuals willingly gave up their Swedish names for adopted Finnish ones and strove—with greater and lesser success—to switch to speaking Finnish.

¹⁴³ Saami ("Lapp")—spoken in northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia—is a linguistic relative of Finnish. Historically, the languages diverged during a long period of separation and then became much more alike in recent centuries as the northward territorial expansion of Finns put them into direct contact (and competition) with the Saami.

There was another Swedish-speaking population in the country, however—one that was unwilling to go along with this shift. On the coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland, farmers and fishermen spoke Swedish as their first language, and they were not eager to relinquish their linguistic heritage. As one descendant of these coastal working people remarked, “There are two kinds of Swedish speakers in Finland: the aristocrats and the fishermen. And the fishermen have always fancied themselves aristocrats.” The language issue divided Finn-Swedes (or Finlanders as they are sometimes called) from the majority Finnish population, and the “language wars” carried on for decades.

From Finnish records, it appears that between 1880 and 1920 (when Finland had finally achieved its independence and survived a brief but devastating civil war) over three hundred thousand people, both Finns and Finlanders, left their country to escape poverty, conscription into the Russian army, and the imposition of repressive Russian policies at home. Most went to the United States and Canada. The Swedish-speaking emigrants were more willing to see their children grow up as English speakers than as Finnish speakers in the old country. Everyone was more willing to voluntarily adopt English than to have Russian forced on them.

Initially, young unmarried men outnumbered women among the immigrants. In Massachusetts they found work as quarrymen in Quincy and Cape Ann. On Cape Cod they worked alongside Cape Verdeans in the cranberry bogs, rose to be bog managers, and saved to become bog owners.¹⁴⁴ Unmarried Finnish women found employment as domestics. Both men and women went to work in the Fitchburg, Massachusetts, textile mills. They founded a Finnish-language newspaper in Fitchburg, built saunas and social halls wherever they settled, and—like the Latvians in Beverly—gathered at festivals and church socials to meet one another, make music, talk politics, and find spouses.

Although there is a cohesive Finnish-American presence on Cape Cod,¹⁴⁵ the Finns resident on Nantucket—few in number, from different hometowns, and married to non-Finns—did not organize. The Kittilä family is now in its fourth generation on the island. The first John Kittilä was born in Pyhäjoki, a coastal town on the west coast of Finland, in 1895 and came to the United States in time to serve in the U. S. Coast Guard during World War I. His son followed in his footsteps and had a career in the Coast Guard, serving at Sankaty Head and Brant Point lighthouses and as commander of the South Shoals Lightship, where he made lightship baskets in his free time.¹⁴⁶ His grandson John Kittilä III also became a basket maker, and his great-grandson carries on the name as John Kittilä IV.

¹⁴⁴ Donaghy 1990, *passim*.

¹⁴⁵ The Cape Cod area Finns hosted a national Finn-Funn festival in Hyannis in November 2001.

¹⁴⁶ Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 5, 1984.

In the summer of 1928 Jalmar Kiiski was engaged as swimming instructor and masseur at Royal's Baths, "the most popular and largest bathing establishment on the island." According to the advertisement announcing that summer's opening of the bathing beach, Kiiski already had "many years' experience in the finest and most up-to-date pools and camps of New England" as well as being a graduate of the "Cambridge School of Swedish Massage and Medical Gymnastics, the largest massage school in New England."¹⁴⁷ The 1934 Nantucket telephone book contains a listing under Kiiski's name for a "health service" on Lower Main Street. In the mid 1940s he returned to the island with his family as year-round residents. Although his wife, Gladys Gardner (Lingham) Kiiski, had been born in Brockton, Massachusetts, she was connected to the island through her mother, Nantucket-born Emma Andrews.

In the immediate postwar years the Kiiskis lived on North Liberty Street, their son Richard attended Academy Hill Elementary School, and Jalmar Kiiski was employed as the Nantucket agent for Knapp Brothers shoes.¹⁴⁸ Later they moved to Orange Street and then to a shared house on India Street, where the Nantucket street lists for 1953 and 1954 state Jalmar's occupation as carpenter and that of Gladys as housewife. Gladys Kiiski died in August of 1954, and thereafter Jalmar Kiiski's name disappears from the annual street lists.

Two Burgess men, not brothers, took Finnish wives. In 1932 Eugene Francis "Todd" Burgess married a woman from Tampere, a textile-mill town in central Finland. They were married in Port Chester, New York, but thereafter they lived on Nantucket in an area off Lower Orange Street overlooking the Creeks that was and is known as Poverty Point. Todd Burgess supported himself and Anna by driving a taxi and, according to the Nantucket street lists, occasionally serving as the town dog officer. The couple remained childless.

When the Soviet Union attacked Finland in 1939, the *Inquirer and Mirror* reported that Nantucket resident Anna Burgess was a native of Finland and that "Her mother and sister live at the old homestead and her three brothers are serving at the front." Her hometown had been bombed, the report continued, and Anna Burgess had been out of touch with her relatives for the past six weeks.¹⁴⁹

Anna Burgess's Finnish surname remains a mystery. Her maiden name appears on Todd Burgess's death certificate as Duffy—an Irish name, not a Finnish one. During the early 1950s Rosamund Duffy, daughter of Irish immigrants to Nantucket, entered into an agreement with Anna Burgess about two parcels of land at Poverty Point, an agreement the women reconfirmed in the early 1960s just before Anna sold off the parcels to abutters. This suggests that Rosamund and Anna had been sisters-in-law

¹⁴⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 23, 1928.

¹⁴⁸ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 3, 1948.

¹⁴⁹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 30, 1939. The newspaper spells Tampere as "Dandie" and locates it near Helsinki, which it is not.

prior to Anna's marriage to Todd Burgess. In any case, Anna retained "D." (presumably for Duffy) as her middle initial.

Three years after Todd Burgess married Anna, Samuel Burgess took Gertrude Majanen for his wife in New York City. For the first eight years of their marriage they lived in New York, and then they moved to Nantucket and lived on Pine Street.

Sam Burgess was not Todd Burgess's brother or even a Nantucket Burgess. He had been born in Pennsylvania of a father from Tennessee and a mother from New Jersey. It was sheer chance that two unrelated men with the same last name should end up living in a community as small as Nantucket with wives from faraway Finland.

Gertrude Burgess had been born Kerttu Kaarina Lemmikki Majanen in 1910. While her maiden name is known, her birthplace in Finland is not. A few months before her twentieth birthday she received an immigration card from the United States consulate in Helsinki and embarked for New York, where she anglicized her name to Gertrude and eventually married Sam Burgess. Unlike Todd and Anna Burgess, Sam and Gertrude had children—four daughters, the youngest born the year the family moved to Nantucket and settled on Pine Street.

Ten years later both Burgess marriages collapsed in a matter of a few months. According to the 1953 street list, Gertrude Burgess had left Sam on Pine Street and moved in with Todd and Anna on Poverty Point. In July 1953 Gertrude filed for divorce from Sam Burgess, and a month later Anna filed for divorce from Todd Burgess. By October both divorces were final. Gertrude kept custody of her oldest daughter and relinquished custody of the three younger girls to Sam, who later remarried.

Anna remarried too. Her new husband was Victor Salmi, a Finn like herself and a carpenter. They continued to live on Poverty Point, where Victor built Anna a sauna with a grand view of the Creeks and Nantucket Harbor. It was perhaps the only free-standing sauna ever built on the island. In the mid 1960s Anna and Victor sold the property and moved away, but the sauna stood for years after they left, looking like an outgrown children's playhouse or a tool shed until it was finally demolished in the 1990s.

The Soviet attack on Finland at the end of 1939 brought warfare with Russia back onto Finnish ground for the first time since 1808. The attempted invasion launched what was known as the Winter War and brought an outpouring of international sympathy and admiration for the outnumbered Finns fighting off the would-be occupiers.

In a series of articles supportive of Finland's resistance, the *Inquirer and Mirror* first identified Anna Burgess as Finnish-born and then, the following month, reported that Hilda Gibbs was also a native of Finland.¹⁵⁰

Hilda Österberg Gibbs was the widow of Sarah P. Bunker's grandson, Maurice Gibbs. For the first three years of her marriage, Hilda had shared living space with Sarah P., and for the eighteen years since Maurice's death she had been head of the household in Sarah P.'s place. By 1940 the street address was 12 Cliff Road, and hardly anyone recalled that when Hilda had come to live there, it had been North Street.

It is not surprising that it took the *Inquirer and Mirror* over a month to find out that Hilda Gibbs was a native of Finland. She was much older than Anna Burgess and had lived on Nantucket since the 1890s. Born in 1871 in the town of Vasa, down the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia from John Kittilä's hometown, Hilda—unlike John Kittilä and Anna Burgess—did not speak Finnish.¹⁵¹ She had been raised speaking Swedish and had attended a Swedish-language school. All her friends and relatives spoke Swedish and identified with Swedish history and culture. One of her sisters once complained with considerable indignation of being addressed in Finnish by a train conductor who should, she insisted, have known better.

This is not to say that Hilda was any less a patriotic Finn than the Finnish-speaking immigrants to North America. Like so many others, she maintained a small altar to Finnish nationhood on a table in her home. On a white crocheted doily stood a miniature flag pole with the blue and white Finnish flag, a carved wooden spoon, a carved wooden bird, and three wooden boxes. One box was from Turkey, inscribed inside to Hilda from her maternal aunt Magdalena. Magdalena Berg had it as a souvenir of Finland's involvement in Russia's Central Asian adventures of the 1870s, and she gave it to her niece when she left for America. In the Turkish box Hilda kept a silver thimble and two doll-size miniature sheath knives typical of her region of Finland. The second was a lacquered box from Russia with a scene on the lid of a troika drawn by galloping horses through snowy woods. The third was a round box and lid carved from a single piece of Finnish birch wood. A drawer in the table contained a Finnish tourist brochure and an autograph book containing verses in Swedish that Hilda's classmates had written for her when she finished school. In different ways, they all asked her not to forget them when she was far away.

Hilda remembered well the garrisoning of Russian troops in Vasa when she was a girl. A block of red-brick barracks and an Orthodox church had been built in advance of their arrival. One winter day word

¹⁵⁰ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 27, 1940. The Winter War lasted from December 1939 to March 1940. During that time the *Inquirer and Mirror* published articles on December 16, December 30, January 27, February 3, March 9, and March 16 supporting the country and soliciting aid to its citizens via the Red Cross and the Finnish Relief Fund. The March 16, 1940, front-page announcement of "Finland's Triumph" was signed by Joseph W. Cochran, chairman of the local Finnish Relief Fund. The triumph was, in fact, an admission by the Finns that they could not maintain force of arms in defense of their country. They ceded part of their territory in exchange for the rest of it not being occupied. Nonetheless, hostilities resumed later that year and the "Continuation War" was waged until 1944 with the displacement of half a million people, the loss of a hundred thousand Finnish lives, and the permanent disability of many survivors.

¹⁵¹ Towns in Finland's traditionally Swedish-speaking regions have dual names, one Swedish and the other Finnish. Sometimes the two names are entirely different, but in the case of Vasa/Vaasa, they differ only by one letter more in the Finnish name.

went out that the troop train was coming, and crowds of townspeople began packing snowballs around stones and holding them under water spigots to freeze them. When the soldiers were marched off the train, they were pelted with ice balls. As an old woman, Hilda remembered with shame that the hated occupiers were teen-aged boys, already half-frozen, far from their homes, and exhausted by days of transport from Russia. Soon their heads and faces were streaked with blood as they marched through a gauntlet of townspeople. And then, she added, their officers made them stand through an interminable Orthodox service in the Russian church before they were permitted to clean up, eat, and rest.

During Hilda's girlhood an air of profound pessimism lay over Vasa, as it did over all of Finland. She had been born in the aftermath of deadly famine. The year she was born, her sister died, and her parents left the countryside for town, where her father went to work in a textile mill. Of the eight more children her mother bore after the move, only four survived childhood.

The oldest of five sisters, Hilda assumed the responsibilities of the son of the family. As her father's helper and his confidante, she was present when a Cossack on horseback menaced him, and she heard of the things that happened to local girls taken into the Russian barracks. Her father told her that like so many young men from their part of the country, she had to go to America and earn money so that her sisters could leave too, and that is what she did. With her she took the Swedish Bible she had received at confirmation. In America she acquired an English-language one, and set to work learning English by comparing biblical passages.

By 1895 Hilda had been in the United States for four years and was working as a domestic on Nantucket. Her sister Ellen had come to work on the island too, and the sisters had a Swedish-speaking Finnish friend, Ida Gref, working here as well. Five years later two more of her sisters, Irene and Edith, had come to Nantucket from Finland. Ellen and Irene were working as domestics in one of the Starbuck mansions—the Three Bricks—on Main Street. Their younger sister Edith had just arrived and was with Hilda, her new husband Maurice Gibbs, and his grandmother Sarah P. Bunker in the old family home on North Street.



The Pinkham/Bunker/Gibbs house at 12 North Street circa 1900.
Courtesy of Ellen Gibbs Holdgate.

Ida Gref continued working for a family on Main Street. When the three sisters and Ida got together with Hilda in Sarah P.'s kitchen on maids days off, they sat down together to chat over knitting, while the house filled with the sounds of Swedish and the fragrance of coffee braids baking in the oven. At four in the afternoon Hilda would carry Sarah P.'s tea up to her room and drop her a respectful curtsey, as well-brought-up Finnish girls were taught to and as Finnish maids did all their lives long.

After 1900, the youngest sister, Frida, received her ticket to America too. Next Hilda saved money to help Edith and Frida go to nursing school. By 1910 all Hilda's sisters had moved on, and even Ida Gref had left the island. Sarah P. had gone to her rest, and Hilda didn't curtsey to anyone anymore.

In Finland Hilda's father had died, and her aging mother was in the care of a foster daughter. Despite her own growing family, Hilda undertook several trips back to Vasa to look after her mother.

By the time her mother died, Hilda was herself a widow. It had happened almost without warning. A veteran surfman in the U. S. Coast Guard, Maurice Gibbs had suffered a back injury during a training exercise. The injury may have opened an avenue for infection, because shortly thereafter, while on duty at Madaket Station, he was suddenly "stricken with a peculiar illness." Taken to the Marine Hospital in Vineyard Haven for treatment, he did not recover.¹⁵²

Left with four children—the youngest eleven years old—Hilda set about expanding Sarah P.'s house in all directions to add rooms for boarders. Sarah P. Bunker's old home became unrecognizable as the classic Nantucket house it had been.



Hilda (Österberg) Gibbs and her family. Clockwise from top left: Surfman Maurice Gibbs, Arthur, John, Esther, and Charlotte. Courtesy of Ellen Gibbs Holdgate.

¹⁵² *Inquirer and Mirror*; December 9, 1922. Maurice Gibbs had originally been a surfman in the U. S. Life-Saving Service, which became part of the Coast Guard in 1915.

Hilda's daughters helped with the paying guests. There were "regulars" who returned every year for a week or two in the third-floor "sky parlor," the sleeping porches, Sarah P's own rooms, and the downstairs barning room. Hilda's family members withdrew into what had been the servants quarters behind the kitchen and the carriage house in back.¹⁵³ Fourteen years after her husband's death Hilda began to receive a Coast Guard survivor's pension, which augmented the summer income from her boarders as her children married and brought children of their own into the household.

It was in the middle years of Hilda's widowhood that Finland was plunged into war. The crisis galvanized her household, as everyone down to the youngest grandchild was put to packing relief boxes for relatives in Finland. The struggle for national survival finally brought Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers together across the language divide—both at home and among Finnish emigrants abroad. Back in 1927 three Finnish women had spent a summer in a nearby house on Cliff Road, but Hilda had made no effort to meet them.¹⁵⁴ They were summer people and—more to the point—as Hilda firmly maintained, she didn't speak a word of Finnish. But with the war, patriotism won out over language allegiance. She sang the Finnish national anthem to her grandchildren in Swedish and revealed that she did, after all, know some songs in Finnish too. Language allegiance no longer counted so much.

From the day Hilda's youngest daughter first opened the North Shore Restaurant in 1943, Hilda baked the daily dinner rolls. Kneading bread dough in the summers and knitting countless pairs of red woolen gloves in the winters kept hands, heart, and mind busy for another two decades, granting Hilda a life as long as Sarah P's had been. Her grandchildren were the sixth and last generation of descended Nantucketers to live in Sarah P. Bunker's old home.

Like Theresa Szabo, young Hilda Österberg had brought a small linguistic treasure chest with her to Nantucket. When she died, her Swedish Bible, her autograph book, and her aunt Magdalena's Turkish box were passed on for safekeeping to the one granddaughter who had learned to understand Swedish.

Swedes

The weaving studio at 64 Union Street is nearly in view of Poverty Point, where Victor and Anna Salmi's sauna once stood, and it is even closer to Nikita Carpenko's former studio and the duck pond. On an afternoon in early 2001, master weaver Margareta Grandin Nettles took time away from her loom to read Hilda Österberg Gibbs's autograph book. For a woman born in Sweden in 1933 the language of the verses written back in 1885 was old-fashioned, provincial, and sometimes oddly spelled, but Margareta was in no way critical. Neither did she take the shortcut of translating anything into English. Instead, she would tactfully

¹⁵³ A month before Maurice Gibbs died, the *Inquirer and Mirror* published an essay by his and Hilda's oldest daughter Charlotte about being a surfman's daughter and about playing what has come to be known as the "Nantucket shuffle," relinquishing one's living space to renters and moving into uncomfortable summer quarters. See Appendix 3i for excerpts from her essay.

¹⁵⁴ *Lothrop's Nantucket, Massachusetts, Blue Book and Directory*. 1927. The three women were Hilma Koskela, Anna Kosonen, and Vieno Kovola, all of Englewood, New Jersey.

ask, “Do you understand this right here?” and if the answer was no, she would paraphrase the verse in more understandable Swedish until it became clear. By the time the bright winter sunshine began to fade, the verses had been read to the end, and Margareta exclaimed over the pleasure of having spent the afternoon with Hilda’s girlhood friends from so long ago and far away.¹⁵⁵

Such generosity was characteristic of Margareta, who found positive good in many things and most people. Raised in Eskiltuna, a town in central Sweden, and professionally trained in textile design at Stockholm’s State School of Art and Design, she came to the United States on a Swedish travel grant in 1966 and soon returned to teach a summer course at the Nantucket School of Needlework. Thereafter she established a studio of her own in New York City, where she met and married James Nettles. In the late 1970s she and her family moved to Nantucket and opened the weaving studio on Union Street. Margareta’s sense of design and the excellence of the products of the Nettles’ studio brought so many commissions that for years the studio had a staff of a half or dozen or more. Many aspiring weavers apprenticed there, producing rugs, wall hangings, and other textiles for celebrity clients.¹⁵⁶ When Margareta underwent brain surgery in 1997, the Nettles family cut back on the studio’s production to give full scope to her boundless zest for life. Her death in the spring of 2003 left her immense circle of friends and admirers bereft.

The Union Street weaving studio was not the only one in Nantucket. Not far away on Orange Street Anna Lynn, also from Sweden, has her Weaving Room. Graduate of Stockholm University and a textile design school, Anna also moved to New York City, as Margareta had before her. A friend suggested a spring get-away visit to Nantucket for a milieu more like Sweden. Returning to the island via an association with the Nantucket Island School of Design, Anna Lynn became a resident of the island—entrepreneur, wife, and mother.

At the end of the twentieth century, Margareta Nettles, Anna Lynn, and several other Swedish women formed a Nantucket social circle that met regularly for food, handwork, and companionship, just as the Österberg sisters and their friend Ida Greff had a century earlier.¹⁵⁷

There is a history of Swedish women outnumbering Swedish men on Nantucket. At the end of the whaling era James Sandsbury, born in Sweden, lived on the island. He owned substantial real estate, but he was approaching 70 and no longer engaged in any occupation. Ten years later, he was making his home with a very large family. Another aged Swede, a sailmaker whose name appears as “Theodore Sohufflin” was recorded in the 1880 census. By then a young shoemaker, O. Magnus Holmberg, had moved to the island with his wife and infant child and departed again. The 1870 federal census, the one that records no Cape Verdeans on the island, also shows no Swedes. Because the economy was at its nadir and there had been a great exodus, this may be true, or—on the other hand—there may have been an undercount of the

¹⁵⁵ Karttunen 2001, *passim*.

¹⁵⁶ Krondahl, 1992. Among those who commissioned work from Margareta Nettles was Jacqueline Onassis.

¹⁵⁷ Woodward, 1994, pp. 6–7, 11–12.

foreign-born that year. Whatever the case, after 1870 Swedish women began to appear. Three were resident on Nantucket in 1880, nine in 1900, seven in 1910, eleven in 1920, and fourteen in 1930.

These women had come to work, but they stayed as married women. Seven of the nine on-island in 1900 were employed as servants, but six out of seven were married in 1910, and among the Swedish women living on the island in 1920, only the widow Hannah Norcross, who did housework for Gulielma Folger and her sister on Cliff Road, was still working as a domestic. Likewise, in 1930 only one Swedish woman was unmarried and working in someone else's home, in this case caring for an elderly couple.

Two Swedish women married Dunham men. Anna Dunham was born in 1845, arrived in the United States in 1873, married Daniel Dunham, and already had children by the time she appeared in the 1880 census. Forty years later she was still on-island, living alone as a widow. Lalla Dunham had come in 1911, been naturalized in 1918, married Nelson O. Dunham, and become a mother by 1920. By 1930 the couple had four daughters.¹⁵⁸

The conversion from gas lighting to electric lighting in private homes put electricians to work wiring old Nantucket houses, a project that carried on for decades. In 1900 there were already several electricians on the island. One was Augustus Lake. His wife, Anna Nelson, was born in Gothenburg, a city on the west coast of Sweden, and had been brought to the United States as a girl in 1887. Selma Newman came to the United States three years later and was employed as a chambermaid by the Fish family until electrician George Rogers of Rhode Island married her. They made their home in 'Sconset, and in 1930 their adult son, who had followed his father into the business, was living with them. Also living in 'Sconset in 1930 was Hilda Welch, who was a clerk in her husband's grocery store on Shell Street.

Like Rose Cohen Kaufman, Hulda Mårtensson traveled all the way to Iowa on her way from the old country to Nantucket. In Iowa she married Fred Allen and changed her name to Hilda Allen. Later the Allens, their Iowa-born son William, his brother Clifford, and Fred's father operated Allen's Pullman Lunch at the foot of Main Street. Nantucket's railroad had ceased operation at the time of World War I, and all its rolling stock had been shipped off with the exception of one car, which remained next to the American Railway Express building at the foot of Main Street, just beyond the Pacific Club building. At about the time that the railroad went out of operation, the Allen family moved from Iowa to Massachusetts. From the mainland they came on to Nantucket, moved in over the express company, and created a diner in the orphaned railroad car. Like the Kaufman family's restaurant around the corner on South Water Street, the Pullman Lunch diner and its "annex" dining room in the former express office space were perennially pop-

¹⁵⁸ Her given name may have been Leila or Lelia, but it consistently appears as "Lalla" in town records, and that was what she was called on Nantucket.

ular with residents and summer visitors alike and operated for decades. Hilda Allen lived to within a few days of her hundredth birthday. Her obituary stated, “There was no one on the island who made a better bread pudding or apple pie than did Mrs. Allen.”¹⁵⁹

Ellen Johnson was also employed as a restaurant cook in 1930. The census that year recorded her as head of a household consisting of herself and her three Iowa-born children. Her daughter was at that time working as an assistant restaurant cook. Caroline Lewis, who had arrived in 1898, had become the wife of Nantucket farmer William Lewis and was living on Orange Street with her husband.

Not all Swedes on Nantucket were Swedish women married to local men. Carl Anderson, born in Sweden in 1879, was already approaching middle age when he married Hattie Parker of Nantucket. At the time he was working as a fisherman, but as a married man he left the water to run a gardening and care-taking business. Unlike many of the foreign-born and their children, Anderson was not reticent about his old-country origin; he publicized it by building a Scandinavian kick-sled for himself, on which he glided around town after snowstorms. Also unlike many other foreign-born men on Nantucket, he did not join the Masonic lodge, instead centering his social life around the Odd Fellows lodge and the Wharf Rat Club. He and Nikita Carpenko died within a day of each other in 1961. Unlike Carpenko, Anderson reached the end of his life an octogenarian, father, and grandfather.

In the 1930s an elderly Swedish couple, Eric and Norma Lindqvist, were living with their son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren on North Liberty Street, and Carl and Holga Stig were operating the Gray Gull Restaurant on Liberty Street, yet another restaurant that became an enduring island business.

Another Swedish couple on Nantucket were Albert and Augusta Rohdin. Albert Rohdin had come to the United States in 1888 and Augusta shortly after. Both were naturalized in 1895. Albert began by fishing on vessels out of Gloucester but soon found his life’s work in the U. S. Life-Saving Service, where he advanced through the ranks. By 1910 he was keeper of the Life-Saving Station on Muskeget Island. His wife and their four Massachusetts-born children lived on Nantucket and visited Muskeget occasionally.

In 1915 the Life-Saving Service was merged with the United States Revenue Cutter Service to form the United States Coast Guard. Rohdin was promoted to the rank of chief warrant



Captain Albert Rohdin and his crew at Muskeget Lifesaving Station circa 1910. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

¹⁵⁹ Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, March 20, 1986; Newhouse 2002, pp. 41–42.

officer and transferred to the Surfside Station (the building now occupied by the Star of the Sea youth hostel) until it was converted into a naval radio-compass facility. Leaving the island, he continued in the Coast Guard until his retirement in 1928. Five years later

he suffered a peculiarly Swedish death, suddenly, while shoveling snow at his home in Rhode Island.

As Nantucket's fishing economy expanded, several Swedish men found a way to make a living at it. In 1920 Carl Anderson was one of three Swedish harbor fishermen. One of them, young Helmer Östman, had a Nantucket wife, and the couple with their baby were living with her parents. Ten years later Helmer was still fishing, and the Östman couple had six children and their own home—equipped with a radio, as most fishing families' homes were in 1930.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts death certificates record the birthplace of the deceased, the birthplaces of the parents of the deceased, the father's name, and the mother's maiden name. Throughout rural Scandinavia, family surnames were late to replace the system of patronymics, in which the son of a Swedish man named Anders—for instance—would be Andersson, and his sister would be identified as Andersdotter, even after marriage. In the course of emigration the double “ss” in men's names and the “dotter” of the women's did not carry over well, but the areas of North America receiving Scandinavian immigrants are full of Andersons, Olsons, Larsons, Eriksons, Nilsons and Nelsons. When some of Nantucket's residents died in great old age, their mothers' nineteenth-century patronymics were recorded as their maiden names. Carl Anderson's parents were recorded as Anders Oleson and Mary Larsdotter. Hilda Allen's parents were John M. Mårtensson and Ida Amelia Zachrisdotter. Hilda Gibbs, from Swedish-speaking Finland, was the daughter of Johan Erik Träskbacka-Österberg and Ulrika Isaksdotter. In the urban, progressive port of Gothenburg, however, Anna Lake's mother had a forward-looking western surname, Segerlind.

Norwegians

On Christmas Day 1926, Arne Parelius Pedersen and Anna Kristina Nilson were married on Nantucket, joining the island's small Swedish community to its much larger community of Norwegian fishermen, the Norwegian "sen" of his patronymic contrasting with the Swedish "son" of her father's.

Anglicization sometimes obscured the fine distinctions among Scandinavian names and at other times made false distinctions. Olga Hansen wrote, "My maiden name Anderson should have been Andersen, but it was Anderson on my father's naturalization papers, so my father wrote it that way. Also, the two Fleming families: one spelled it with one "m" and the other with two "m"s just because it was spelled that way on their papers. They were brothers!"¹⁶⁰

By 1938 the roster of Norwegian men currently or recently fishing out of Nantucket included Olaf, Edward, and Hjalmar Alfred Anderson; Ole Borgen; Axel and Arne Christiansen; John Dale; Richard Johansen; Paul, Mathias, Samuel, and Wilhelm Mathison; Sigurd, Rudolf, and Bernt Matland; Knutte and Sigurd Rasmussen; and Rolf Sjölund. Harold Cooke's occupation was listed in the 1930 census as "master: steamboat."

Captain Peder Pedersen, whose name was unofficially anglicized to Peter Peterson, modestly described himself as "boatman," but he had commanded vessels of every sort in a lifetime at sea. He was born in the Lofoten Islands, off the northwest coast of Norway well above the Arctic Circle. Despite their far-northern location the islands are not icebound, because the North Atlantic Drift Current sweeping up the coast ameliorates the climate. Between February and April this stream of warm water is the spawning ground for codfish, attracting fishermen from all over Norway. The riches of the fishing grounds are harvested at great risk, however, because the current between the islands is the original Maelstrom, a treacherous area of giant eddies and whirlpools. In the midst of this wild maritime environment Peder Pedersen was born in the 1870s. At age fourteen he left home for the merchant marine and thereafter, during the years preceding World War I, he moved on to operating wealthy men's pleasure boats for them.

Compared to the waters around his home islands, the coasts of Denmark and Germany are relatively benign, and Pedersen spent nearly a dozen years skippering sailing yachts in those waters. With many adventures along the way, he became a United States citizen at the time of World War I, retired again from merchant service in 1922, and took up residence on Pleasant Street on Nantucket. For ten years he was employed by playwright and Nantucket resident Austin Strong, during which time he and Strong organized the Nantucket Yacht Club's children's sailing program. Together they brought into being the "rainbow fleet" of miniature catboats that became the postcard symbol of Nantucket harbor. Pedersen was a core member

¹⁶⁰ Letter from Olga Hansen, January 15, 2003.

of the Wharf Rat Club on North Wharf. After his death, his Norwegian sheath knife was presented to the Nantucket Historical Association.¹⁶¹

Peder Pedersen's wife Henrietta was from England, Hjalmar Anderson was married to Budapest-born Theresa (Szabo) Anderson, and Rolf Sjölund's wife Eunice was the daughter of Nantucketer James T. Worth. Peder Pedersen's nephew Arne had taken a Swedish wife, and some of the other fishermen had Norwegian wives. Three Norwegian women—Ragnhild Coffin, Bertha Conway, and Machen Hamblin—were married to Nantucket men.

Margarethe Stigum of Bergen, Norway, resided unmarried on Nantucket for ten years. When she died young of cancer in the spring of 1940, a lyrical but uninformative obituary was printed in the *Inquirer and Mirror*. It describes her as building something unspecified and doing so artistically. Her death certificate states that her father was Karl Stigum of Trondheim and that she lived on Union Street and sold antiques in a shop.

In the late 1930s the Norwegian Pottery Shop, selling modern Scandinavian ceramics, glass, and silver rather than antiques, was located at the site of Nikita Carpenko's studio at Consue Corner. The Nantucket street lists for 1939 and 1940 indicate that Stigum, Carpenko, and another woman, all merchants, shared that address. Among Carpenko's papers are a letterhead for the shop, a price list, and a letter with a reference to working "in the shop." Despite the cryptic initials R.D.W.W. at the end of Stigum's obituary, the writing is a stylistic match with that of Carpenko's own autobiographical writings. It concludes, "She went so quietly that hardly anyone was able to believe that she had actually gone. It was simply as if a great gate



Captain Peder Pedersen, right, with Austin Strong in Strong's boathouse on Old North Wharf, circa 1945. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association (photo by Louis Davidson).

¹⁶¹ See Appendix 3j for Peder Pedersen's obituary.

had slowly and silently opened, and she had slipped through; and then as the gate was slowly and silently closing, it was as if she had smiled and laughed a little, and had said, 'Never mind; it's all right.' But of course to those on this side it isn't—quite."¹⁶²

Other Norwegians living and working on land included baker Emil Isaksen; Carl T. Andersen (whose surname was often spelled "Anderson," confusing his identity with Swedish Carl E. Anderson) and his wife Sigrid; Håkon Thorstensen and his wife Birgit; carpenter Richard Johnsen, who was living with his sister Dagny Anderson and her husband Olaf; and trucker Albert Johnsen and his wife Rosalena. Eugene Larsen was keeper of Sankaty Head Lighthouse.

The surname of Joseph Remsen, Larsen's predecessor, appears Norwegian, but he was Nantucket-born. His grandfather had come to the island and married a Nantucket woman, and their son had done the same. Through his mother and grandmother Joseph Remsen was descended from Gardners, Colemans, Swains, and Bunkers, and he would have considered himself kin to Sarah P. Bunker. Born in 1849, he joined the U. S. Lighthouse Service, and in the course of his career served as keeper of Brant Point Lighthouse, spent a year on the South Shoals Lightship, and finally became keeper of Sankaty Lighthouse, a position he held for twenty-seven years.

During those years both Charles Vanderhoop and Eugene Larsen served as assistants under Remsen. After serving briefly as Remsen's successor at Sankaty, Vanderhoop returned to Aquinnah as keeper of Gay Head Light. Larsen succeeded Vanderhoop at Sankaty and remained there until his retirement in 1944. Under his stewardship, Sankaty was repeatedly recognized as a model for all the lighthouses in the service, and he received numerous awards for its maintenance and operation.

Eugene Larsen was from Oslo, the second of seven children. Following the custom of the time and place, he went to sea young and while still in his teens served on a British ship before moving to the United States and signing on with the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, where he served as quartermaster on three different ships. Returning to Norway, he met and married Tobine Edvardine "Dina" Reinertsen, an island girl from Korshavn.

Eugene and Dina moved to Oslo but neither found life in the city to their liking, and Eugene returned to the United States, this time to employment as quartermaster on vessels of the U. S. Cutter Service. Early in 1910 he managed to transfer to the U. S. Lighthouse Service and was able to send for Dina to join him on shore.

Their oldest child was a son, born in Norway and named for his father. Mother and toddler traveled in steerage to Boston to begin a new life on islands with lighthouses. One of Eugene's posts was at Thatcher's Island, off Cape Ann, near Gloucester, where the Larsens' oldest daughter, Alice Thatcher

¹⁶² *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 20, 1940.

Larsen, was born. At Sankaty, the Larsens had five more daughters: Marie Antoinette, Thelma Ann, Ethel Alma, Helen Edith, and Evelyn Doris. Universally known as the beautiful Larsen girls, the sisters made Sankaty a lively place that people—Nantucketers and summer people alike—enjoyed visiting.

Alice Larsen married Nantucket historian Edouard Stackpole, whose family had longstanding connections with the *Inquirer and Mirror*. When Edouard Stackpole's father-in-law died in 1961, the *Inquirer and Mirror* published a tribute to the Larsen family that read in part, "Keeper and Mrs. Larsen made the lighthouse on the bluff a place of beauty and joy. Above all it was



Sankaty Lighthouse keeper Eugene Larsen with his daughters. From left: Marie, Alice, and Ethel. A visiting girl stands at right. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

their home. Here, Keeper Larsen was a part of an old tradition. As he gazed out to sea from the tower, he could recall his experiences as a youngster scrambling aloft on a square rigger, or being on the bridge of the cutter *Gresham* during rescue operations after the steamers *Republic* and *Florida* collided off Nantucket Lightship in 1909. Here he recounted his experiences at the two lights of Thatcher's Island or at lonely Minots. Here, in the spotlessness of the lighthouse, he could survey the little domain to which he gave devoted service."¹⁶³

Like the Larsens, many of the Norwegian and half-Norwegian couples had growing families, and they formed a mutually supportive social network. Eunice Sjölund reminisced about summer boat trips to Pocomo, where the young Norwegians shared picnic lunches on the beach, went swimming, played pranks on each other, and danced to accordion music. When the weather was bad and boats were delayed getting home, the fishermen's wives listened to their radios and called each other on the telephone to keep up their courage and reassure each other.

Although Rolf Sjölund settled on Nantucket later than many of the other Norwegians, he arrived with ready-made connections. Years earlier his father had come to the island to work on construction of the jetties at the entrance to Nantucket Harbor.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Rolf's first cousin Dagny and her fisherman husband Olaf Anderson resided on-island, and Dagny's brother Richard Johnsen lived with them for a time.

¹⁶³ Personal communication from Hamilton family; Butler 1996, pp. 81–86; Stackpole 1972, p. 116; obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, September 8, 1961.

¹⁶⁴ The west jetty was mainly built between 1880 and 1885, and the east jetty between 1891 and 1902, but work continued on both of them until 1937.

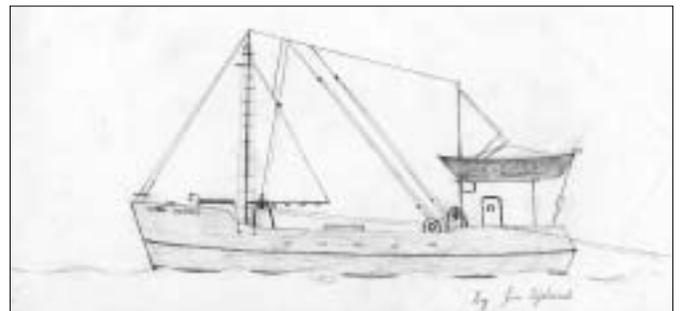
The Sjölund family homestead was located on the Oslo Fjord, close to the border between Norway and Sweden. From that fjord it is a straight sail out past the northern tip of Denmark to the North Sea, and thence to the oceans of the world. When Rolf Sjölund's father left home for Nantucket, Rolf was not yet born. The little boy, born in 1906, was already walking and talking by the time his father returned with his earnings from America.

During World War I the Norwegian merchant fleet, which at the turn of the century had grown to be one of the largest in the world, lost about half its vessels to German submarines and mines. Travel to work outside the country was next to impossible, and local work was hard to come by. In a situation comparable to Nantucket's after the American Revolution, a third to a half of Norway's workers found themselves without employment.

The Sjölungs, originally a family of seven—parents, four sons, and a daughter—were hard hit. Two of the four Sjölund brothers died in the war. Rolf's surviving brother took up studies to become a Lutheran pastor, and young Rolf felt an obligation to make life easier for all by leaving home and being, as he put it, one less mouth to feed. In the 1880s it had been possible for Peder Pedersen to ship out at age fourteen, but by 1920, child-protection laws were in place, and Rolf Sjölund had to pretend to be older than his years. Like Pedersen before him, he was fourteen when he succeeded in signing on for seven years in the Norwegian merchant marine. After that, he came to Nantucket and went to work in commercial fishing, proving himself so competent that his cousin-in-law, Olaf Anderson, turned over the operation of his boat *Dagny* to him.

The first boat Rolf Sjölund owned and operated for himself was the *Eunice Lillian*. Then in 1946 the *Carl Henry* was built for him in Fairhaven. The new vessel's maiden voyage to the fishing banks, without benefit of radio or any of the modern navigational conveniences that became available in the postwar years, yielded a record catch of 86,000 pounds of flounder, haddock, and codfish. Over the next quarter century a great many Nantucket men went fishing on the *Carl Henry*.

In 1953 the Sjölungs made the first of several trips to Norway to renew family ties, and their Norwegian relatives also came for an extended visit to Nantucket. Captain Sjölund retired from fishing in 1970. At his death in 1984, he held membership in many diverse organizations: Union Lodge, F. & A. M., the Odd Fellows, the Pacific Club, the Nantucket Historical Association, and the Anglers Club.¹⁶⁵



Drawing of Captain Rolf Sjölund's dragger *Carl Henry* by his grandson James Sjölund. Courtesy of James Sjölund.

¹⁶⁵ Series of conversations with Eunice Sjölund in 2000; Morris 1996, *passim*; obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 12, 1984.

One of the men who fished with Rolf Sjölund on the *Carl Henry* was Karsten Reinemo, who—with his wife Marion—became proprietor of the Downyflake Restaurant.

It was Marion Matland's family connections to Nantucket that brought Karsten Reinemo to the island. Her father, fisherman Bernt Matland, moved his family to Nantucket in 1922. He and his wife Caroline Christiansen Matland were both born in Norway, and their first three children—including Marion—were born in New York. Two more Matland children were born on the island, where other Matlands and Christiansens were already residing. All the Matlands and Christiansens were making their living from commercial fishing.

Bernt and Caroline gave their two oldest children classic Norwegian names, Ragnhild and Gottfrid. Marion and her younger brothers—Clifford and Kenneth—received names that stood out less at school, and in Nantucket High School Gottfrid chose to go by the name of Karl. Marion attended the Orange Street School until it closed, and then she moved on through the Cyrus Peirce School, the junior high school at Academy Hill, and Nantucket High School. After graduation, she took a job with a bank in Boston, and that is where she met Karsten Reinemo.

The Reinemo family had lived in the vicinity of the town of Holmstrand on the Oslo Fjord for generations. When Karsten was born, they had just survived the hardships of World War I, and he grew up in the economic depression that followed that war. Before the Germans occupied Norway in 1940, his father advised him to leave, and young Karsten used the same vehicle for leaving home that Peder Pedersen and Rolf Sjölund had before him, the Norwegian merchant fleet.

Over the next several years—dangerous ones for shipping in the Baltic and North Seas—he worked his way up to the rank of chief steward, the position he held in 1943, when torpedo damage sent his vessel into Boston for repairs. He and Marion Matland met at a church social in Boston, and they married before his ship left port. According to their son, “In the Norwegian merchant marine officers were allowed to take their wives. So when my father married my mother in 1943, she was the only American gal on the vessel. She sailed with him for about a year and a half, and she learned to speak Norwegian fluently, because she was the only lady on board.” Her total immersion in spoken Norwegian had taken place under sunny Caribbean skies as the ship ran freight between New Orleans and Haiti.

At war's end, the Reinemos settled in Nantucket, and Karsten joined the men of the island's deep-sea-fishing fleet, working on the *Carl Henry*. In the summers Karsten and Marion leased the restaurant of the Ships Inn from its owner and, as their son puts it, “They had a very, very nice restaurant for several years.” But the restaurant business was seasonal, and in the winters Karsten had go out on week-long fishing trips to the offshore fishing banks. In 1965 Gordon MacDonald, the owner of the Downyflake Restaurant,

offered to sell it to the Reinemos, and they seized the opportunity to own and operate their own business, expanding it from a two-month-per-year summer operation to a year-round business that opened at 5:30 A.M. for fishermen and other working people. In 1991, an early-morning gas explosion in the orig-



The Original Downyflake Restaurant and its doughnut sign. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

inal Downyflake building in the heart of town nearly proved fatal for Karsten, but he survived, and the Reinemo family rebuilt in the business district on the edge of town, where the Downyflake continues to prosper.

Karsten Reinemo worked in his restaurant's kitchen to the end of his days, and he kept on spending wintry mornings on the water scalloping with his son Karsten.¹⁶⁶

Once again Nantucket families merged. Young Karsten's wife, Julie Reinemo, is Sarah P. Bunker's great-great-great-granddaughter and Hilda Österberg Gibbs's great-granddaughter.

Dutch

Leendert Block served as mate on Olaf Anderson's *Dagny*, Rolf Sjölund's *Eunice Lillian*, and a half a dozen other vessels that fished out of Nantucket and New Bedford. From time to time he was a "transient captain" for a fishing boat when its regular captain was temporarily off. Born in Ymuiden, a North Sea port on the coast of the Netherlands close to Haarlem,¹⁶⁷ Block—like Peder Pedersen and Rolf Sjölund—had gone to sea young on merchant ships and then came to the United States to work in commercial fishing. He enlisted in the U. S. Army at age thirty, was naturalized during his service, and then moved on to the

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Karsten Reinemo Jr., July 1, 2003.

¹⁶⁷ The modern Dutch spelling of this town is IJmuiden, with two adjacent capital letters.

Army Transport Services. At age forty he married a Nantucket woman and settled on the island just when the stock market collapse sent the nation reeling into the Depression. In the next decades he became, in the words of his obituary, “a well-known island fisherman.”

In 1920 a dozen men from Dutch families resident on Nantucket were supporting themselves by fishing. William Grice and his wife Frytjes were in their sixties, but William continued deepwater fishing with his unmarried sons Albert, Jacob, and William Jr. One of the Schafer brothers, Peter, had a Dutch-born wife Tina, but his brother, Orvis—just a year younger—had an American wife, as did John Vahlan, John van Evrendeft, and Cornelius Sanders. Thomas Townsend’s wife was Swedish. John Grock and Frederick Young were widowers. H. van Ommeren, minister of the Unitarian church 1914–21, and William Voorneveld were the only Dutch-born men on the island at the time who were not commercial fishermen.

Arriving ahead of the Dutch fishermen, the Voornevelds had been Nantucket’s first family to come from the Netherlands.¹⁶⁸ Hermanus and Madaline Voorneveld were already an aging couple when they moved to Nantucket in 1903 to open a florist shop. Married at the time of the American Civil War, they had brought their large family to the United States in 1883, when their youngest son William was just four years old.

Hermanus Voorneveld was born in Utrecht, an inland city about as far from the coast as possible in the small and sea-oriented country of the Netherlands.¹⁶⁹ For generations the Voornevelds had been horticulturists, a profession that had prospered greatly during the golden years of the 1600s and 1700s when much of the world was delirious with “tulip fever.” The sultan of the Ottoman Empire was one of the best customers of the Dutch horticulturists, buying shiploads of tulip bulbs for his court gardens. In Nantucket, it was the summer residents, “with hundreds of whom she [Mrs. Voorneveld] came in contact each season,” whose patronage made the Voornevelds prosperous.¹⁷⁰

With the same care they used to cultivate flowers, the Voornevelds also cultivated networks of human contacts. While Mrs. Voorneveld made friends with Nantucketers and summer people, Hermanus Voorneveld maintained close ties with fellow florists in the Netherlands, often traveling there to do business. The Voornevelds were also a close-knit family despite the scattering of the Voorneveld children across the states from Massachusetts to Nebraska. It was William and his American family who had come to the island in 1911 to take over for his parents.

When eighty-year-old Madaline died in 1916, Dutch clergyman van Ommeren conducted committal services in Prospect Hill Cemetery. Hermanus survived his wife by barely a year, and his graveside rites were carried out by members of the Odd Fellows, of whose Nantucket Lodge he had become a member.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ The only people from the Netherlands known to have lived on Nantucket in the 1800s were two domestic servants and a ship’s rigger.

¹⁶⁹ For all intents and purposes, “Holland” is synonymous with “the Netherlands.” In the nineteenth century, the country was at one time the Kingdom of Holland and at another time the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Originally the Kingdom of the Netherlands included Belgium and Luxembourg, but they both separated from the kingdom and became independent. Today they have regrouped in an economic union known as “Benelux.” “Dutch” is derived from the fact that the language of the Netherlands is a form of low-country German (*Deutsch*).

¹⁷⁰ *Inquirer and Mirror*; December 16, 1916.

¹⁷¹ *Inquirer and Mirror*; December 22, 1917.

William Voorneveld carried on as “Voorneveld the Florist,” noted not only for the cut flowers and floral arrangements from the family florist shop, but also as a landscape architect, town tree warden, and superintendent of moth suppression—an important position in the 1930s as the whole Northeast suffered from a plague of gypsy moths. He joined Union Lodge, was an active member of the Congregational Church, and was elected to the Nantucket Board of Selectmen.

Despite Hermanus Voorneveld’s advanced age at the time of his death, the *Inquirer and Mirror* had reported that “The suddenness of his death was a surprise and shock to all the people of Nantucket.” Twenty-two years later, the *Inquirer and Mirror* used almost the same words to report the death of his son: “The sudden death of William Voorneveld Sr., Wednesday morning, came as a severe shock to the community.”¹⁷² It came as an even greater shock to learn that sixty-year-old William Voorneveld had ended his own life with a bullet from a thirty-eight-caliber revolver, joining the sad company of Frank Oddo and Stanley Ozog (and far, far back, Quak Te), foreign-born men who exited without warning from economically depressed Nantucket.

Despite these shocks, the Voorneveld florist business carried on through two more generations in Nantucket with its shop on Centre Street and its gardens and produce stand on Madaket Road.

In the 1920s the fishermen came and went. The federal census of 1930 lists eight Dutch fishermen from four families, not one of them from among the Dutch families who had been on-island in 1920. Leendert Block, Marius Scheele, and Albert Greik had moved to the island with their American wives and children. Four Lamens brothers had also taken up residence—in order of age: Leendert, Martin, Gerard, and Lambertus. They had come from Den Helder, the northernmost tip of the Dutch coast before it breaks up into the Frisian Islands. Leendert and his wife Dirkje, born and married in the old country, had come to Nantucket with their Dutch-born daughter Trina and their New York-born daughter Annie. Martin Lamens’s wife was from Florida, but their children, too, had been born in New York. Gerard Lamens’s wife was from New York. The youngest brother, Lambertus, arrived as a bachelor and wed Latvian-born Alice Duce. Alice’s brother Arnold married Annie Lamens, creating double bonds between the Latvian Duces and the Dutch Lamenses. Annie’s older sister Trina married Nantucket carpenter Oscar Ceeley.

Garrett and Susan Huyser came to Nantucket with their children from Long Island in 1923. Almost as soon as they arrived, Susan Huyser was hospitalized with a ruptured appendix and peritonitis, and their infant son died. According to his death certificate, Garrett Huyser Jr. was infected with tuberculosis, and he survived less than three months. Surviving this tragic start, the Huysers stayed and raised a Nantucket fam-

¹⁷² *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 5, 1939.

ily. Before moving to Woods Hole, Albert Greik put up capital for Garrett Huyser to become half-owner of a dragger, but by 1930 Huyser had found a land job as driver for the local office of Railway Express.¹⁷³

The heads of the Dutch families living on Nantucket in the 1920s and 1930s had left home for America before the outbreak of World War I. The Netherlands remained neutral in that war, but like Norway—another North Sea country with a maritime economy—it suffered brutal economic losses. The emigrants had ridden out the war years mainly in New York and New Jersey, at a safe distance from the devastation of Europe, but even from Nantucket they could probably discern the clouds of an even worse fate for the Netherlands gathering in the 1930s.

French Canadians

Despite its centuries-long economic exploitation of the sea, Nantucket has never been a locus of boat building. All timber and metal had to be transported to the island, and the harbor has always been a shallow place for sizable vessels. It is little wonder that in the course of half a century the boat yard on Brant Point produced only five whaleships, one in 1803 and the other four between 1832 and 1838.¹⁷⁴ Nantucket's cat-boats and even the dories of the second half of the 1800s were built off-island.¹⁷⁵ So were the fishing boats of the early twentieth century, which were launched from mainland shipyards in Maine, Massachusetts, and New York.¹⁷⁶

According to the 1920 federal census, only one man living on Nantucket, Maine-born George Donovan, was occupied as a boat builder. Ten years later Donovan was no longer on the island, but in his place Stanley Butler gave his occupation as boat builder as did an elderly Canadian, Laurence Burrage, who was probably no longer active in his profession. Under boat building and repairs the 1927 Nantucket business directory lists Walter Chase at the head of Steamboat Wharf, Nantucket Boatworks on Whale Street, and the South Beach Boat Yard at the end of Washington Street.

Beginning in the 1920s, however, the island was undergoing a boat-building boom thanks to the arrival of seven French Canadian men. Clovis Mazerolle, in the United States since 1902, had relocated to Nantucket as foreman of a boat-building crew. Two of his employees were boarding with his family on Coffin Street, and three others had brought their families along and were taking in boarders themselves.

It was a full house at 4 Coffin Street in 1930. Clovis and Eugenie Mazerolle had three children, and Eugenie's mother Rose was living with them, too, as well as boat builders Maillet Resther and Jude Rantreau. The other French Canadian boat builders were Emile Trahan, Maxim LeBlanc, Alfie Lombard, and Andre Theriault.

¹⁷³ An interview with Garrett and Susan Huyser's son Henry Huyser appears in Newhouse 2002, pp. 96–100.

¹⁷⁴ *The Rose* in 1803, the *Charles Carroll* in 1832, the *Lexington* in 1836, the *Nantucket* in 1837, and the *Joseph Starbuck* in 1838 (Morris 1996, p. 8).

¹⁷⁵ See Andrews 1990, p. 2, for an advertisement of Morse Bank Dories, built in Amesbury, Massachusetts.

¹⁷⁶ Morris 1996 lists the following locations where Nantucket fishing boats were built: Thomaston, Friendship, East Boothbay, Newcastle, Kennebunkport, and Damariscotta, Maine; Gloucester, Fairhaven, Osterville, Hyannis Port, Rockport, and South Boston, Massachusetts; and Brooklyn and Patchogue, New York (pp. 153–201).

Among the fishing vessels built in Nantucket in the 1920s and 1930s were the *Native* for French Canadian fisherman Fidence Fortin in 1924, the *Margaret* in 1930, and the *Squam* in 1933. They were long-lived vessels. Eight years after launch, the *Native* was still working out of Nantucket. Captain Philip Grant was operating the *Squam* nineteen years after she was built.¹⁷⁷

In 1930 there were more French Canadian men building boats on Nantucket than fishing from them. Fidence Fortin, his Irish wife Mary, and one Massachusetts-born child were already living on the island in 1920. By 1930, when the Fortins had a second child born on Nantucket and owned a house on Martins Lane, two other French Canadian fishermen had taken up residence. Louis Amiral had come on his own and was boarding with a French Canadian family on Orange Street, while Alonzo Achison, with his English wife and their two Massachusetts-born children were renting a house on Silver Street. In sum, there were only three French Canadian fishermen living on-island. Among Coast Guard surfmen stationed on the island, Philip Samson was born in Canada and Leo Gamache had a French Canadian father.

This is not to say, however, that there were few French Canadians living on Nantucket. To the contrary, between 1920 and 1930 there had been an influx of French Canadians to the island. The Fortins had been joined by at least thirty-five others (many with American-born children), enough to constitute a visible and audible new ethnic group on the island. Boat building was a strong specialty among them, but it was a subspecialty of the building trade. Two building projects that attracted workers to the island were construction on Steamboat Wharf between 1926 and 1929 and the raising of the new brick Academy Hill School in 1929. Among the French Canadian men living on Nantucket in 1930, seven—including Ulric Trahan, brother of boat builder Emile Trahan—gave their occupations as carpenters or house builders, and they were supported in their work by a French Canadian plumber, Henry Richard, and two French Canadian house painters, Charles Roy and Joseph Domis. Prominent among these builders were “Mack” Paradis and Joseph Senecal.

French Canadian families are famously large. Carpenter and cabinetmaker Magloire Paradis was born in Frenchville, Maine, as one of seventeen children. His wife, Marie Boutin Paradis, born in Quebec, was one of seven. They were parents of ten daughters and finally a son, Patrick. It is practically a party game among Nantucketers to name the Paradis daughters: Annette, Bernadette, Laurette, Germaine, Claudette, Maximille, Adrinette, Jeanette, Therese, and Georgette.¹⁷⁸

Mack Paradis’s employment by the Taylor Construction Company of New Bedford first brought him to Nantucket in 1926 to work on construction of a large freight building on Steamboat Wharf. Three years later he returned with his family and stayed for the rest of his life. On Nantucket he was known as a highly skilled craftsman, and he trained a number of the next generation of Nantucket carpenters.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Morris 1996, pp. 153, 201.

¹⁷⁸ See Appendix 3k for a poem composed by Maximille Paradis Howes about the eleven children and their names.

¹⁷⁹ Obituaries, *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 17, 1959; *Town Crier*, April 17, 1959.

Five of the Paradis sisters married into Nantucket families, and Patrick's wife came from Washington, D. C., to live on the island. By 1959, the year Mack Paradis died, there were twenty-three Paradis grandchildren, including Patrick's first son, Nicholas, whose birth guaranteed that the Paradis name would continue on Nantucket.

Patrick Paradis started his own career in the building trades as a carpenter for the Marine Lumber Company. Beginning in 1958 as woodworking instructor at the Coffin School, he too taught future Nantucket carpenters, carrying on his father's legacy. When the Coffin School closed as a vocational school, he transferred to Nantucket High School. Then in 1993, as "owner's representative," he took on the demanding role of liaison among the director, trustees, and contractor in the three-year restoration of the Nantucket Atheneum building, a project on which his son Stephen also worked. Subsequently Patrick Paradis served as clerk of the works during construction at the Nantucket Cottage Hospital, while Stephen Paradis was contracted in the same role for the conversion of the Nantucket Historical Association's Fair Street Museum building into an archive and research library. Patrick Paradis has since been engaged as clerk of the works for the construction of the Nantucket Historical Association's new museum complex incorporating the Whaling Museum and the Peter Foulger Museum buildings.

Joseph Senecal was born in La Prairie, Quebec. After their June wedding in New Bedford in 1924, he and his bride Laura Marie Richard came to Nantucket, where—according to his son—one of Joe Senecal's first jobs was repairing the Old Mill for the Nantucket Historical Association and getting it back into running condition. It was a job he repeated in 1936 and again in 1949. The machinery he built for the task was still available to builder John Gilbert when he made repairs to the mill in 1978.¹⁸⁰ Senecal had a carpentry shop on Lily Street, and the high quality of his work was recognized by Nantucket's other builders. The Senecal home on Pleasant street, close to the mill that he cared for so diligently, remains in the family.

Only a few French Canadian men working on land in 1930 were not involved in the building trades. Three were truck drivers, one was a butcher in a meat market, one was on a grounds crew at a golf club, and one was a farm laborer. Most of the women were "at home" as wives and mothers looking after large families, but one young woman was working as bookkeeper for the Nicoletos brothers, and three women—one born in Canada and two born to French Canadian parents—were waitresses in local restaurants. In weddings a week apart in September 1930, two of the Latvian American Duce brothers took young French Canadian

¹⁸⁰ Handwritten notes by Charles Sayle on file at the Nantucket Historical Association under "Old Mill 2." Sayle mentions the 1936, 1949–50, and 1978 repairs but none in the 1920s. Private communication from John Gilbert to Helen Seager, February 28, 2002; Raymond Senecal to Helen Seager, March 1, 2002.

brides. Waldemar Duce married Yvonne Marchessault, one of the waitresses, and Harry married Regina Lemieux, daughter of truck driver Joseph Lemieux.

According to the federal censuses for 1920 and 1930, the number of men from the Azores and Cape Verde engaged in fishing declined moderately, and they were mainly engaged in harbor fishing and shell-fishing. The number of French Canadian fishermen grew from just one to three, but two dozen Canadian men of English, Irish, and Scottish background moved to the island to work in commercial fishing. The number of Dutch fishermen declined slightly, while the Scandinavian fishermen—mostly Norwegians—increased in numbers. Although their crews were cosmopolitan, the owners and operators of deep-water fishing vessels were mainly Norwegians and English-speaking Canadians.¹⁸¹

When Rolf Sjölund's *Carl Henry* joined the Nantucket fishing fleet, most of the other vessels had been built at least two decades earlier. It was the older wooden fishing boats that had assisted Captain Manuel Sylvia in bringing the steamer *Islander* safely to dock in Nantucket in March 1927, avoiding what appeared to be inescapable destruction. When the *Islander's* steering mechanism failed outside the jetties in a spring storm, Captain Sylvia used her steam whistle to alert people on shore that she was in distress. The *Inquirer and Mirror* reported that:

The first boat to go out was one of the small Coast Guard patrol boats, but as the whistle blasts from the steamer continued to sound, some of the large fishing craft followed out of the harbor, among them being the *Victor*, the *Anna C. Perry*, the *John Erickson* and the *Dagny*. Other large fishing boats berthed at the Steamboat wharf were ready to go out to the scene if needed, but owing to the narrowness of the channel between the jetties and in to Brant Point, it was realized that only a small number of boats could operate there without interference.¹⁸²

Alternately running and cutting the engines, Captain Sylvia kept the steamer off the rocks until high winds and heavy seas lifted and carried her in broadside between the jetties. Once the *Islander* was in the



The steamboat *Islander* passing stern-first around Brant Point with the assistance of the Nantucket fishing fleet, March 1927. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

¹⁸¹ For the Azorean and Cape Verdean communities on Nantucket, see Part II of *The Other Islanders*. For English-speaking Canadians, see Chapter 6.

¹⁸² *Inquirer and Mirror*; April 2, 1927.

calmer waters of the outer harbor, the *Perry* and the *Erickson* made fast to the steamer to help her keep in the channel as they approached Brant Point Lighthouse. There a crowd stood waiting to see if the steamer could round the point without being driven hard aground. With the fishing boats hugging to her, the steamer swung completely around, touched bottom, and cleared the lighthouse. The fishermen cast off their lines only when it was certain that Captain Sylvia would be able to bring the steamer alongside Steamboat Wharf unassisted. The drama had played out over three and a half hours to an anxious audience of hundreds of onlookers lining the beaches.

Subsequent to their shepherding the *Islander* to safety in 1927, the fishermen's ventures and adventures continued to fuel the island newspapers. As the Depression descended on the nation, the price for which they could sell their catch sometimes fell below operating costs. In June 1932, Captain Paul Mathison chose to donate five thousand pounds of flounder from the *Bernice* to the needy of New Bedford rather than to dump them. His donation was not the first from fishing boats coming in to the city and finding no market for their catch. Previous fish give-aways had been so chaotic that the New Bedford Public Welfare Department had organized a procedure for notification and equitable distribution to area families.¹⁸³

At the end of December, 1933, Captain Olaf Anderson took the *Dagny* on a hazardous crossing to Vineyard Haven when steamboat service had been canceled due to ice fields and dense fog.¹⁸⁴ Returning to port in 1961, Captain Rolf Sjölund reported a close encounter with a hundred-foot-long dead whale floating so low in the water as to be nearly invisible. He deemed it too far out to sea to be a menace to vessels smaller than the *Carl Henry*, adding, "I'd hate to run into it myself, though."¹⁸⁵

Deep-sea fishing is one of the most hazardous of professions, and in addition to colorful stories of encounters with the elements and the creatures of the deep, the Nantucket and New Bedford newspapers carried news of business failures, physical injury, and loss of life.

Crossing to the Vineyard during the December 1933 freeze-up, Olaf Anderson suffered frostbite of both hands and his windward ear. The newspaper also reported that he had sold the *Dagny*, "one of the most active fishing boats in these waters for a number of years."¹⁸⁶ Having a wealthy patron such as Leeds Mitchell wasn't proof against the Depression either; in the summer of 1938 an advertisement in the *Inquirer and Mirror* announced that Captain John Egle was offering for sale his own "Yawl Mnemoosha (The pride of Old North Wharf). All reasonable offers considered."¹⁸⁷

On New Year's Day 1941, out in the shoals "to the southard" where so many Nantucket whalers had lost their lives in the early days of whaling, Hjalmar Alfred Anderson was struck by a falling mast

¹⁸³ *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 11, 1932.

¹⁸⁴ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 6, 1934.

¹⁸⁵ *Town Crier*, May 12, 1961.

¹⁸⁶ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 6, 1934.

¹⁸⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 2, 1938.

aboard the *Alice*. The *Alice* powered back to New Bedford under full throttle, but the medical examiner there determined that Anderson had died almost instantly of his injuries. Theresa (Szabo) Anderson was left a widow with four children.¹⁸⁸

Captain Jack McDonald was badly injured when the *Gladys & Mary*, on her maiden voyage, was caught out on the fishing banks in the 1944 hurricane.¹⁸⁹ Some years later, at sea aboard the *Carl Henry* in midnight darkness a steel tow cable parted and struck Lambertus Lamens a powerful blow to the ribs. Captain Sjölund brought the *Carl Henry* straight in to Nantucket, but Lamens died at the hospital of a ruptured liver. Years before, his brother Martin, described as a “hard-working industrious fisherman,” had died of a heart attack on the fishing schooner *Anna Louise*.¹⁹⁰

On Good Friday 1950 the deep sea scalloper *William J. Landry* was running for New Bedford in an April storm. The crew of the Pollack Rip Lightship sighted her battling heavy seas in blizzard conditions, but they were unable to assist her. Ship-to-shore radio contact continued until midnight, and Captain Arne Hansen, Hjalmar Alfred Anderson’s Norwegian son-in-law, put through a reassuring call to his family, but in the early morning hours of Easter Saturday, he perished with his five-man crew, including Theodore Polasky and Earl Blount of Nantucket. Seven children, four of them on Nantucket, were left fatherless.¹⁹¹

The Four Sisters with a crew of ten from New Bedford disappeared in the same storm. The *Gladys & Mary* and the *Anna C. Perry* were reported missing after they lost radio contact but made port safely. Two years later in another spring storm the *Anna C. Perry*, newly rebuilt and outfitted, was lost with all hands. Her crew of six were from New Bedford and Fairhaven, but her owner was Catherine Flanagan of Nantucket. The *Anna C. Perry* had been built for her father, Eugene Perry.¹⁹²

As the death toll mounted, the entire Nantucket community was stricken. People who were children in 1950 recall the deadly Easter weekend with the same photographic clarity with which Americans know where they were and what they were doing when President Kennedy was shot or when the World Trade Center towers fell. Not so long afterward, Nantucket’s fishing families began to move to New Bedford where, as Captain Hansen’s widow Olga Hansen wrote, “living was easier and they did not have to make the trip to Nantucket after they sold their fish.”¹⁹³

Prospect Hill Cemetery and St. Mary’s Cemetery lie across the street from one another. Nantucket fishermen have been interred in both. A drawing of the *Carl Henry* is engraved on the Sjölund family marker in St. Mary’s Cemetery, and Norwegian and American flags are placed there on Memorial Day.

¹⁸⁸ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 4, 1941.

¹⁸⁹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, September 23, 1944.

¹⁹⁰ *Inquirer and Mirror*, October 1, 1955; October 21, 1933.

¹⁹¹ Morris 1996, pp. 179–81; *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 8, 1950; April 15, 1950. An account of the loss of the *Landry* by one of the Coast Guardsmen from Chatham Lifeboat Station who attempted to set out to assist is in Webber 1985, pp. 28–31.

¹⁹² *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 10, 1952.

¹⁹³ Letter from Olga Hansen, January 15, 2003.

Chapter Six

English-Speaking Cousins

*There were no titles allowed among Quakers. Everyone was addressed by the first name. Since we children were not permitted to use Mr. and Mrs., we called all Father's and Mother's friends Uncle, Aunt, or Cousin. It seemed as if we were related to nearly everyone in town.*¹⁹⁴

The English-born families who began settling on Nantucket in 1659 retained the placenames in use among the island's Wampanoag inhabitants. They did not impose “new” names such as New London, New Haven, New Bedford, much less New York, New Jersey, New England, or New South Wales.¹⁹⁵ Had they all originated in the same English town or shire, perhaps the settlers might have identified their adopted home and its parts with familiar places they had left behind. They were, however, a mixed lot, and in just one generation their Nantucket-born progeny identified with their island home to the exclusion of any Old World place.

That intense local identification, amplified by Quaker inwardness, has been tenacious over the centuries. Cousinhood, on the other hand, has been and remains a broadly inclusive category of great importance to the descended Nantucketers, and its ties know no geographical bounds. Practically by definition descended Nantucketers have countless cousins at home and abroad. Some of these relationships are tenuous in the extreme—removed, by marriage, and even fictive—but are deeply felt nonetheless.¹⁹⁶

Britain

Many Nantucketers maintained ties to cousins in England. In the early 1700s, for example, William Gayer Jr. was sent from Nantucket to marry his first cousin in England in order that his uncle's estate would remain in the family. Nantucket merchants and their families spent years at a time in London, and English businessmen found a warm welcome in Nantucket. Transatlantic bonds such as these added yet another dimension of personal trauma to the American Revolution and the War of 1812, which so devastated the island's economy and from both of which Nantucketers earnestly dissented.¹⁹⁷

Until the American Revolution, the distinction between people born in England and those born in the colonies was obvious, but ultimately all were fellow English subjects. After American independence, cor-

¹⁹⁴ Adams 1917, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ The village of New Guinea, or Newtown, on the edge of the English town was the exception.

¹⁹⁶ Two men described by Deborah Coffin Hussey Adams as cousins of her father were both husbands of his female cousins.

¹⁹⁷ Nantucket went so far as to conclude a separate peace with England in 1814, months before England and the United States signed and ratified the treaty ending the war (Horsman, 1981, *passim*).

duality between Nantucketers and their English cousins persisted to a degree that—in the opinion of some patriots—bordered on the treasonous. In the mid-1800s, when federal census returns finally differentiated between the native and the foreign-born, they revealed a sizable British community living on Nantucket.

In 1850 there were twenty-eight English-born men, four men from Scotland, and six English women residing on Nantucket. The census recorded another eleven transient seamen from England. The whaling economy at that date was beginning to decline, and by 1860 the number of men born in England had dropped to thirteen, while the number of English women was the same as a decade earlier. Only one Scot remained, but a Welsh woman had come to live on-island. The decline continued until the 1890s. Then, from a low of just three English-born women, five English men, and a Scot, the numbers began to rise very quickly. The difference between this new wave of British residents and the those of whaling days is that while the number of men began to rise slowly, the increase in women was quick, the English and Scottish women coming to outnumber the English and Scottish men by nearly three to one. The majority of these women were married and “at home,” but single British women were employed as nurses, housekeepers, domestic servants, and laundresses.

In 1850, most of the men from England were engaged in maritime professions, with a near-monopoly on rigging ships. In addition to riggers and seamen, there were ropemakers, a shipwright, a sailmaker, a blacksmith, and one wealthy maritime merchant, Henry I. Defrieze. Among those not directly connected to maritime commerce were a farmer, a shoemaker, and a tailor. Aging John Weston was a pauper living at the asylum for the indigent.

John Boadle, a Quaker teacher living with the Mitchell family, was originally from Birkenhead, a town near Liverpool. In 1829 the Nantucket Society of Friends had written to the Friends of Philadelphia requesting a teacher for young children, and the Philadelphia Friends sent John Boadle. In 1838, nearly a decade after his arrival, the Nantucket Friends built a school building on Fair Street where he conducted the Monthly Meeting School. Even as the building was being erected, however, Quakerism on Nantucket was in steep decline. The number of Quaker schoolchildren fell so low that maintaining the school for them was no longer feasible, and the school building was converted into a meeting house. Subsequently, John Boadle conducted a private school for Quaker and non-Quaker children until, shortly after the 1850 census, having spent two decades teaching Nantucket’s children, he left the island to open a school in New Bedford.¹⁹⁸ Wherever his school was, and whatever proportion of his students were children of Friends, Quaker plain speech was mandated. The following description of “John’s School” was published in 1922:

At the beginning, John’s school was limited to the children of the Society of Friends, but later he took the children of “world’s people” too. . . . Whether they were Friends’ people or world’s people there was one invariable rule for the children; they called John Boadle “John” by his express direc-

¹⁹⁸ Weeks, 1903, p. 17.

tion. Sometimes they got into trouble at home (the worldly ones) and were told sternly that they must say “Mr. Boadle” and not “John.” But once back at school John would have none of it. It ended in his having his own way and the way of the Friends, and he was “John.”¹⁹⁹

With the exception of the transient seamen, most of the British women and men had Massachusetts-born spouses and considered Nantucket their permanent home. Unforeseen economic depression in the wake of the Great Fire of 1846 and the increasing scarcity of whales to be found in the world’s oceans, however, sent many of the foreign-born and their families off in search of greener pastures. Between 1850 and 1860 the total number of island residents born in England, Scotland, and Wales dropped by more than half.

Henry I. Defrieze was exceptional. He married into Nantucket’s old families not once, but twice. In 1819 he married Elizabeth “Betsy” Coffin, and the couple had four children. Within a year of Betsy’s death in 1829, he married the widow Anna Barnard, and they had six more. In the 1830s and early 1840s, he prospered as part owner of at least one whaleship, the *Clarkson*. Then, miraculously, in a period of economic collapse and mass exodus from the island his fortune grew. In 1850, when he was 59 years old and gave his occupation as merchant, his estate was valued at \$5,000. In the five years after he was elected to the board of directors of the Pacific National Bank in 1855, it rose to \$19,500, and ten years after that, when the census listed his occupation as retired mariner, it had reached \$27,000.

His son, Captain Thaddeus Defrieze, served as judge of the Probate Court from 1873 to 1908, but at his death in 1913, he was best remembered as “the last whaling master of Nantucket.” A portrait of Thaddeus was presented to the Probate Court in 1948.²⁰⁰

Yet the Defrieze family name, so prominent in Nantucket in the 1800s, slipped into local oblivion in the following century, even as settler families’ names such as Coffin, Gardner, and Starbuck—to mention but three—were burnished ever brighter through the efforts of the Nantucket Historical Association, which had been founded in 1894 to preserve and promote Nantucket’s history. Henry Defrieze had been one of the world’s people, and from Nantucket his progeny had moved off-island into the greater world. Although his son Thaddeus stayed and served the island, Thaddeus’s brother George was one of the many Nantucketers who went to California to seek his fortune, and his brother Ferdinand had a career in the U. S. Navy.²⁰¹

As residents of Nantucket the Defriezes had enjoyed great wealth and influence, but that did not assure their name a prominent place in Nantucket history. On the other hand, a man born in England whose assets dwindled to nothing during his life on the island has been afforded durable posthumous celebrity. In the southeast corner of the Old North Cemetery a large stone tablet is inscribed with a succinct biography of one of Nantucket’s professional riggers. Robert Ratliff was born in New Castle-upon-Tyne in

¹⁹⁹ Sturdevant 1922, p. 49.

²⁰⁰ “Death of Capt. Thaddeus C. Defriez, Nantucket’s Last Whaling Master,” *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 24, 1913; “Portrait of Captain Thaddeus Defrieze Presented Court,” *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 16, 1948.

²⁰¹ Obituary of George W. Defrieze, *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 14, 1899; Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 137, folder 2. On October 12, 1918, the *Inquirer and Mirror* reported the death of Henry Defrieze’s great grandson, Lieutenant Thaddeus C. Defrieze, in the influenza pandemic of that year. According to his obituary, “He was a true Nantucketer, although not born on the island.”

1794 and died on Nantucket in 1882, just five days short of his eighty-eighth birthday. In his mid-twenties, he had survived a shipwreck on the shoals surrounding Nantucket and had stayed on as a resident of the island for over sixty years.

In his young life before his rescue from the shipwreck, he had many adventures that appealed to the imagination of Nantucketers. Sea-oriented as they were, and in spite of Quaker abhorrence of war, they found Ratliff's worldly experiences fascinating. He had gone to sea as an apprentice seaman in his early teens, just as Nantucket boys did, but instead of doing battle against whales, he served in the British navy and was a sailor on the British ship *Albion* in the attack on Washington, D. C., during the War of 1812. Then he served on the ship *Northumberland* when it conveyed Napoleon Bonaparte into exile on the island of St. Helena in 1815. His personal recollections of the appearance and demeanor of Bonaparte were so compelling for Nantucket shipowner Frederick Sanford that he commissioned the stone for Ratliff's grave and had included in the inscription that Ratliff had "received marked notice from the great emperor."

On-island, Ratliff took a Nantucket wife, the widow Judith West Robinson, who brought two daughters to their marriage. To support them, he established his own rigging loft on Nantucket's waterfront, where his business prospered. The Ratliffs lived in a spacious house on Quince Street, and Robert Ratliff was noted for his integrity and generosity. In 1842 he invested in shares of the Nantucket Marine Camel Company, a scheme to float heavy ships over the sandbar that blocked entrance to Nantucket Harbor. Then, in 1846, the Great Fire consumed Nantucket's whole business district and waterfront, destroying his loft and everything in it, and burning to within a block of his home.²⁰² He started over, but Nantucket's maritime economy did not recover. After discovery of gold in California, many of the ships he would have rigged sailed to California, never to return. Four years after the fire, the value of his estate was listed as just one thousand dollars; in 1860 he had managed to build it to \$1,600, but ten years later, he had only two hundred dollars left to his name, and the Ratliffs had taken in two boarders. Then Judith died and left him an aged widower. As the couple had been childless, there was no one to look after him, and Robert Ratliff went to the town asylum to live out the last years of his life.²⁰³

He was by no means friendless there, despite his age and poverty. Sanford and other visitors came to hear his stories of long-past days at the beginning of the 1800s, when Lord Nelson had defeated the Danes in the Battle of Copenhagen and British ships had been frozen into Baltic ice for weeks at a time; about his personal memories of the burning of the White House by British forces in 1814; and of the stoicism and fortitude of Napoleon Bonaparte in the face of his utter defeat. One of Ratliff's visitors was Eastman Johnson, who painted Ratliff's portrait in 1879 and presented it to the Nantucket Historical Association in

²⁰² The house at 5 Quince Street later became the home of playwright Austin Strong and has been placed under conservation restrictions to preserve the interior and the garden as well as the exterior.

²⁰³ In 1854 parts of a building that had been at the Quaise Farm for the indigent were moved to town to be part of an asylum "for the care of the needy, mentally ill, homeless and diseased." It was not until 1905 that the institution acquired the name "Our Island Home."

1900. The handsome portrait and the large stone tablet in the Old North Cemetery afford a durability to the memory of Robert Ratliff that eluded the Defrieze family.²⁰⁴

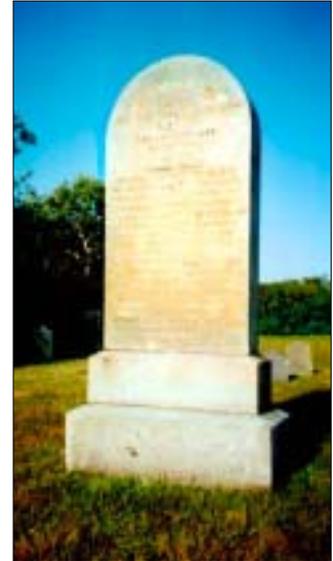
The 1870 census records the aging of the English men who had once been occupied in the whaling business. Besides retired Henry Defrieze, there were mariners William Rivers, 66, and John Quinell, 57.

Of three remaining riggers—Benjamin Jones, 58; Robert Ratliffe, 76, and John Gardner,

87—only Jones might still have been engaged in his profession. Ropemaker Thomas Thrift was 87 years old. The generation of English maritime men had passed.

Back in 1850, when just a half-dozen women who had been born in England resided on Nantucket, two of them had unconventional living arrangements. Twenty-four-year old Lucy Hill, white and illiterate, was sharing a household with two black men in New Guinea. Sixty-five-year-old Nancy Folger was also a member of some sort of collective. She was living with six other women, only two of whom were obviously related to one another.

Female heads of household were not uncommon on Nantucket in 1850. Most of them were headed by widows, and the other members of the household, male and female, were clearly family members with the same surname. Nancy Folger, however, shared a household with the following women: Emeline Bartlett, 47, and Ann C. Bartlett, 26; Adaline Fanning, 44; Phebe Beard, 71; and Sally Coffin, 69. With the exception of Ann Bartlett—who was Emeline Bartlett’s daughter—and Sally Coffin, each of these women had independent wealth. Nancy Folger’s estate was valued at \$1,250; Emeline Bartlett’s at \$1,500; Adaline Fanning’s at \$500; and Phebe Baird’s at \$400. By mid-nineteenth-century standards, these were significant sums and especially remarkable for single women. From the census returns, it appears that a group of unattached Nantucket women of means pooled their resources to live together as a small, mutually supportive community within the greater community of Nantucket.²⁰⁵



Portrait of Robert Ratliffe by Eastman Johnson, 1879. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.* Narrative marker for Robert Ratliffe in the Old North Cemetery. (photo by Frances Karttunen)

²⁰⁴ “The Robert Ratliff Portrait: An Eastman Johnson Gift,” unsigned article in *Historic Nantucket*, Volume 21, Number 4 (April, 1974), pp. 6–8; “Portrait of Robert Ratliff, Rigger, an Old Royal Navy Man,” unsigned article in *Historic Nantucket*, Volume 31, Number 1 (July, 1983), p. 6 (This article contains several errors.); Horsman, 1998.

²⁰⁵ This all-woman household is numbered 906 in the 1850 federal census for Nantucket.

By 1895 the number of women from England and Scotland had risen to thirteen, while only two English men resided on the island. One of the men was baker Thomas Bickerstaff, whose sister Agnes was also living and working on Nantucket.

Agnes Bickerstaff had left England first. Born in 1862, she had come to the United States while still in her teens. In 1880, her brother, just a year younger than Agnes, made the same journey. By 1895, both were on Nantucket, Agnes working as a nurse and Thomas as a cook. Thomas married a woman from Minnesota, and by 1900, they had four children. During those busy years, Thomas was also accumulating capital to go into business for himself. Purchasing a bakery building on Lower Pearl Street, he became proprietor of the Nantucket Domestic Bakery. A half-page advertisement in the 1909 Nantucket directory offers, "Home Made Bread, Pies, Doughnuts, Cakes, &c. A Specialty Made of Catering both to Large and Small Parties." For the next ten years the bakery's advertisement continued unchanged until, in the 1919 directory, an additional line appeared: "Open to Public Inspection at all Times."

Thomas Bickerstaff's family continued to grow. In 1910 the Bickerstaffs had six children, and shortly after that they moved from Hussey Street to a house on New Dollar Lane. The street had formerly been called Risdale Street, and the change to New Dollar Lane was gradual, just as the change from North Street to Cliff Road was. In the 1927 Nantucket directory, Thomas Bickerstaff's residence is still listed as 5 Risdale, but the address for his son Alger Bickerstaff, who lived with his parents, is given as New Dollar Lane.

In 1930 Thomas Bickerstaff was a widower and had retired from baking. A man of considerable self-made wealth, he moved to his daughter's home on Milk Street and occupied himself with gardening. The



Anna Sisson with her daughters Dorothy, left, and Bettina in stroller, with two friends in front of the Bickerstaff Bakery, 1921. *Courtesy of Judith (Plucinski) Ross.*



Remains of the ovens after demolition of the bakery building next to the Nantucket Atheneum. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

bakery on Lower Pearl Street was taken over for a real estate office until it was demolished to make way for the Atheneum's garden.

Agnes Bickerstaff made a life-long commitment to nursing. Remaining unmarried, she boarded with the Robinson family on Fair Street and only in the last years of her life moved to Quince Street, to live next door to the former home of her fellow countryman Robert Ratliff. A tribute to her published in the *Inquirer and Mirror* after her death at the very end of 1934 read, "A kindly smile! A kindly word! Help for the sick, the needy and, above all, a never ending thought for service.

Such a person was Agnes Bickerstaff. Her first and last commandment was—"One kind act each day."²⁰⁶

Another Englishwoman known for her kindness was Elizabeth Watts of 'Sconset. Universally known as "Nana Watts," she assisted in the delivery of many native Nantucketers, especially those born in 'Sconset, where she generally reached a mother in labor well ahead of a physician summoned from town. Dina Larsen, who gave birth to five daughters in the keeper's cottage at Sankaty Lighthouse, is thought to have named her middle daughter Ethel after Elizabeth Watts's daughter of the same name.

Elizabeth (Langton) Watts had been born in the village of Chadderton, near the town of Oldham, on the edge of Manchester, England. James Watts was born in Wolverhampton, a town on the edge of Birmingham. They met in New York after making their ways separately to the United States in the 1880s. When they first came to Nantucket, they lived and worked on a farm in Quaise, where their daughter Ethel was born. Five more children followed.

Moving from Quaise, James Watts acquired Wayside Farm on Sankaty Road, between the village of 'Sconset and Sankaty Lighthouse. His listing in Nantucket directories varies between florist and gardener. The 1920 census reports him as a gardener on a private estate, and he is said to have planted most of the large privet hedges that afford privacy to 'Sconset's most affluent summer residents.

The Watts family lived on New Street in Siasconset until the 'Sconset Casino, wishing to build tennis courts on the land where their house stood, offered to move it to the Wayside Farm property. So it happened that the Watts family address changed in the 1920s, although they continued to live in their old home.

²⁰⁶ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 12, 1935.

During World War I the family temporarily relocated to New Bedford to help in the war effort by working in a factory there. Again during the Depression, James Watts moved to the mainland, this time to work for a large florist business in Boston while his family remained at Wayside Farm.

After so many decades in 'Sconset, James and Elizabeth left the village at the end of their lives. When James Watts died in 1942, he had gone to live with his son James at the Wannacommet Water Company property on Cliff Road. Elizabeth Watts resided for a time at Our Island Home and then moved to a mainland nursing home, where she died in 1946. Their legacy to the island is, in part, the great green privet walls of 'Sconset and the children and grandchildren of those Nantucketers Nana Watts helped into the world. Among James and Elizabeth's own grandchildren is Nantucket's retired fire chief and selectman, Bruce Watts.²⁰⁷

James and Elizabeth Watts came to the end of their days during the war years of the 1940s. At the same time a young man and a young woman were coming of age in England. The future would bring them together and then to Nantucket, where they burst onto the scene as gifted actors with the Theatre Workshop of Nantucket.

It was Elizabeth Gilbert whose connection to 'Sconset brought her and John Gilbert to the island. Her father, a physician who practiced in the United States, had a summer cottage in 'Sconset that he offered to the young couple for their honeymoon in 1955. They had been planning to relocate from London to New Zealand, but the weeks in 'Sconset changed their minds. Instead, they brought their considerable talents to the island as permanent residents. Many Nantucketers first made their acquaintance in the Theatre Workshop production of *The Mikado* in 1957.

Nantucket has a history of involvement with the theater dating back to the 1880s, when 'Sconset became the home of an actors' colony. In the decades before air conditioning, the New York theaters closed for the summer and the writers, directors, producers, and actors moved to rural places like 'Sconset to refresh themselves in preparation for the fall season. Nantucket's own community theater had been fostered in part by individuals associated with 'Sconset's professional theater folk.²⁰⁸

In the mid 1950s Joseph "Mac" Dixon began his involvement with Nantucket. In 1956 he directed *An Italian Straw Hat*, the first of many well-appreciated productions, and followed it up with *The Mikado*.

The Theatre Workshop actors were not professionals. Norman Wilson, one of the stars of *The Mikado*, was a meat cutter by day. Other actors worked in sales, journalism, teaching, and the like. John Gilbert was employed as a carpenter, and Elizabeth Gilbert managed stores, but despite their youth and

²⁰⁷ Personal communication from Arline Bartlett, daughter of Ethel Watts Fisher, and from Ethel Larsen Hamilton.

²⁰⁸ Although most of the amateur theatricals on Nantucket were put on by and for the summer residents, Margaret Fawcett, daughter of actors George Fawcett and Percy Haswell, wrote Nantucket historical plays and cast Nantucketers in the roles. Some Nantucketers also gained theater experience by taking part in the annual reviews at the Siasconset Casino. (See Lancaster 1993, pp. 213, 217–19, 221). In the 1930s many Nantucket children had the experience of acting and singing in musical comedies, including Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, directed by native Nantucketer Ellen Ramsdell.

their day jobs, the Gilberts brought with them to Nantucket a wealth of experience in singing and dancing for audiences in England. Over the years on-island they took on roles from the comic to the most profoundly serious, with music and without. Among the veterans of the Theatre Workshop, Elizabeth Gilbert was involved in a record number of productions, onstage for thirty-seven and offstage as costume mistress and in other capacities for many more.²⁰⁹



Elizabeth and John Gilbert, 1957. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

As the Gilberts contributed to Nantucket theater, they also became core members of the island business community—Elizabeth as a distinguished needleworker and proprietor of a crafts center, and John as a builder and restorer of historic structures. In 1978 he took over responsibility for putting the Old Mill back in running order once again, and he also worked on most of the Nantucket Historical Association’s other properties.

For many years the Gilberts lived and conducted their businesses opposite Nantucket’s Quaker graveyard, the inspiration for Robert Lowell’s poetic meditation on the bloody combat waged by pacifist Quakers against the world’s whales.²¹⁰ Because orthodox Friends rejected attachment to earthly remains, there are few headstones on the rolling grassy expanse—“this field of Quakers in their unstoned graves,” as Lowell puts it. The Gilberts’ quiet neighbors were for the most part also nameless. But from among the world’s people a significant headstone presented itself to them on a visit to England in the spring of 2003. In the churchyard of John’s ancestral home of Ashford, Kent, they came upon the grave marker of a previous John Gilbert. And then these English cousins set their course westward and returned to their adopted island home.

²⁰⁹ An interview with John and Elizabeth Gilbert by Mary Miles is forthcoming.

²¹⁰ *The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket. For Warren Winslow, Dead at Sea*, Robert Lowell, 1946.

English Canada

Dear to the hearts of generations of Nantucketers was the Old Nantucket Candy Kitchen that shared the lot on Lower Pearl Street with the Bickerstaffs' bakery. Confectioner Walter Sisson had his business there from 1918 through the 1950s, and each May he and his Canadian wife Anna rewarded every child who participated in Nantucket's Memorial Day parade with an ice-cream cone.

Anna "Nan" Belyea was born in Hartland, St. John, New Brunswick, in 1883 and came to the United States in 1910. By then Walter Sisson, a native of Lynn, Massachusetts, had already been in the candy business on Nantucket for a half dozen years.

Together they ran a candy stand on

Chestnut Street before moving to Lower Pearl.²¹¹ There, on a large slab of marble in the back of the small building, Anna and the Sissons' two daughters kneaded, pulled, cut, and wrapped the salt water taffy so popular in coastal New England resorts. In the evenings they sold popcorn to patrons of the nearby Dreamland Theatre. In addition to the candy stand, the building also housed Nan's Souvenir Gift Shop. Their businesses endured for nearly half a century.

It was only after 1900 that English-speaking Canadians arrived in force. Throughout the 1800s, the number of Canadian-born residents of Nantucket had never risen above twenty. A minor specialty of Canadian men during the whaling era had been making packing boxes for spermaceti candles. In 1910 there were just twenty-seven residents from "English Canada," but in 1920, for the first time, the number of Nantucket's residents born in Canada exceeded the number of island residents born in Ireland. By 1930, before the Depression undermined all economic incentive to move to the island, their number had risen to 150.²¹²



Anna and Walter Sisson at the door of their candy store in 1910. *Courtesy of Judith (Plucinski) Ross.*

²¹¹ Prior to 1918 the candy stand by the Atheneum had been operated by summer resident Henry Todd.

²¹² It is only in 1920 that French Canadians begin to appear in Nantucket census records. However, in 1758, when England expelled the French residents of Acadia and dispersed them among its other North American colonies, over thirty were assigned to Nantucket. A list of thirty-seven individuals, twenty-seven with the surname Dupee [Dupuis?] and ten with the surname Bruse or Brufe, appears on p. 3 of Volume 24, Archives of the State of Massachusetts. The list is reproduced in Starbuck 1924, p. 108. Apparently the Acadians did move to Nantucket. In 1764 there were fifty-two "neutral French" living on the island. (Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 289, folder 1, p. 203). They were not welcome, and at the August 13, 1766, Town Meeting it was voted to request the legislature to confirm an order already passed for removing the French from the island (Town Meetings: Births/Marriages/Deaths 1696–1738. Sherburn. Volume in Office of Nantucket Town Clerk). This was in the same period when the selectmen were forcing the departure of other individuals and groups who had moved to Nantucket without invitation and were perceived as undesirable.

With the exception of Granville Cranston, who came from Ontario, all the Canadians—both English-speaking and French-speaking—who moved to Nantucket were from the provinces on the Atlantic coast: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Newfoundland. This was the part of Canada earliest settled and most populous. There had been two French colonies in the 1600s: New France with its cities of Quebec and Montreal, and Acadia, which was later divided into the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

After France ceded Acadia to Great Britain in the 1700s, Acadia's French residents were deported, mainly to Louisiana, to be replaced with settlers from England, Scotland, and Ireland. A decade later a few of the Acadians made their way back, mainly to northern New Brunswick.

At the close of the American Revolution about forty thousand American colonists not in sympathy with the revolution against British sovereignty—people known as “United Empire Loyalists”—moved north, mainly to Nova Scotia. As the result of eighteenth-century politics and war, Quebec today is French-speaking with a minority of English speakers, while Canada's Atlantic Provinces are English-speaking with a minority of French speakers.

During the late 1800s, with North America's focus on westward expansion, the Atlantic Provinces became backwaters eking out a subsistence economy based on fishing, dairy farming, and the production of apples and potatoes. Nonetheless, because of a high birthrate and continuing immigration, especially from Ireland in the wake of the potato famine, the population nearly tripled between 1870 and 1930 and severely taxed the resources of those northern lands with short growing seasons.

Between 1914 and 1918 more than 600,000 Canadian men served in World War I. Initially there had been a promise that Canada would not conscript men for overseas military service, but when voluntary participation in the war effort proved insufficient, conscription was imposed in 1917. After the close of the war, the hard feelings incited by the draft were compounded by demands for higher wages, better working conditions, and subsidized crop prices. Canadians in the Atlantic Provinces sought better opportunities in the United States, and many moved south to New England.

Among the opportunities Nantucket offered was employment by the Nantucket Cottage Hospital, first opened in 1913. Until then Nantucket had managed without a general hospital, sick and injured Nantucketers being treated and cared for in their own homes. With advances in surgery, however, Nantucket's physicians required a sterile operating room. Moreover, the growing population of summer residents faced a sometimes painful dilemma. Unlike the islanders' sturdy homes, many of the summer people's cottages were inconvenient and uncomfortable for illness and convalescence, but under those circumstances the discomfort of travel back to the mainland was often unbearable. Voting residents of

the town of Nantucket did not assign high priority to the establishment of a hospital on the island, but the physicians and the summer people did.²¹³ Doctors John Grouard and Benjamin Sharp called a series of meetings about the problem in 1911 and succeeded in enlisting Nantucket businessman Millard Freeborn and popular novelist Mary Waller to their cause. Funds were raised, a hospital corporation was formed, a location on West Chester Street was chosen, and work began on converting a former private home into a hospital.

To begin with, patients staying at the hospital brought their own private nurses. Three beds were provided in the attic for the nurses, and the hospital's cook slept in the kitchen, which doubled as the nursery for newborns.

Originally intended only for summer operation, by 1915–16 the hospital was open year-round. The influenza pandemic of 1918 brought the first islandwide challenge for the new medical facility and its staff. Of 337 confirmed cases of influenza in the late fall of that year, there were just nine deaths, a far cry from the devastating mortality of the “Indian sickness” of the mid 1700s.

In the course of the 1920s, Nantucketers' use of the hospital increased dramatically. In 1927 there were 416 admissions, 151 surgeries performed, and 224 X-rays taken. As many as seventy births took place each year at the Nantucket Cottage Hospital. The continual need for expansion of facilities was underwritten by ever more elaborate summer fundraisers—fairs and fetes and thrift-shop operations.²¹⁴ To expand the staff, the hospital board looked to Canada. In 1930 four of nine nurses employed by the hospital had come to the island from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as had the cook and two maids.

The tradition of Canadian nursing on Nantucket was, in fact, more venerable than the island hospital itself. In 1870 Maria Thomas of Nova Scotia was supporting herself and her thirteen-year-old son by nursing. She owned Nantucket real estate and had substantial cash savings as well. In 1900 Canadian Annie Reilly, who had been in the United States for a decade, was a private nurse for the King family, and in 1920 Lucy Crompton, a “trained nurse” was providing services for an unnamed private family. In 1910 Carrie Freeman was nurse on a Nantucket farm.²¹⁵ In addition to the nurses at the hospital in 1930, Eva Topham was employed as a private nurse.

Eva May Rowley was born in New Brunswick. Unlike the members of the hospital staff, who had for the most part left Canada for the United States in the 1920s, she was already living on Nantucket when the 1895 local census was taken. In 1900 she had been joined by two younger Rowleys: Walter, a blacksmith, and Burton, who was working as a day laborer. She apparently kept house for them and did not have outside employment at the time. By 1910 more Rowleys had come to the island, Canada-born Marvin and his Massachusetts-born wife with their three Massachusetts-born children. As for Eva, she married surf-

²¹³ In response to an accusation that she was against progress and against the hospital, Sarah P. Bunker's neighbor Gulielma Folger retorted, “I was against the hospital until we got money. I didn't think it fair to put it on the summer people.” (Interview with Helen Cash for the Nantucket Historical Association, September 23, 1942.)

²¹⁴ “Nantucket's First Hospital” signed by L.P., *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 28, 1913 (reprinted from the *Boston Evening Transcript*); “The Nantucket Cottage Hospital: A Short History” by Edouard A. Stackpole, serialized in the *Inquirer and Mirror* on January 11, 18, and 25, 1941. According to Stackpole, the hospital employed six nurses during the influenza outbreak of 1918, and three “State physicians” were sent to the island to assist.

²¹⁵ According to the 1910 census, Carrie Freeman was working as a nurse on “Milne Farm,” but it was more likely Milton Farm in Polpis.

man Leland Topham, and during the 1920s they were proprietors of the Blue Dory Tea Room, first on Liberty Street in the building later occupied by the Grey Gull and later in the Wright Mansion at 94 Main Street. When the marriage failed, Eva Topham turned to private nursing until her death in 1932.

As in the earlier cases of the Irish and then the English, Canadian women on Nantucket substantially outnumbered Canadian men. Besides nursing, the woman did various sorts of domestic service as cooks, housekeepers, maids, and laundresses. Some worked as waitresses in Nantucket's proliferating restaurants. Emma Fraser was a milliner with her own hat shop in the 1920s. Hilda Allen's Canadian daughter-in-law, Evelyn Allen, was a public-school teacher. Most of the English-speaking Canadian women were, however, married and "at home" as were the French Canadian women and the English women on-island. Among the English-speaking Canadians in 1930, there were about two dozen couples in which husband and wife were both born in Canada, and about three dozen more Canadian women married to Nantucket husbands. Nantucket Cottage Hospital's hiring of nurses from Canada continued; in the late 1950s and early 1960s four nurses from Newfoundland—Shirley (Reid) Gardner, Betty (Elms) MacDonald, Georgina "Jean" (Holmes) Bennett, and Violet (Pyne) Allen—came to the island, married local men, and stayed.

In early-twentieth-century Nantucket, Canadian men had a near monopoly on blacksmithery. In competition with Irish-American Thomas Warren Sr. and his son Thomas Jr. were young Walter Rowley, aging James Quigley, and partners Frederick Heighton and Aquila Cormie.

Aquila Cormie's life in Nantucket began before 1900. Born in Moncton, New Brunswick, in 1880, he left for the United States at age 17, and soon was working as a farm laborer at Eatfire Spring Farm on Wauwinet Road. He learned smithery from Nantucketer Clinton Parker, and by 1910 Cormie, now a married man and a homeowner, was employed as a blacksmith.

Fredrick Heighton was born in River St. John, Nova Scotia. In 1896 he went to Maine to work as a blacksmith and from there moved on to Ottawa, Illinois, where he worked for a large German concern that employed fifty or more blacksmiths in shoeing horses and making decorative ironwork. In 1898 he married May L. Jocelyn from Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and they started their family in Illinois.

The advent of the automobile put many blacksmiths out of business, but on Nantucket, where automobiles were prohibited until 1918, there were still plenty of horses. Moreover, the fishing fleet needed the services of smiths to make and repair tackle, dredges, and other equipment for their vessels. May Heighton's sister, Charlotte Holm, who was married to Nantucket farmer Frank Holm, encouraged the Heightons to relocate to the island.²¹⁶ They came with their Illinois-born children, and while they were living and working on several Polpis farms, their family increased. Altogether there were twelve Heighton children, including two sets of twins.²¹⁷ The next-to-youngest of the Nantucket-born

²¹⁶ Frank Holm's 86-year-old father, Charles Holm, born in Denmark, was living with Frank and Charlotte Holm on Nobadeer Farm in 1910. Charles Holm; Juliet Currie, wife of Canadian barber Frederick Currie; Siasconset electrician Folmer Stanhigh; farm laborer Christian Hansen; and elderly domestic Nils Nielsen were the only Danes recorded in the federal censuses for Nantucket through 1930.

²¹⁷ The Heighton children born in Illinois were Mildred, twins Blanche and Grace, Winifred, and Frank. Of them, Mildred, Winifred, and Frank came to Nantucket. Twins Victor and Vernon were born in Nantucket in 1910. Between 1912 and 1920 were born Jean, Henry, Charlotte, Constance, and Edward.

Heightons—Constance—grew up to be newspaperwoman Connie Indio, cofounder and copublisher with her husband Joseph Indio, of the *Town Crier*.²¹⁸

In the 1910 federal census, where the Heightons first appear in Nantucket, Fred Heighton's occupation is listed as farmer, but by 1920 his occupational listing had changed from farmer to blacksmith. In fact, he both farmed and did blacksmithery all his life. Among the farms he rented and operated were the Mitchell Farm and the Devlin Farm in Polpis, Eatfire Spring Farm, and the Snow Farm on Hummock Pond Road. The produce of the farms they worked fed the Heightons' own family, and Fred Heighton had a regular route for distribution of their dairy products and eggs. Besides shoeing horses, he also made fireplace andirons and ironwork fences, including some of the elegant ones still to be seen at residences on Main Street. May Heighton shared the farmwork and also supplemented the family income by working for Polpis neighbors.

Fred Heighton and Aquila Cormie went into partnership to operate a shop on Still Dock, just a short distance from Tom Warren's blacksmith shop on South Water Street. Later, Cormie moved to Straight Wharf, where—toward the end of his very long career—he became something of a curiosity as Nantucket's "last blacksmith," working at his forge, shoeing horses on the sidewalk, and amiably making souvenir rings from bent horseshoe nails for children and tourists. Upon his retirement at age 74, the shop and many of its furnishings were incorporated into the Four Winds Gift Shop, which still occupies his former premises.

Over the years Aquila Cormie kept in close contact with Canada. His second wife, Jennie Shanks Cormie, was born in St. John, New Brunswick, and after he inherited a family farm, they divided their

Aquila Cormie at work at the forge (bottom left) in his blacksmith shop on Straight Wharf (bottom right; photo by Mary J. Barrett).
Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.



²¹⁸ See Part II for a profile of Joseph Indio and the history of the *Town Crier*.



Oscar Quigley and Josefino Cabral building a chimney in the 1950s.
Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

time between Nantucket and Canada. According to the Nantucket street list compiled in 1938, they had just returned to the island from spending a year in Nova Scotia. They continued their visits to Canada after his retirement almost to the end of his life.²¹⁹

Oscar Quigley came from St. John, New Brunswick, to Nantucket as a teenager in 1910. Like Aquila Cormie, he apprenticed to a local tradesman, in this case Nantucketer Nathaniel Lowell, from whom he learned masonry. Retiring after forty years in business as a contractor, he was appointed a member of

Nantucket's Airport Commission, serving the town until his death in 1967.²²⁰

Nantucket had three Canadian barbers by 1920. Frederick Currie had been brought to the United States as a child in 1887. In 1910 he was boarding with a Nantucket family, and ten years later he had his own barber shop. His wife Juliet was born in Denmark and left her home country in 1909. By 1930 the Currie family was quite prosperous.

John Fee of Prince Edward Island was a decade older than Frederick Currie, but he came to Nantucket later. Although he and his large family were living in a rented house in 1920, he too had his own barber shop. The Fees' oldest son was a surfman in the Coast Guard.

John Leslie MacDonald and his wife Rosa of Prince Edward Island were living on Nantucket with their three children in 1910. They had become homeowners, but more than most families, the MacDonalds divided themselves between the United States and Canada. "Les" MacDonald had been naturalized many years earlier, but Rosa had not become a United States citizen. The oldest of their children, according to the 1910 census, had been born in the United States two years after their marriage, but their second and

²¹⁹ Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, November 24, 1961.

²²⁰ Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, September 28, 1967.

third children, Wanda and John, were born in Canada and entered the United States for the first time in 1906.

During World War I, Rosa and the children returned to Canada, and Les MacDonald served in the United States armed forces. In 1920, he was back on-island, still married but living alone on Atlantic Avenue, next door to his relative Margaret Hyde, also born on Prince Edward Island, and her Massachusetts-born husband. In addition to his house, he also owned his own barber shop. Ten years later, in 1930, he was sharing his household with two sons and two nephews and no longer listed his occupation as barber. In late middle age he had switched to carpentry and was working with his nephews, one a carpenter and the other a mason.

When Les MacDonald died in 1953, he had been living with his fisherman son, John MacDonald, who had moved from Nantucket to East Providence, Rhode Island. His other children, Wanda and Donald, had long since returned from Prince Edward Island to Nantucket, and it was to Nantucket's Prospect Hill Cemetery that their father was returned for burial.

Nantucket's fishermen seem to have had an affinity for Christmas weddings, probably because Christmas was one of the rare times of the year when everyone was ashore. Like Arne Pedersen nearly a decade earlier, Newfoundlander John J. "Jack" McDonald had a Christmas wedding. He married Mary Genevieve Davis, whose parents were also from Newfoundland, on Christmas 1933. A wedding reception for sixty guests was held at the home of yet another Newfoundland couple living on Nantucket—McDonald's best man, fisherman Ambrose Furey and his wife Ellen Furey.²²¹

In the 1930s McDonald and Furey were among at least twenty-six Canadian men fishing out of Nantucket. Jack McDonald—who began fishing at age 16—had left the sea to earn a college degree before emigrating from Newfoundland. Once on Nantucket he became a captain in the island fishing fleet. In 1944 he and Captain Ernest Murley had a new fishing vessel built for them. They named her the *Gladys & Mary* for their oldest daughters.

On September 5, 1944, the *Gladys & Mary*, captained by Jack McDonald with a crew of seven, sailed from Nantucket on her maiden voyage to the off-shore fishing grounds. Two nights later, as they were in the vicinity of the South Shoals lightship, the barometer began to drop precipitously. Aware that this meant the approach of a powerful storm, they made a run out of the shoals for the relative safety of deep water, but the storm overtook them. The vessel withstood a tremendous pounding from hurricane winds and huge waves that at least twice drove the boat over on her beam ends. Pieces were torn off the

²²¹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, January 6, 1934.

vessel, and water poured in through smashed hatches. The generator failed, and the engines stopped running. In the darkness a wave breaking over the stern knocked Captain McDonald down a companionway. Unconscious from the blow, he was in danger of drowning when two crewmen located him and moved him out of the water below decks. At the mercy of the storm, the *Gladys & Mary* was tossed and battered for hours. Only the fact that she was new-built accounted for her staying afloat. When the storm moved off and left the fishermen in its wake, they had been swept from south of Nantucket to far east of New Jersey. Twenty-four hours later the *Gladys & Mary* limped into Nantucket Harbor, and Captain McDonald and one crewmember went to the Nantucket Cottage Hospital for treatment of injuries sustained in the storm. Having come within a breath of drowning, Jack McDonald went straight back to his vessel, continued fishing for another two decades, and lived to the age of 87.²²²



Fishing dragger *Chas. E. Beckman* of New Bedford at Island Service Wharf, December 1953. (photo by Esther Gibbs)

Tobias Flemming was another Newfoundlander who became a captain in the fishing fleet. He had not come to the United States until the 1920s.²²³ Fishing out of New Bedford and Nantucket, while he was still in his twenties, he became one of the youngest captains of commercial fishing vessels in the United States. Over the years he commanded the *Charles Fossey*, the *Catherine T.*, and the *Anna C. Perry*, having the good fortune not to be aboard the *Perry* on her final, fatal voyage. He both owned and operated the *Mary Tapper*. Despite all the hazards of deep-sea fishing, he retired from a long career as a fisherman and died on land in 1973.²²⁴

The stone marking the Flemming plot in St. Mary's Cemetery is incised with a fishing boat passing Brant Point Lighthouse outward bound with the text: "Dear Lord be good to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small." The gravestone of Captain Tobias Flemming proclaims, "Safe harbor at last."

²²² "The Gladys & Mary Narrowly Missed Foundering in Storm" in the *Inquirer and Mirror*, September 23, 1944. Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, August 5, 1993.

²²³ Despite the difference in the spelling of their names, Charles Fleming, an engineer on Nantucket fishing boats, and Tobias Flemming were brothers from St. Vincent, Newfoundland.

²²⁴ Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 27, 1973.

Black Nova Scotians

Back in 1783, some United Empire Loyalists who relocated to Nova Scotia from Virginia plantations took their slaves with them. Thousands of other slaves had been promised their freedom, protection from future enslavement, and land of their own by British colonial governors in exchange for taking up arms against the American colonists. The fledgling government of the United States of America objected to the departure of the Loyalists' slaves and former slaves on the grounds that they were American property that the defeated British had no right to remove from the United States. To resolve the dispute, the British made a cash payment to the United States, certificates of freedom were issued to the departees, and documentation of more than three thousand slaves who had earned their freedom through service to the British was registered in the "Book of Negroes" created for the occasion.

In Nova Scotia the United Empire Loyalists found life difficult. The climate was harsher and the soil less fertile than Virginia's, and replication of the plantation life they had once lived proved impossible. As a result, masters abandoned their slaves to fend for themselves. As for the Black Loyalists who had arrived with their certificates of freedom, few received the hundred acres promised to each who had served. Those who did receive some land had to wait years for it only to find subsistence farming hardly viable. In order to survive, Black Loyalists had to indenture themselves and their children to more prosperous whites or to hire themselves out as very cheap labor, thereby arousing the resentment of others in competition with them for jobs.

In 1791 the Black Loyalists sent a representative to England to seek redress. While there, he was approached with an offer of free land for all in Africa, and the following year two thousand of the Black Loyalists embarked on fifteen ships in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and sailed for Sierra Leone. At the same time, a group of Maroons from Jamaica, descendants of former slaves who had freed themselves, were relocated to Nova Scotia. Some of them, too, went on to Sierra Leone, but others stayed behind. A generation later, during the War of 1812, the number of black Nova Scotians was augmented when once again the British offered slaves in the United States freedom and land in Nova Scotia in exchange for fighting against the United States.

The Maroons in Nova Scotia joined the remaining Black Loyalists and the abandoned slaves in several black communities, including Shelburne on the south coast, Birchtown a bit to the north, and Guysborough, a town reconstituted in northeastern Nova Scotia after a disastrous fire. Like Nantucket's New Guinea, these communities had their own small businesses, schools, and churches. The Anglican Church held little appeal for people whose former masters were Anglicans. Although the Catholic Church was not very welcoming, some converted to Catholicism, while others established African Baptist churches.²²⁵

²²⁵ Information about the Black Loyalists can be found at the Nova Scotia Museum website: museum.gov.ns.ca/blackloyalists and also at stfx.ca/people/acallist/afriheri2. For the Maroons, see Salvadore 1969, p. 29.

From Nova Scotia's black communities at least three people made their way to Nantucket in the 1800s. Two women first appear in the 1850 census. Lydia Boston, wife of seaman Benajah Boston Sr., had previously been married to one of the Nantucket Pompeys.²²⁶ Elizabeth Camben was the wife of West Indian seaman Daniel Camben. Although Pitman Moors was only middle-aged, he had no stated profession in 1850. Nonetheless, by 1860 he owned a modest piece of real estate in New Guinea.

What had brought these Nova Scotia-born people to the island? An old connection between Nantucket and Nova Scotia dated to the period immediately after the American Revolution. As the United Empire Loyalists struggled to settle themselves, Nantucket was also struggling to rebuild its whaling economy, which lay in ruins after the war. Prospects for the return of prosperity seemed dim. Many Nantucketers saw no alternative but to leave the island for locations offering more protection in case of future war. Some went to a well-defended spot high up the Hudson River in New York. Others saw advantage in moving their business to Nova Scotia in order to trade directly with the London market unhampered by United States mercantile regulations.

Just three years after the Loyalists' arrival on ships from New York, ships bringing forty Nantucket families arrived in Dartmouth, near Halifax, Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia welcomed the prospect of the employment whaling might offer to the jobless Loyalists. The Dartmouth community, however, was as short-lived as the one attempted in Dunkirk, France, a few years later. The Nova Scotia General Assembly supported the migration with subsidies and privileges, but in London there was a strong reaction against the scheme. Attempts were made to lure the Nantucket whaling business directly to London, and the Nova Scotians were ordered to desist from offering incentives to the Nantucketers to move to Dartmouth. In 1791 it was reported that most of the people who had left the island for Nova Scotia had returned to Nantucket. Renewed pressure to move the Nantucket whaling fleet to Nova Scotia arose during the War of 1812, but without success. Unlike enslaved people for whom Nova Scotia meant freedom, Nantucket businessmen—despite the hazards of war—had other options.²²⁷

Pitman Moors had been born in Nova Scotia in 1800, Lydia Boston in 1803, and Elizabeth Camben in 1819, all after the brief Nantucket experiment at Dartmouth. Perhaps the lines between Nova Scotia and Nantucket remained open for a while after the whaling colony failed, or perhaps each had found a way to the island independently of the others. In 1900 a young woman named Lucy Backus, born in Canada of Canadian parents and classified as black, was working on Nantucket as a hotel cook. During the ensuing century other people of color from the United States, Canada, and Bermuda would follow her lead, coming to work and to live on Nantucket. Their story will be told in Part IV.

²²⁶ Her maiden name was Lydia Howard. Prior to her marriage to Benajah Boston Sr., she had been married to George Pompey (private communication from Franklin Dorman).

²²⁷ Byers 1987, pp. 234–37; 245; 287–88.

Chapter Seven

Northward Voyagers

Sea-going Nantucketers' Children

Like the Nantucket residents of the early 1800s who had been born in France, many of the island's residents of the second half of the 1800s who had been born in Latin America were children of Nantucket-born parents. The same is true of Nantucket children born on islands of the South Atlantic and Pacific.

Nantucket families had moved to Dunkirk (and to New York and Nova Scotia as well) to pursue the wealth promised by the whaling industry to those willing to make personal sacrifices. The Nantucket whaling outposts on land offered housing similar to what the migrating families left behind on Nantucket. There were Quaker meeting houses for the free practice of worship, and women and children enjoyed the daily company of other Nantucket women and children. In Dunkirk it was useful to be able to speak French, but it was possible to live in an entirely Nantucket household and community.

Once whaling entered the Pacific and ever-lengthening voyages stretched out over years, some captains began to take their wives and children along with them, dropping them off for spells in Honolulu or Lahaina, the whalers' port on the island of Maui, in the company of other whalers' families. This was a situation very different from life in the little communities dispersed on land. While at sea the captain's wife was the sole woman aboard, and her children were her only daily company. The crewmembers of whalers spoke a welter of languages, and in port the local language might be Spanish, Portuguese, French, or any of a number of Polynesian and Melanesian languages.

Little accommodation was made for pregnancy and birth. Children were born on land if possible, but some births inevitably took place aboard ship. Matilda Joy, wife of Samuel Joy, gave birth to their daughter Anna in Mexico and two years later gave birth to Anna's brother William in Brazil. Maria Winslow was one of the fortunate children to be brought into the world in Hawai'i, but Ida and Emily Winslow were born at sea. Of the ocean-going Grant family, Charles was born on Pitcairn Island, George on Upolu, Western Samoa (then known as Navigator's Island), and Leonora at New Zealand's Bay of Islands. Other sons and daughters of Nantucket had their birthplaces in Peru and Chile and on Norfolk Island, east of Australia. During World War I Lawrence Cady was born in Cuba. For all of them, getting to Nantucket for the first time meant traveling north toward home.

Wives from Distant Shores

Although it was next to impossible for a crewmember to marry while on a voyage and take his wife home with him, there were a few foreign-born wives from the Caribbean, Latin America, and elsewhere to the south. From St. Thomas in the West Indies came Ann Louisa Ray, daughter of Nicholas and Grace Potter of St. Thomas. In 1850 Ann Louisa was living on Nantucket with her mariner husband. Two Potter men, Peter and Thomas, were also living on the island. Peter, a cooper, was lodging with the Upham family, and mariner Thomas Potter was a Nantucket homeowner with a Nantucket wife and children. Ten years later Ann Louisa's sisters Eliza and Mary had come to Nantucket and were living with one of the Macy families. Ann Louisa bore four children and lived until 1890.

Another woman from the West Indies, Gwendolyn Backus, was the wife of Oliver Backus, purser on one of the steamboats. Like Ann Louisa Ray before her, Gwendolyn had four Nantucket-born children. The family was living on Union Street in 1930.

The 1850 census recorded twenty-year-old Isabella Starbuck, born in Australia, as wife of equally young store clerk, Marcus Starbuck. It also recorded Leonore B. Whippey, 23, of some unspecified place in South America, married to George Whippey and mother of a Nantucket-born infant.²²⁸ In 1860 Maria Ramsdell, Francita Goodnow, and Mary Gifford, all Chilean women in their twenties, were living in Nantucket. Maria and Francita and their families were sharing living quarters.

In 1870 the federal census recorded the birthplace of Rosa Ross, wife of James Gardner Ross, as the island of St. Helena. Twelve hundred miles out in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa, St. Helena had been uninhabited when discovered by the Portuguese in 1502. From 1659, the same year the first English settlers came to Nantucket, St. Helena had been a British colony and a port of call for ships bound from Europe around the Cape of Good Hope to the Indian Ocean. Such was its isolation that it was chosen as the place of exile for Napoleon Bonaparte, taken there in 1815 in a ship on which the young Robert Ratliff served.

Several men from St. Helena came to Nantucket over the years. Among the transient mariners listed in the 1850 census were William Canfield, 22, and William Wright, 24, both classified as white. A decade later another mariner—William Tony, 27—had settled on Nantucket as a newlywed with a Nantucket wife. A great many years later Matthew Ellis, born on St. Helena to parents also born there, was living on Nantucket and working as a school janitor. He had been married but was divorced and living alone in 1920.

It is easy enough to see how seafaring men from St. Helena had made their way to Nantucket, but it is an intriguing mystery how a young, unmarried woman of color could leave such a remote place and

²²⁸ The Whippey family made something of a tradition of marriages with the world's people. David Whippey Jr. (1801–75) married a native Fijian and lived out his days in Fiji. William Whippey was born in New Zealand in 1801, most likely of a Maori mother, came to Nantucket's New Guinea, and married Maria Ross (older sister of Eunice). Maria and William operated a boardinghouse for Pacific Islanders in New Guinea until William died of tuberculosis in 1847.

travel so very far north to marry James Gardner Ross, a Nantucket barber whose grandfather had been born in Africa. Rosa was 25 years old in 1870 and the mother of two Nantucket-born children. The census classified her as “mulatto,” and listed her occupation as “tailoress.” Her husband was a nephew of Eunice Ross. Thanks to the successful campaign for school integration waged for and by Eunice Ross, their son J. Gardner Ross, born in 1877, graduated from Nantucket High School and went on to Newton Theological Seminary and a life of service in Baptist churches.

Mariners Putting Down Roots

In addition to the five members of the Potter family from the West Indies, there were at least three other men born in those islands and living on Nantucket in 1850. William Hazell was a young ship captain with a local wife and a baby. Another West Indian man resident on the island at the time was Thomas Derrick, a mariner who also had a Nantucket wife and child. Daniel Austin, on the other hand, was an octogenarian pauper living at the town asylum in the company of English-born Philip Walker, an aging farmer who had come to the same fate. The asylum received a state subsidy for the support of the two men. All these residents of Nantucket were classified as white. Among transient seamen from the West Indies in 1850 were four classified as white and four classified as black.²²⁹

John Thomas, 35 years old in 1850 and classified as black, was specifically from Santo Domingo. In Nantucket he might possibly have found some company from home, because two men from “St. Catherine, South America,” lived out their lives on Nantucket. Mariner Joseph Simmonds died on-island in 1864 and Joseph Rose, an elderly widower, in 1873. Their birthplace might have been either St. Catherine Island off the south coast of Santo Domingo, or Ilha de Santa Catarina off the south coast of Brazil.²³⁰ Probability lies with the latter. In the second edition of *Worcester’s Gazetteer*, published in 1823, the entry for “St. Catherines, isl. in the S. Atlantic ocean, near the coast of Brazil” reports the island to be green and fertile although plagued with poisonous snakes. The population at the time was 30,000, but the inhabitants were too poor to take advantage of the island’s potential: “Their soil, which is very fit for the cultivation of sugar, remains unproductive for want of slaves, whom they are not rich enough to purchase. The whale fishery is very successful.”²³¹ It would have been a wise move for a mariner to ship out of Santa Catarina on a whaler bound for nearly snake-free Nantucket.

In 1860 master mariner William Wood had taken up residence on Nantucket. He had been born in the West Indies in 1810 and is described in the *Eliza Starbuck Barney Genealogical Record* as “of New Bedford,” “from the West Indies,” and “a stranger.” His wife, Eliza Ann Edwards, and three of his children

²²⁹ In two further instances (one seaman classified white and the other as black), place of birth is ambiguous, because the abbreviation “W.I.” could stand for either “West Indies” or “Western Islands” (the Azores).

²³⁰ If their birthplace had been St. Catherine Island in the Sea Islands, the census would have recorded it as Georgia.

²³¹ Worcester, 1823, Vol. II, p. 481.

were all born in Massachusetts; but their son Alexander was born in Peru in 1852. Alexander followed his father's profession and, sadly, died at sea at the age of seventeen.

Peruvian-born mariner Joseph Castro—born in Paita, on the coast of northern Peru—was also residing on the island in 1860. His wife Lavina and his stepdaughter Isabella were Nantucket-born. All were classified as mulatto and living in New Guinea.²³² In 1870, although he was fifty years old, Joseph Castro was “at sea” when the census was taken.

In the first half of the 1800s, a man from Suriname named Vanderhoop was assimilated by the Aquinnah Wampanoags, and he and his wife Beulah have many descendants on Martha's Vineyard. Charles E. Delprado, a seaman from Suriname, settled in Nantucket's New Guinea in the 1850s and married a woman from the black community, but unlike the Vanderhoops, they did not establish a family to carry on their name. The young couple was living on Nantucket in 1860, but ten years later they were gone, part of the general exodus from the town's post-whaling-era depression.

There were both transient mariners and settled mariners on Nantucket in the 1800s who had been born in Chile, Peru, and Brazil. In the late 1990s a new wave of Brazilian immigrants began gathering in Hyannis and on Martha's Vineyard. By 2002 a Brazilian convenience store had opened on Nantucket, and the local supermarkets had begun to advertise that cash transfers could be arranged through the Banco do Brasil. In 2003, Isabella Rose Tarcitano, all of whose grandparents live in Rio de Janeiro, was born on Nantucket.

²³² Philbrick 1998 says that Dorcas Honorable had a daughter Emmeline (not Lavina) who married a man named Castro and had a daughter named Isabel, who became the wife of former slave and Civil War veteran Hiram Reed (p. 286). He has confused Dorcas Honorable with Dorcas Mingo. (Although Dorcas Mingo is described in court documents as a “spinster,” this does not refer to her marital status but to her profession as a spinner of wool.) The Mingos were originally a Nantucket Wampanoag family, but Dorcas Mingo Wilbur, her daughter Lavina Wilbur Draper, and her granddaughter Isabella Draper Reed were all classified at one time or another as black or mulatto. Isabella Reed is classified as an Indian in the 1870 census. Although Isabella died in 1882, her mother, Lavina, lived until 1891. Lavina and Isabella were both buried in Nantucket's “coloured” cemetery behind Mill Hill.

Brotherhood

A reader of obituaries in the Nantucket newspapers cannot fail to be struck by how important fraternal organizations were to foreign-born men in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Membership in such organizations was so universal that those few obituaries that do not end with mention of special graveside rites by fellow Masons, Odd Fellows, or Red Men stand out and catch one's attention. Men who belong to one such organization often belong to several, but membership in Nantucket's Masonic lodge has been the rule. Since the mid-1800s it has been rare for an individual to find companionship at the Pacific Club or with the Odd Fellows without also belonging to Union Lodge F. & A. M.

This is remarkable in view of the intensely antimasonic sentiments of earlier times. Nantucket's Union Lodge was founded in 1771, when the influence of Quakerism was in full force in Nantucket. The Friends Book of Objections is replete with cases of men who risked disownment not only for admitting musical instruments into their homes, sailing on armed vessels, and being inoculated against small pox, but also for consorting with Freemasons. Just a year after the founding of Union Lodge, Quaker elders who sought to dissuade Jethro Hussey from an interest in freemasonry "received from him such unbecoming carriage and behavior as prevented them from doing so." Over a period of three months in 1775, Andrew Worth was "treated with for joining a company in throwing a quantity of oysters out of a vessel without legal authority and for being in fellowship with those called Freemasons both which he refused to give satisfaction." Ultimately, although he made things right about the oysters, he "declined to discuss Freemasonry." Both Worth and Hussey were disowned.²³³

Although the action of the Meeting made it clear that Quakerism would not tolerate it, Nantucket men's attraction to masonry continued unabated. The cases of Jethro Hussey and Andrew Worth are just two of many such entries in the Book of Objections.

For many of the same reasons that the Society of Friends proscribed freemasonry, so did the Roman Catholic Church, which perceived Masonic ritual as in competition with Christian holy ritual. Faithful Catholics were barred from membership in Masonic lodges, and membership in the Knights of Columbus was offered as an alternative. Over time a great many Catholic men in Nantucket have been members of the Knights of Columbus, but many have also joined Union Lodge.

What was it about masonry that was so compelling for Quaker men, Catholic men, and foreign-born men living on Nantucket? In the 1700s, it was still quite a new phenomenon. Although masonry has its roots in the period of the construction of Europe's great cathedrals, when stonemasons formed professional guilds throughout Europe, the social function of the masons' organizations and the elaborate rituals in use

²³³ Nantucket Historical Association MS Collection 35, Book 9. Entries for "27 1st month 1772," "26th 6th month 1775," and "25th 9th month 1775." Jethro Hussey departed so far from Quaker tenets as to rent meeting space to the Masons. He appears in Union Lodge minutes as Brother Jethro Hussey as early as October 1772 ("Union Lodge, Nantucket, Mass." p. 157), and in 1779 served as Worshipful Master (manuscript "Historical Sketch of Union Lodge" by Francis W. Pease).

today developed in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Masons consider the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 to be the foundation event of their organization. From England, masonry came to the North American colonies, where it became immensely popular, and its membership included the most influential leaders of the colonies and the founding fathers of the new United States of America. To be a Mason was to belong to a brotherhood of men of accomplishment.

For the newly arrived foreign-born, membership in a lodge offered, if possible, even more advantages than it did to the native-born and long-established. Immigrants had left behind all the continuities of their family networks. In particular, they were separated from their family gravesites and were generally anxious about who would bury them in the new land and who would look after their survivors. As a result, immigrants were quick to form burial societies, mutual-aid societies, and insurance cooperatives. In places like Nantucket, where ethnic groups were, for the most part, diminutive, masonry offered a ready-made alternative. A Mason knows that his brothers will be at his funeral, where they will speak eloquently and confer dignity on the occasion, and they will continue to offer support to his widow and children.

Most Masons were also members of churches, and church membership might seem to suffice for those purposes. In Nantucket, however, where there were no Eastern-rite churches and no Lutheran church, many of the foreign-born had to choose new churches to join; Armenians and Lutherans alike joined the Congregational Church, for instance. But beyond membership of any particular church, Masons found fellowship with a broader sector of the community, and as an international organization Masonry did not discriminate against the foreign-born. Anxiety about mass immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave rise to a nativist backlash among citizens who considered themselves descendants of Anglo-Saxon settlers. Languages other than English, foodways other than those considered all-American, and domestic rituals from “the old country” were generally driven underground by outspoken public criticism. The Masons, who had themselves suffered from an intense antimasonic movement in the 1820s and 1830s, did not close their door to the foreign-born, and they offered new, inclusive rituals. For men seeking to assimilate into their new American home on Nantucket, Masonry was a broad, well-tended highway.

Even a partial list of Union Lodge’s foreign-born members shows how cosmopolitan Nantucket’s Masonic brotherhood has been over the decades: Captain John Murray Jr. (Azores, Portugal), José Reyes (Philippines), Carekin Proodian (Armenia), Emile Genesky (Russia), Antoon Khouri (Syria), John Nicoletos and George C. Anastos (Greece), Eugene Collatz (Germany), Peder Pedersen and Rolf Sjölund (Norway), Leendert Block and William Voorneveld Sr. (Netherlands), Frederick Heighton (Canada), John Gilbert (England). Simon Kaufman was a devoted member of the Wauwinet Tribe of Red Men, but his

son-in-law Milton Zlotin was a member of Union Lodge. Lincoln Porte, whose grandfather had come to Nantucket from India and whose grandmother was the descendant of African slaves, was a member. Although living off-island in retirement, Albert Rohdin, born in Sweden, maintained his Nantucket ties, and his obituary concluded: "He was a member of Union Lodge F. & A. M. of Nantucket and took pride in belonging to a lodge with its history dating back to the years before the Revolution."²³⁴

In recent years, especially since it began admitting women, Rotary International has to some degree superseded Union Lodge as the premier place for Nantucketers to meet and network, and most recently the Great Hall of the Atheneum has become Nantucket's busiest international gathering place. A grant from the Coffin School to the Nantucket Atheneum funded the purchase of a roomful of laptop computers. Beginning in the summer of 2001, use has grown to over 25,000 computer patrons per year, with usage concentrated in the summer, when Nantucket's highly international workforce fills the hall with people waiting for their turns to receive and send e-mail.²³⁵ Keeping in touch with home has drawn hundreds of young men and women into the library, which they otherwise might never have visited during their seasonal employment on the island. Even a tripling of the use fee in the third summer did not abate the service's popularity. This is without doubt the most vital and appreciated service the Nantucket Atheneum has ever offered to its foreign-born residents.

²³⁴ Obituary, *Inquirer and Mirror*, February 18, 1933.

²³⁵ The Nantucket Atheneum Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2002, and Facts and Figures 2002.