



# Peconic Bay SHOPPER

...preserving North Fork History

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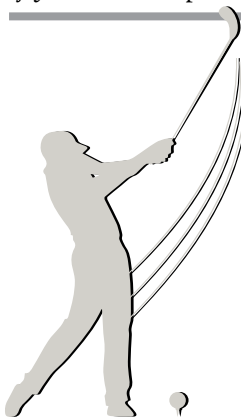


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We are always looking for writers and/or photos that can help preserve local history. If you have old photos, please share. Story ideas to share or write? **Contact us!**



## LOOKING FOR INFO...

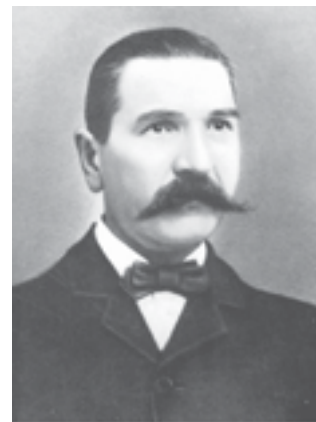
We would welcome any information, pictures or memories of the Greenport Driving Range that was across the street from Drossos on Route 25 heading into Greenport.

Some have already related stories on how, on occasion, the golf balls would fly over the fence into the woods — which was not welcomed by the range management. Please share.

## On the Cover—

On the walls of Claudio's Restaurant hang old family photographs and licenses; some have been there as long as anyone can remember. This photo is different than all the rest because it seems to have no relationship to the property. It's beautifully hand-labeled "Clam Bake, Orchard House, Aug 18, '07.

Janice Claudio has a theory about the photo: *William E. Claudio, the youngest son of Manuel Claudio died sometime in 1907 at age 33. Could one of the men pictured be William? No surviving photographs are known of William so it would be truly remarkable to identify one of these people as he. Older brother Francis (Frank) Joseph Claudio would have been 35 in 1907 and again there are no known images of him. Perhaps the brothers were together at the Clam Bake. Their father sprouted a bushy mustache his entire life if that is any clue (Manuel would have been 68 when this was taken and does not fit any of the men shown). Where is Orchard House and is it a club of some sort as this professionally taken photo is obviously of just men? Perhaps a grieving Manuel put it on the wall after his son passed as a remembrance. It would be so exciting to identify one or both of these two brothers.*



*Manuel Claudio*

### CAN ANY READERS HELP?

There is an "Orchard House" in Concord, Massachusetts that is a historic house museum. It was the longtime home of Amos Bronson Alcott and his family, including his daughter Louisa May Alcott, who wrote and set her novel *Little Women* there. Was there also a North Fork Orchard House?

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Undated photo. On the back is written "James J. Kirkup farmhouse. East of Marratooka"

## In Mattituck, An Ordinary Life

by Helen Didriksen

Miriam Kirkup was an ordinary woman. And she lived an ordinary, late Nineteenth Century life. That is what makes her so interesting. From her diaries (there are six of them, at the Southold Historical Society), we can see clearly what life was like back then. We will look only at the first, from 1888. It is representative of the others, except for one event that was not ordinary: The "Blizzard of '88."

Miriam's diaries (many women had them) were tiny (2 3/4" by 4 1/2") and strictly structured, and limited what she could write. Space was small. And in the beginning, in print, was the word "weather." So she began with the weather. This was not as insignificant as it sounds, in the days before mechanized transportation. It vitally effected how one functioned. Some of her descriptions: "Terrible

heavy rain all day," "icy, some snow; very bad travel," and "lovely day overhead, very muddy traveling." On many a day, Miriam never left the house.

When she did, though, life was surprisingly social. She could "walk up street" to her parents' house, and to visit elsewhere. Others returned the favor. There were also the weekly Sewing Society meetings, at women's houses on Thursday afternoons. The "Sociables" – undefined – were also at private homes. And of course there were the church events, three in Miriam's case, at the Mattituck Presbyterian Church in town. Sunday had services morning and evening, and there was also a Wednesday "prayer service." Miriam rarely made all three, but she always mentioned it when she "did not go."

And there were the special events. Three mentioned in 1888 are: "Jim

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& I went to Lee Theatre. Saw little Tin Soldier played very nice indeed." Also, "Morris Wells' Auction." And finally, "Grand jollification at the Canning Factory." Yes, a canning factory in Mattituck, where the Kirkups took their tomatoes. They were also in the business of selling milk.

And there was travel. To Riverhead, certainly. And even, very occasionally, by train, to New York City.

Some background information is in order. Miriam's husband, James, with his parents and siblings, was a recent arrival in Mattituck, from Cambridge, England. He was a successful farmer, and the farm still exists, between Reeve Avenue and Marratooka Lake, on the Main Road. Her family, the Gildersleeves, however, had been in Mattituck for generations. Her father, Andrew, was an innovative builder. His structures include the "Octagon House," still standing on the corner of Main Road and Love Lane, where she probably was born. Her dates are 1855 to 1922.



Miriam and James had two children, a girl and a boy, spread far apart, and they came later, in 1892 and 1899. Perhaps Miriam was having trouble getting pregnant. She did have a younger sister of James, a teenager, living with them that year, a girl named Annie. Annie went (walked) to school and helped with household chores. Household life seems to have been harmonious.

Life back then had a regular rhythm. One really did wash on Monday (if it wasn't too cold) and iron on Tuesday. The diaries are also filled with baby arrivals but also deaths (particularly children's deaths), so much more common then. Some examples: 'Mr. Wilbur buried today'; "Sarah Rashburn dead"; "Lill Luce baby dead"; "Ma quite sick Chub about the same"; and "Irada sick Mary Wells very sick."

While Miriam was washing and ironing (and doing many other things), husband James was usually working outside, and often with other men. Miriam lists the following occupations for him during the first three months of 1888: clamming, carting potatoes to the freight train, filling the ice house, eeling, carting coal, "in the woods," carting lumber, killing a pig. In one nice domestic touch, he "made me a shelf for Hyacinths" on January 11. By May 17 it's "men putting out tomatoes." On September 25, "Jim picked twenty bushels of tomatoes and got them to the factory." But on October 11, "Heavy frost killed tomatoes." On December 12, Jim is "salting pork."

As for Miriam, she is into candy making, and, in the fall, preserving (canned peaches, cauliflower pickles, apple jelly). She mentions churning. Other cooking chores are not mentioned, perhaps because they are so routine. Sometimes she has a helper, a woman named Lib. Sewing is a factor: a "sacque" (a child's or woman's garment) and "lace for an apron," later "carpet rags." Of course there is cleaning, particularly in the spring. "Annie's, room," "my room," the "store room," and the "boys room, back hall" are all dealt with. Notable is the acceptance of all this tedious work. It was all that was known. It is something for us in the impatient Twenty-First Century to think about. Back then, life was going on as usual.



*Evelyn Kirkup and Andrew Kirkup*

But then, on March 12, comes the blizzard. It dominates her diary until March 21. "Chilly, look like storm," she writes on the 11th. But by the 12th, "Genuine blizzard for this part of the Country, rain, snow, wind. Worse storm known around here, heavy wind steady all day & eve. Ann at school, almost gone when she came home. Does not moderate but worse."

The next day was almost as bad. "Terrible day, snow, blow all day, not quite as bad as yesterday, some colder. Worse night last night in many years. Trains blocked since Monday A.M." (This is Tuesday.)

The snow finally stopped falling on Wednesday. But the cleanup had just begun. "Snowing some in morning," Miriam's entry begins that day. "Men digging out all day. Cleared off pleasant in afternoon. Jim up street on foot in PM. over home all well, worse digging in many years." "No trains through yet," she adds.

Thursday, March 15, was another day that was "pleasant overhead" but "the traveling just fearful." Miriam got out that day that day though: Jim "took me up street in afternoon" to see her mother and several others. And Sewing Society was apparently scheduled, for she simply records that she did not go. "No trains through yet – the worse storm known in seventy years or more," she concludes.

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*Christmas inside the Kirkup farmhouse.*

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After Thursday, things seem to have returned almost to normal, though Miriam several times reports that it “feels like storm.” There is even a “school meeting” on Saturday, March 17, “to see about building a new school house.” “Snow going away quite fast,” she reports that day. But “Men on road digging,” and “No trains through yet.” Finally, on Tuesday, March 20, a day of quite heavy rain, the trains are “beginning to work through.” And on the next day, “Jim up street after mail. First mail since March 16th.”

The year 1888 ends with Christmas preparations, albeit at what we would call the last minute. On December 24, “Started for Riverhead about ten o’clock a nice time got some Christmas.” But it also, characteristically, ends with death. December 30: “Went to Eva Jackson’s funeral in afternoon.... Captain Perry buried today. Three funerals.” It was all a part of this “ordinary life.”

❖  
 Author’s note: Thank you Norman Wambach, co-author of the book “Mattituck and Laurel” for your valuable commentary and photos.



Bethany Cemetery, Mattituck



The Anderson Gildersleeve Family, circa 1890.  
 James Kirkup is second from the left in row two, and his wife Miriam is far left row three.

**ATTENTION READERS!**

This month marks the 130th Anniversary of the Blizzard of '88. We have been unsuccessful in trying to locate local photos from this storm. If anyone has photos or information to share, we would greatly appreciate it!



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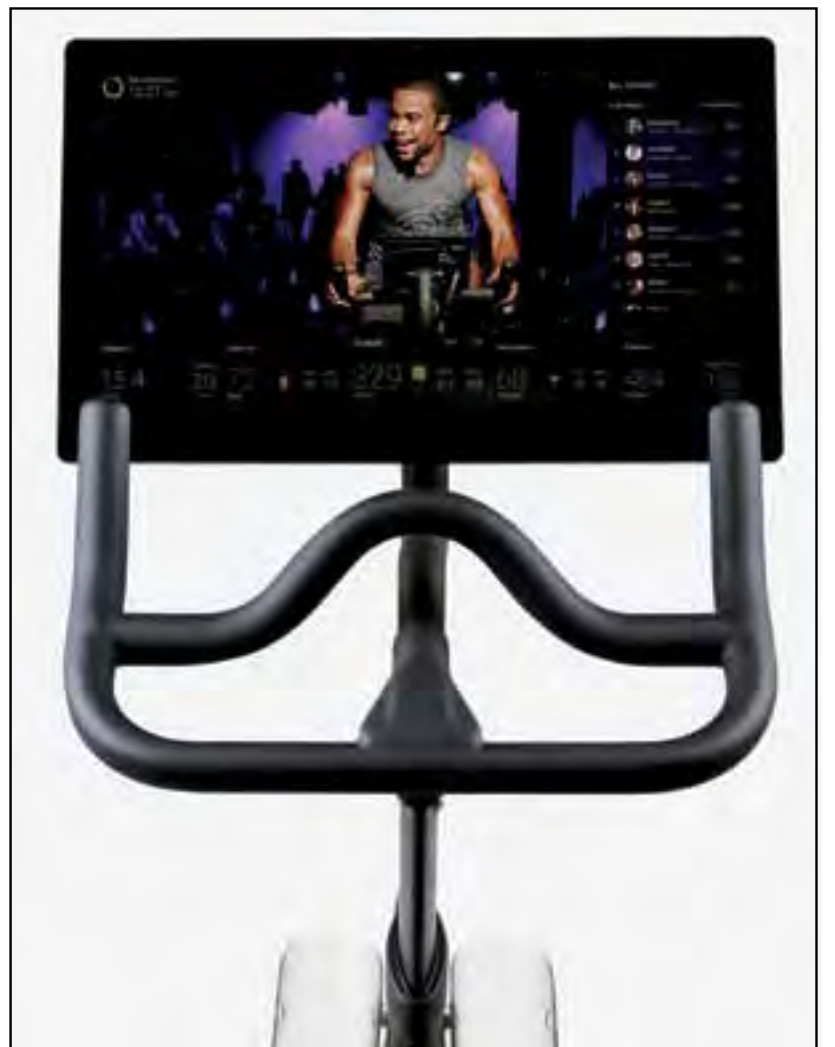
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This 1915 advertisement looks like it was published to clean up the reputation from the shady side to a high class place for "Ladies and Gentlemen" described as "something new, moral and clean".



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