National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cape Cod National Seashore

Guide's Guide
Prominent Cape Cod Personalities

Samoset, Squanto and Massasoit

Samoset

On March 16, 1621, residents of Plymouth were startled by the sudden arrival of the first Native American to visit them. This was Samoset, a sagamore of a tribe living in Maine. He knew English fishermen in that area, and had learned the language. He shook hands with the Pilgrims, greeted them warmly, and gave them information about the tribes in the area. Samoset dined with the Pilgrims and spent the night at the home of Giles and Constance Hopkins' father, Stephen. He found his hosts friendly, but well supplied with cannons and muskets.

Subsequently, Samoset led several members of the nearby Wampanoag tribe into Plymouth for a visit, and most providentially, one of them, Squanto, stayed with the Pilgrims for the rest of his life. Samoset's memory is preserved in an important east-west road in Eastham as well as in other towns in the former Plymouth Colony.

Squanto

Squanto, also known as Tisquantum, from the Patuxet tribe which had occupied the general area around Plymouth until a few years before the Pilgrims' arrival, had made a strange odyssey. It is believed that he was kidnapped by a villainous English shipmaster who intended to sell him and about nineteen others into slavery in Spain. Squanto escaped and stowed away on an England-bound vessel and was taken in by a kindly London merchant. It is believed that he had learned English on a previous trip to that land. At his request, the merchant sent him to Newfoundland where he persuaded the master of a Maine-bound vessel to take him as an interpreter. Eventually, he reached the Plymouth area to discover that all his family and friends had been wiped out by a pestilence thought to have occurred four years before the Mayflower's arrival.

Squanto chose to remain with the Pilgrims and made himself indispensable as interpreter, guide and teacher. He knew the coast from Penobscot Bay, Maine, to Point Judith, Rhode Island. He taught them when and where to fish, how to tread eels frem the mud, where to find herbs in the forest. Best of all, he taught the Pilgrims how to plant and fertilize Indian corn or maize, an unknown crop to Englishmen, to whom "corn" meant a grain such as wheat.

Massasoit

In this same month of March 1621, Squanto brought to Plymouth the Wampanoag sachem, Massasoit, his brother, Quadequina, and sixty Native Americans. After an exchange of friendly remarks, feasting and drinking, a peace treaty was concluded by Massasoit and Plymouth Governor, John Carver, in the presence of Edward Winslow, Myles Standish and other Pilgrim leaders. Samoset was also present.The peace treaty with Massasoit, was of enormous importance to the Plymouth Colony in guaranteeing peace for over fifty years. For Massasoit and the Wampanoags, English support in the face of the powerful Narragansetts was essential.

A death threat against Squanto resulted in a strong stand by the Pilgrims to the Native Americans of Southern New England about the necessity for mutual respect. Squanto and Hobomok, a Wampanoag who also chose to live with the Pilgrims, went with a message to Massasoit. Corbitant, a Wampanoag sagamore, encountered them and decided to kill them. Myles Standish and fourteen Pilgrims scuffled with Corbitant and drove him off.

Trifles for Furs

In the summer of 1621, leaders of the Plymouth Colony decided to make a diplomat-ic visit to "the Massachusetts," a tribe inhabiting the Blue Hill area south of Boston. Squanto, Hobomok, Myles Standish and the new governor, William Bradford, traveled part way by shallop and landed at a section of present-day Quincy known ever since as "Squantum." By offering glass beads and trifles in exchange for beaver furs, the Pilgrims started a beneficial trading relationship with "the Massachusetts," and thus provided furs to their London financial backers. Fur shipments to England became the Pilgrims' economic salvation, and the ins-and-outs of the fur trade were taught to the Pilgrims by Squanto. Furs were trapped and the pelts cured by the Native Americans, who valued them more for trade than to wear. They bartered them for English products such as, hardware, wool coats and blankets.

Squanto's insights were important to the Pilgrims and would be missed later. Canoni-cus, a Narragansett sachem, threw down a fighting challenge to the Pilgrims by sending a messenger with an arrow bundle in rattlesnake skin. Squanto told Bradford its signif-icance. Canonicus was silenced when the snakeskin was returned filled with powder.

During the Plymouth Colony's second winter, 1621-22, Squanto inexplicably started a rumor that Massasoit was about to attack. Massasoit demanded Bradford give up Squanto for beheading. William Bradford was faced with a dilemma - Squanto was invaluable to the Colony, but Massasoit's good will was essential. Fortunately for Bradford, and especial-ly for Squanto, Massasoit cooled off and changed his mind.

The corn harvest was short in Plymouth during the second autumn, 1622, so Governor Bradford set out in the ship, Swan, piloted by Squanto, to barter on Cape Cod. At Pleasant Bay, Squanto reassured the Monomoyick Indians and persuaded them to offer corn and beans to Bradford in trade. A fatal illness overcame Squanto at Pleasant Bay, and *desiring the Governor to pray for him that he might go to the Englishmen's God in Heaven,* he was probably buried on a hill just west of Ryder's Cove and Route 28 in Chatham, where an Indian burial ground has long existed.

Governor Bradford said Squanto had stayed with the Pilgrims *because he was a special instrument of God for their good beyond their expectation.*

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The Penniman Family

Scammell Penniman was the first member of the Penniman family to purchase property in Eastham in 1829. He was a sixth-generation descendant of James Penniman, who came to America in 1631. His early training was as a carpenter, and he later became a merchant dealing with dry goods and real estate.

Upon his death in 1836, the Eastham property passed to Scammell's second wife, Hannah. In June 1838, Hannah transferred the property to Scammell's children-Fanny, Daniel, and Maria. The two sisters never married. Records indicate that Fanny and Maria never lived in Eastham, even though they owned property there. Daniel appears to have been living in Eastham from at least as early as 1829. He continued to live there until he sold his property to his son in 1867. The 1860 agricultural census lists Daniel Penniman as owning eight acres of land in Eastham, Massachusetts, as well as one horse, two milk cows, and two pigs. He raised rye, corn, and potatoes.

Whaling Captain

Captain Edward Penniman, who purchased the property from his father, was responsible for the construction of the existing structures on the site, and is the renowned member of the Penniman family with whom the site is associated. He was born in Eastham on August 16, 183 1. At age eleven, he began his career at sea as a cook on a schooner bound for the Grand Banks. This expedition ended in a wreck in which only the crew and cargo were saved. Possibly tempered by this experience, he spent his adoles-cent years fishing in the Eastham area. In 1852, at 21 years old, he went to New Bedford, and embarked on his first whaling expedition to the Pacific aboard the Isabella. This expedition began Edward Penniman's long and highly successful career as a whaling captain. He made seven whaling voyages, several of which were around the world.

A tally of the whale oil and bone acquired by Captain Penniman on his voyages, listed in the History of Barnstable County, Massachusetts, reveals how successful these expeditions were:

> *On various voyages, he [Captain Penniman] took 4,237 bbls. of sperm oil, 12,096 bbls. of whale oil and 166,871 pounds of whale bone*.

Captain Penniman's whaling voyages were also adventuresome. On his fourth voyage, as captain of the Minerva, he narrowly escaped capture by the Shenandoah, a privateer ship attempting to burn whaling vessels. Other adventures are recorded by his daughter in her "Remarks," written in 1943. Between whaling voyages, Captain Penniman would return to Eastham, and it was here that he retired at the end of his whaling career in 1884. He occupied his time with small-scale farming. He owned a house and barn, a cow, a horse, and a flock of chickens. He had a large vegetable garden and a greenhouse where he raised chrysanthemums. Penniman also was active in community affairs, most notably the Eastham Universalist Church. His obituary reads: *He was the stalwart pillar of the Eastham Universalist Church, and to that his Toss will be a staggering blow...*

Captain Penniman died at his home on October 16, 1913. Ownership of the Fort Hill property passed to his wife, Betsey Augusta Knowles Penniman. She was a remarkable woman. She accompanied Captain Penniman on three of his seven whaling voyages, each time taking one of the children along. She was an active participant in the expeditions, as demonstrated on her second voyage when Captain Penniman and most of the crew were ashore and the ship was blown out to sea by a gale. Under her direction, the ship weathered the storm at sea and returned, two days later.

Upon Betsey Augusta Knowles Penniman's death, ownership of the Eastham proper-ty passed to her daughter, Betsey Augusta Penniman. Betsey had never married and was living in the house at the time of her mother's death. Both of her brothers, Eugene and Edward, had moved to Dorchester, where they started a hardware business. She died in 1957, passing the house to her niece, Irma Penniman Broun Kahn. Irma and her first husband, Maurice Broun, sold the house to the National Park Service in 1963.

Prominent Cape Cod Personalities

Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O'Neill, recipient of four Pulitzer Prizes and the Nobel Prize for Literature, has the reputation of being America's greatest playwright. He revolutionized the style of drama written and produced in this country. He wrote 45 plays - all tragedies - dealing with what he called the "sickness of today." O'Neill felt that science was the culprit in robbing people of faith and leaving them with no faith to satisfy desire for meaning in life and to comfort their fear of death.

O'Neill was born in 1888 in a New York hotel to James O'Neill and Ellen Quinlan O'Neill. His father came to this country from Ireland in 1856. He was a talented actor and performed Shakespearean roles, but he achieved permanent fame in Dumas's *The Count of Monte Christo*. He was so successful in the role that he was typecast and contin-ued to perform in this play for 25 years.

James was difficult to live with. He bullied his family, was a trickster and a miser. His wife, from a prosperous Cleveland family of Irish extraction, early on began storing up resentments over a shifty life with her actor husband. At some point, suffering from pains, she received a morphine prescription, and soon became addicted, retreating into a dream world, playing on the emotions of her husband and sons.

Eugene had a brother, Jamie, ten years his senior, who was a corrupting influence on him. Lonely and depressed, Jamie was an alcoholic by age twenty.

Road of Tragedies

The only sense of "roots" young Eugene ever had was Monte Christo Cottage in New London, Connecticut, which his parents built in the 1880s and used as a summer home for many years.

Much of the time, young Eugene traveled on the road with his parents and nanny. He had no friends. Shy like his mother, he was troubled, brooded, and buried himself in books. He was sent to a Catholic boarding school in New York, away from theatrical touring and the sight of his mother's drug habit. Subsequently he lived with Ellen in New York. He went through a brief period of intense religious feelings. His secondary school-ing was at Betts Academy in Stamford, Connecticut. Princeton followed for a short time in 1906, but Eugene rebelled against the social life of clubs, was bored, ultimately suspended, and flunked out.

In 1909, O'Neill married Kathleen Jenkins, who bore him a son, Eugene, Jr., in 1910. It was the first of three marriages. He had no real interest in wife or baby, and soon deserted them. Within the next few years, he roamed from gold prospecting in Honduras to sailor on a square rigger. He came down with tuberculosis, drank heavily, and attempted suicide.

The Provincetown Players

Eugene's forays into New York City brought him into contact with Greenwich Village writers and playwrights, some of whom summered in Provincetown, calling themselves the Provincetown Players. A member of this avantgarde set, Mary Heaton Vorse, a writer on socialist subjects, acquired the Lewis Wharf in Provincetown. This became the Wharf Theater.

In 1916, Eugene, summering in the wreck of a ship in Truro, offered the Players for presentation in their humble Provincetown surroundings a one-act play, *Bound East for Cardiff*. It was a sensation, a momentous occasion for American drama and for O'Neill's standing as a playwright.

Modern American drama was born with the Provincetown Players, and O'Neill's genius paralleled the success of this group. The Wharf Theater, which burned down, projected out from shore opposite the end of Gosnold Street in Provincetown.

In 1918, O'Neill married Agnes Boulton, and shortly thereafter began spending summers at the former Coast Guard Station at Peaked Hill Bars in Provincetown. This place was given to Eugene and Agnes by his father.

Eugene did his writing here on a desk built by his friends, the Coast Guardsmen. He loved returning to Peaked Hill Bars each year. *It's wonderful - same old sea and all*, he said. Eugene swam, kayaked, chatted with Portuguese fishermen and Coast Guardsmen. In 1931, the old Coast Guard Station was swept away in a storm.

O'Neill was restless. During a period of approximately 35 years, he lived seasonally in Provincetown; Ridgefield, CT; a chateau in France; Sea Island, GA; Danville, CA; Marblehead, MA; and Boston. Tao House in Danville, where he lived with his third wife, Carlotta Monterey, is now the Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site.

At Peaked Hill Bars, O'Neill wrote *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Emperor Jones*, *Anna Christie*, *The Hairy Ape*, and *Marco Millions*. By the 1930's most of his plays had been written, including the aforementioned, plus *Desire Under the Elms*, *Strange Interlude*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Ah, Wilderness*, and *The Iceman Cometh*. These were followed by *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, about brother Jamie.

Eugene O'Neill suffered from Parkinson's Disease starting in 1944, resulting in a loss of ability to create. He died in 1953 in a hotel in Boston. Three years later, his most autobiographical play about his parents and brother, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, was produced.

A knowledge of O'Neill's family is fundamental to the understanding of his plays. He portrayed his family in his plays to allay old ghosts.