

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

OAK BLUFFS

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: Oak Bluffs

I. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of Oak Bluffs is located on the island of Martha's Vineyard lying between 70°50' and 70°25' longitude and 41°05' and 41°30' latitude. The island covers approximately 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. Oak Bluffs is located in the northeastern portion of the island bounded to the east and north by the Nantucket Sound, to the north and west by Vineyard Sound, to the north and west by Tisbury, and to the south by Edgartown. Major physical features in the town include Sengekontacket Pond, Lagoon Pond, Vineyard Haven Haror, and the East Chop.

The uplands in the town are within the bounds of the Nantucket Moraine, a hilly and rocky area covering nearly all of the township. The moraine is composed largely of coarse or medium sand and boulders of varying size (Latimer 1925:10). In general, soils are sandy and not stratified. Some areas of town are also within outwash plain locations. Outwash areas are sandier and stratified. Drainage is generally subsurface, although some ponds and streams are present. Elevations average 100 feet or less in the interior and 50 feet or less along the coast and on the outwash plain. Nearly the entire town is within an oak/pine vegetation zone. Some dune vegetation is also present.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

East Chop appears to have been included in the original Great Harbor township grant of 1641, which was incorporated in 1671 as the town of Edgartown. The area remained part of Edgartown until 1880, when tax controversies ultimately led to the separation of the northern part of town, and its incorporation as Cottage City. The corporate name was changed to Oak Bluffs in 1907.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Oak Bluffs is a resort community on the northeast shore of Martha's Vineyard, with numerous likely native sites. First permanent European settlement of East Chop took place ca. 1667 as the northern periphery of Edgartown. Late 18th and early 19th century secondary Holmes Hole Harbor settlement developed at Eastville. First local Methodist Camp Meeting was located to the east in 1835. By mid 19th century, the Wesleyan Grove tent city had expanded to a summer camp meeting of regional importance. By 1860, permanent Carpenter Gothic cottages were being built, and the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association was formed. Subsequently, the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company promoted

secular development of east coast lands. Lands to the north were less successfully organized as the Vineyard Highlands, with a Baptist Camp Meeting. Tax controversies with Edgartown led to separation as Cottage City in 1880. By the late 19th century, the town displayed a range of religious and secular resort features, including open air tabernacles, wharf and boardwalk facilities, commercial and recreational complexes, and landmark shoreside hotels. This unique assemblage of activities made Cottage City the major center on Martha's Vineyard and one of the foremost resorts in the region. An early 20th century summer estate district subsequently developed at East Chop. Although major hotels, boardwalks, and wharves have been lost, the Camp Meeting Grounds survive, still under the control of the Association, as does most of the Oak Bluffs residential development, the Circuit Avenue commercial district, and many elements of the Oak Bluffs Avenue recreational complex.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Little is known regarding Contact period trails in the Oak Bluffs area. Major trails probably followed coastlines in the east around Sengekontachet Pond to the Chappaquiddick Island area, and in the west around Lagoon Pond to the West Chop and Lake Tashmo areas. Interior trails in the Oak Bluffs area also probably existed as well as tracks to the south toward coastal ponds and projected village areas in Edgartown, West Tisbury, Chilmark, and Gay Head.

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.

Oak Bluffs may not have had one of the larger native populations on Martha's Vineyard during the Contact period. However, substantial populations undoubtedly existed in the Lagoon Pond and Sengekontachet Pond areas, as these were both preferred coastal pond settlement locations (Ritchie 1969:2). At the close of the period, native populations in the Oak Bluffs area probably did not exceed 100 individuals. European populations were not present in Oak Bluffs during this period.

C. Settlement Pattern

European settlements did not exist in Oak Bluffs or on Martha's Vineyard during this period. However, some contact between Indians 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 noticeable were Gosnold's voyages through the islands off the Cape and settlement at Cuttyhunk in 1602.

Native Americans had settled the Oak Bluffs area for some time prior to European contact. While specific Late Woodland period sites are not known, artifact finds for this period are known for the town as a whole. Late Woodland artifact finds are also known for the Lagoon Pond area, conforming to an island and regional trend for coastal settlement preferences. Additional sites should be present in interior areas also.

No evidence exists at present to identify specific Contact period village sites. However, it seems probable they existed since the Oak Bluffs area was originally called by its Algonquin name "Ogkeshkuppe," referring to a tribal/village area subordinate to the major Takemmy and Nunnepog areas to the south. Furthermore, a native presence in the Oak Bluffs area is further attested to by the fact that much of the area of first settlement, particularly the Ogisske neck area, was purchased from the local natives. Native place names for Martha's Vineyard and the Oak Bluffs area also provide clues to the extent to which natives either inhabited and/or used these areas. For example, Tikhomah refers to the area at the head of Lagoon Pond, Quosaquannes refers to a tract of land on the east side of the easternmost chop of Homes Hole, Quatapog is a small pond of farm neck, and so on. Numerous native or Algonquian names still exist for Oak Bluffs locales, particularly coastal areas.

Thus, while specific Contact period village sites are unknown for the Oak Bluffs area, artifact finds of the Late Woodland period, the extensive presence of native names in the area, and the fact that early settlers had to deal directly with the natives for land indicate that natives were active in the area and that Contact period sites should exist. Native settlement for the Oak Bluffs 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 Oak Bluffs 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 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 Oak Bluffs 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 Chilmark, 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 the Oak Bluffs area, several estuaries contain mixed and concentrated shellfish populations of quahog, bay scallop, and soft shell clam. Mussels and oysters may also have been available in significant quantities. Areas in Oak Bluffs containing shellfish populations include the Lagoon Pond, portions of Sengekontacket Pond, Oak Bluffs Harbor, and portions of Vineyard Haven Harbor. Alewife runs are not now present in Oak Bluffs, but may once have been available..

In addition to alewives and shellfish, other species of marine life were also available in the Oak Bluffs 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 wetlands and forested areas of Martha's Vineyard and Oak Bluffs 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

Transportation routes in the Oak Bluffs area probably changed little over that noted for the Contact period. Native populations were declining, and European settlement had not come until late in the period. New trails may have been present in the Farm Pond/Oak Bluffs area.

B. Population

Native populations in the Oak Bluffs area probably declined from previous lows during the Contact period. European populations are also difficult to determine during this period. Lands were granted in the Oak Bluffs area as early as 1642. However, it is unclear whether or not Oak Bluffs landowners actually resided on their holdings, as many of them also had homes in Great Harbor and Boston. No census records exist for Oak Bluffs prior to 1880.

C. Settlement Pattern

Little direct evidence is present to indicate that natives still lived in the Oak Bluffs area during the Plantation period. However, it appears likely that they did exist, since they were selling land to Europeans as late as 1653 (Ogisske Neck) and the Lagoon and Sengekontachet ponds were favorable areas of settlement. No known sites of this area are reported.

Many of the first landholders in the Oak Bluffs area did not reside there, since they resided in the earlier Great Harbor village settlement. Actual settlement first occurred in the area originally known as Ogkeshkuppe and later Sanchacotachet Neck. Thomas Mayhew gave the area its first English name, calling it the easternmost chop of Homes Hole, later known as Farm Neck. The name Farm Neck results from the fact that in 1642 Mayhew gave the first grant of 500 acres to John Dagget for a farm which covered the present settlement of Oak Bluffs. However, this grant was disputed and it was not until 1660 that Dagget gained full title to the land. It is unknown exactly when Dagget settled in Oak Bluffs, but it is generally felt he was the first White man within the limits of the town. Dagget moved to West Tisbury in 1673. Thomas Mayhew had the first farm in Oak Bluffs, but did not reside there.

D. Economic Base

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

European settlers in the Oak Bluffs 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 may also have been planted during this period. Domesticated animals were also brought over during the first period of settlement. Some of them included cattle, hogs, horses, sheep, goats, fowl, and possibly oxen.

Banks (1911:37) indicates that one mill may have existed in the Oak Bluffs area. Nicholas Norton (died ca. 1690) is said to have utilized a small brook that was from a marsh to Sanchacontacket pond for a mill site since a dam still existed there and early deeds make reference to it.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes

Contact and Plantation period trails were likely still in use, as the town had a rural atmosphere into the 19th century. Coastal paths along the east coast were likely upgraded to accommodate horse and cart travel to Edgartown and connecting settlement areas (Major's Cove, Farm Pond, Pecoy and Eastville). However, since most settled areas were along the coast, it appears likely that water travel may have been more important to the early residents than overland routes.

B. Population

Census records for the Oak Bluffs area do not exist prior to 1880. Thus, Colonial period population figures are as scanty as those of the previous period. Banks (1911:5) notes the Des Barres map of 1781 as showing 32 houses probably representing 35 families or 180 persons. Population figures at the close of the Colonial period probably approached the estimates based on the Des Barres map.

C. Settlement Pattern

Following limited Plantation period settlement in the Oak Bluffs/Farm Pond area, settlement in other areas of town was quick to follow during the subsequent Colonial period. The Major's Cove area was settled late in the 17th century, possibly as early as 1686. The Eastville area was also settled early, possibly by 1695, although purchases were made as early as ca. 1686. Settlement was also made at Pecoy or Pohqu-Auke, a small neck on Sengekontacket Pond.

Settlement throughout the Colonial period was slow. Basically, the Oak Bluffs area was sparsely settled farmland until the 19th century. By 1781, the Des Barres map shows 32 houses in the Oak

Bluffs area, the majority of which were located in Eastville settlement which was rapidly assuming a maritime focus.

D. Economic Base

By this period, hunting was probably of little importance, with fishing becoming more prominent for both Europeans and native Americans. Otherwise, Oak Bluffs' economic base continued to build on foundations established during the Plantation period. Farming and husbandry were important. In addition, evidence at hand indicates maritime trades such as casting, the whaling industry, and the fisheries were rapidly gaining importance. The increasing importance of maritime related trades is somewhat indicated by the development of taverns early in the 18th century. Moreover, Oak Bluffs taverns were concentrated for the most part in the Eastville area on the northwestern coastline. Taverns, particularly in this area, most often serviced shipping interests who furnished their patronage. Between 1730 and 1787, at least six persons were licensed inn holders in this area.

No evidence exists at present to indicate additional mills were built during the Colonial period over that noted for the previous period.

E. Architecture

Residential: Houses that survive from this period are story and a half, double pile, five-bay, center chimney and center entry in form. The oldest, Webb House on the Lagoon, is reputed to be the oldest, possibly dating from the last quarter of the 17th century. Others dating from the mid 18th century are similar in form, and are located in the area of Eastville.

Institutional: No institutional buildings are known from this period.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes

The Colonial period roadways continued in use in this northern area of Edgartown. The primary routes were the Edgartown Road from Holmes Hole across the south and the northern branch to Eastville/East Chop (County Road-Eastville Road). By period's end, a wharf had been built at Eastville.

B. Population

Separate population figures are not available for Oak Bluffs until separation in 1880. However, village of Eastville, the largest community in the town in this period was reported to have "not more than 15 houses" in 1807 -- about one fifth the size of Edgartown's community of 80 houses. (Based on Freeman's own "exact" enumeration in August 1807, this would put about 91 people in Eastville.)

The village of Eastville expanded with neighboring Holmes Holes during this period. The island's first group of Methodist converts met here under John Saunders, an ex-slave from Virginia, from 1787-95, and periodically thereafter.

C. Settlement Pattern

Each Chop Neck remained a peripheral area of Edgartown, with a settlement focus on Holmes Hole Harbor at Eastville. In 1781, 32 houses were located in the area, mostly at Eastville. In 1798, a marine hospital was established here.

D. Economic Base

There being no settlement at the later Cottage City site, Eastville's economic orientation was probably toward Holmes Hole (Vineyard Haven). Fishing, whaling, and some agriculture may be imagined.

E. Architecture

Residential: The small number of houses that remain from this period indicate continued construction of the story-and-a-half, double pile, five bay, center chimney, center entry house form.

Institutional: A Marine Hospital existed after 1798 in Eastville, of unknown appearance.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes

The early 19th century roadways continued in use. By the 1850s, Eastville wharf had gained importance as the landing point for the thousands of summer visitors to the Wesleyan Grove Methodist Camp Meeting, and the Eastville Road to "Cottage City" became a well traveled corridor until Oak Bluffs Wharf was constructed in 1867.

B. Population

Separate population figures not available until 1880. No identified permanent growth in Oak Bluffs. Figures for Edgartown, then including Oak Bluffs, decline steadily in 1860s. No substantial immigrant population identified.

The key event in the town's development occurred in 1835 when lay exhorter Jeremiah Pease chose the oak grove on the edge of Squash Meadow Pond for a camp meeting for island Methodists. The area became so popular that only one meeting was held elsewhere by this group, and attracted attendants first from the Cape and later Massachusetts generally. At first, visitors came in groups from their hometown religious societies, who put up a tent and segregated the group by gender. Later families lived in smaller tents separately. Meetings began as weekend retreats whose primary events included the Sacrament (Eucharist), Love Feast

(testimonials) and Parting (procession and hand-shaking farewell). Soon, meetings were lengthened, and the days were punctuated by preaching from the stand at 10, 2, and 7, as well as in tents and parks throughout the day.

The growth in the number of attendants during the period was dramatic. From 9 tents in 1835, the number swelled to 20 society tents in 1841, plus family tents bringing ca. 800 for the meeting and 2,000 to the Sunday service. In 1851 there were ca. 100; in 1854, 180 tents including 36 parish tents. The meeting began to attract the curious as well as the devout at this time. In 1858 the tents numbered 320, and 12,000 attended Sunday services; 600 tent and cottage lots were leased in 1868. The meeting was ecumenical in spirit, attracting members of most Protestant denominations as well as Roman Catholics.

Concern over the secular "picnic" atmosphere increased during the 1860s, and led to the purchase of the Vineyard Highland area as a potential retreat from the more secular activities of the adjacent development of the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Co., as well as the construction of a six-foot-high fence to enclose the meeting.

Residents of the area, particularly at Farm Neck, as well as upislanders, supplied the growing community with food and supplies.

C. Settlement Pattern

The period saw the continued growth of Eastville, and the establishment and efflorescence of the seasonal settlement of the Methodist Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association. The first camp meetings on East Chop Neck took place in 1835 at an oak grove at Squash Meadow Pond in the northeast. By 1840, summer meetings were held at Wesleyan Grove, with focus at Trinity Park. By 1848, 50 tents were erected for the annual meeting.

Meanwhile, Eastville grew as the landing point for summer visitors and as the nearest local center providing services for the flow of summer traffic. A small Methodist church was located here in 1840 on the road east to the meeting grounds, and a small Baptist church was built on this road in 1845. By 1850, 26 houses were located on East Chop Neck, mostly at Eastville.

Popularity of the camp meetings grew, and by 1858 the summer "Canvas City" had expanded to 320 tents. By the late 1850s, annual visitors were replacing tents with elaborately decorated Carpenter Gothic cottages, and in 1859 the Camp Meeting Association built a permanent administration center at Trinity Park. Circular and radial street patterns were laid out, with Forest Circle established southwest of Trinity Park in 1864 and County Park to the east in 1865. Clinton Avenue boulevard was laid out in 1868. Postwar cottage construction rates intensified, and by 1870, 60 carpenters were employed full-time in the off-season at "Cottage City." In 1870, a great canvas tabernacle was erected at Trinity Park. In addition, the potential of Cottage City as a secular resort was being exploited by period's

end, as the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company purchased the land between the camp meeting grounds and the sea in 1866 for speculative development. The response of the Camp Meeting Association was to build a seven-foot-high fence around their entire 36-acre tract in 1867 to isolate themselves from the new development. The Association that year also purchased a 55-acre tract at Vineyard Highlands to the north, to assure the possibility of future, controlled expansion.

D. Economic Base

No change in economic base. East Chop and Eastville remain oriented toward Vineyard Haven. East Chop light built 1869 as a private enterprise by Silas Daggett of Vineyard Haven (trusting in subsequent reimbursement by U.S.). Development of campground for summer cottages by land companies begun c.1860 affects only seasonal occupation.

E. Architecture

Residential: Expanding Eastville adopted the new gable front form during this period; houses remained a story and a half in height and double pile in depth, but presented a gable end, three-bay, side entry facade to the street. Occasionally sidewall dormers and ells were added.

In the campground the earliest dwellings were tents, large ones for societies, smaller for families outside the first circle. The wood framing of these tents was soon supplemented by side walls and roofs and by the 1850s, frame structures were being constructed. About 1859, prefabricated cottages were being transported from Providence, Rhode Island. Large numbers were being constructed by local craftsmen by 1864, when the land was purchased by the camp meeting, 40 in that year alone.

The basic form of the cottage was uniform: 15 x 20 feet in overall dimensions, built on brick piers, a story and a half in height, gable front to the street; the facade is composed of a center double door with a small window on either side on the first floor, and a central double door leading to a cantilevered porch on the second. The exterior ornament for which these cottages are best known is derived from the random width tongue and groove wall finish, the variety in the shapes of the openings, roundheaded, lancet, etc., the jigsaw cut bargeboards and turned balusters. First-floor porches and other wall finish (clapboard or shingles) are in many cases later additions. On the interior these homes were simple, composed of a large front room and smaller rear room with stair to the single second-floor chamber. Even in these early years, larger buildings were constructed in the campground. Double cottages were built for preachers on Trinity Park.

Institutional: A school was built in 1775 at Farm Neck and survived into the 20th century; it was a small, gable front, one-room, one-story structure with a gabled porch entry.

In 1835, Jeremiah Pease and others built the first preachers' stand in Wesleyan Grove, and nine tents were set up in a semicircle around it. It was rebuilt to accommodate larger crowds in 1857, and covered by a huge tent in 1870.

Commercial: A lighthouse was built in 1802 of wood on East Chop. The first of the area's major hotels, the Central House, was constructed in the campground in the 1860s. A storefront survives on Montgomery Square, the commercial area within the campground.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes

With its expansion as a camp meeting and summer resort center, Cottage city became the focus of improvements in the transportation system on Martha's Vineyard. New, more direct roadways were built. Tisbury to the west completed the Lagoon Bridge in 1871 to provide direct access from Holmes Hole to Cottage City along Beach Road through Eastville. In 1872, Edgartown built a Beach Road along the east coast to Cottage City. The Vineyard Grove Company built a bridge across Squash Meadow Pond (later Lake Avenue) dividing it into Lake Anthony on the north and Sunset Lake on the south. The Company also constructed Highland Wharf at the head of Commercial Avenue.

A horse railway line was constructed in 1873 from Highland Wharf south to a loop around the Camp Ground circle at Trinity Park. This line was extended to New York Wharf at Eastville in 1892, and to the Prospect House at Lagoon Heights. Meanwhile, in 1874, steam railroad service was opened from the Oak Bluffs Wharf south along the east coast, through Edgartown Village to Katama Point. The line was plagued by roadbed reconstruction costs resulting from winter storm damage along its exposed shoreline route, and survived a series of financial crises before going bankrupt in 1896 after 22 years of operation. The Cottage City Electric Railway Company was formed in 1895, underwritten by nonresident capital, with a powerhouse at Eastville. Service extended west to the Lagoon Bridge, but the route in Vineyard Haven remained a separate line for some time, and electric service was never extended south to Edgartown. Beach Road to Edgartown, however, was improved as a macadam state highway in 1902. In 1900, Lake Anthony was opened to Nantucket Sound and dredged to become Oak Bluffs Harbor.

B. Population

There are no population figures available before incorporation in 1880, when 672 were reported as year-round residents. By the end of the period, this figure had risen to 1245, nearly twice the earlier number. A substantial portion of this rise were the new Portuguese immigrants which in 1885 made up 7% of the population; by 1905 the 235 Portuguese represented 20.6%. This was much the highest number of Portuguese on the island and the third highest number in the study unit after Provincetown and Falmouth.

C. Settlement Pattern

Major new camp meeting and resort development took place at Cottage City as growth continued at the Camp Meeting Grounds, on the land of the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company in the east, and at the newer Vineyard Grove development to the north. Development at Eastville slowed after the construction of wharf facilities at Cottage City.

Trinity Park continued as the focus of the Methodist Camp Meetings, and Trinity United Methodist Church was built here in 1878. The next year a large, open-air tabernacle of cast-iron framing was constructed here to replace the canvas tabernacle. Grace Methodist Chapel was added in 1885. Cottage development continued throughout the camp ground, and the Wesley House and Attleborough House hotels were built along Lake Avenue.

A secular, seaside resort developed at Oak Bluffs to the east. At Oak Bluffs Wharf the landmark Sea View House hotel was built in 1872, and recreational activity extended south along the boardwalk, with a large refreshment pavilion, observation tower, and bathhouses totalling 900 dressing rooms. The area northwest and west of the wharf became an amusement focus, by the 1880s including a trotting track, roller skating rink, dance hall, and carousel. Circuit Avenue grew as a thriving business district, focused on the Land and Wharf Company's 1871 Arcade, with subsequent hotel and store development in the 1880s and 1890s. Union Chapel was constructed off Circuit Avenue in 1871; the Oak Bluffs Baptist Church was built nearby on Pequoit Avenue in 1878. The Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart opened on Circuit Avenue in 1880, and Trinity Episcopal Church was located on Ocean Avenue in 1882. The Sea View House burned in 1892. Cottage development extended along curving streets to the east of Circuit Avenue toward Sea View Avenue, with the residential focus around Ocean Park, where larger, more elaborate Victorian houses were built after the 1890s.

In 1870, the Vineyard Grove Company, controlled by Camp Meeting Association clergy, was formed to develop the Vineyard Highlands area, a tract which had grown to include 200 acres from Squash Meadow Pond to East Chop Light. Highland Wharf, the Highland House (which burned in 1893), and some cottages were all built, but the scheme fell apart in the depression of 1872-73. Some lands were sold, and Vineyard Highlands subsequently came under the control of the Baptist Vineyard Association, which held its first camp meeting at the Highlands Circle in 1875. In 1878 the Baptists built a permanent octagonal wooden tabernacle at the Circle. A business focus ultimately developed along Commercial Avenue south of Highland Wharf, and cottages were built around Highland Circle and west of Sunset Lake. However, the area never shared the level of success of the earlier camp meeting and resort developments, and the Commercial Avenue boardwalk declined after the opening of Oak Bluffs Harbor. At East Chop, large summer estates were built after the 1890s on oceanfront property along Highland Avenue, and larger Victorian houses were built along New

York Avenue. Agassiz Hall of the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute was located near Highland Wharf in 1882, and the Institute remained in business through 1907.

D. Economic Base

Oak Bluffs had a substantial fishing community. Its flounder catch in 1915 was the second highest on the island after Tisbury and the fourth highest in the study unit. In 1890 Gazetteer author Elias Nason reported 25 farms, "but no manufacturing worth mentioning." The town was "mainly a place of summer residence having only the business related to such occupancy." Cottage City, alone of the Martha's Vineyard towns, was provided with its own local gas, electric, and horsecar companies.

E. Architecture

During the 1870s and 1880s, the primary house form constructed in the town remained the camp ground cottage. With the opening up of new development areas, Vineyard Highlands Land & Wharf Co., Bellevue Heights, most notably, these cottages were built, or in some cases moved, from the campground to a new location. Planned with larger lots, however, these areas allowed for the construction of larger and more complex variations on the same form. These expansive campground type cottages were made larger in a variety of ways, most commonly through the addition of another story, a second perpendicular block, cross gables, or side tower; often several of these options were employed. These became large and ambitious compared to the majority: a notable example is the Pitkin House which added cross gables, a high tower, and wall shed dormers; or the Spinney double cottage composed of two gable-front blocks divided by a square tower; both are now in Vineyard Highlands. "Twin Cottages" on Elliot Place is also a double cottage with central tower; the two-story porches with conical roofs on the gable portions resemble towers, and the whole composition is pulled together by a first-floor full facade porch. At present, over 300 cottages survive in the campground, and over 100, many altered, survive elsewhere in Oak Bluffs. Ca. 25 of the expansive type also survive.

As the elaboration of these cottages indicates, in some instances architects were employed in conjunction with their design. Best known is Samuel F. Pratt, who designed ca. 22 buildings in the area between 1870 and 1872, as well as plates in period pattern books. His houses, like his public buildings, stressed roof complexities, combining mansards with cones, dormers, hips and gables at several levels. 140 Wesley Park Road is an example published in Bicknell's Pattern Book, and employs a mansard with tower and dormers.

Builders seldom constructed purely Second Empire buildings, although ca. 5 two-story, three-bay side entry examples, and two larger five-bay, 2 1/2-story houses are known to survive.

In their use of complex roof lines, jigsaw and turned ornament, many of these campground type houses resembled better known Queen Anne style houses, and more familiar forms are known. Several were built on New York Avenue in the 1890s from designs probably by M. F. Cummings. In these examples, the main block of the house is 2 1/2 stories with a hip roof; stylistic asymmetry comes from the varied placement of gabled projections on the front and sides, the use of porches, decks, belevederes, and once a tower. Under ten are known in this complex form, but simpler houses with Queen Anne ornament are also known. In these the three-bay, side entry, gable front block of 1 1/2 or 2 1/2 stories was ornamented with patterned shingles, bargeboards, and turned balustrades; much of the detail has not survived.

Later in the period, summer homes were constructed in the Shingle Style, signaling the arrival of a wealthy resort population to East Chop and Hart Haven. These large houses are usually 2 1/2 stories in height with gable or gambrel roof, first-floor porches and shingle wall cover. Variation comes from the addition of cross gables, facade gables, various dormers, occasional towers, as well as bands of multipaned windows and more unusual shaped openings under gables. About 20 of these survive from the 1890s to period's end, as well as isolated examples of Colonial Revival summer homes. A single example of half-timber and stucco design with fieldstone chimney survives on Beach Road.

Two-and-a-half-story, pyramidal roofed houses of the end of this period also survive, probably constructed by the growing year-round population. Most examples are three bays in width, with equal numbers of side and center entry plans and little ornament.

Institutional: With the success of Wesleyan Grove, the development of nearby areas, and the ecumenical spirit of the camp meeting, it is not surprising that ecclesiastical structures were built here during the 1870s and 1880s. In the campground the Methodists built Trinity Church in 1878 for the resident population; the large gable front building has a center gable roofed entry porch and tall side bell tower and is simply ornamented with bargeboards. A permanent replacement for the preaching stand and tent was dedicated as the Tabernacle in 1879. The overall dimensions of the building are 130 feet on a side and 100 feet in height. Its center section is square with a hip roof of corrugated iron topped by a wooden octagonal cupola; two tiers of roofs spread below divided by bands of windows, supported by delicate iron supports, and open at the base except for small frame entry annexes. In 1885 an auxiliary chapel was constructed, small in size and simple gable front in form.

Outside the campground the two primary new developments constructed houses of worship. On Wayland Grove at Vineyard Highlands the Baptist Temple was dedicated in 1878; it too was constructed of corrugated roofing and iron supports, but was smaller, only one roof level with open sides and octagonal cupola. In response to the closing of the campground behind its

wall, the developers of the Land and Wharf Company built Union Chapel, dedicated in 1871, and designed by Samuel F. Pratt. Its overall form is octagonal with an open, square tower with pyramidal roof and stickwork ornament, and hoods over the entries. Two roof tiers are divided by a band containing lancet windows, and triangular dormers project from each face of the top roof; it is surrounded by an octagonal bell tower.

The island's first Roman Catholic Church was built in 1880 and currently serves as a parish hall. It is a small gable front frame church with inset square entry tower that rises to an open belfry and is topped by a hexagonal roof; its side windows are triangular headed. Trinity Episcopal church of 1882 has undergone alterations; its original form was gable front, center entry with small transepts, shingled with stick ornaments, and small belfry at the junction of the ridges of nave and transept roofs; its was designed by Robert Slack of New Bedford.

Schools of this period are of unknown appearance. The Summer Institute built Agassiz Hall in 1882, 2 1/2 stories in height, large and square, with ornamental facade gables in all four sides of the hip roof, first-floor porch, wide cornice frieze, and stick ornament.

A fire station was constructed in 1886 in the campground, 2 1/2 stories in height, gable front housing two engines, tower in rear, frame in structure with brackets at eaves, and shingle cover. In 1897 the State Police office was constructed in a Colonial Revival style, a single story, three bays in width, under a hip roof, frame in structure.

Commercial: The most important commercial buildings of this period were the large resort hotels. Several major hotels operated during the peak of the summer vacation era in the first half of the period. Preeminent was the Sea View (1872-92) at the head of the Land and Wharf Co.'s wharf. Others included the Vineyard Grove Company's Highland House (ca. 1875-93) at its wharf; Belleview at its wharf on the Lagoon (became school 1906-20s); the Wesley at the edge of the Campground (still in use); several were also located on Circuit Avenue, including the Island House (1872, now minus its upper story), the Pawnee (1870; now only one story), the Metropolitan (demolished), Searell's (1880s, now the Lamp Post), and Hartford House (still standing). The New Seaview on Waban Park (still standing) was built in the 1890s. Most were three or four stories, mansard roofed structures with towers and first-story porches; later examples were gable or gambrel front 2 1/2 story in form with multiple porches.

Built in conjunction with the resort also were a number of entertainment-oriented buildings located at the base of Circuit Avenue. Best known is the simple gable roof structure that covers the Flying Horses Carousel. Earlier, the area included a large roller skating rink housed in a large gable roof structure with stickwork ornament, corner towers, and several cupolas, and viewing stands for the racetrack. Similarly, the beachfront had

more structures during this period including observation towers and bathhouses, as well as plank boardwalks.

On Circuit Avenue, adjacent to the hotels, were other retail establishments. The Arcade, one of the earliest to be built here, was designed by Pratt, and like the houses in the campground, resembles a tent, with a passage into the campground. Others were 2 1/2 stories, gable front structures with storefronts on the first floor and flats above.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915-1940)

A. Transportation Routes

Electric streetcar service ended soon after the period began and automobile traffic intensified. Local highways improved by period's end include the road west to Vineyard Have, connecting to Oak Bluffs Center along Eastville Road-New York Avenue; Beach Road south to Edgartown; County Road south from Eastville; and the Edgartown Road from Vineyard Haven across the southern part of town. Highland Wharf was removed or destroyed in the 1920s.

B. Population

Population rose by 27% between 1915 and 1940, reaching 1584 in the latter year, giving the town the second highest growth rate on the island after Tisbury's 48%. In the same period, the foreign-born population declined from 25% to 15%. In 1937, the summer population was said to be double that of the number of permanent residents.

C. Settlement Pattern

Expansion continued at the Oak Bluffs resort through the period. Movie theatres, gift shops, and a diner were added along the Oak Bluffs Avenue amusement area, and new commercial buildings were constructed along Circuit Avenue in the 1920s. New cottage development extended southwest along Circuit Avenue, Wing Road, and Vineyard Avenue; infill occurred, particularly in the area between Ocean Park and Waban park. A new school was located on School Street southwest of Sunset Lake in 1935. Residential development continued along New York Avenue, where a Seventh-Day Adventist Church was located in 1927, and a Christian Scientist edifice was built in 1928. New estates were built at East Chop in the beginning of the period. Development also extended south of Lagoon Heights in the west and along Beach Road.

D. Economic Base

Farming and some shore fishing remain subsidiary to summer tourist economy.

E. Architecture

Residential: Resort architecture of this period continues to employ forms of the early 20th century: the main gable roof block of 2 1/2 stories is elaborated with oceanside porches, dormers, and cross gables, and shingle cover. A late example employs an ell placed at an angle to the main block to form an unusual plan. A large elaborate house in a classical style is T-plan in form with hip roof and bowed bays. Smaller bungalows were built in Bellevue Heights and near the harbor. An unusual house on New York Avenue is two stories in height with a hip roof, constructed of fieldstone with full two-story porches.

Institutional: In 1919, Star of the Sea church was constructed, a gable front, center entry frame building, with false buttresses, rose window over the center entry, and elaborate copper trim. In 1938 the Christian Scientists built a simple shingled gable front, center entry church with a single transept. The State Employment office of 1926 is a small, shingled structure in Colonial Revival style, gable front, three bays in width, with a center entry on New York Avenue.

Commercial: On Circuit Avenue, single-story, flat roof store buildings with parapetted fronts were constructed.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

This professional survey may be the region's best. There is a range of useful aggregate information, including the National Register nomination, area forms, and streetscape forms, as well as good individual forms. An attempt is made by the surveyors to present a typology of housetypes, incorporated into the individual forms, which makes presentation of aggregates much easier. The forms for structures included in the National Register district, currently designated for dead storage, should be refiled in the drawers with the general inventory.

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