

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

EDGARTOWN

Report Date: 1984

Associated Regional Report: Cape Cod and the Islands

Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports, produced for MHC's Statewide Reconnaissance Survey between 1979 and 1987, introduce the historical development of each of the Commonwealth's municipalities. Each report begins with an historic overview, a description of topography, and political boundaries. For the purposes of the survey, the historic period has been subdivided into seven periods: Contact (1500–1620), Plantation (1620–1675), Colonial (1675–1775), Federal (1775–1830), Early Industrial (1830–1870), Late Industrial (1870–1915), and Early Modern (1915–1940/55). Each report concludes with survey observations that evaluate the town's existing historic properties inventory and highlight significant historic buildings, settlement patterns, and present threats to these resources. A bibliography lists key secondary resources.

Town reports are designed for use together with a series of town maps that demarcate settlement patterns, transportation corridors and industrial sites for each historic period. These maps are in the form of color-coded, polyester overlays to the USGS topographic base map for each town on file and available for consultation at MHC. For further information on the organization and preparation of town reports, readers should contact MHC.

Users should keep in mind that these reports are now two decades or more old. The information they contain, including assessments of existing knowledge, planning recommendations, understanding of local development, and bibliographic references all date to the time they were written. In some cases, information on certain topics was not completed. No attempt has been made to update this information.

Electronic text was not available for digital capture, and as a result most of the reports have been scanned as PDF files. While all have been processed with optical character recognition, there will inevitably be some character recognition errors.

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

DATE: 1984

COMMUNITY: Edgartown

I. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of Edgartown is located on the island of Martha's Vineyard lying between 70° 50' and 70° 25' longitude and 41° 95' and 41° 30' latitude. The island covers 249 square kilometers and is covered with a hilly upland with a maximum elevation of 92 meters, averaging 59 meters; and coastal plain with elevations sloping gently southward from about 29 meters to sea level. Edgartown is located in the southeastern portion of the island bounded to the east by Nantucket Sound, Sengekontocket Pond, Edgartown Harbor, Chappaquiddick Island; to the south by the Atlantic Ocean; to the west by West Tisbury; and to the north by Oak Bluffs. Major physical features in the town include the coastal formations and island noted above as well as Katama Bay, Edgartown Great Pond, and Oyster Pond.

The uplands in the town are within the bounds of the Nantucket Moraine, a hilly and rocky area covering the township along the coast from Sengekontocket Pond through Chappaquiddick Island. The moraine is composed largely of coarse or medium sand and boulders of varying sizes (Latimer 1925: 10). In general, soils are sandy and not stratified. The south and western portion of the township are within outwash plain areas. Outwash areas are sandier and stratified in these locations. Drainage is generally subsurface, although some streams and ponds are present. Outwash channels and lowland in the south have been drowned by sea level rise, forming several salt ponds. Elevations average 50 feet or less in most areas of the town, slightly higher along the coastal moraine. Nearly the entire town lies within an oak/pine vegetation zone. Some dune vegetation is also present.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Great Harbor township grant was made in 1641. Edgartown was incorporated in 1671 under the jurisdiction of New York. Territory was transferred to Massachusetts in 1691. Northwest boundary was established with the separation of Cottage City (later Oak Bluffs) in 1880.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Edgartown is a resort community and county seat of Dukes County, focused on the sheltered Edgartown Harbor on the east coast of Martha's Vineyard. First permanent European settlement of Old Town took place ca. 1642, with first meetinghouse site established by 1653, near local settlement concentration at Great Harbor. Chappaquiddick Island to the east retained a significant Christian native population through the 18th century. A local fishing and sheep grazing economy developed, leading to early 18th-century legal conflicts with natives over Chappaquiddick grazing rights.

Establishment of county courthouse at Edgartown after 1721 stimulated village development, as did late 18th-century growth in the whaling industry. Port of entry status was conferred in 1789. Efflorescence of Federal and Early Industrial period village resulted, including high-style residences of maritime capitalists and landmark Methodist church. The mid-19th century decline in whaling was followed by the rise of the summer resort economy, although the Methodist camp meeting focus at Cottage City in the north separates in 1880. Late 19th-century railroad connections from Oak Bluffs to Katama failed to stimulate an expected real estate boom, but by the early 20th century Edgartown Village became the focus of new yacht/resort activities.

Modern resort development has continued to restructure Edgartown Village, with harborside hotel complex/restaurant construction, and tourist-oriented Main Street commercial district expansion. Chappaquiddick Island has developed as an estate district. More recent changes have included extensive suburban growth in the southwest interior, and intensive suburb/condominium construction of Katama on the south shore. Significant threats are posed to historic archaeological sites. Edgartown Village retains a remarkable amount of its 18th- and early 19th-century scale and fabric. While destruction of extant historic archaeological features seems unlikely, long-term development pressures have produced incremental structural alterations that continue to have a cumulative impact.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Little direct evidence is present regarding the exact locations of Contact period Native American trails. However, it is probable that at least two main trails existed along northern end southern coastal areas. The southern trail probably skirted the northern shores of Edgartown Great Pond and Oyster Pond connecting the Chappaquiddick Island area with the Nunnepog, Takemmy, and Nashowakemmuch (roughly remainder of Edgartown, Chilmark, and West Tisbury) sachemship (tribal/village) areas to the west. This trail may have linked up with native trails reported in the area of the South Road. A northern trail is also probable connecting the Chappaquiddick Island area with the rest of Edgartown around Sengekontacket Pond to what is now Vineyard Haven Harbor, Oak Bluffs, and Tisbury. Interior trails were likely stemming off main coastal trails. No roadways existed at this time.

B. Population

Little direct information is present on which systematic estimates of Native American populations during the Contact period can be made. Furthermore, when estimates are given they are often contradictory with considerable variation. For example, Ritchie (1969:3) estimates the Wampanoag population on Martha's Vineyard in 1600 A.D. at 1,500 individuals. Yet, in 1642 another author estimates the native population at 3,000 individuals (Collections of the Mass. Historical Society Vol. III, p.92). Estimates of

native population are further complicated by the fact that the plague of 1616-17 undoubtedly drastically altered existing populations and areas of settlement. Thus, it appears likely that native populations for the entire island were probably more in the range of 1,500 individuals than 3,000, at least during the late Contact period.

C. Settlement Pattern

European settlements did not exist in Edgartown or on Martha's Vineyard during this period. However, some contact between Native Americans and Europeans in the Martha's Vineyard area undoubtedly took place as European explorers, traders, and fishermen frequented the area from early in the 16th century long before settlement. Most notable were Gosnold's voyages through the islands off the Cape and settlement at Cuttyhunk in 1602.

Native Americans had settled the Edgartown area for some time prior to European contact. Late Woodland period sites, particularly shell middens and known artifact listings with general Edgartown provenience exhibit a site locational preference for coastal areas, particularly on necks and coves on coastal ponds. Additional sites should be present in interior areas also.

No evidence exists at present to identify specific Contact period sites. However, it seems probable they existed since the Edgartown area was originally called by its Algonquian name Nunnepog which was led by one of the more powerful sachems on Martha's Vineyard. Furthermore, a Native American presence in the Edgartown area is further attested to by the fact that many of the areas of settlement were purchased from the local natives. Native American place names for Martha's Vineyard and the Edgartown area also provide clues to the extent which natives either inhabited and/or used the areas. For example Chappaquiddick Island, Katama Bay, Mattakeset Bay, Pocketapces Neck, Meshacket Cove, and countless other areas derive their names from Algonquian roots and attest to the importance of coastal areas to the local natives.

Thus, while specific Contact period village sites are unknown for the Edgartown area, Late Woodland period site location, general artifact finds for the town, the extensive pressure of native place names and the fact that early settlers had to deal directly with the natives for land indicate that sites of the Contact period should exist. Native Americans settlement for the Edgartown area during this period should follow regional and island trends for settlement preferences in coastal areas along ponds, estuaries, and rivers. Inland sites should also be present, although not to the extent of coastal sites.

D. Subsistence Pattern

European settlements were not present on Martha's Vineyard during the Contact period. Thus, any transient Europeans in the Edgartown area probably followed subsistence patterns similar to native inhabitants in the area. While some food was undoubtedly carried with early explorers, traders, and fishermen, the bulk of

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their subsistence was probably secured through hunting, fishing, and the gathering of wild plants and shellfish, and the trade, stealing, or purchase of agricultural products (corn, beans, etc.) from the local natives.

Native American subsistence in the Edgartown and Martha's Vineyard area was probably similar to that practiced in other areas on mainland Cape Cod. The combined use of wild and domesticated food resources formed the basis of the subsistence system. It is unknown at present exactly when agriculture, or more specifically, horticulture, was introduced into the Cape and islands area. However, on Martha's Vineyard, carbonized corn kernels were found at two sites: the Peterson site in the town of Edgartown, and the Hornblower II site in Gay Head (Ritchie 1969). At the Hornblower II site, carbonized corn kernels were C14 dated to A.D. 1160 $\pm$ 80 years (Ritchie 1969:52), placing corn agriculture well within the Late Woodland period. Thus, some form of agriculture may have been practiced on Martha's Vineyard for some time prior to the Contact period. Furthermore, by the Contact period, sufficient quantities of corn, beans, etc. were being produced for storage and at times for sale or trade to English settlers. Shellfishing, fishing, and hunting were also important subsistence pursuits. On Martha's Vineyard, virtually all of the existing Algonquian place names and suspected village areas are located along the coast, particularly in estuarine locations near extensive shellfish beds and anadromous fish runs.

In addition, other species of marine life were also available in the Edgartown area. Saltwater fish such as striped bass, bluefish, swordfish, porgie, tautog, eels, mackerel, flounder, codfish, haddock, and others were present in coastal and estuarine areas. Lobster, crabs, snails, and possibly various species of terrapins were present. Sea mammals such as whales and seals would also have been available in coastal areas. In freshwater ponds, trout, perch, bass, and pickerel were present.

The westlands and forested areas of Martha's Vineyard and Edgartown provided numerous species of mammals and birds for hunting. The heath-hen, or pinnated grouse, was available in upland areas with numerous species of ducks and geese available in coastal locations. Several mammals were also available which today are not necessarily present. They included: deer, bear, lynx, fox, otters, beaver, rabbit, raccoon, and others.

Numerous types of flora were also present and available for subsistence. These included beechnuts, walnuts, acorns, sassafras, grapes, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, huckleberries, and others.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes

Established Native American trails continued to be used by both natives and Europeans. In 1652, approximately ten years after settlement the town voted to lay out all highways belonging to the MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Edgartown

town. Main Street is the first reported street in the town, probably laid out when the home lots were divided but not referenced until 1654. Pease Point Way is the next street mentioned in the town in 1660. The street roughly extends from the harbor to Great Point. Other streets and paths present during this period include Planting Field Way (1653), Plain Road (1662), and Mill Path. A bridge was also present at Mashacket by 1653.

B. Population

Aboriginal populations in Edgartown during the Plantation period continued a pattern of fast decline established during the Contact period. Little direct information is present on which estimates can be made. However, it seems likely that no more than a few hundred individuals existed at this time, probably fewer.

Early estimates of European populations in the Edgartown area are derived from scattered sources much the same as with native populations. Banks (1911: 15) notes a slow but steady increase in population. In 1653 fifteen persons reported as heads of families were present, followed by twenty "heads" in 1660, and 27 "heads" in 1676. Banks (1911) uses an estimate of five persons per family, resulting in total population estimates of 75 persons (1653), 100 persons (1660), and 125 persons (1676).

C. Settlement Pattern

Native American settlement of the Edgartown area during the Plantation period probably followed similar trends of coastal settlement noted for the Contact period. However, settlement density was probably in decline, particularly after the 1616-17 plague. No known native sites of this period are reported, although land purchases were made by Europeans from natives in the area prior to white settlement. Chappaquiddick was established as one of the praying towns of the Vineyard in ca. 1670.

In 1641-42 a grant for the present Edgartown township was made, followed by the first settlement in 1642 at Great Harbor (Edgartown Harbor). Nunnepog was the Algonquian name for the place Mayhew chose for the town site (other spellings are Nunpauket, Nunpaug, Nunpog, and Unnunpaugue). The first settlement was around the harbor which was not named Great Harbor until 1642. Land was originally divided into 20-acre lots per man. Previously, the area was known simply as the Vineyard, the only white settlement on the island. The first meetinghouse was built ca. 1653; however, the exact time and where it was built remain unknown.

Two large sections of land in Edgartown were purchased from the natives. The first, commonly known as the Old Purchase, was from the Sachem Tewantquatick and included all the land south of a line running from Wintucket to the end of the home lot of William Weeks. The second purchase was known as the New Purchase and included part of Ogissket or Sanchacuntucket Neck. This area was divided ca. 1673 or 1674. Settlement was also begun in coastal areas (necks, etc.) north of Great Harbor in the area of

Sengekontacket Pond and to the south in the vicinity of Edgartown Great Pond at the end of the period (Crackatuxet Neck, 1660; Quanomica Neck, 1663; Felix Neck, 1664).

Edgartown was incorporated as a town in 1671 under the political authority of New York.

D. Economic Base

Native American populations in the Edgartown area probably continued the combined use of wild and domesticated food resources as a subsistence base much the same as they did during the earlier Contact and possibly Late Woodland periods. Little specific information is present regarding these activities but hunting, fishing, the gathering of shellfish and floral resources, combined with some form of corn agriculture, were pursued.

European settlers in the Edgartown area probably hunted, fished, and gathered much the same as the native residents did. However, agriculture and husbandry were of much greater importance. Hay and "turkey wheat," or Indian corn, were major crops to the early settlers, followed by rye and oats as well as some barley. Salt grass and meadow grass were highly valued for cattle. Apple orchards were also planted during this period. Domesticated animals were also brought over during the first period of settlement. Some dates for the introduction of various animals may have included cattle (1651), hogs (1652), horses (1653), sheep (1653), goats (1668), and domesticated fowl (hens, ducks, and geese) before 1660. Dogs are also noted in 1661, but they may have been a Native American breed. Oxen were also probably present; however, no date exists for their introduction.

No mills existed in Edgartown during this period. However, Edgartown residents may have operated an early mill in Tisbury at the end of the Mill Path. Whaling developed early on Martha's Vineyard focusing on drift whales. As early as 1653, certain individuals in the Edgartown area were designated as whale cutters for the town. In addition, by 1669 barrels of whale oil and processing equipment were appearing on estate lists. Evidence also exists that the coastwise trade was important from the time of first settlement, for one of the first settlers, Robert Codman (ca. 1656) was engaged in that trade and evidently pursued it after his settling on Martha's Vineyard. Fishing was also pursued by the early settlers. However, little information exists regarding this trade. It was likely pursued seasonally by farmers and other persons.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Contact and Plantation period trails, paths, ways, roads, and bridges continued in use. During the Colonial period, several new locations are mentioned. The Mashacket Path is first noted in 1677, but probably existed earlier. The Sanchacantacket Path is first noted in 1678 and became an extension of the main highway

leading out of the village. The Wintucket Path or road is first mentioned in 1708, Mob Street in 1762, and South and North Water Streets officially in 1786, but as an alley as early as 1703. Meeting House Way, or the present Commercial Street, was laid out in 1768, Penny Wise Path in 1734, and Tarkill (Tarkiln) Path in 1738. The Maskachet Bridge is mentioned again early in the Colonial period, as well as bridges over Mile Brook, Menoda Creek, and possibly the pile bridge over Sanchacontacket inlet.

B. Population

Actual statistical figures on which population estimates can be made are not available until 1657 when muster rolls were available for persons capable of bearing arms. Prior to that point, population estimates are based on scattered sources. In 1676, Banks (1911: 15) notes about 27 heads of families, or about 125 persons. In 1694, the Athearn map notes 35 or 36 houses in Edgartown which Banks (1911: 16) estimates at about 40 families. Between 1700 and 1765, when the first census was taken, population grew considerably. In 1757 muster rolls listed 182 individuals, possibly indicating a total population of 900 or more persons. In 1765, census figures list from 945 persons (census figure) to 1,030 persons in 150 families in 128 homes (Banks 1911: 16). the 1765 census also lists 86 natives: Edgartown had the largest Martha's Vineyard population at this time.

C. Settlement Pattern

No new evidence regarding native populations for the Colonial period is present beyond that noted for the Contact and Plantation periods. In 1690 the Praying Indians at Chappaquiddick were set apart from other Native Americans in the eastern portion of the island. European settlements continued to expand in the Great Harbor area as well as coastal areas in the southern portion of the township. The Chappaquiddick Island area was first residentially settled during the Colonial period, the first settlement being in 1750. In 1691, the area was again under the political authority of Massachusetts. By 1765, Edgartown had the largest European settlement on the island.

two cemeteries were in existence by 1768; the earliest on Burial Hill with the second on Pease Point Way. A fortification existed in the town as early as 1691, probably at or near Pease's Point. Its size, location, and actual date of construction remains unknown.

D. Economic Base

Hunting probably declined in importance with fishing becoming more prominent for both Europeans and natives. Otherwise, Edgartown's economic base continued to build on foundations established during the Plantation period. Farming and husbandry were important as well as maritime trades such as coasting, the whaling industry, and the fisheries. Taverns or inns were also established as early as 1680, possibly in conjunction with maritime interests. Physicians were now present in the town. At least four were

present in Edgartown from 1720-75. Grist mills were also probably established during the Colonial period. However, only grist mills operated under wind power were present in the town.

E. Architecture

Residential: Although houses dated to this period are few, they represent a range of house types. Most are variations on the central chimney house, with both 1 1/2- and 2 1/2-story examples surviving. Best known of the former is the Vincent House (1685), five-bay, center entry, double pile type; others are three or four bays in width (about six). A comparable number survive in the 2 1/2-story form, including the 1704 Captain Fisher House and the 1765 Thomas Cook House. The town is unusual in the number of double interior chimney houses, 2 1/2 stories in height, five bays in width, with center entry; examples include the Timothy Coffin House (1734), Swasey-Kelley House (1766), and the hip-roofed Daggett House. The inventory also dates a number of 2 1/2-story three- and four-bay houses to this period.

Institutional: The town built a number of meetinghouses in succession between settlement and the Revolution. The first (1653) is of unknown appearance; the second (ca. 1665) was 33 x 19 feet with an eight-foot stud height; the third (1719-20) was to be no larger than 40 x 30 feet; the fourth (1767) was 60 x 45 feet with interior galleries. The first county (1721) measured 27 x 40 feet. A jail was probably located in the town as early as 1699, of unknown appearance; its 1743 replacement measured 24 x 12 feet with seven-foot studs and was replaced in 1762.

II. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

The Colonial period road system remained in use, with the main highways extending west to Tisbury (West Tisbury Road) and northwest to Holmes Hole (Vineyard Haven Road). Some extension westward of the Edgartown Village grid occurred. Packet service from New Bedford to Edgartown was established by ca. 1800, and extended to Nantucket by 1807.

B. Population

Edgartown's population grew erratically in the Federal period post-Revolutionary years, rising until 1790, falling for a decade, and rising again until 1810. Only in the years following 1820 do the figures suggest any sustained growth. By 1830, Edgartown had a population of 1509.

In 1820, of the 282-member labor force, 100 were in agriculture, 135 in "commerce" (including "ocean commerce," whaling and fishing), and 43 in manufacturing.

The number of white residents on Chappaquiddick increased, and 23 houses, both "English" and "Indian," were noted in 1781. A meetinghouse was noted on the reservation in 1830.

The town's Congregational society appointed an Arminian minister in 1780. Preaching by a former slave from Virginia made converts to Methodism, perhaps the first in the region, from 1787 until his death in 1805; itinerants visited thereafter, and classes were formed in the town (1809) and on Chappaquiddick. They shared a meetinghouse with the town's Baptists after 1811. The Baptists had begun as an offshoot of the group in Holmes Hole (1787), met first in a school, and became a separate society in 1823. An academy, Thaxtor's, operated in the town after 1825. Masons were members at Holmes Hole and Nantucket until forming their own lodge in 1820.

C. Settlement Pattern

Growth of Edgartown Village at Great Harbor continued, stimulated in part by the granting of port of entry status in 1789, and by the town's role as the county seat. High-income residential development intensified along the North Water Street-South Water Street shoreline lots, and housing began to extend northwest from the primary wharves, particularly along Main Street and Cooke Street. In 1781 the county courthouse was moved from its North Water Street site to Commercial Street. In 1803, a new courthouse was built on Main Street. A jail and keeper's house were added on the adjacent lot in 1825. New commercial development concentrated along the Main Street toward the shore. By period's end, several churches were located in the village. A Union Meetinghouse was built on School Street, and by period's end was used exclusively by the Baptists. The first Methodist Church was built on Winter Street in 1822, but this was replaced in 1827 by a Main Street edifice opposite the Court House. The fifth Congregational church was located to the south in 1828 at South Summer and Cooke Street. Thaxter Academy and been located near here in 1825 at South Summer and Davis. Earlier (1799) the Custom House was located at Cooke and School, but by 1830 it had been relocated to North Water Street.

D. Economic Base

Although Edgartown had a substantial agricultural production in the Federal period, raising sheep and other products, the whale and other fisheries continued to be the chief occupation of her residents. Harbor considered one of the best on the Atlantic coast, deeper than Nantucket, so that as whale ships grew in size, many Nantucket whalers were outfitted in Edgartown. Establishment of Cape Poge Light, 1801, probably a reflection of this increased business. In 1807, Freeman reported "ten sail of vessels": two fishermen, five coasters, one pilot boat, one West Indies trader, and one carrying fish to New York. First whaler from Edgartown, 1816. Harbor light established 1828.

The only mills were windmills, and were local grist mills only. Eighteenth-century coopering business probably expands; by 1832 the industry produced 3,000 barrels annually for the whale fleet; three salt works established by 1807.

E. Architecture

Residential: Houses dated to this period by the inventory are overwhelmingly 2 1/2 stories in height, and include several types. Hip roofs became the most popular, including a center chimney, four-bay, side-entry example, several double interior chimney examples, including five with a gable on hip roof, as well as two examples each of three- and four-bay types. Two single pile end chimney types with rear ells are also known.

Institutional: The town's Congregational society built its fifth meetinghouse, designed by Frederick Baylis, in 1828. It represents the shift to church plan, with paired entries into a projecting pedimented vestibule which provides partial support for the square tower with steeple. It is two stories in height. A Union meetinghouse of unknown appearance was built for the town's Baptists and Methodists in 1811. The Methodists built their own house in 1822, which was sold to the Chilmark Society in 1827. Their next house was constructed thereafter (becoming the town hall in 1843); it is a gable front structure with paired entries raised above ground level and reached by stairs, and with round heads on all its second-tier of windows. The Baptists built a new house ca. 18390; it was also designed by Frederick Baylis, gable front in form with paired entry and a Tuscan portico. It became the Masonic Lodge. A new courthouse was built in 1808, measuring 36 x 26 feet, of brick, 2 1/2-stories in height, with segmental arches over its windows, with later additions in 1859 and 1897. An adjoining jail was built in 1825 and stood until 1874.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

The early 19th-century roadways continued in use, with westward expansion of the Edgartown Village grid. Daily packet service from New Bedford to Edgartown was initiated in 1837.

B. Population

Edgartown's population rose steadily until 1860, reaching in that year an all-time high of 2118. In 1855 360 men were employed on the whale ships, probably representing the majority of Edgartown's working population. The sharp decline in this business, however, brought about a similar decline in the town's population: by 1870, Edgartown had returned to the same size it had been in 1830.

Edgartown's foreign-born population amounted to less than 3% in 1865. As a result of the whaling industry, over half this group was made up of a small Portuguese-born population.

Little information on institutions and movements for this period. A second academy, Davis, operated pre-1836. A Lyceum and subscription library was formed in 1850. On Chappaquiddick, all denominations worshipped at the Marine chapel ca. 1860.

C. Settlement Pattern

Edgartown Village continued to grow through the 1840s, as infill and extensions occurred along the North Water Street-South Water Street axis. New residential development expanded northwest toward Pease Point Way. The Main/Church area remained the civic/county seat focus. A new Baptist church was built nearby on School Street in 1839. With the construction of a new, monumental Methodist church in 1843, the 1827 Methodist edifice became the town hall. A new Court House was built in 1859. The North Water/Main Street intersection was firmly established as the commercial focus with the location of the Custom House here in 1849, and the addition of the Edgartown Bank in 1855. Stores clustered nearby on Main and North Water. Maritime industries located along the shore including the North Water Street candle factory

D. Economic Base

Whaling dominated the town throughout the period, as the number of whalers rose from 195 in 1837 to 255 (1845) to 360 in 1855. Almost all the land-based industries were subservient to whale ships, as small shops produced hats, boots and shoes, blocks and pumps, boats, tinware, casks, or woolen clothing for the whalers or their ships. The largest of these industries was the oil and candle works of Dr. Daniel Fisher (1799-1876). He is said to have "cornered the whale oil market" and obtained a contract to supply all the government-operated lighthouses. His oil works was said to be the "largest in the world" (Hough, p. 18). By 1855 the works produced nearly \$470,000 worth of oil and candles, much the largest single product value reported that year.

The whaling industry was hard hit by the business depression of 1857. The enormous quantities of whale oil soon overstocked a market much less inclined to buy, and prices fell dramatically. Any possible recovery of the business was further compromised by the discovery of petroleum in 1859, in the long run virtually eliminating the demand for sperm and whale oil as illuminants. In 1865, the number of men employed in Edgartown whalers had fallen to 180 as whale bone -- the Bowhead's baleen -- became increasingly sought after.

E. Architecture

Residential: Several large houses with hip roofs, double interior chimneys were constructed with Greek Revival entries, including the Captain's House (1832), the Edward Coffin House (1839), and the Jeremiah Pease House (1858). Most builders shifted to the gable front form during this period. The majority were 1 1/2 stories in height. Like houses in Tisbury, most (ca. 25) were four bays in width, occasionally employing the large centered and small side windows common to the side elevation of capes, as did a five-bay example; one included a Doric porch within its in block. Next most numerous were the three-bay examples (ca. 20). Two-and-a-half-story examples were also most often four bay sin width (ca. 10), as well as three bays (ca. 5) and five bays (ca.

4). Although most examples are trimmed with Greek Revival entries and cornice boards, they occasionally employ Gothic windows in their gable apexes. At least one of the 1 1/2-story types is fitted out with full Gothic trim at the cornices, labels over openings, and a flushboard facade. Later in the period, a variety of house forms were ornamented with Italianate bracketed cornices, hooded doors, etc.; one large example is a 2 1/2-story gable front with a large perpendicular side wing; others (ca. 3) are 2 1/2-story, double interior chimney, center entry houses of three and five bays, with facade gable treatment. A small number of mansard-roofed houses were constructed, of 1 1/2 and 2 1/2 stories, three and five bays' widths.

Institutional: The town's Methodists replaced their church with the large Greek Revival church, gable front in form with monumental Tuscan portico supporting the pediment, square tower with belfry, clock, and pinnacles; it has three front entries and square headed windows. Several schools survive from this period, 2 1/2 stories in height with gable front forms employing Greek Revival corner pilasters and cornices, including a center entry version now serving as apartments, the center entry, ball cornice, Dan's Academy of 1836, and the South School of ca. 1840 with a bracketed cornice.

Commercial: The town's earliest surviving commercial buildings date to this period and include two 2 1/2-story and one 1 1/2-story gable front examples; one exceptional large example employs a corner entry and ornamental pilasters on the first floor. The brick bank of 1855 is 1 1/2 stories, three bays, with center entry and ornament form the cornice in brick.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

The 19th-century road network remained in use. In 1874, railroad service was initiated from Oak Bluffs, passing west of Edgartown Village to Katama Point. Repeated reconstruction of the roadbed along the northeast shore was made necessary by winter storm damage. After 22 years, service was discontinued in 1896. The Beach Road to Oak Bluffs was opened in 1872, and in 1902 was improved as a macadam state highway.

B. Population

Edgartown's population continued to decline until 1895, given a substantial boost in its decline by the separation of Cottage City (Oak Bluffs) in 1880 with a loss of 672. By 1895, the town's population stood at 1125.

Edgartown's subsequent growth, reaching 1276 by 1915, was in large part due to her growing Portuguese population. By 1915, 10% of the population was Portuguese born.

C. Settlement Pattern

Residential infill occurred at Edgartown Village, and peripheral additions were made on Upper Main Street at Memorial Park and along Pease Point Way north of Main Street. Protestant Episcopal St. Andrew's Church was located on Summer Street in 1899. A public library was built on North Water in 1904. Mattakeset Lodge was built at Katama Point in 1873, but projected real estate development in the area never materialized, and the hotel was removed in 1910.

D. Economic Base

Edgartown seems to have shared relatively little of the burgeoning summer popularity of Oak Bluffs, despite the new railroad linking that development with Edgartown and Katama. Fishing still remained an important industry, however. The value of flounder, mackerel, and cod caught made dramatic gains in the period 1905-1915 (possibly credited to the new use of motor boats over the slower and less efficient sailing vessels). The value of cod caught, \$34,560, was second in the study unit (after Provincetown), while the value of mackerel was third. Flounder caught in 1915 was valued at nearly six times the catch a decade earlier.

E. Architecture

Residential: Early in the period, large houses were built in the Queen Anne style, including 2 1/2-story examples with gable blocks ornamented by facade gables or bay windows and porches, as well as hip blocks with gabled projecting side bays, facade gables, and porches. Ornamental shingles, brackets, and porches were occasionally added to gable front house forms familiar from earlier periods. Shingle Style houses were also built in small numbers, 2 1/2 stories in height, most often with gable roofs, less often with large gable roofs, and ornamented with multiple dormers, facade gables or towers, and porches. Later in the period, bungalows and 2 1/2-story pyramidal were constructed in similarly small numbers employing Arts and Crafts motifs.

Institutional: After meeting since 1895 in private homes, the town's Episcopalians completed St. Andrew by the Sea in 1899; this small brick Gothic church employed half-timbering in its gables, entry into one gable end, and a belfry at the opposite.

With the rise of social and recreational clubs, some clubhouses were built, although few are of known appearance. A combination yacht-tennis club survives, a small bungalow-type structure with center entry and shed dormer above. The "reading room" is 1 1/2 stories in height with a hip roof, center entry into porch under primary roof, and round dormers.

The town's Carnegie Library was constructed in 1904.

Commercial: Attempts at encouraging tourism in the town date from the plans for Katama and the construction there of the Mattakeset Lodge (1873); called "chateaux" in style, the 75-room hotel

consisted of a main block of 3 1/2 stories under a high hip roof and a large octagonal tower of 4 1/2 stories at each end of a 2 1/2-story mansard roof central section, with porch. The Harbor View (1891) was composed of earlier sections moved to the North Water St. site. Other hotels include the Colonial Inn, of three stories with a porch and shingle wall cover.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

The main local roadways radiating from Edgartown Village were paved and improved, including Oak Bluffs Road, Vineyard Haven Road, West Tisbury Road, and Katama Road. By the early 1930s, an airport had been established at Katama in the south.

B. Population

Population rose only slightly between 1915 and 1940, with occasional lapses, 1915-20 and 1935-40. By 1940 number of year-round residents numbered 1370, 94 persons above the figure twenty-five years before. During the same period, her foreign-born population, still dominated by the Portuguese, fell from 18 to 14 percent.

C. Settlement Pattern

Peripheral resort development continued around Edgartown Village, and the Edgartown Yacht Club located at the harbor in 1927. New residential development extended northeast on Fuller Street and north beyond the Edgartown Golf Club (1926). New development also extended south along Pease Point Way and on the Inner Harbor shore. Shoreline estate development also occurred on Chappaquiddick Island to the east.

D. Economic Base

In 1915, the Mattakeeset Herring Fishery produced a catch valued at \$6043, the highest value of any in the state. The company was a major supplier of halibut schooners with bait until 1928, when Great Pond broke through to the sea. As in Barnstable, the presence of the herring encouraged the manufacture of artificial pearls. Ralph Bodman, an Attleboro jeweler, patented a process for using the herring scale to manufacture pearl essence, and he established a flourishing pearl business near Herring Creek. At the same time, the Mattakeeset manufacture of artificial pearls. Ralph Bodman, an Attleboro jeweler, patented a process for using the herring scale to manufacture pearl essence, and he established a flourishing pearl business near Herring Creek. At the same time, the Mattakeeset reek Company in 1917 constructed a herring processing plant.

Shell fisheries, wrote Banks in 1908, were equal in value to the other sea foods collected in Vineyard waters

E. Architecture

Residential: A small number of new houses were constructed during the period, including Colonial Revival bungalows, Dutch Colonials, Cape Cod cottages, and at least one large 2 1/2-story, five bay, Georgian Revival example.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Although the inventory is technically complete, it suffers from common problems, including photographs inadequate for typing, lack of dates, and too little descriptive texts.

XII. SOURCES

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