

Digital Archive Referral Guide

Compiled by Oak Bluffs Public Library Reference Department

Purpose: One in a series of guides collated by staff at the Oak Bluffs Public Library where researchers can access digital archives from a variety of sources regarding Oak Bluffs and Martha’s Vineyard. Please note the library did not create these resources, we are only offering information about their usefulness as related to particular topics. These guides are in no way an exhaustive list of digital resources available and before sharing content found, the patron should follow general copyright guidelines.

If you need further assistance or referrals, please contact the Reference Desk: 508-693-9433 or email: nferry@clamsnet.org

VINEYARD GAZETTE’S – *TIME MACHINE*

This is the digital component of the Gazette’s archives that includes materials dating back to the newspaper’s first issue in 1846. The following page includes an interactive timeline with links to significant events, including hurricanes, tourist seasons, technological innovations, remarkable buildings, and ferries.

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine>

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African American History

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine/collection/african-american-history>

Groups:

- African American Heritage Trail of MV, founding of
- Cottagers, founding of a group of African American women homeowners; an organization devoted to philanthropy and cultural pride
- NAACP, formation of Vineyard Chapter
- Polar Bear Club, formation of

Historical topics:

- Settlement patterns of early African Americans
- Shearer Cottage opens to middle-class African American vacationers
 - Active seasons of the Shearer Summer Theater
- Slave sales

Individuals:

- Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., pastor and politician, buys property in OB
- Barak Obama, President, election of
- Della Hardman Day in 2005, creation of
- Edward W. Booke, Senator, also a summer resident of Oak Bluffs
- Herbert E. Tucker, Jr., Judge for Dukes County District Court and OB resident
- Oscar Denniston, Reverend & his parish in Oak Bluffs
- Martin Luther King, Jr. letter to the *Gazette* editor
- Rufus Burton Shorter, first Martha's Vineyard School Superintendent who is also African American

Camp Meeting History

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine/collection/camp-meeting-history>

Construction and land purchases:

- 1859--Improvements to Camp Meeting Ground, including new well, laid out of avenues, planted shade trees, and construction of a two and a half story house to accommodate business meetings and the storage of goods
- 1860--tents begin to be replaced by cottages and laymen take over police and financial duties, leaving ministers freed up for more religious matters.
- 1868--The Land and Wharf Company purchases the land between the campground and the ocean. A sturdy wharf is erected 80 feet into the sound so that steamers may bring visitors to the “morally and physically desirable summer retreat” of Oak Bluffs
- 1869--The Camp Meeting Association decides to construct a picket fence around the campground to try to create a barrier between secular vacationers.
- 1869--a few members of the MV Camp Meeting Association pool their resources to purchase 55 acres and establish the Vineyard Highlands, an area in East Chop that competed with development by the Land and Wharf company
- 1870-1879--A tent made from sail cloth protects approximately 4000 camp meeting goers from the weather.
- 1879--The Camp Meeting Association completes the building of a wrought iron tabernacle in July
- 1926--An electrical cross is constructed for the top of the Tabernacle and installed
- 1982--renovations are completed on the Tabernacle bell

Cottage City:

- Cottage City secedes from Edgartown in 1872 and is incorporated as a town.
- Cottage City is renamed Oak Bluffs in 1907

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Milestones and Traditions:

- Wesleyan Grove beginnings
- Camp Meeting Herald (August 1864), Vineyard Gazette begins publication
- Illumination Night, first on Aug. 14, 1869, attracted 30,000 people
- Tradition of campground singing begins in the 1920s.
- June 1965, the MV Camp Meeting Association celebrates 100 years
- 1979 the Camp Ground is included in the National Historical Register
- 2005 the Camp Ground is recognized as a National Historic Landmark

Railway/Railroad:

- Railroad, horse-drawn, 1873 construction, connects people from Highland Wharf to the original camp meeting site.
- Railway, electric replaces the Horse Drawn Railway in 1895
- In 1874, President Grant and his wife visit the campground and stay in a cottage

Hurricanes and Storms of note

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine/collection/hurricanes-and-storms>

- Hurricane Edouard (Sept. 1996) hits the Eastern part of the Vineyard with the greatest force. Damage to Oak Bluffs is relatively light except for a vehicle crushed by a fallen tree on Circuit Ave.
- The Perfect Storm (Oct. 1991-Nov. 1991); three different weather patterns come together to sink a historic fishing boat in the OB Harbor and cause lots of other damage
- Hurricane Noel (Nov. 2007) High winds and tides sank two boats in Oak Bluffs harbor
- Boaters leave OB Harbor in anticipation Hurricane Bill (Aug. 21, 2009)
- Hurricane Sandy (Oct. 29-Oct. 30, 2012) severely damages East Chop Drive

Collection of Presidential Visits

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine/collection/presidential-visits>

- In 1874, President Grant and his wife visit the campground and stay in a cottage
- In 1917, Lt. Governor Coolidge visits the campground for Governor's Day
- In 1919, Governor Calvin Coolidge visits the MV Camp Meeting Association and speaks at the Sunday morning Tabernacle service
- July 1941, Jack Kennedy and his brother (or a friend?) intended to sail in the regatta at Edgartown, but arrived at the Ocean View in need of dry clothing, food, sail repairs, and a place to sleep
- Aug – Sept 1997, President Bill Clinton makes one of his many trips to the Vineyard during the summer months. On this visit, Clinton plays golf at Farm Neck and touts standardized testing at the OB Elementary School. Hillary Clinton attends the birthday party of Dorothy West.
- Aug. 2007, Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton addresses a crowd of 2,000 at the Tabernacle
- Aug. 2007, Presidential candidate Barack Obama speaks at a fundraiser at the OB home of Ron and Judy Davenport

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Steamship and Ferries Collection

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine/collection/steamships-and-ferries>

Most articles discuss maiden voyages and last trips of specific boats. Little is written about the Oak Bluffs pier. The exception is:

- Sept. 1971--Ferry Nobska runs aground near Oak Bluffs Steamship dock
- March 1980--Ferry Islander hits a rock and nearly sinks after leaving Oak Bluffs wharf

Vineyard Trust

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine/collection/vineyard-trust>

- In 1986, the Martha's Vineyard Preservation Trust launches a campaign to save the Flying Horses carousel
- In 2002, the Trust acquires and begins preservation of Union Chapel

World War II

<https://vineyardgazette.com/timemachine/collection/world-war-two>

Miscellaneous articles about soldiers from Oak Bluffs and the war effort on the home front.

