

From the Archivists

The Falmouth Historical Society

Harriet Quimby, Recorder

Anyone who passes regularly through the village of West Falmouth cannot fail to notice the two mansions sitting on either side of the Friends Meeting House. What they may not realize is that the houses once belonged to two brothers, Daniel Wheeler Swift and Henry D. Swift, who were Quakers. Born in West Falmouth, they, like many young men of their time, left home to build careers elsewhere. The Swift brothers went to Worcester, Massachusetts, where their success as business men and as inventors enabled them to build these two houses in their native village.

The Falmouth Historical Society is most fortunate to have received the papers from this important West Falmouth family. Collected and preserved by the late W. Everett Swift, they were donated to the Society in December 1986 by his sons. Of particular interest are the account books, bills and receipts, ships records, and writings pertaining to the Society of Friends. These materials date back to the time of their forebear Abial, a blacksmith and apprentice to Richard Lake. It is known that in 1790 Abial Swift bought from Richard Lake 150 acres of land and the accompanying buildings. Out of these holdings grew the smithy and the chandlery which were passed on to his sons. The blacksmith shop, located in a stone barn, is still readily visible at the foot of Blacksmith Shop Road. In addition the Swifts developed a ship-building yard on Davis Point, a salt store, and the store on the west side of the road, across from their home next to the Friends Cemetery. These businesses freed the residents of West Falmouth from their dependence upon Falmouth for supplies and in turn the account books of the businesses help us to understand the economic life of the village. For instance, the interdependence between the smithy and

the shipyard is shown by the accounts for the Schooner *Swift* and the Brig *Marcella*.

The records of the business adventures of the two Swift brothers include plans and the patent for the once familiar household aid, the hand-operated clothes wringer. Papers related to the incorporation of the Logan, Swift and Brigham Envelope Company which was to revolutionize that industry are also to be found there.

The more than 400 items that comprise this collection will be available to researchers and genealogists in the archives of the Falmouth Historical Society located in the Conant House.

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Ad. for Swift brothers' Eureka Clothes Wringer.
Courtesy West Falmouth Library.

Woods Hole Historical Collection

Jennifer Gaines

The Woods Hole Historical Collection houses a fine, small archive of village history in the Bradley House Museum. Within our air conditioned archival storage room are family papers, business records, photographs of Woods Hole dating from more than a hundred years ago, a first-rate Oral History Collection (both on tape and transcribed), and various other items of local interest. We also have a small library focusing on Cape Cod and maritime history.

The collection is gradually growing, through the generosity of people who know of our facilities, have items of local historic value, and who wish to have them preserved and shared.

One of the great delights among recent gifts has been the bequest of Mrs. Ellen Howes of Cumberland, R.I. who has given us a fine collection from the family of Levi Howes (1845–1930). Family legend has it that as a boy from East Dennis Levi sailed on a square-rigger with his father as captain, and later on another voyage around the world with his uncle as captain. His uncle's ship was wrecked in the China Sea. The rescued crew was taken to Falmouth, England, and eventually returned to Cape Cod, at which time the young Levi announced that he did not wish to return to sea but rather would go back to school.

We have no details of Levi's life until 1873, when he married Eliza T. Howes, a member of another Howes family from East Dennis. They moved west to homestead 12 miles outside of Omaha, Nebraska. Four years later they returned to the Cape and settled in Woods Hole, where he was station master at the railroad for thirty-five years.

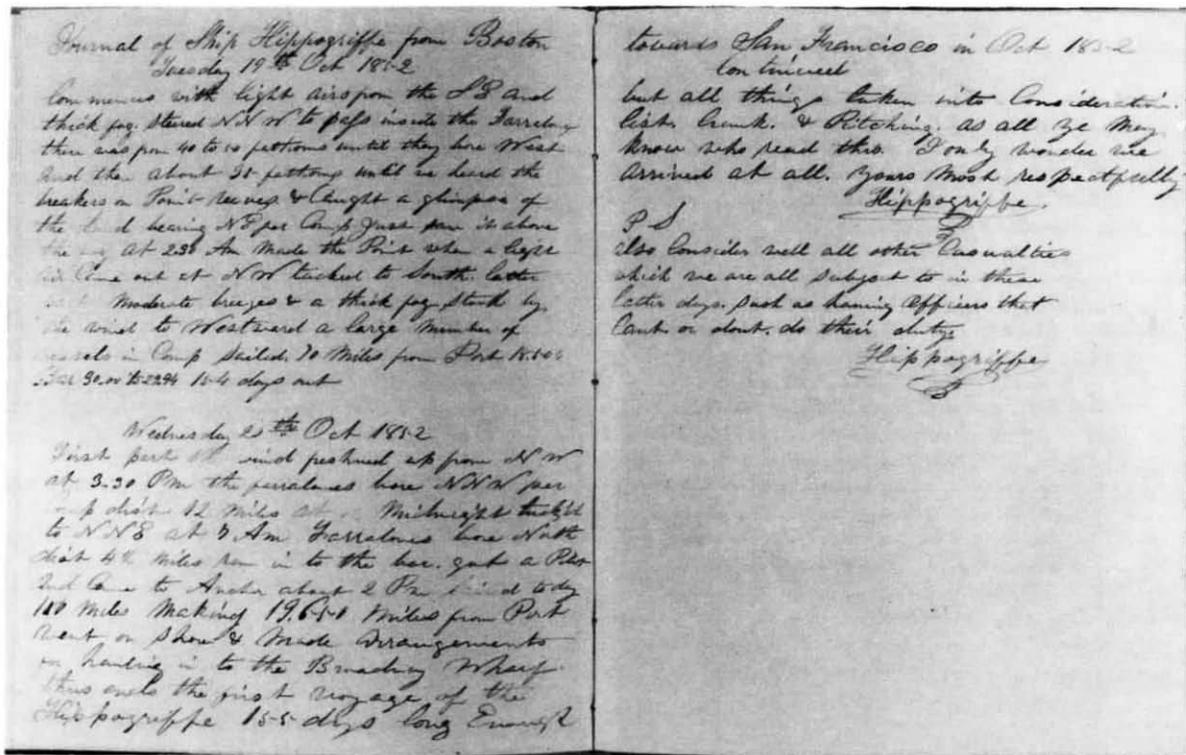
The Howes collection includes photographs of the family home (on the site of the present Marine Bi-

ological Laboratory's Whitman building), genealogical information, and a scrapbook highlighting the life and career of one of Levi's sons, James Sturgis Howes, who followed the old family tradition and became a sea captain. Prominent among the pages of the scrapbook are records of his command of the *Arcturus* expedition with William Beebe in 1925. Two other sons, William Lothrop Howes and Elijah Smith Howes, worked for the Fisheries in Woods Hole for many years.

Perhaps the most exciting part of this gift is the group of six ships' logs covering the period from 1847–1900. Most of the logs were kept by Anthony Howes, Levi's uncle, who sailed from Boston to Ceylon, Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Southampton. The great age of the square-riggers is reflected here: the China trade, the California gold rush, and the trans-Atlantic crossings. These ships' logs provide fascinating reading.

As new additions come to our collection, it is almost as if new pieces are added to a jigsaw puzzle to fill in the general outline of our village history. These logs and scrapbook record the daily lives of men from Cape Cod who sailed the world on perilous farflung trading voyages, and eventually returned home to their neat and snug New England villages to live out their lives. It is fascinating to sit in the reading room at the Bradley House Museum looking out on sheltered Little Harbor and reading of those days when our men and their Ships sailed on the other side of the world, at times becalmed under the hot tropic sun or caught in a raging typhoon.

Thanks to people like Mrs. Ellen Howes, our collection grows in interest and value. The addition of these Howes family logs quadruples our holdings of ships' logs. In fulfilling our responsibility to preserve these documents, we are currently having several of the volumes deacidified and rebound so that they



will last another one hundred and thirty years. We are also making a photocopied "working copy" to make their information readily available to researchers. We will use a darkening process to make the faded brown ink more easily legible in the working copy. With methods such as these, we plan to fulfill our mandate to honor the past and plan for the future.

From the log of the Hippogriffe, May 1852. Photo
WHOI. Courtesy WHHC.