

CUTTYHUNK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Cuttyhunk, Massachusetts 02713

June 1983

THE GOSNOLD MONUMENT

Eighteen years before the landing of the Pilgrims, Bartholomew Gosnold discovered Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands. He set sail March 26, 1602 (Old Style) from Falmouth, England in a small ship CONCORD with thirty-two persons aboard, for the purpose of founding a colony in the northern part of Virginia, as the coast of North America was then known.

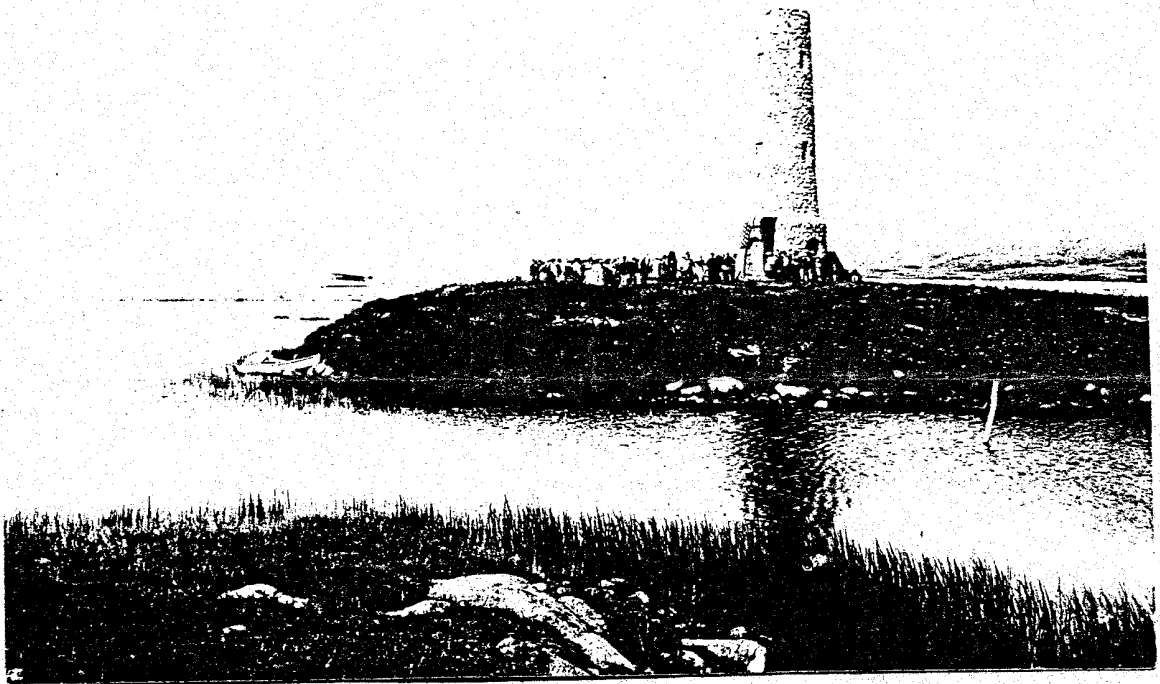
Aboard on this daring adventure were two journalists who recorded the entire voyage, so we can follow them from the day they departed until they returned. The tiny ship, fifty-six feet in length or only nine feet shorter than the ALERT, was found to be unsound and unable to carry full sail; therefore she took two weeks longer to cross than the anticipated five.

They arrived off the coast of Maine May 14, rounded Cape Cod and finally on May 24 landed on Cuttyhunk, where they built a fort on the little island on the West End. They remained here for twenty-five days, trading with the Indians, collecting a cargo to take back to England and making one trip to the mainland. Then, changing plans to leave part of their company at Cuttyhunk, they all returned home to England.

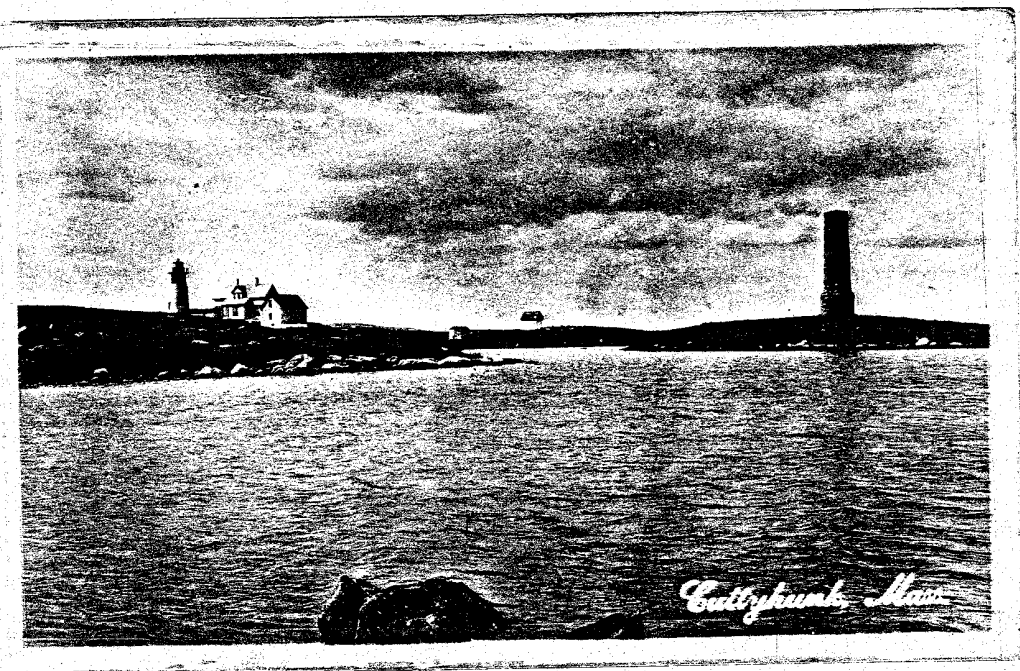
However short their stay, they were the first Englishmen to abide in New England and their stay is regarded as the true beginning of its history. They achieved a shorter course across the Atlantic than had been known before, they lived near Indians in a generally friendly manner and brought home a valuable cargo of furs, logs and sassafras, greatly prized at the time. Most important was the fact that their voyage led to the founding of Jamestown five years later and the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620. Gosnold was a leader in the Jamestown settlement where he died in 1607, at the early age of thirty-five.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Gosnold was recognized as a dauntless pioneer who had rendered valiant services to his country, but no one had proposed any official recognition until the historian, Daniel Ricketson suggested that a monument be erected in his honor upon Gosnold's Isle on the West End of Cuttyhunk. In his 1858 History of New Bedford, Mr. Ricketson wrote: "It is truly a consecrated spot, and should henceforth be devoted to the fostering of that noble and adventurous spirit, as well as the kind and friendly relations between mankind, manifested in the intercourse of these hardy adventurers with the natives they here met."

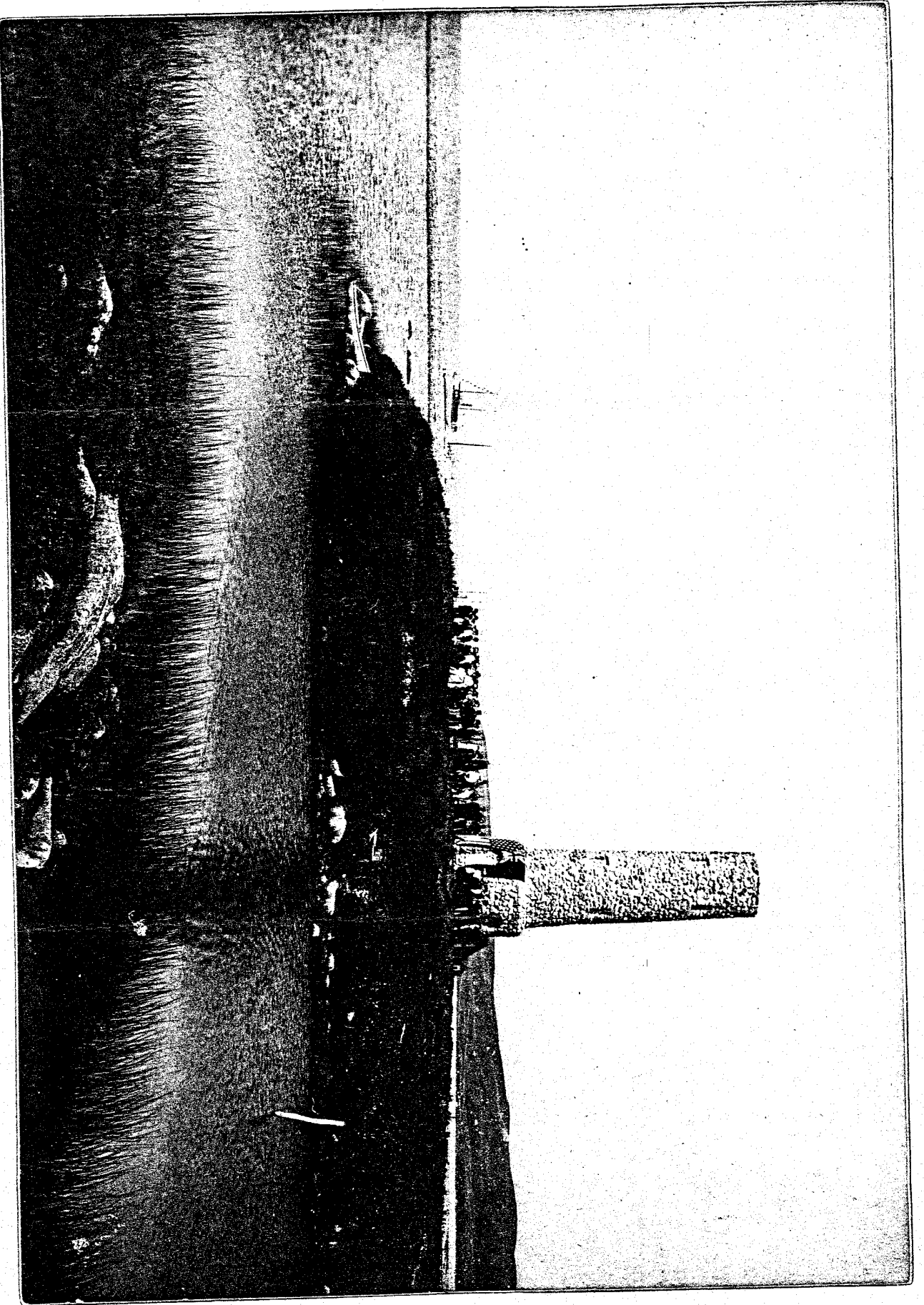
Nothing was done however, until 1902, when Walton Ricketson, the son of the historian, began a movement to build a memorial on the three-hundredth anniversary of Gosnold's voyage. A three-man committee was formed on the mainland and quickly raised sufficient funds to proceed. On the island another committee was named to oversee progress there. It consisted of the three selectmen: David P. Bosworth, Oscar Stetson, Alonzo B. Veeder and Josiah W. Tilton and his son, Josiah H. Tilton.



At 12:45 P.M. Sept. 1, 1903 Members of The Dartmouth Historical Society Dedicate the Newly Completed Gosnold Monument.



Original Cuttyhunk Light House -
only the Small Shed (center) Remains.



12:45 P.M. Sept. 1, 1903 The Dartmouth Historical Society Dedicates The Gosnold Monument.
On August 10th, 80 years later with the assistance of C.H.S., they plan a commemorate revisitiation.

One hundred and twelve subscribers, many of whom were Cuttyhunk Club members, gave a little over \$3000. which paid all costs. The architect, Nat C. Smith, designed a shaft to be built of boulders from the island. Frank C. Bennett of New Bedford was the contractor; he used island labor and the wages must have been a short-lived boon to the local economy. On June 4, 1902 the three New Bedford members of the committee together with some historians journeyed to Cuttyhunk for the laying of the cornerstone, and soon the construction began.

One has only to look at the massive structure today to wonder at the feat of conveying the boulders across the rocky beach by oxen, the transferral to barges for the trip across the West End Pond to the island, and then the raising of the tower itself. The purposely squat and sturdy shaft rises sixty feet from the surface with walls four and one half feet thick at the base, with false doors and windows put in for appearance only. Had it not been for the expense, the tower would have been solid; instead it is hollow, although sealed so that no one can enter. The diameter at the base is eighteen feet and it tapers to twelve feet at the top.

Before the tower could be built, the deed to the island had to be obtained. In 1858 three owners of a whaleship left with her from New Bedford for a pleasant day's sail, as was often the custom then, intending to return home with the pilot when he left the ship. However, a storm arose and they put into Cuttyhunk instead, where they spent the night with Otis Slocum, the owner of the island. In the morning, wishing to offer him some compensation for his hospitality, and undoubtedly knowing that he possessed much land of little value, they asked what he would sell them Gosnold's Island for; he told them \$50. They purchased it and at their deaths it passed into the hands of their heirs. These heirs preferred not to sell the island, but instead gave it to the Mass. Historical Society. Because of the historical interest and enthusiasm aroused by the memorial, the Old Dartmouth Historical Society was formed, and the deed was ultimately handed over to it.

At last on September 1, 1903, all building was completed, invitations were issued and all plans made for the formal dedication. At 12:45 on a beautiful sunny day, a chartered steamer GENEVIEVE dropped her anchor in Wash Pond Bend with about seventy-five eminent historians, scholars, ministers and men of business aboard with their wives. Already anchored in the Bend were Frederick Grinnell's yacht QUICKSTEP adorned with signal flags from bowsprit to stern and the catboat-yacht SHADOW, both filled with guests.

Along the shore moving specks showed that the islanders were arriving for the ceremonies and soon a fleet of skiffs put out to transfer the visitors to the beach. After a short walk to the pond, they were ferried in other skiffs across to the island. No motors, only oars, were used; perhaps adding a note of historical authenticity to the occasion.

The two-hour dedication ceremony was opened by Charles S. Randall, the chairman of the New Bedford committee. George Fox Tucker, the second committee member, and several others then spoke. During these speeches, the dedicating tablet

had been covered with draped American and British flags. Now at a signal from Walton Ricketson, the third committee member, Capt. Frederick Slocum Allen, one of the oldest and most representative of islanders, and Myrtie Bosworth, aged nineteen, daughter of Capt. David P. Bosworth and later the mother of Capt. Coot Hall, tugged at the lines which confined the flags, and they fell away, disclosing the inscription.

TERCENTENARY MEMORIAL
TO
BARTHOLOMEW GOSNOLD

and his companions who landed here June 4 (O.S. May 25), 1602 and built on this Islet, the first English Habitation on the Coast of New England.

Corner Stone Laid
June 4, 1902
Dedicated

Sept. 1 (O.S. Aug. 22) 1903
Anniversary of Gosnold's Death
at Jamestown, Virginia

Following this, the deeds to the island and the shaft were turned over to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society's vice-president, George H. Tripp, who made a brief speech of acceptance. He was followed by a few other notables, including Henry H. Rogers, the great oil and copper magnate. Three cheers were given the citizens of Cuttyhunk and the ceremonies drew to a close. The guests were ferried back to the steamer and the yachts for the trip home. As the QUICKSTEP commenced her sail, there was a shout on board, "Salute the tower!" Everyone swung his hat and watched as the distance obliterated the beach and shore, leaving the monument shining in the late afternoon sunshine.

This year will see the 80th anniversary of the tower. Only once has it been threatened. In 1936 it was struck by lightning, but was soon repaired and a lightning rod added, repairs being paid by contributions, said the New Bedford Mercury.

The ceremony had been a great success. "Never before," stated the newspaper account of the event, "had the island seen such an assemblage of men prominent in public life". A fitting monument to the intrepid explorer had been built which would serve as a beacon to voyagers approaching by sea, and would mark the spot of the first attempt by English-speaking people to settle in America.

Janet Bosworth

P.S. As we went to press, we learned that on August 10th this summer the Old Dartmouth Historical Society (Whaling Museum - New Bedford) plans to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Monument. Their Membership is being invited to visit the monument and our Society is assisting by arranging water transportation to the island on which the monument is located. Further details will be published this summer in the Gosnold News. J.B.

Sources:

- New Bedford Standard, 1902
- New Bedford Mercury, 1902
- The Gosnold Discoveries in the North Port of Virginia 1602
Compiled & Edited by Lincoln A. Dexter 1982
- The Story of Cuttyhunk, by Louise T. Haskell 1953
- A Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Parts of Norumbega
by Warner F. Gookin, B.D. 1950