



# *Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket*

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North American

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There is no such place as Martha's Vineyard, except in geography and common speech. It is Martin Wyngaard's Island, and so was named by Skipper Block, an Albany Dutchman. But they would English his name, even in his own town, for it lingers there in Vineyard Point. Bartholomew Gosnold was one of the first white visitors here, for he landed in 1602, and lived on the island for a time, collecting a cargo of sassafras and returning thence to England because he feared the savages.

This scarred and windy spot was the home of the Indian giant, Maushope, who could wade across the sound to the mainland without wetting his knees, though he once started to build a causeway from Gay Head to Cuttyhunk and had laid the rocks where you may now see them, when a crab bit his toe and he gave up the work in disgust. He lived on whales, mostly, and broiled his dinners on fires made at Devil's Den from trees that he tore up by the roots like weeds. In his tempers he raised mists to perplex sea-wanderers, and for sport he would show lights on Gay Head, though these may have been only the fires he made to cook his supper with, and of which some beds of lignite are to be found as remains. He clove No-Man's Land from Gay Head, turned his children into fish, and when his wife objected he flung her to Seconnet Point, where she preyed on all who passed before she hardened into a ledge.

It is reported that he found the island by following a bird that had been stealing children from Cape Cod, as

they rolled in the warm sand or paddled on the edge of the sea. He waded after this winged robber until he reached Martha's Vineyard, where he found the bones of all the children that had been stolen. Tired with his hunt he sat down to fill his pipe; but as there was no tobacco he plucked some tons of poke that grew thickly and that Indians sometimes used as a substitute for the fragrant weed. His pipe being filled and lighted, its fumes rolled over the ocean like a mist—in fact, the Indians would say, when a fog was rising, “Here comes old Maushope's smoke”—and when he finished he emptied his pipe into the sea. Falling on a shallow, the ashes made the island of Nantucket. The first Indians to reach the latter place were the parents of a babe that had been stolen by an eagle. They followed the bird in their canoe, but arrived too late, for the little bones had been picked clean. The Norsemen rediscovered the island and called it Naukiton. Is Nantucket a corruption of that word, or was that word the result of a struggle to master the Indian name?

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