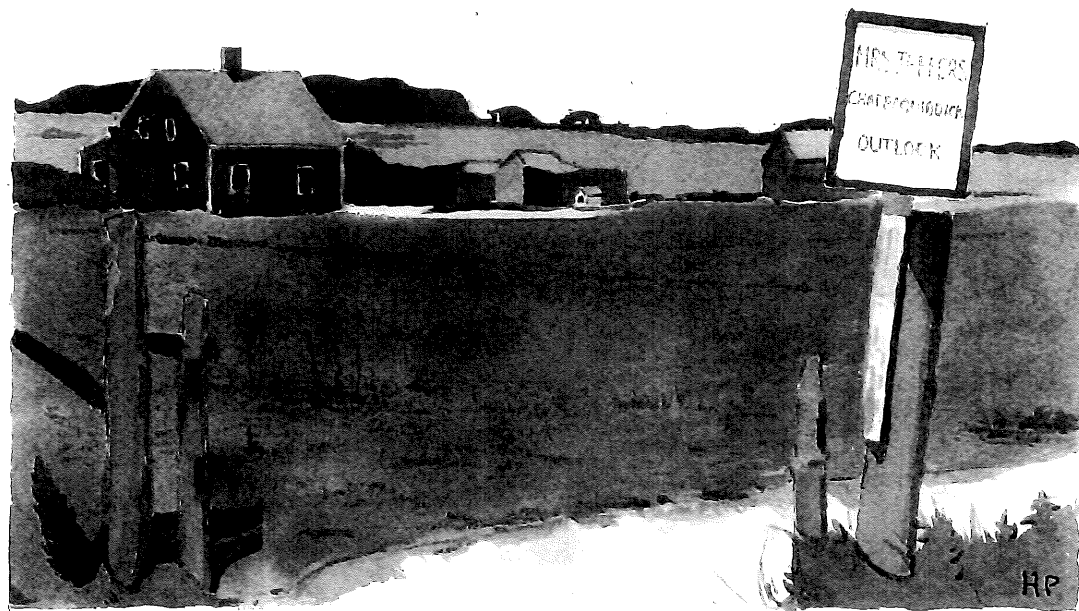


CHAPPAQUIDDICK THAT SOMETIMES SEPARATED BUT NEVER EQUALLED ISLAND

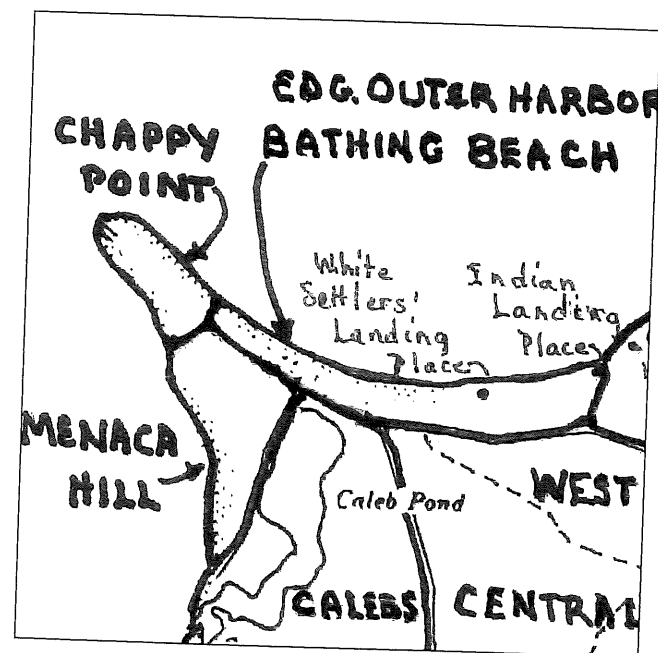
2ND EDITION



CHAPPAQUIDDICK ISLAND ASSOCIATION

After decades of climatic battering, there isn't a right angle in Menaca. The open second-floor hall sags under the bare feet from a hundred summers filled with family and guests. Light penetrating walls and floorboards reminds one of Menaca's unique "visible history." Antiquity whispers, too ancient to shout.

—Sandford "Sandy" Berry, 2005



RECOLLECTION

Menaca Hill House: Chappy's 'Prow' in a Northeaster

By SANDFORD "SANDY" BERRY

*First of all, we want a restful invigorating change —
a place where the accumulated cares and worry of
the winter can be forgotten.*

— from the first Menaca Hill House brochure (1930)

Menaca Hill House lives where it wasn't born. It was originally built about 1885 at Katama and served as a guest house for the Mattakeeset Lodge at Edgartown's South Beach. Nearby was the southern end of the Vineyard Railroad, which brought vacationers from the steamship ferry pier in Oak Bluffs, through Edgartown and on to Katama, where the Island's wild southern shore beckoned.

At the close of the 19th century, as now, enterprises began and failed regularly on the Vineyard. The railroad and lodge went belly up and the house that was later christened Menaca Hill House stood forlornly vacant on Katama's sand plain until Jimmy Chadwick, an Edgartown entrepreneur and owner of the coal wharf, bought it about 1908. Speculating in real estate, Chadwick acquired nearly half the point of land on Chappaquiddick that aims itself at the whaling-era heart of Edgartown. While establishing the Chappaquiddick Beach Club below Menaca Hill, Chadwick divided his land into lots overlooking Edgartown's inner and outer harbors.

Boards and beams were systematically numbered, wrenched apart, barged from Katama to the front harbor, hauled up the short hill and reassembled into a jigsaw sentinel. Grazing sheep keep foliage crisply cropped on the hill, eliminating significant land clearing. Faded puzzle numbers remain, especially in the upstairs front bedroom and most closets. A G37 or C91 impart thoughts of the blood, sweat and cursing that flowed during deconstruction and resurrection.

On the Vineyard "Menaca" is believed to be Wampanoag for "head of land." The house's screened sleeping porch provides a 200-degree vista of Menaca Hill, Edgartown rooftops, the outer harbor, Cape Cod's distant southern tricep, and Chappy's shoreline curve to the Cape Pogue Lighthouse. When northeasters hit Chappy, the Hill House acts as Menaca's prow, and the house moans and whistles in defiance.



Menaca Hill House, c. 1910.

The relocated, reborn Menaca became Chadwick's demonstration model for his subdivision scheme. A year later his wife spent her only summer at the house. Despite ferryman Charlie Osborne's service rowing people across the narrow harbor channel in his flat-bottomed skiff, she claimed she was too far from Edgartown friends and social life. Most Chappaquiddickers had their own rowboats and sailboats with which to go to Edgartown, after "parking" their horses at the Point. Mrs. Chadwick, upset with Chappy's "remoteness," bid adieu to Menaca.

During Menaca's reconstruction, Mr. Chadwick added a kitchen pantry and shed to the house's basic cruciform shape. The upstairs half-bath, built later, is no bigger than a tiny closet and still retains original fixtures, as do the largest bedrooms with their antique marble sinks. The shed, which is filled with ancient tools, rusty hardware and Chappy dump pickings, still has the low exterior-door lintel which bruised the head of many an unwary visitor.

Joshua Snow Smith, David Alger's maternal great grandfather, purchased Menaca in 1910. The house has survived a number of hurricanes. Menaca's structural flexibility in strong winds may well have saved it. Tempests seemed to blow through it, not around it. This conclusion was drawn after watching the clapboard wall in my bedroom move six or seven inches in and out during some of the huge gusts of Hurricane Carol in 1954.

After decades of climatic battering, there isn't a right angle in Menaca. The open second-floor hall sags under the bare feet from a hundred summers filled with family and guests. Light penetrating walls and floorboards reminds one of Menaca's unique "visible history." Antiquity whispers, too ancient to shout. The painted hall stairs still have antique doorstops that march upwards like a column of lead soldiers, ready to tangle with errant bare feet. Even second-floor windows provide beautiful swaths of Chappy's western landscape, Edgartown's architectural landmarks, yachts flying foreign flags, and orange Cape Pogue moonrises that seem to create conspiratorial serendipity.

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On June 28, 1930, Mrs. Edwin C. H. Wilkins and her daughter Rosamond were the first guests at Menaca Hill House when Edith "Deedie" B. Smith (who later married Stedman Alger and was David Alger's mother) opened it for business. Menaca Hill House's little brochure listed many of Chappy's advantages: "Superb views; wonderful bathing at our very door, the temperature of the water being generally above 68 degrees; interesting hikes along seashore and over country roads; blueberrying, blackberrying, fishing, boating and even autoing."

The House offered "large, airy rooms, each with a water view; roomy piazza; two sleeping porches; hot and cold running water; open fire; these combined with the tonic of out-to-sea air make it an ideal spot for a restful, healthful and interesting vacation." The rate for room and (full!) board was \$20/week per person.