

Excerpts from the Diary of Orville Dewey Lovell

Transcribed by Andrea Leonard

Introduction

From time immemorial, man has hunted. Primitive man hunted with clubs and stones. Later, bows and arrows assured better success. Guns gave hunters far greater power and accuracy. Since Europeans first arrived on this continent, men have hunted with guns for food. More recently, some men have also hunted for sport.

One of the late 19th century's most avid hunters was my cousin's husband, Orville Dewey Lovell of Osterville. He was called O.D. by the companions who sailed with him in his modified cat boat, the Comfort, from his boat house in East Bay to Comfort Harbor (Waquoit Bay) where they anchored and hunted birds.

O.D. wrote a diary of his shooting expeditions in which he kept an accurate count of each day's hunt. Fortunately the diary has come down to me. Now other readers can accompany O.D. as he describes his excursions in waters around Falmouth and Woods Hole more than 100 years ago.

Long Cove

Long Island, New York
November 14, 1881

Over the waters of the inland bays and on the ever rolling ocean I have shot, but my greatest sporting days, and thus the most pleasing to recall, have been in the waters of my boyhood's home and amid the scenes I love so well. The "trio of gunners" are yet alive; one has somewhat retired from the field, but the other two yet enjoy it to its fullest extent. I trust that when this record closes it will contain only pleas-

ing reminders of happy days passed among old friends and of a large number of birds bagged, that all who are interested in gunning may have their most ardent wish gratified. That each shot may bring down its bird, and no accidents occur to mar the enjoy-



Orville Dewey Lovell, 1862, when he was 23 years old.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society



The yacht *Bubble*, taken from Lovell's wharf at his boat house, East Bay, Osterville, 1886.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society

ment of the day's sport, is the writer's wish for the reader and all his friends.

Orville D. Lovell

Home

Home, Dec. 26th, 1881. A fine morning for an early drive over the hills to Osterville. The S.W. wind blew freshly and the horse (Kate) went swiftly. I rode through the "deserted village" and drew up to Nate's* house at 4 A.M. precisely. Nate was not up, but my tap soon brought him out, and we drove down to the old historic Narrows and found the boat all ready.

We pulled up between the Islands and rigged. On arrival we found we had been towing a big piece of pig iron all the way up. Nate remarked he thought "she towed rather hard." I lay first, and the birds came early; before sunrise I had eight dead birds. It

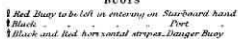
was a fine bright morning, very warm, and no ice or snow visible. After sunrise I got Nate to get in, and he shot about 12 guns, and I went and picked up the birds. Lost three that Charles West recovered and restored afterward. At 9 A.M. we gathered our rig and rowed to the Narrows (did not tow the pig iron this time). Drove to Centerville. At night attended the "Annual Ball" at Howard Hall. Result of first day's shooting in the South Bay, as follows: 14 whistlers. (11, ODL and 3, NEW). The home shooting opens well. Hope it will continue.

Waquoit

Sat., Jan. 7, 1882. WAQUOIT. 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.; then a party from Davis Neck came down to set coys off Snake Creek Fence. We gathered our rig and reset in Deep River Channel. It blew heavily N.W. We had very hard work, the boats dragging off from the ice. Nate lay, shot six birds. I got in afterward and shot five.

At sunset we gathered our rig and returned to the *Comfort* where a nice cozy cabin and a hot supper awaited us. At 7 P.M. I was asleep for the night. Re-

*Nathan E. West



Portion of 1883 chart showing cruising ground of Orville Dewey Lovell.

sult of this day's work, a fair bag of nice birds, 26 whistlers.

Mon., Oct. 30, 1882. Wind S.W. to N.E. and calm. Went out with William to the Bishops for coots (in Vixen). Had to row a part of the way; it was so very calm, we could not sail onto the birds although we found many. Rowed and sailed for the Bay and arrived about 4 P.M. In running in, off the points, saw five shelldrakes. As they dove, two came in range and I killed two (with one barrel) in the water. When they flew, I got two more (4 with two shots), which was very fair. Ran into the bay and found eight grebes and got four of them. Went to the Boat House and had a most excellent chowder and supper.

Home

Dec. 20, 1884. Arrived Home at noon and found the *Comfort* at the wharf. She is very much improved by the addition to the cabin and now can accommodate four very nicely and, with her new paint, looks fine. The Bay is closed up, and I fear we shall have to cut her out again but hope not.

Wed., Dec. 24, 1884. *Comfort*, under charge of Nelson and Nate, left the hotel wharf in a N.E. snow-storm at 11 A.M. Arrived safely at Waquoit at 2 P.M. A wild, stormy day and night.

Waquoit

Fri., Dec. 26, 1884. Left Home at 11 A.M. for Waquoit. Drove up in the "Old Buggy" and arrived at the Bay Points at 2 P.M., found the old craft all right, the boys glad to see me. Had a fine dinner, the first I had eaten in the new cabin. Afterward Nate and self walked up to "Deep River" Saw a large flock of broadbills and whistlers near the mouth of the river. Returned to the boat and had supper. Tomorrow A.M. we shall rig on the flats nearby. Hope to get some shots at Trading Birds flying into the bay.

A raw windy night, and heavy dark blue clouds scud across the moon, but it is nice and cozy in the cabin (in fact, too warm, at present writing). I will close now as I am so sleepy, I cannot tell what I am writing. I hope for a fair bag tomorrow.

Sat., Dec. 27, 1884. Arose at 4 A.M., found the wind N.E. and warm. Set in channel, but only got one shelldrake (lost two). After breakfast moved up to Deep River and set off shore. I got in and lay for some hours and got only a few shots, bagging four whistlers. An oyster boat nearby spoilt a number of shots. At sunset we gathered our rig and returned to the *Comfort*. Comfort Harbor result: 4 whistlers, 1 shelldrake, 1 black duck (shot by NEW on 25th), total: 6.

Sun., Dec. 28, 1884. A perfect day. Calm and mild. The surface of the Sound and bay is a glassy mirror. Under the East Shore lie a flock of whistlers feeding (about 200) and, outside, a large flock of coots (about 1,000). This is just the day to go out for them, but it's Sunday and they are safe, but we have watched them closely.

Sun., Jan. 4, 1885. Night has again come down upon us, and the clock points to the hour of six P.M. The heavens are overcast and the rain drips on the deck overhead. Nelson lies reading on one seat, and Nate sits on the other; both are reading the newspapers received today.

Outside, the very surf is stilled and naught is heard but the gurgle of the outgoing tide as it passes the boat to the sea. A night of quiet and darkness. This morning we rose at 8 A.M., got breakfast, and then decided to remain one more day and try the birds. A large flock are feeding (or have been) by the mouth of Deep River all day.

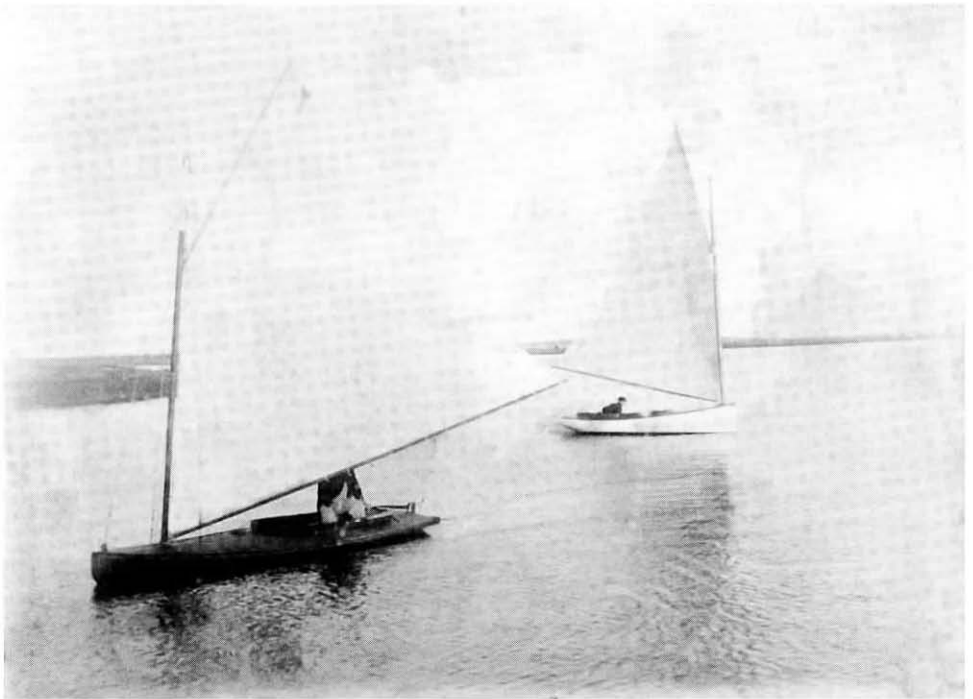
I went up with Nate to the Widow Jones's and looked over my woodlot. The weather was wild with snow squalls in the westward quarter. We had just got back to the *Comfort* (at 12 noon) when I saw the old familiar buggy coming on the West Beach. I rowed over and greeted Laura and Capt. Nelson and glad I was to see them. We had a good hot dinner in the cabin and then, after about two hours with us, they left, and I watched the carriage disappear behind the western sand hills.

We then returned to the *Comfort* and got her out of Comfort Harbor, and she now lies moored on the west side so we can get out at any time we desire. Shall go back to the East Bay tomorrow, after shooting in the morning if the wind will allow. Our coy boat (the *Whistler*) and box are anchored up on the Quahog Flat. We hope for a last chance at the birds in the morning.

A quiet, dark night. Nelson has just reported a light under Menhaunt, but Nate declares "No natural light could be there" and if it was seen, he 'would walk over and find out what it was.'" It may be one of those mysterious lights so often seen about this bay. The dark and solemn night and the death-like quiet

seem to favor a visitation from the mysterious spirits that haunt these headlands. Do they stalk abroad tonight and light their dismal signals as of old? Who can tell?

The rain still patters on the deck, and I fear the morning will not be propitious; but I yet hope it will clear 'ere the day comes. Next Sunday night,



Bubble in foreground, *Broad Bill*, a Crosby catboat in background, both boats belonging to Orville Dewey Lovell, c. 1886.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society

how differently situated (probably) I shall be, in the great city, surrounded by life with all its bustle and care. To me, the quiet of this night, the pattering rain, the gurgling of the passing tides, and the cozy comfortable cabin with my friends about me and the gunning ground so near, is far more inviting, and I shall sigh to be again in the old *Comfort's* cabin and wish then (as I do now) that the cruise were but

beginning. But I will — and must — stop, and so say “Good Night.”

Shooting Record #4

Friday, January 8, 1886. Left home at 10 A.M. Chester drove us up to Waquoit where we had left Nate aboard the *Comfort* in Waquoit Bay on Wednesday afternoon. Found Nate all right and plenty of birds in the bay. We dined and then set coys in Menhaunt Hill Pond. Did not get a shot. I fear a storm in the morning; if not, I think we shall do well as the prospect is good for a good bag. About 500 whistlers in the bay.

9 P.M. The storm is upon us. It snows fast and a very heavy gale is promised which is now increasing

very fast. I pity the poor fellows at sea. As I lay down to sleep, the wind is fast rising and the air is thick with snow. I expect a wild night. Nate saw two sun dogs, one to the south and one to the north of the sun. He says the snow will be a heavy one.

Saturday, January 9th, 1886. We have experienced the hardest storm I ever saw in Comfort Harbor or anywhere else. By 10 P.M. the wind was blowing a gale with snow, and it fairly howled and shrieked through the rigging. I fear we shall lose our coy boat and box that we left anchored up in the bay. At 3 A.M. the boom began to swing over and back, and I got ready and went on deck and we secured it.

It was a fearful gale and blew almost a hurricane N.E. at daylight. We saw the coy boat off the point all

Birds Recorded

Complete list of game bagged during the period beginning 28 December 1876 and ending 14 November 1881.	547	Broadbills	18	Summer Yellow Legs
2,000 Record No. 1	189	Whistlers	4	Doves
781 Record No. 2	9	Dippers	4	Piping Plover
1,801 Record No. 3	6	Ruddy Ducks	15	Ring Necks
4,582 Total to date	309	Coots	3	Brant Birds
	85	Sheldrake	2	Meadow Larks
	53	Old Squaws	14	Grey Backs
	1	Sea Duck	292	Peeps and Ox-Eyes
	1	Hooded Merganser	1	Bittern
	4	Loons	1	Lip Up
	3	Cape Race	2	King Fishers
	7	Grebes	6	Crows
	12	Gulls	18	Quarks
	1	Curlew	2	Blackbirds
	4	Willett		
		Black Breast Plover	1801	Grand Total
	6	Robbin Snipe		O. D. Lovell
	12	English Snipe		Brooklyn
	7	Winter Yellow Legs		December 4th, 1881
1 Spring Tail Duck				
11 Geese				
75 Brant				
2 Canvasbacks				
31 Redheads				
31 Black Ducks				
3 Green Wing Teal				
5 Widgeon				

safe. The box was off in the channel, and as we looked at it, the wind swung from N.E. to S.W., and the box sank in a few minutes. We have not yet recovered it and fear it may be lost, but hope not.

After the wind changed, it blew a terrible gale. I got on shore and secured the coy boat, and at 2 P.M. ran two anchors ashore, backing one with the other. The snow squalls were tremendous and the wind could hardly be faced, the hail and snow cutting like glass. The tide was the highest I ever saw it and broke over the Beach Point ahead of us.

I never saw a storm come on so quickly and so furiously. We doubled all our lines and held on, the *Old Comfort* pitched and rolled and made things lively in the cabin. Off in the Sound, it looked wild. Great seas broke over the bar and ran into the harbor, and all would be shut out by the thick and blinding snow squalls.

Four three-masted schooners are at anchor in the channel, and I never saw such heavy pitching and rolling before. It seemed as though they must come on shore. At last the tide began to run out, and the sea went down, and the *Comfort* lay smooth. It is now 6 P.M. The wind still howls and roars by us from the S.W., but the sea is gone, and soon we will be aground and quiet.

God pity the seaman on this coast last night and today. I expect to hear of many disasters.

Today when not securing the boat, I have watched the gale and the sea. I hope for a quieter night than the last was, and I hope tomorrow will be a quiet and pleasant day. I will now retire to forget the war of winds and waves in sleep, being thankful for such a secure harbor and comfortable home in such a cy-

clonic gale as we have had. Plenty of birds in the bay but we did not think of shooting today. Only tried to hold our boat to her moorings.

Wednesday, January 19, 1887. Wind N.W. and S.W. with snow squalls, the entrance to East Bay all frozen over. Worked all day and at 3 P.M. got the *Mischief* outside the points. I sincerely hope we shall not freeze up again, and trust to start tomorrow. Three days from wharf to open water is pretty severe work. Much milder at night.

Thursday, January 20, 1887. Left for Waquoit at 10 A.M., wind S.S.E. and moderate; much ice in the sound, but the *Mischief* is now pushing her way through it very fast, and we soon shall be up in Waquoit. We are now off Cotuit. See no birds in the sound as yet, but hope to find some in the bay. A lovely day, with some pictures before starting. Hope they are good ones. Arrived at Waquoit at 12 Noon and grounded on the bar. Nate went ashore and interviewed the two Davis brothers. The bay was frozen up except at the head and mouth. Not a bird in the bay. Nate came back on board, and we worked the boat off the bar and at last out of the heavy ice to open water. Started for Vineyard Haven, but it looked badly, and we then ran for Woods Holl Harbor and anchored in Hadley's North Harbor, Naushon Island. Nate and I went ashore and walked over the island. Went on board yacht, the *Puritan*, and called at the Forbes' farm house. We saw a large lot of fine sheep. This island is called Naushon and owned by Col. J. M. Forbes. We find a large lot of shelldrakes about the island and hope to get a few tomorrow; the yacht *Puritan* looked finely, and looks the splendid yacht and the Cup Defender, as she is.

Naushon Island, Friday, January 21, 1887. Arose at 4:30 A.M., wind S.W. and moderate. Set coys on

the N.E. point of the harbor; got a little late start and while setting our coys two or three pairs of mallard went by. I shot at the last pair and got a fine drake which is the first mallard I ever shot.

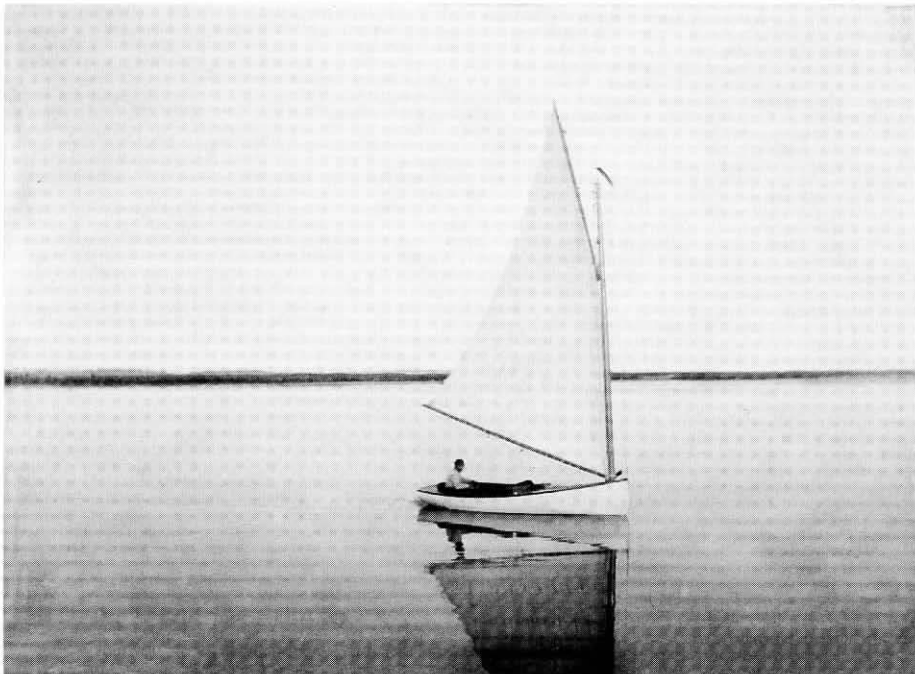
Later we rowed through a most picturesque river, with wooded banks and very narrow, almost overhung with trees and very crooked. Went under a stone bridge and at last came out into Vineyard Sound. This island seems to me a paradise for birds and a most beautiful place (especially in summer). A splendid stone mansion is being erected by Col. William Forbes, nearby. After dinner we went up to the yacht *Puritan* and set coys under her bows (almost). I shot one shelldrake. We then rowed through the river above referred to and a lovely row it was. We set coys on the outer point of the river on a point of rocks. We got a few shots and then moved back aboard the *Mischief* and brought her into Puritan

Harbor where we lay close to that famous and beautiful yacht. A Mr. William Phinney (on a smack nearby and a gunner) has called, and I will send letters by him tomorrow, home, and shall not return until Monday. It is a dark night, but warm. I hope for a good gunning day tomorrow. This is a great country.

Puritan Harbor, Naushon Island, Yacht *Mischief*

Saturday, January 22, 1887. Arose at 4:30, wind light and calm. I set coys by yacht *Puritan*; Nate in Pine Tree Lead. As it was very moderate and calm but few birds came. Since we were not finding sport, we returned to the boat, and with the *Whistler*, Nate and I rowed out to sea about four miles to the Weapecket Islands. We found them surrounded by large rocks and the island covered with a tough wiry grass, along with beach grass, and a barren place.

Saw quite a flock of black ducks and other birds. A flock of whistlers flew over and I got one fine one out of it. We then returned to the boat and after dinner went through the river to Vineyard Sound, and Nate and Phinney (from the smack) watched for black ducks. I returned after an interview with Col. Forbes' game keeper to the boat and again put coys out by the *Puritan*, but got no birds. At 4 P.M., returned to the boat and we are now about ready for supper. The day has



Broad Bill with Henry Bearce at tiller, 1889.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society

the weather will allow. This has been a very pleasant cruise and I have enjoyed it much. The bag has not been large, but the new scenes has amply repaid me for the outlay.

Monday, January 24, 1887. At 11 P.M. last night I felt the boat was not holding and called to Nelson and Nate. We all jumped up, and none too soon, as the boat was taking her two anchors as though nothing was ahead of her and driving down directly under a schooner's bows that lay to the leeward of us. Soon we struck her broadside on (under her bows), and we held the boat there until we made fast to her and cleared the *Dipper* and *Whistler* that were nearly sunk. Finally got alongside and then held on and made it through the night, thumping continually against the schooner, and passed their traps over our decks. At daylight, determined she was deserted, and we find her to be the *Hellen* of New York. Later Nate and I rowed to Petherick's Island and set coys on the East Point. It now blew a gale, and at 11 A.M. we returned and had a job to drop the *Mischief* astern of the schooner. Found the *Dipper* sunk and some boards lost. After getting the *Dipper* on deck, we cleared the coys and then got dinner. The center-board, which has been frozen up since we left, to-day is clear, so we can use it for the first time. It is now 3:30 P.M., and the wind still blows and it rains hard. We only hope the schooner will hold on, and I think we shall ride it out. Saw but few birds this A.M. at Petherick's Island. We are laying about 100 yards from the guano

factory, but the wind (luckily) blows the odor away from us.

Tuesday, January 25, 1887. This A.M. at 4:30 the alarm awoke us, but we had heard the howling north-west wind that had been blowing all night, it having changed from south to N.W. at 4 P.M. yesterday, and we were glad to hold onto the protecting Schooner *Hellen*. At 7:15 A.M. we got underweigh and under three reefs ran for home. Arrived at the Boat House at 10 A.M. and dismantled the *Mischief* and put all things away and returned to the house. This finishes a very pleasant winter's trip.

Sunday, January 15, 1888. This morning it was usual Sunday weather, wind S.E. and storming, rain instead of snow being the only variation. Soon a thick fog set in and has now just cleared away at 9 A.M. We had a 9 o'clock breakfast and then Mr. E. Davis called with splendid milk for which he (as usual) would not take anything in the way of recompense. I could only send presents to his children for it (which I did.)



Pacific Guano Company, on Long Neck, now Penzance Point, Woods Hole. Painting by Franklin Lewis Gifford. Courtesy Woods Hole Library.

Photo by Paul Ferris Smith

It is a wild night. The wind moans over the beach and the night is full of fog and darkness, not a coast light yet shines forth, and we seem to be in a world of storm all our own, but within the cabin burns the cheerful coal fire, our three lamps are brightly burning, and the curtains drawn. We sit around our bountiful table and bless our stars that we are so comfortable and hope all others are as well-housed. We laugh at the storm without. Tonight we had our cake and it was a great success. We certainly have had a most pleasant trip but very few results.

Popponesset Harbor
Aboard the Yacht *Comfort*
1888 & 1889

Dec. 5, 1888, Wed. 4 P.M. This A.M. at daylight we started on our cruise for Waquoit. Calm, but looked very black in the S.W. and N.W. At 8 A.M. breeze came up and at 11 A.M. we had to bear away for the New Inlet and ran in and anchored at 11:30. The wind has blown quite fresh all day. Theodore was sick outside and had to lie down most of the time. We have passed the day in reading and have seen but a few birds, not enough to go after them.

We intend to start for Cape Poge, if weather allows, at 3 A.M. tomorrow. It is a lovely night, almost like October. I hope we shall have a good cruise over tomorrow. Now near sunset, we will watch a lovely and clear one. Hope soon to be able to test my new box and gun at Cape Poge Pond. All well, eating hearty, and having a splendid time. My leg is getting rested and feels almost well. I will close now and prepare the boats for the night as we hope to leave before daylight.

Dec. 6, 1888, Thur. 6 P.M. Comfort Harbor, Waquoit Bay. Last night at 2 A.M., we got up and found the wind almost calm, sky overcast, and a

storm threatening, so we concluded not to start. At daylight we got underweigh, wind light N.E. and N. with mist and rain. We concluded to try for Cape Poge as the wind was fair and light, but when we got off Succonessett Light Ship, it began to breeze up so badly that we hauled in for Succonessett Point, which we reached just as the wind hauled N.W. and blew fresh. We single-reefed the mainsail and lobbed the jib (but soon set that again) and ran up to Waquoit.

It's a lovely night; the wind hauls from the northwest out of a clear sky and sings through the *Comfort's* rigging and out over the sea. The coast lights twinkle brightly, and a quarter moon hangs in the western board - close beside it hangs a star.

Nate says "That means more foul weather." I hope it won't come before we get over to Cape Poge. We go tomorrow if we have a chance. We are three weeks ahead of our time last year here, and I hope we will be successful.....Today I shot my new Lacy #12 Gauge gun, the first bird killed to her score. Bag: 1 killdeer plover.

Dec. 7, 1888. Fri. 8 P.M. A wild night, but pleasant. Wind roars through the rigging of the *Comfort* and she trembles when it blows in its force. The sky is overcast with hurrying clouds, and waves break in thunder on the beach — a wild night of storm.

This A.M. we arose at 3. Rigged the box at daylight under the "Morning Side Bluff." Lay until 9 A.M.; got only 1 whistler. Tried my new #12 gun and like her much. Came on board and had a shot at a large seal that had crawled out on the sand on the west side. I thought I hit him.

Dec. 8, 1888. Sat. Another day of disappointment. Awake at 3 A.M. Tried to get the *Comfort* afloat but

could not stir her on account of a very low tide; it did not flow in at all....Has been moderate and warm all day. We received three callers: Messrs. H.O. and Z.H. Davis, and H.W. Lumbert. After the calls we rowed up to John's Pond, but before we got there we saw two gentlemen from Mashpee eeling, so did not go. Returned, got lunch, and got ready to get the *Comfort* afloat.

After tugging and hauling, at last got her off. Then the wind, which had blown fair for us, died to a calm. All our labor was in vain. After trying to get

the consequences. It is all overcast but yet calm. The moon lights up a little, and I trust may give us a fair weather yet. Our baked beans and brown bread are about ready, so I must close. Perhaps tomorrow will find us at Cape Poge, and I do hope soon to get some sport for as yet we have done nothing, and no birds are here.

Waquoit Bay And Cape Poge Bay

Dec. 9, 1888. Sun. 5:30 P.M. This A.M. at daylight we found wind N.E., cloudy and rainy. At 8 A.M.

we started under white mainsail and jib, intending to run out in the Sound and, if the wind was too strong or the sea too rough, run to Naushon. When we got out, the *Old Comfort* did so well, and the storm held up a while, we concluded if we were to get to Cape Poge at all, we must get across the Sound before the gale came on. It looked to us about four hours off, so we let her go and drove her all we dared to, and I must say I find her a much better sea boat and much stiffer than I dared to hope.

Off the Hedge Fence Shoal, seas were very rough and winds blowing strongly. The

Old Comfort rushed through it, towing the *Broad Bill* and the *Dipper* behind. Then a heavy puff came and away went our weather shroud carrying away the hook to the turnbuckle. I luffed her up, and we got new lanyards run and kept on. There was a ques-



The yacht *Bubble* alongside boat house wharf in 1886.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society

out of the harbor against the tide, we had to anchor and are moored on the West side. At 4 P.M. Nate and self went for black ducks but did not get a shot.

A large fleet of vessels have passed west this P.M.; Nate saw a "Sun Dog" to the south of the sun; I fear

tion whether we could fetch into Edgartown Harbor, the west tide was so strong.

As soon as we dared (on account of the mast, which we feared might go), we trimmed in our sheets, and the old craft did well. We JUST fetched the mouth of Cape Poge Pond, and we were glad when we had Edgartown Harbor under our lee. It was blowing fresh and came on stronger as we drew near to the land, and we had all we wanted, also, in the Bay. Going across the Sound, our lee rail was always under water, and almost all the time our cabin window on the lee side was under, Theodore reported.

Upon arrival we beat up to the light house and interviewed the keeper, Mr. Fisher, and then ran south. We lie at anchor now quite near the place we laid when we were here in the *Mischief*. It is a stormy night, wind is northeast, and rain is falling in heavy showers. Cape Poge Light shines out at us through the mist of storm. Nathan's "Sun Dog" is doing his work in good earnest, but as we have our two heavy anchors ahead, we have no fears.

We found some large flocks of birds here and hope for good luck. I doubt if we are able to shoot tomorrow A.M. from the box. I have an intimation of some trouble from my box shooting, but shall be able, I think, to convince the inhabitants that I am within the law. It has been a busy Sunday for us, but I am glad we are here and shall enjoy the storm and sleep well in our snug quarters. Good night.

Dec. 10, 1888, Cape Poge, Monday. The alarm sounded at 3, but we concluded to wait for daylight and so got breakfast at 6:30 A.M. Started at 7:30 for the east part of the bay. Set the box off Light House Point and I got in. I had a bad headache all day, and it now aches as I write, but Gustavus' remedies and

hot water (in a bag) has helped me very much, and I hope to be all right tomorrow A.M.

Dec. 11, 1888, Tue. Cape Poge. A DAY OF DISASTER AND STORM! It opened with a northeast rain storm. At 9 I went ashore alone with the *Dipper* and shot 2 black ducks in a pond hole, then went up to Light House Point and set my coys. It rained very heavily all day and blew a gale. At 3:30 P.M. I managed to get on board the *Comfort*. We had out both anchors. Blowing, hailing, and raining. At 5 P.M. the wind changed to the north and blew a very heavy gale. At 8 the *Dipper* sank astern and the *Comfort* pitched bowsprit under, and took BOTH of our anchors along as though they were NOTHING but lightweights!

The large anchor was not worth anything and had it not been for our SMALL ONE, we should have gone ashore in half an hour. At 10 P.M. the *Broad Bill* sank and turned over, bottom up, thereby losing all my 300 lbs of shot and pig iron, anchor, and all things that would sink. At 10:30 I cut her adrift and let her go. The wind now absolutely howled through the rigging and drenched any one that was on deck by the spray. We at 1 A.M. found we were drifting again, so we hauled in the small anchor and threw it out again, then did the same with the big one. After they was both let go, they brought her up. Then Nate and self watched all night, neither of us sleeping at all.

At 2:10 A.M. the rudder ropes failed and we were absolutely at the mercy of the winds and trusted to the anchors to keep us off the lee shore that we could see in the darkness close aboard. You could hardly get along the deck on account of the wind and the Old *Comfort* pitched TERRIBLY. It was a wonder she held on.

We sat in the companionway watching to see if the anchors held, so we could be ready for a jump and the beach if she went ashore, but they did their duty nobly. The great seas would rush by in the darkness and flood our decks and the gale shrieked through the rigging. Sleet and hail cut like a knife whenever you looked to the windward. At last in my watch I saw a gleam of daylight, and the black clouds began to break away in the north-west, and glad was I to see it.

I was wet through going out on the bowsprit to secure the anchor lines as the Old *Comfort* would plunge it, and me on it, completely under the great seas that swept and broke all around and over us. At last morning dawned. (Bag: 2 black ducks.)

Dec. 12, 1888. Wed. And still it blows. From the cabin I can see my decoys on the beach, but no *Broad Bill* or Box, and I cannot tell how much my loss will be as yet. The wind still howls northwest, and we are unable to get ashore. I want to go as soon as possible to find out the extent of my loss. We were FOOLS not to go into a better harbor, but this night will be a lesson I will never forget. It has spoilt the trip and I am very much disgusted. I hope soon to get ashore and will then note my loss all right. A bright beautiful day, but the WIND, yet and still, howls out from the Northwest, and seas break all about us. The *Dipper* lies sunk under our stern; we are not able to bail her out until it moderates, which I pray may be very very soon.

At 11 A.M. we got the *Dipper* bailed out and Nate and self went on shore. Found decoys all tangled up (100 of them), the Box badly damaged, and the shore strewn with my effects. The *Broad Bill* lay about two miles farther West, bottom up on the beach. Went and turned her over and started for the *Comfort*. Got entirely wet through by the seas. Got all things, at

last, together and pulled off to the *Comfort*. JUST GOT TO HER, and that was ALL, it still blew so heavily. Changed clothes and got supper. LOST: 275 lbs shot in bags. 1 anchor. 4 pieces of Pig Iron. Broke box and wings. In fact, used up my rig until repairs are made.

It is now 8:30 P.M. A LOVELY NIGHT and as light as DAY. The fierce northwest wind howls yet about and over us. I am on watch; all else have retired. The cozy cabin keeps us very warm. Our clothes hang drying by the stoves and outside lies the *Broad Bill*. I am glad to get her back undamaged. I am so tired and sleepy — I will stop for a few moments.

10 P.M. All are asleep; wind at LAST has moderated. We are lying without pitching our bowsprit under. As it looks now like a moderate night, I will soon retire for I feel the need of REST. The cabin is so WARM AND COZY, I almost feel loath to retire. It blows again, so I will hold on for a while before I go to bed.

Dec. 13, 1888, Cape Poge, Thursday. At sunrise the gale had blown out at last. We got the *Comfort* underweigh and beat her into the pond which we now call Comfort Harbor. It is a REAL COMFORT to be here and not driving head and stern into a heavy sea as we have been for the last three days. Have both anchors ahead. Let the big one go but now I don't trust it, so put down the small one.

We have passed this day getting our box and decoys and etc., up to this harbor. A cold rough job. Had to tow the box along-shore. Could not sail or tow her in the *Broad Bill*; tried it and turned her over, breaking BOTH the new wings, so am now about all used up. Have buoyed the place where the shot are supposed to be and shall try for them if a calm day offers. I am TERRIBLY TIRED of this place. Shall

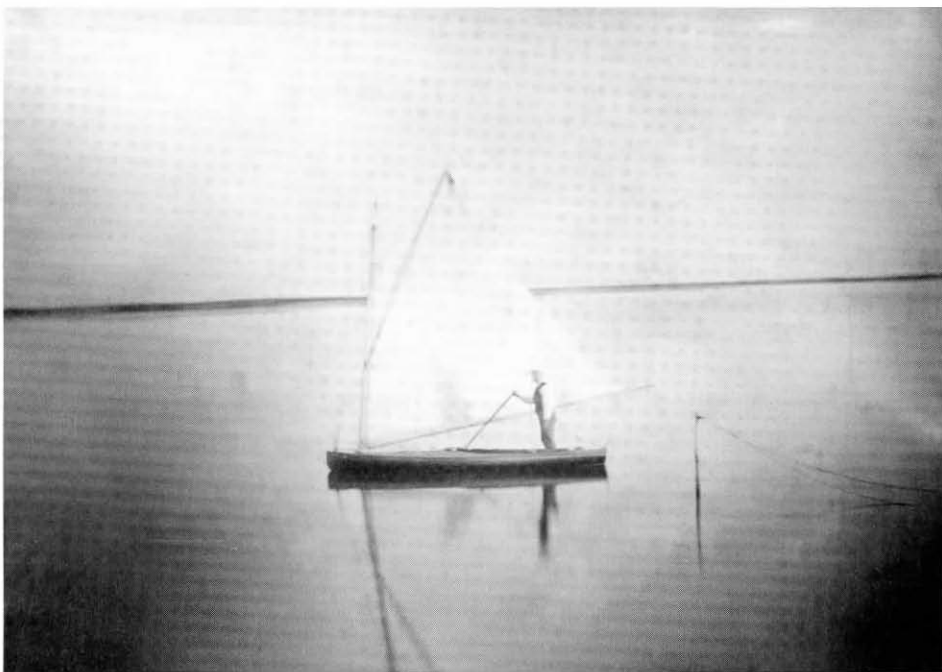
leave as soon as I can and never, I hope, return to it - (to experience such weather!)

It is a very cold night and freezes up fast. Nate is not well tonight but hopes to be better in the morning. Shall repair damages tomorrow and sail for Naushon, if possible. Will now retire although wind blows heavily again, and GLAD are we all to be in this nice harbor and AT REST. I shall try for birds on the Beach tomorrow A.M. if it don't storm. How pleasant to be able to lie down and sleep, and not to have to sit in the companionway, look into the black night, and watch the white line of breakers under your lee to see if you are dragging into them. Good night.

Dec. 14, 1888, Comfort Harbor, Cape Poge, Fri. 8:40 P.M. The SAME STEELY SKY and SAME H O W L I N G WIND (at North). Had breakfast at 8 A.M. and at 10:30 Gustavus and self went up to the Light House. The family were glad to see us and gave us HOT DOUGHNUTS, Pumpkin Pie, and chocolate. Gustavus did full justice to all. Took pictures of the family and Light House and returned to the *Comfort*, wheeling down a half bbl. of water. It was hard work, but the good water repaid us, as we had

none to wash with and none to cook with. The chance to send letters Home was improved, and I was glad to send them.

Ice is forming around us and the wind howls and shrieks over us and out to the sea. A lovely bright night. Where we lay before we came in here, the sea tumbles in white caps, but it don't toss us longer on its bosom. We have a nice HARBOR and last night we really rested, the first night's rest for three nights. Nate was taken sick yesterday but is much better today, and thinks he will be all right tomorrow. I will now join the readers and retire soon as it is nearly nine o'clock and I soon shall be asleep. Hope to awake and miss the howl of the wind! I have heard it now since Tuesday, and I am so tired of its ever-lasting music, its roarings and moanings.



Bubble – A slumbering silence fills the sky. East Bay, Osterville, 1884. O.D. Lovell on board.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society

Dec. 15, 1888. Sat. 9:40 P.M., Vineyard Haven: This morning at sunrise got our breakfast and, the barometer indicating a change, we got our damaged box and coys stored in the *Broad Bill* and at 12 o'clock started for Home or Naushon. We found quite heavy ice and had to break our way out. At 3 P.M. was at the mouth of the BAY. Wind light at West. We got off Edgartown at Sunset and, as it was a lovely night, we concluded to make for Vineyard Haven, and perhaps Naushon and run close to the Beach. Passed a 3-masted schooner ashore near Cottage City and went close in to the city itself, single-reefed the mainsail off the wharf at Cottage City and beat into this place, Vineyard Haven, arriving at 9 P.M.

The wind has again backened and threatens another storm. We shall try to run over to Naushon early tomorrow A.M. We are all glad to be clear of Cape Poge, but we left a great many birds in there. I hope to see half as many at Naushon, but at Cape Poge, you cannot get at them except it is very moderate. I left word with Mr. Fisher to try to get my shot and Pig Iron and anchor. It is 10 P.M., and I will set the alarm on 3 and retire. Have had a nice supper of Baked Beans and etc., (since we anchored here). We try and "keep Saturday night" on the *Comfort*.

Dec. 16, 1888, Sun. 2 P.M., Vineyard Haven: Here we are, a fierce sou'wester blowing and although fair for Naushon, yet so heavy is the wind, we do not think it prudent for us to start for Naushon or Home.

Out in the Sound the great waves rise and fall with their snowy caps, and the vessels glide by to Eastern ports before the gale or seek the shelter of the harbor if bound to the West. Last night as we glided by Cottage City (which looked like a city of mist and void of life), we did not think, after a WEEK OF

GALES, we should be again wind-bound, but only in the night does the wind allow us to sail and even then only under close-reefed canvas.

Today we have passed reading, sleeping, and eating. I have taken a few views of the wind-bound fleet and of Vineyard Haven. We have watched the vessels beating into the harbor, and one has gone so closely to West Chop that she lies aground and will not come off until the flood tide lifts her. The churchbell rings out, but we do not seem to respond. We hope to get a run across tonight. Shall go if a chance offers.

9 P.M. A light but cloudy night. The wind still blows and we shall not have any chance tonight to go across the Sound.



Augusta Bearse Lovell, O.D.'s wife.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society

Dec. 17, 1888. Mon. This morning at daylight we had our breakfast and at 7 A.M. Nathan set Gustavus ashore so he could take the steamer to Woods Holl and go Home by cars. I was sorry to have him leave us and miss him very much indeed. We watched him go on board the steamer and waved to him Good Bye until he was hidden from our sight by the mist and rain. We envied him going Home, leaving us alone in the gloom of this day.

The wind moderated soon after he left, so we got in our big anchor, double reefed the sails, and got all ready for a start, but it BLEW UP AGAIN, and we gave it up. It soon began to rain and is now, at 2 P.M., a hard storm and a most dismal day. I have never experienced such weather! The only comfort is that at Home, they know we are safe and of our where-about, that our cabin is nice and dry, and we have plenty to eat. I had hoped for a chance to get across to the North Shore today, but I must now relinquish it, I fear. I will try to read and divert my mind from the gloomy surroundings of clouds and storm.

9. P.M. The wind still howls and has canted to the East, and the boat trembles under the BLAST. I long for rest and quiet and not to have to WATCH and hear the howl of the wind, the grinding of the rudder, and feel the toss and pitch and surge of the boat as she rides to her strained anchors. All about us is flying spume and mist. The clouds go scurrying by overhead and the shore and vessels' lights shine dimly through the storm. I trust tomorrow will give us rest and quiet AT LAST. I am very tired of this incessant warfare of the elements. Nathan and Theodore are in bed, and I on the watch until midnight.

12 o'clock midnight. The storm is still raging, but not as severe. At 11 P.M. a seal crawled out on the *Dipper's* deck (just astern). I shot at him and he disappeared in the water. Don't know whether I killed him or not. I will now call Nate and retire. It is past midnight; I am tired and sleepy.

Dec. 18, 1888, Tue. "Our Anniversary Day." It opens at Vineyard Haven in a howling storm. The wind at West actually takes up the water and dashes it in one's face. The grey sky is close down upon us and from it comes a raw chilly rain. The Old *Comfort*

rolls and pitches and tugs at her two anchors as if she would NOT be held, but driven to the sea which is not visible on account of the drift of the mist over the waters. Under our stern lays the *Dipper*, again sinking, and it is all I want to do to get on her, remove the cover, and bail her out. What a day for the

A Very Low Barometer

Fall of an Inch in Twenty-Four Hours

And Extraordinary Weather Record Left by the Storm Just Over The Mercury in the Barometer Lower than Ever Before.

Dec. 18, 1888: In respect to weather, the year 1888 has been remarkable. The latest phenomenon, about which all the local weather observers are now talking, is the surprising record of the barometer which was made during the storm which has just passed over the city.

Prof. Draper looked over his books for the last twenty years and said that the record at three A.M. on December 18 was the lowest ever recorded at Central Park Observatory, the lowest preceding record having been made on the 9th of January, 1886, when the glass stood at 28.698. The fall of the barometer from six A.M. of December 17 until three A.M. of the following morning was one full inch - an extraordinary drop. The wind of yesterday morning was very irregular. The swiftest gust came with a force of 19-1/2 pounds to the square foot, which, reduced to miles, indicates a velocity of 62.5 miles per hour.

Clipping from the Tuesday, December 18, 1888 issue of *The Evening Post* glued to page 154 of Shooting Record

coming of the "Anniversary of our Marriage!" (But lighter hours were in store for us.)

At 10 A.M. the fierce squalls began to abate, and broken clouds gave us hope. At noon, for the first time for three days, we saw again the glorious sun. All day we have tossed and pitched at our moorings, not able to get ashore and only thankful we can hold on. A Capt. from the Schr. "Abel W. Parker" rowed by; said for 15 years he had never seen so low a barometer.

Now at 8 P.M. the sky is without a cloud and the great moon rises up over the sea and floods all with its silver light. We note our barometer and hope for a chance for the North Shore to-morrow. It is weary, laying here, tossing in this open roadstead.

I look across the Sound and see Lights of Home, and wish I was there. It seems hard to be kept so long wind-bound and only striving to keep the *Comfort* from the shore or from going to sea. "Hope Springs Eternal," and mine is that tomorrow will bring us a fairing wind which we shall improve.

The night is PERFECT and I hope we shall "sleep well" and have no anchor watch to keep us awake. The swells roll in from the Sound and the *Comfort* rolls heavily in their hollows. Close to us lies the Schr. "Queen Esther," the same schooner that was with us last year at Puritan Harbor. I have watched her anxiously to see if our anchors held, and when the storm was overfast, found her an old acquaintance. Old familiar as she is, I shall be glad to leave her behind. Perhaps tomorrow. Next Anniversary Day I hope to be with my Dear Wife AT HOME. I trust to have a pleasant night and bid adieu to this place tomorrow.

Dec. 19th, 1888. Wed. At 5 A.M. we arose and found the wind at N.W., moderate at last. Secured the *Dipper*, got in our anchors, and at 6 A.M., an hour before daylight, started for the North Shore. We were the first boat or vessel to leave the Harbor. We left under single-reefed mainsail and whole jib. Off West Chop it was quite rough and the wind freshened, but the Old *Comfort* DID WELL. At 8 A.M. we were over under Succonesett. Glad were we ALL to leave Vineyard Haven where we laid since Saturday night at 9 P.M.

As we could not fetch Nobska and as it looked stormy, I concluded to terminate this most disastrous trip and run for HOME. Under Succonesett we shook out the reef in the mainsail, the wind freshening, we run along well. At 9:30 was off the Wading Place, and at 11 was on the Bar. Arrived at the Boat House at 11:30 A.M. So ends the stormiest and most disappointing trip I ever had in the Old *Comfort*. Grand total for trip: only 25 birds.

NOTE: If I go again to Cape Poge, we must moor in Comfort Harbor, have a well dug, and also arrange with the lawyers as to suit if any is pressed upon me. At present there are no birds on the North Shore at all, so we have not missed much sport except maybe at Waquoit.

Dec. 20, 1888. The Old *Comfort* is all dismantled, ready to go into the house; the Bay is clear of ice, and it is now lovely weather. Would we had had only a part of this when on my trip!

NOTE: Dec. 21, 1888. Housed the *Comfort* today and stored away all the coys and etc. Heard from Mr. Davis that after we left Waquoit there was about 1,000 whistlers and 800 red heads in that Bay and Waquoit Bay was entirely closed. Cape Poge Bay (at

that time) was over three-quarters open, and even Comfort Harbor at Cape Poge was NOT CLOSED. I want to make a memo of this fact for future guidance.

O.D.L.

Postscript

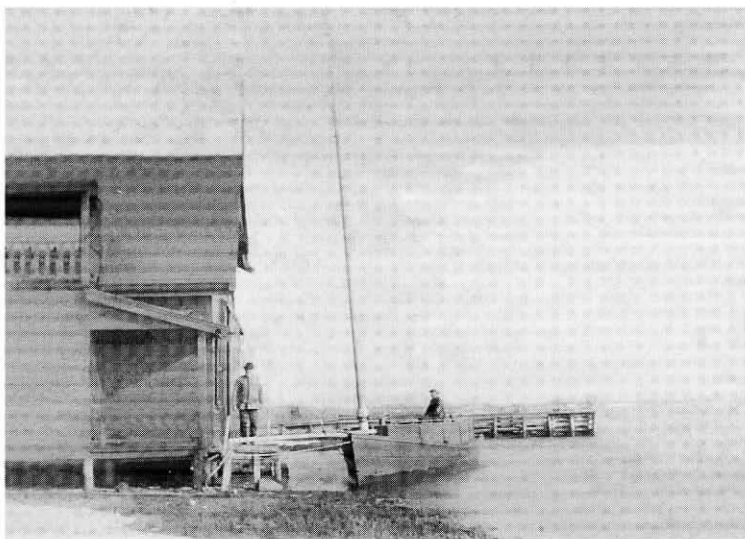
Nineteenth century sportsmen shot bear, buffalo, deer, squirrels, and birds. They shot land birds: quail, pheasants, turkeys, eagles and owls. And they shot waterfowl: geese, seagulls, brant, and all species of duck. Indiscriminate as it was, their hunting probably did not significantly reduce the vast populations of water birds.

Habitat destruction has been far more damaging to waterfowl. All along the Atlantic flyway where birds have traditionally rested and fed during their semi-annual migrations, marshes and feeding grounds have been drained and filled. Pollution has degraded most of the remaining wetlands and estuaries. When oil tankers flush their bilges at sea, rafts of waterfowl die because when oil coats their feathers, they cannot fly. People have displaced birds almost everywhere.

These are the issues we must deal with as we read O.D. Lovell's Shooting Record and recognize the changes that have taken place on Cape Cod since he wrote his journal.

To make his permanent home in Osterville, Orville Dewey Lovell retired in 1891 from membership in the firm of F.H. Lovell & Company, of New York. Founded 1864 in New York City by his brother, Franklyn, the company produced railroad and marine lighting fixtures. Born Osterville 1839, youngest son of Captain George Lovell and Adeline Hallett, O.D. Lovell married in 1870 Augusta Barse, 1849-1930, daughter of Captain Nelson Barse, Sr., and Florida Hinckley, of Centerville. Augusta was a granddaughter of Osterville shipbuilder Oliver Hinckley.

Andrea Leonard earned her B.A. at the University of Chicago after graduating from Barnstable High School. She is the author of *A Guide to Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, Osterville Twice Remembered*, various articles in *Cape Cod Life* magazine, and *A Crocker Genealogy*. She inherited O.D. Lovell's diary and feels sharing this fascinating historic document is imperative.



The yacht *Comfort* alongside boat house after winter cruise, January 1885.

Courtesy Osterville Historical Society