

Additional Notes on MFCSF

Hitchcock 1824. Notices of the Geology of Martha's Vineyard, and the Elizabeth Islands
Peat use described in Chilmark as perhaps 100 acres

1 *Alluvial*. This formation occupies a considerable portion of the southern part of the Vineyard; reaching in some places, even beyond the centre of the island. Where I crossed it, it consists of a perfectly level, sandy tract, uninhabited and uninhabitable. I have rarely seen as extensive a region, that was so cheerless and barren. It is covered by stunted shrub oaks, rarely exceeding five feet in height, and when I saw them, they were entirely leafless, presenting to the eye, a cheerless, wintry waste. On my right as I crossed this plain, at a distance, appeared a ridge of high land and rounded eminences: but on my left, nothing was to be seen, except this uniform unrelieved barrenness. I was immediately struck with the idea, that this sandy desert must have been formed by the action of the waves of the vast Atlantic, which have beat upon this shore, without obstruction, for so' many centuries.

Freeman on Little Pond and the problem of oral histories. "It has never been known to be dry; and as there is no water either salt or fresh within about four miles of it, it seems to be placed here by a benevolent Providence for the refreshment of the thirsty animals, by which it is surrounded. ...Of this pond a marvellous story is told, that in a wet summer it is two feet lower than in a dry summer, and that the remarkable fact has been confirmed by the observation of more than a hundred years. But after careful inquiry, the author has reason to believe that this is a fabulous story. Those, who during a hundred years have conveyed it from one mouth to another, have probably been too much pleased with the wonderful tale, to give themselves the trouble to examine into its truth. But a physician of the island, who, in the exercise of the duties of his profession, has had frequent occasion to pass by the pond, assured the author, that this pond was like other ponds, that its water was lowest in a dry season, and highest after copious rains."

"Thus a relatively scarce native community type—modified somewhat with the addition of several introduced taxa became considerably more widespread because of human disturbance." (Dunwiddie 1990)

"The outwash plains, described as early as 1794 as that 'vast plain of bitter oaks between Edgartown and Tisbury ...'" (Smith, 1794??) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994) Collections of the MHS 1815 A Description of Dukes County August 13 1807

"The internal parts of the Island will probably always remain without inhabitants. Land is enclosed in the Eastern part, though many parts are not worth enclosing ... they are destitute of water and left in common." (MHS, 1815, p. 54) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"An 1830 town atlas map of Edgartown signed by Crapo, also at the DCHS, includes marginal notes describing woodland in the Great Plains as 'rather thick and interspersed with short stunted oak shrubbery ... with the exception of a small part thereof which may be termed woodland ... the same sign however is given to the whole.' (Crapo, 1830) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"Having passed from the township of Holmes Hole into Tisbury, the road lay through what would have been an oak forest, except that none of the trees [exceeded] some four feet in height — [our

guide] affirming this to be their mature growth, and that no larger ones had grown since the forest was cleared by the original settlers." (SPNEA, 1859, p. 284) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"The same Pohoganot fields that have been pastured since the 18th century are now kept open by periodic mowing." (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"The part of the Island which I now had to traverse on foot was very barren and showed traces of great earth upheavals which had taken place in prehistoric times; it is therefore no wonder that our white fellow citizens left this desolate region as the last refuge to the poor Indians. I left the carriage at the last house which was surrounded by a few trees, [probably just beyond Beetlebung Corner]. From here the whole area showed only bare hills divided by somewhat more fertile valleys which were frequently broken by ocean inlets and small sand steppes. Yet those hills and desolate valley were separated into irregular fields by man-made walls of field stones, and here and there rose a house which ... looked lonely and melancholy indeed without a garden or the shadow of a tree." (Koch, 1990) (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"Oak Bluffs is a mushroom town without any oaks, except some scrubs, and little in the way of bluffs except what one gets from super Christianized people. White pine in the shape of gothic shanties is the only forest growth I have yet found ... box-like houses ... of a profane architecture ... scattered around through the thick set copse of oaks which are not high enough to hide their ten-foot eaves..." (Shaler, 1887). (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"In a 1982 interview with oral historian Linsey Lee, Manny Correllus described the gruelling process of reforestation:

"We started in the late 20s reforesting. We used to put in 125,000 trees a season. We had gangs come up here and plant them by hand, ... three-year old seedlings. Three or four years later we would come back and we did what we called "relieving" in among the scrub oak. We would take a tool we called a brush hook and clean out so that the trees could come up between the scrub oak.... I had men go into the woods with brand new sweatshirts and come out at night with just a ring left around the collar. That's awfully clawy stuff -- those scrub oaks -- they grab you and pull you." (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

Great Plains - "never very desirable for grazing or cultivation, was distant from settlements and had very few natural barriers to prevailing winds and the spread of fire. This area seems to have had the highest fire frequency of any area on the Cape or Islands. The resulting landscape changed little over the period documented here. Since the earliest description in 1794 the outwash plain has had a stunted, second-growth oak forest." (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)

"Shaler's remarks that characterize the forest soils as exhausted and useless for anything but woodlots"..."presage the doomed experiments in forestry that were to take place in the twentieth century." (Dunwiddie Adams 1994)