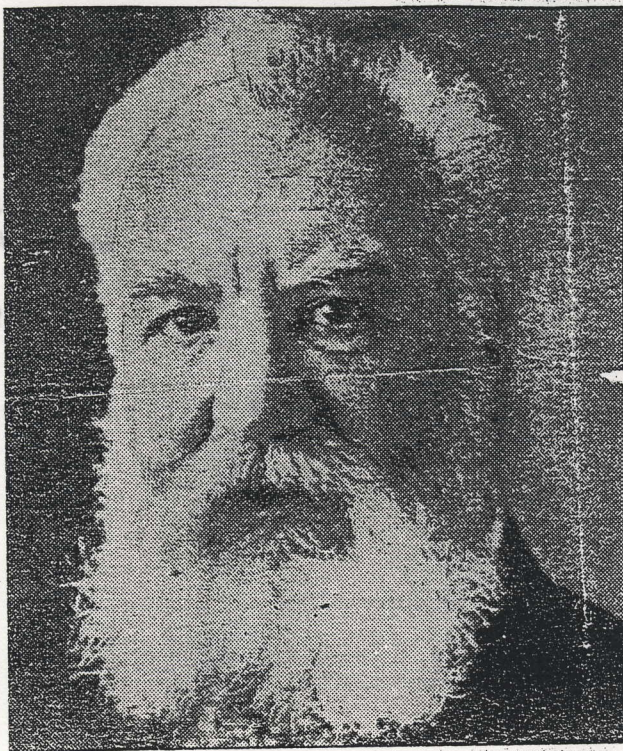


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ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL'S concern with the Island and its people was much more than a thing of the moment. His visits and at least one prolonged stay on the Island were the result of his desire to investigate the so-called "deaf-mute" town in Chilmark about which a fictitious tradition had sprung up.

It is also true that while Bell was living in Capt. Abram Osborn's house in Edgartown, the telephone was taking form and Bell put in much work on the invention. When he left the Island he had made strong friendships which were parted only by death.

On his arrival on the Vineyard Bell went directly to Chilmark in order to study the deaf-mutes. His interest in the subject is said to have been stimulated by the fact that Mrs. Bell was deaf. At Chilmark Bell was soon referred to Richard L. Pease of Edgartown as being the one person best able to supply him with the desired information. Journeying at once to Edgartown Bell soon found Mr. Pease, whose knowledge relating to Vineyard families proved complete and satisfying. In speaking of him shortly afterward to Mrs. Pease, Bell exclaimed. "Why, I've found a mine in Mr. Pease!"

An interesting side-light on Bell at Edgartown is furnished by the account of James L. Humphrey of New Bedford who met him there.

Bell had gone to Edgartown on the verge of a nervous collapse, according to the story he told Mr. Humphrey at that time. He had engaged room and board for the winter in a hotel with the stipulations that the place was to be his to do absolutely as he wanted and that strict privacy should prevail to the exclusion of other boarders.

Then a salesman, "making Edgartown," Mr. Humphrey arrived at the hotel one stormy night after all lights were out. After prolonged knocking he aroused the host, Captain Osborn. The ban on intrusion by others was explained by the Captain. Only after Mr. Humphrey set forth his plight at that time of night and in such bad weather did Captain Osborn relinquish his rule against additional roomers — for which rule, he told Mr. Humphrey, the stranger, who later proved to be Bell, "paid well."

Curious over the whole affair, Mr. Humphrey began to devote his efforts to find out what this work was that must not be interfered with. He discovered that everything that Mr. Bell did, he accomplished with inflexible regularity. He would read for exactly an hour and stop on the stroke of the clock. He would play the piano just one hour. If out walking, he would be back in an hour to the very second. So in his experiments on the invention that was later to be the finished telephone.

D.G. July 10, 1992