



Chadwick's Gunning House, Squam Beach.

{As it was before it was rebuilt two years ago.}

TAKEN FROM:

SHOOTING AND FISHING for YOUNG
SPORTSMEN

BY: T. ROBINSON WARREN 1871

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SNIFE SHOOTING AND FISHING IN BARNEGAT BAY: On a wretchedly hot day a fortnight since, returning home from business, I found my wife fagged and wearied, with a ruefully woe-begone countenance, and on asking the whys and wherefores I was informed that "Baby was drooping, had the summer complaint, and must be taken to the sea-shore." The various localities were duly discussed: Long Branch too fashionable and too expensive; Newport and Cape May too ditto and too far; farm cottages by the sea stupid and uncomfortable; finally, in despair I suggested Barnegat Bay! Daniel Webster, after his most magnificent effort, was never greeted with such applause as was elicited by that single word, **Barnegat!** Wife, boys and girls fairly shouted with delight, and the house shook with echoes of "Hurrah for Barnegat!" Now, be it known that for years it has been my habit to make semi-annual pilgrimages to Squam Beach in search of game, and I have always come back with a goodly bag of ducks and geese, and on each occasion a solemn promise has been exactly to take the whole kit and crew down with me some time or other--and now that time had come and there was "no going back" on them.

One day's notice was sufficient, and in twenty-four hours we were all ensconced on board the Jessie Hoyt, steaming down the bay to make connection with the Delaware and Raritan Bay Railroad, ticketed through to Point Pleasant. Arriving at Farmingdale, we took stage to Charley Maxon's at Point Pleasant, at the head of Barnegat Bay, and from thence, after an hour's drive along the beach, with the ocean on the one hand and bay on the other, we pulled up at Billy Chadwick's gunning-house, in just eight hours from New York. Now, for the benefit of the uninitiated, I must mention that Squam Beach is a narrow sand-pit, separated from the mainland by Barnegat Bay, having an average width of five or six hundred yards . . . and along its length are scattered, at intervals, houses owned by wreckers, and answering as houses of entertainment for gunners. The bay swarms with ducks and geese during fall and spring, and with snipe in summer; besides offering as fine fishing as is to be found in the world for bluefish, bass and sheepshead. Thus there is scarcely a month in the year in which the votary of gun or rod may not find enjoyment. Now Billy Chadwick's, situated seven miles from the head of the bay, is the best conducted of these houses, and may be reached from Point Pleasant by land or by one hour's sail via Toms River; and having been the resort for thirty years of gentlemen sportsmen of the old school, who, while willing to rough it, would have things nice and clean--consequently, while the house is entirely unpretentious, it is far superior in point of comfort to the huge caravan-series at Long Beach or Cape May. Cleanliness is Madame Chadwick's first law, seconded by good coffee, good sugar, good tea, rich cream, and exquisitely cooked game, whether of fish or feather; no fuss, no

obsequiousness, and egregiously small bills. To this place, on a lovely summer afternoon, I drove up with wife, five children and nurse. I must own that I had felt some doubts as to my reception with such a caravan, for Billy's wife had often said she didn't mind how many gunners came, but she didn't want women around. But my doubts were quickly dispelled in the warm welcome accorded, and to my astonishment found that Billy had made an addition of a three-story verandah to his house, and that our rooms were as comfortable as could be wished; and as the children tumbled into bed they dropped off to sleep, counting on their fingers the intervals between the flashes of the Barnegat Light. Although I well knew that there was no better snipe-shooting to be found than on Billy's flat, I had no idea that so early in the season there would be any flight; hence had simply brought my gun as a matter of habit. Fancy my delight, then, when I found the snipe had already appeared, and that the prospects for sport were never brighter. Leaving the youngsters dreaming of prospective fun . . . I went down to ask Billy more particularly about the snipe and the morrow's shooting. . . Now, Billy's big house had made him proud, so he utterly refused to talk snipe till I had "jined him in a glass of bourbon" . . . Having taken the medicine kindly, Billy proceeded in this wise, in a roaring monotone:

"Now Captain, if Providence had laid a telegraph down from the moon [Billy being a wrecker, and consequently a moon worshiper, always locates his elysium there] to your house, and sent you a special dispatch, you couldn't hit it better. Them yelpers keep a whistlin' and shaking their yaller legs from daylight to dark. Marlin were never more plenty; jack-curlews ain't so plenty; but there is a flight of sickle-bills, and the doe-witches and robin-snipe are as thick as flies around a sugar bowl."

It seemed as if I had hardly got asleep when I heard a tap at the door: "Ten minutes to four, Sir!" "All right!" On go the old clothes, hole-y shoes and straw hat, and my toilet is complete; when, hastily snatching up gun and accoutrements, I sally forth, and step out into the early dawn struggling with the full moon. The air was cool and bracing, the sharp cracking of the surf on the one hand contrasting with the scarcely ruffled water of the bay, barely one hundred yards apart. A fast step across a wet meadow, a moment's wade accross the shoal, and I found myself in the inner blind, formed of brush breast high, with an old cane sofa - the spoil of some wrecked vessel - for a seat . . . Hastily picking up a dozen decoys and placing them within twenty yards of the stand, I took my seat, fresh capped my gun, and, like St. Paul when he was cast away, waited for day and for - game. And it was not long coming, either; for a black duck whizzed past at about fifty yards, receiving a salute from my two barrels, but the number eight shot never fazed him. Not so a bunch of doe-witches, which came skirling over the meadows, readily answering my call and circling around twice, finally doubled over the stool, only to depart as mourners, leaving a half a dozen of their numbers dead among the deceitful decoys. Next came an old jack-curlew, who evidently knew the ropes; for, coolly gazing at the stools, then making three successive whirls and drawing the contents of two barrels, he finally sailed off. A flock of marlin came manfully to stool, but, without stopping to bury their dead, darted away to seek consolation among the decoys of the outer stand, where the balance of them terminated their career. Many a yellow-leg and creaker shared their sad fate, and by seven o'clock, in spite of many a villainous miss (of course attributable to our gun), we had a bag of twenty birds; so, leaving guns in the stand, we cheerully responded to the breakfast bell. Assembled on the piazza, I found my mosquito fleet, who, accompanied by mamma, had been watching for some thime our sport, but who were now clamorous for breakfast-and such a feed! Madam Chadwick, under the tuition of ;many an epicurean sportsman, not least among whom was Uncle Gilly Davis, can make a good cup of coffee, poach an egg, broil a sheepshead, or roast a snipe in a way that would docredit to Guy or Downing.

After breakfast, my little ones sued out a habeas corpus and obtain possession of my person, mamma being frantic with their appeals as to fishing, swimming, crabbing and sailing; and even baby, who improves by the hour, begs to be taken down to the "big waatah." Hastily providing the bigger ones with hook and line and showing them where they could catch sunfish and perch as fast as they could bait, and escorting mamma, baby and nurse to the beach, adjusting shawls and parasols, and marking out a line of sand fortifications to be at once commenced, I left them, to wade off again to the blind, and barely was seated when I heard the peculiar call of the sickle-bill. Now, the sickle-bill is as large as a teal-duck, and, as they stool well, offer good sport. Our answering call attracted their attention, for they hesitate in their flight, diverge, and then swoop directly for the stool; again rise, circle twice, and then double in front. Springing to our feet, we give them four barrels; two-four-six are struggling among the stool, and the rest, panic stricken and with startled cry, hover with impunity over our discharged guns. Oh! for a breech-loader!

Then come bunches of doe-witches, and single birds, yellow-legs, and the rest. Though we do some bad shooting, still by one o'clock we are well satisfied. The dinner-bell now rings, and papa's whistle calls together his little flock, who with bared feet and sun-burnt faces, are chock-full of fishing exploits.

After dinner, lighting a cigar, we stroll over to the government station-house, accompanied by Billy, who has charged and keeps everything in apple-pie order. He explains to the wife and little ones the uses of the various implements for life-saving-the mortar, the rockets, the life-car, the great surf-boat, etc., illustrated by sundry incidents of his experience, of deadly despair succeeded by joy at being saved, of tragic deaths, of wives and husbands washed ashore in death; then, after a swim, we go back to our stand till the sun sets; and then thoroughly pleased with our day's sport, we lift our decoy, and go again to the house in response to the tea-bell. Now the fishing boats come dropping in, with various experiences of sheepsheading and blue-fishing and double-reefed breezes, and new comers arrive from the main with late New York papers and eager for the morrow's sport. It was a week of days like the one described, the birds coming in thicker and thicker, varied by fishing and delightful cruises in the bay, generally with Captain Gulick in his well appointed, staunch and stiff little yacht **Zouave**, or with Johnny Chadwick, or with Charley Stout, all of whom know, as if by intuition, the whereabouts and habits of fish and fowl.

One morning a fog-bank suddenly rolled in from the southward and hovered for several hours over the sea and bay; toward afternoon the breeze freshened, and as we looked over the beach we descried a vessel ashore. Hailing the house at the top of our lungs, we shouted "A wreck! a wreck!" and in two minutes every man, woman and child were streaming toward the beach, ourselves among the first. As we approached, we saw a schooner's spars looming up through the fog, close on to the beach, and hailing her, found her the **R.J. Whilden**, of Philadelphia, wanting assistance. Billy being sub-agent for the Coast Wrecking Company, dispatched a man on horseback to the nearest telegraph station; while our services as a seafaring man were enlisted to draw up contracts, and in twelve hours the Company's steamers **Relief** and **Winan** were alongside, and all appliances necessary for hauling her off put into requisition. The children were frantic with delight, as a wreck had never been even dreamed of in their programme.

And now, dear SPIRIT, if any of your readers want a few days' good sport, let me recommend them to do as I did. They can take the **Jessie Hoyt** at 4 PM, buy a ticket on board for Tom's River, arriving about eight, take the **Zouave** across the bay, and sleep snugly at Billy Chadwick's, in readiness for the next day's sport.