

# village view

by Andrea Leonard

VILLAGE ADVERTISER March 9, 1978

**Tuesday, December 27, 1881**

"Left the East Bay at 1 p.m. for Waquoit on the first gunning trip of this season. Wind S.E., fresh, with mist and rain squalls. Rather a dirty-looking day to start. Nathan, Gustavus and I were in the COMFORT, and Nelson in his boat, the CURLEW, in which he is taking his last sail. When we get to Waquoit he'll deliver her to her new owner who has just bought her at \$300; he's got a good boat and a bargain.

"Off Marshpee the weather looked so stormy, and there was such a strong possibility of its being dark before we could get to Waquoit, we concluded to make a harbor for the night and tied up both boats in the bay.

**Wednesday, December 28, 1881**

"Arose at 6 and had breakfast. Got underweigh at 7. A cloudy morning, mild, wind to the north, variable and light. Drifted with a fair tide; passed large flocks of coots. Got off one or two long shots without result, and arrived off the inlet at 10 A.M. We hauled and poled in against a strong head tide, and tied up at 10:30. There were some birds in the bay.

"After dinner Nelson sailed up to Waquoit Village and delivered the CURLEW. Nathan took a walk over to the ponds and found 25 or 30 birds in one of them. Calm day throughout.

"Nate shot a wing shake coot on the beach on his return to the boat. Weather very mild; no winter weather as yet; quite a contrast to last winter when everything was frozen solid and the COMFORT was two days getting into Comfort Harbor where we now lie tonight with everything snug. Result of first day's shooting - 1 coot.

**Thursday, December 29, 1881**

"The alarm woke us this morning at 3:30 A.M. Weather thick and drizzling. Wind east. After breakfast Nate and I pulled over to the point of the East Beach, but we came back in an hour, not having seen a bird. At 11 A.M. the prospect looking poor for any shooting while this miserable weather lasts, we started for home.

"We are now running along the beach, wind S.E., and making short tacks off. Will soon have a fair tide and make a good run home. Arrived at Worthington's at dark, the wind breezing S.E., and rain. We ran into West Bay and went home. A heavy storm at night."

The gunners spent the next several days at home; doubtless they helped welcome in the New Year in appropriate fashion. While they rested, the weather changed.

**Wednesday, January 4, 1882**

"Wind N.W. Very very cold. Set coys in Centerville River, but it froze in the tide-way. I got three shots, laying in the SNEAK. I never saw it colder. About ten birds came into the river. Got three whistlers.

**Friday, January 6, 1882**

"This A.M. set coys in South Bay with Nate and Herbert. We had broken a hole in the ice off Dead Neck Point the night before, put in two boxes, but the birds did not all return. We lay until 8 A.M. and then went ashore. Result of the morning's sport = 9 whistlers."

Birding improves when the cold weather sets in; therefore the sportsmen set sail for Comfort Harbor in Waquoit Bay.

**January 12, 1882 - HOME**

"My bag at home has not been very large, but I have had a splendid time and only regret leaving (as I do today) for New York. The old COMFORT lies dismantled at the Boat House, ready to go into her quarters for the winter; I leave the old Boat House with regret. Its pleasant hours will long linger with me and I hope soon to return."

Some shooting excursions by Orville Lovell and his friends Nelson, Gustavus and Nathan were short ones. We can only surmise what the household conversations might have been when the ladies learned the men planned to set forth on yet another gunning trip, for Orville's record makes no mention of whether the wives were as happy to have the menfolk depart as the quartet was to go.

Between Christmas and New Year's, 1882, Orville and his friends again tried their luck with the birds. The record begins with the COMFORT tied up in the bay off Mashpee (which they called Marshpee as do old-time Cape Codders of this day.)

"We gathered our rig and reset in Deep River Channel. It blew heavily from the N.W., and we had very hard work. The boats were dragging off from the ice. Nate lay and shot six birds.

"I got in the box afterward and shot five. At sunset we gathered our rig and returned to the COMFORT where a warm cabin and hot supper awaited us. At 7 P.M. I was asleep for the night. Result of this day's work, a fair bag of nice birds, 26 whistlers."

Throughout Lovell's record, respect for the Sabbath is apparent. No matter how many birds were sighted or how perfect the weather for shooting, Sunday was a day of reprieve for the birds and of leisure for the gunners.

Visits were made and tall tales told, some even recounted in some detail in the shooting record. The following entry delighted the storyteller as much as his listeners, and it makes one wonder if the mysterious lights may still shine on dark and sombre nights among the "funeral pines" that now, as then, shelter Waquoit Bay.

**Sunday, January 8, 1882**

"At 9 A.M. we had a good breakfast of ham and eggs, fine coffee, and toasted brown bread. Enjoyed it very much indeed. At 12 noon, Mr. H.O. Davis and son called and brought me a jug of milk and some steak and eggs. The milk I retained, but the latter articles I was well supplied with. I appreciated the kindness that prompted him to bring them.

"In conversation with Mr. Davis I referred to the legends connected with this bay, and to the lights, held and lit by hands not of mortal mould, seen on the shores and on Menhaunt Hill. Mr. Davis said, 'I saw the same light, about 20 years ago, and it retreated up Deep River and vanished under the shadows of the sombre and funereal pines.'

"His remarks was confirmation, 'strong as Holy Writ', of Nate's former stories.

"No one can hereafter doubt the un-quiet Spirit of the Old McGreggo Maiden who revisits the scenes of her lonely maidenhood, and the spot where she was mysteriously slain. The Old Deserted House, alone amidst the melancholy surroundings, with its weather-beaten sides and broken casements and doors, is a fitting habitation for her restless spirit to revisit.

"Tonight, as it closes dark and grey about us, with the melancholy requiem of the surf on the shore and the whispering pines repeating the refrain, is such a night as she would choose to come again to her earthly habitation, and Nate says, 'She will be there.' So we watch and wait for the light to shine over the bays and headlands, and I will report if it comes.

"I will say in ending that about 100 birds are feeding up under Snake Creek and 30 in the East Branch, and the wind will determine which way we shall go in the morning. We are very comfortable here in our warm quarters and all ready for tomorrow.

**Monday, January 9, 1882**

"At 3 A.M. we awoke and found the wind fresh at S.W., and a thick fog and drizzle. This was a damper on our prospects in every sense, as the wind was wrong, the fog so thick a bird could not see the coys, and we could not discern the Fish House on the west shore.

"We went around the point and towed down our box and coy boat, and got all things on board, ready for a start home. Left under single-reefed mainsail and ran down the beach with a fair wind.

"Shot one old squaw on the way; arrived back at the Boat House at 10 A.M., a quick run. Still very thick fog; and found the ice nearly gone. Cut out the ice so I got the COMFORT up to the Boat House and dismantled her for the winter. Left two nice fires burning in the stoves and a nice warm cozy cabin.

"Our winter cruising is over, and only a few birds to our score, but we have had a good time for all the drawbacks. Telephoned to the girls to come over and dine with me at the Boat House. They came and we had a very nice lunch and a nicer supper. In the evening Dr. Clement was over, and Laura and the doctor gave us some fine singing. A pleasant day after all the fog and rain and disappointments.

"At 12 noon left East Bay in the COMFORT with Nate and Charles West as assistant. Arrived at 3:30 P.M. to find a good many birds, but fear the wind may break up the ice.

"Mr. Davis called on us this P.M. The COMFORT is now quite tight; had the boys to work on her and hope she will not trouble us more. Had a fresh breeze, running up, and carried whole sail, running up in 2-1/2 hours, and moored in Comfort Harbor at 2:30 P.M.

"A wild-looking night. Hope it will not storm as we find there are a number of birds on the bay and hope we may be able to rig in the morning. Mr. Davis was very kind in his remarks and wished us every success. Hope for the best and trust our bag may exceed the last we made here.

**Saturday, January 7, 1882**

"At 3 A.M. Nate and I towed the box up to the edge of the ice below Snake Creek Fence, and after working hard (having forgotten to bring the ice hooks with us), we got the box set and I got in.

"The first bird was a brown whistler which I missed clean. The next one stopped. I lay until 9:30 A.M., and then a party from Davis Neck, coming down to set coys of Snake Creek Fence, spoiled our lay.