

## The History of the Captain's House

In 1840, Captain Thomas Dunham returned to visit his family home at Holmes Hole on Martha's Vineyard, after having made his fortune as a prosperous ship merchant in New York. At one time, he owned more ships than any other New York merchant. Upon his return, Captain Dunham spent a very large sum of money to rebuild and enhance the 1804 home, built by his father, Squire Dunham - master merchantman in the foreign service.

This big house on the harbor had once been a tavern frequented by seafaring men. From its post swung a sign upon which they painted the rising sun. On the south end of the building, a ship's chandlery supplied many sailing vessels that came into the sheltering harbor of Holmes Hole (later named Vineyard Haven in 1871). In 1820, an account written by lodgers who stayed at the Rising Sun Tavern mentioned that, "after being on a sailing ship for a long journey, it was indeed good to eat soft white bread once more."

Captain Dunham made The Rising Sun Tavern into his summer home and also built a massive, sturdy three-story barn for his carriages, hay, and his fine horses. The big barn was strongly made to withstand the raging nor'easters that often blew in from the sea.

The property eventually came to the granddaughter of Squire Dunham, Mrs. Joseph Chase. In 1915, her son Joseph kept the tavern house, dividing the property with his brother Isaac, who kept the huge barn which he made into a handsome home for his family. Both houses were kept in the family until 1953, at which time the Isaac Chase house was purchased by Mrs. Stiles Winslow. It became The Captain's House, carrying on the tradition of hospitality to travelers and to modern-day "seafarers".

In tracing the history of the houses, and of the Dunham and Chase families, it was found that in 1809, Susanna - daughter of Cornelius Dunham - married Peleg Winslow. Peleg Winslow descended through James Winslow from the Old Colony at Plymouth and was a forefather of the present owners.

## **Guests of the Captain's House**

Over the years, some of the prominent guests of the Captain's House have been:

Max Adrian  
Mr. and Mrs. Tyrone Guthrie  
Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontanne  
Mr. Robert Rounseville  
Ferrante and Teicher  
Miss Claramae Turner  
Mr. Boris Goldowski  
Mr. Leopold Mannes  
Miss Dorothy Parker  
Miss Lillian Hellman  
Mr. Saul Bellow  
Miss Margaret Webster  
Miss Pamela Frankau  
Sir Hamilton and Lady Gibb  
Sir Charles Ellis  
Mr. Randolph Churchill  
Dr. Paul Dudley White  
Mr. and Mrs. Francis Sayre  
Admiral and Mrs. Thomas Hart  
General Randolph Pate  
Senator and Mrs. Edward Kennedy  
Denzel Washington, Jr.