

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Another episode in the diary of Orville Lovell reveals the hunters went far afield searching for sport; let him tell us his experiences in his own way.

Although Manomet Point was in darkness when we reached the beach, the pre-dawn light enabled us to pick our way to the boat we'd pulled up above high water the preceding evening. As we hauled the skiff to the edge of Cape Cod Bay and shoved her off, stern first, our boots dug deep gouges in the sand. Howard (Marston) and I returned to high ground to get our guns and shot, while Joe held the painter to keep the skiff from floating off on the receding tide.

The wind blew hard from the northeast, and rain, hissing as it hit the water, dripped off our oilskins. The bottom of the boat was soon puddled. It was a miserable start.

Sitting side by side in the stern, Howard and I unwrapped the oilcloth from the double-barreled weapons and, hunching over to keep them dry, loaded the guns. Joe faced us from amidships and rowed into the wind and rain. With guns ready should there be a flight of coot, we moved out from the shore. Now and then I bailed.

The sky lightened as the sun rose behind lowering clouds; the dim outlines of the beach, the woodlands beyond the hotel's bulk, cleared somewhat through the rain, but visibility was poor.

Joe rested on his oars. "This ought to do it, Joe," Howard said. Joe tossed over the anchor, letting the line run out the several yards until the hook grabbed the bottom, and the boat swung on the tide, the northeaster holding us stern-to the point.

And there we sat, the rain sheeting across the bay, the wind sharpened in its drive across the Labrador Current that sweeps down from Greenland, along the coast of Maine, past Gloucester and Marblehead, through Massachusetts Bay to Scituate and Marshfield, through Plymouth Bay to Manomet Point. Cold and cutting was that northeast wind on this 14th day of October in the year 1882.

We lay in the boat until 8:00 a.m.; there was no flight of coots. Chilled to our marrowbones, we unloaded and rewrapped our guns; Joe hoisted anchor and rowed for shore. After hauling the boat high on the beach, we returned to the hotel in time to join the ladies for breakfast. We came eagerly to the table and after being warmed and fed, oiled our guns. The remainder of the day we spent watching the heavy storm thrash the trees, lash the waters of the bay and send the scudding foam flying along the shore.

By Sunday morning the rain had stopped, but fog and mist bathed land and waters. The beach was invisible from the hotel porch, though it lay but a few hundred yards from the steps. Since there's no shooting on Sunday, soon after breakfast we harnessed the horses and drove the carriage into Plymouth where we attended service before partaking of a good lunch. In the afternoon we drove on to Scituate where we spent the night.

Monday, we watched for birds along the Scituate and Cohasset shores, but sighted none.

On Tuesday, October 17th, we returned to Manomet Point, believing this is by far the best ground. When we went out Wednesday morning, the wind veered from northeast to southwest to dead calm. Still no flight of coots. They have not come along as yet, and our results are poor.

At noon we started for Osterville, arriving home at 6:00 p.m. The ladies were tired from the long drive through Ellenville and over the Sandwich hills, but by the time the horses were put up, Laura had a steaming supper ready for us, and we fell to it readily enough.

The coots did not fly until October 20th. They made good shooting then, but we went too early to Manomet and Scituate.

Even when the coots came in, there were but a few birds; still, we made a try for them. With Joe, Laura and Addie, I went out in the VIXEN, but our bag was nil. The wind blew from the northeast, raw and chilly; we didn't stay long on the water.

Not until Saturday, the 21st, did we bag a coot. The wind was still coming northeast and blowing heavily. Nate, Joe and I took the VIXEN out under double reefs in a heavy sea. We got only one shot and came home with the one coot.

Nate and I tried again on Tuesday, October 24th. The wind was still northeast, blowing freshly; there was a heavy sea and a drizzle. Nate and I sailed the VIXEN to the Horse Shoe Shoal with two reefs in the mainsail. There we found a large body of coots, but they were very wild. We got nine of them and three grebes. As we returned, we grounded on the bar and laid there waiting for flood tide. When we got off, we made the bar and arrived after dark at the Boat House in East Bay.

Tomorrow I'm to go quail shooting with Mr. Alex Hinckley of Hyannis; this will be my first experience shooting up-land game.

Mr. Hinckley and I hunted over the Osterville and Hyannis fields and at last found a covey back of Makepeace's farmhouse. We soon got seven birds, fine ones. Mr. Hinckley got five and I downed two; I think I can improve on that at my

next trial. I admired the beautiful working of the dog, a splendid specimen, and enjoyed the sport very much.

The following morning, Friday, October 27th, Mr. Hinckley, Capt. Nelson Bearse, and Nelson Harvey went with me for coots in the yacht MISCHIEF. We found plenty of birds off the Horse Shoe Shoal. After shooting for a few hours, we bagged twenty-eight coots and returned to shore.

While over to the Boat House the next day I saw two coots in the bay, laying close to the VIXEN. I ran down on them and shot both with the first gun. The wind came northeast, weather clear and cool. After racing with the JIM BO in the VIXEN, I met the ladies at the Boat House, and we all lunched on Laura's fine coot stew.

The last day of the fall shooting was Monday, October 30th, and the wind was variable, southwest, northeast, and calm, by turns. William and I took the VIXEN out to Bishop's (Bishop and Clerk's Light) for coots. We had to row part of the way. It was so very calm we could not sail onto the birds, although we found many. Rowed and sculled for the bay and arrived about 4:00 p.m. At the Boat House we had a most excellent chowder and supper.

This finishes my shooting at home for this time; I hope for as good luck next year. I leave these scenes with regret and although I go bodily away, my heart is left behind amid the old hills and waters of my childhood's home to which I hope soon to return to bag yet many more birds on its familiar points and waters.