



MBL student in the lab.
Courtesy MBL.

From the Editorial Board

We are pleased to begin the second year of *Spritsail* with a special issue on women scientists as part of the Centennial celebration of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole. The two feature articles in this issue are about Dr. Cornelia Clapp, who was the first student at the MBL in 1888, and Dr. Maria Mitchell, the Nantucket astronomer.

Although separated by half a century, the careers of Clapp and Mitchell show striking parallels: Both combined research with teaching at the women's colleges which began to appear in the mid-nineteenth century. Both had to overcome professional roadblocks because of their sex; each was encouraged to persevere by influential male scientists — in fact the influence of Louis Agassiz helped both in their careers. Neither woman married; raising a family was out of the question. There were some improvements over time: photos of the early days of the MBL show a fair sprinkling of women among the men.

There are many more women scientists today than a century or even half a century ago, and many are able to combine careers with marriage and bringing up children. However the battle for equality is far from over. Prejudice and tradition still obstruct the road, in both academic and corporate research and in the funding agencies. We applaud those women who struggle, as Mitchell and Clapp did before them, to achieve a rightful place for themselves and their colleagues in that world of scholarship which, above all others, should know better.

The two articles complement the Woods Hole Historical Collection's summer exhibit at the Bradley House museum, on Women in Science. The exhibit, which contains photographs, costumes and laboratory paraphernalia from the early days of the MBL, was organized under the direction of Mary

Louise Montgomery. The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday in July and August, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Mitchell article also reflects a characteristic that has marked *Spritsail* from the beginning: we have looked beyond the geographic boundaries of Falmouth for our subject matter. The article on photographer Baldwin Coolidge in our first issue a year ago included his work on Martha's Vineyard and in Boston and other off-Cape locations. The Winter 1988 issue dealt with delegates from Bourne and Sandwich to the Massachusetts convention to ratify the U.S. Constitution, as well as delegate Joseph Palmer of Falmouth.

To acknowledge these broad horizons we have made a slight change in the full name of our magazine. Instead of *Spritsail*, a Journal of Falmouth History we have become *Spritsail*, a Journal of the History of Falmouth and Vicinity. That title enables us to go to the stars with Maria Mitchell in this issue and should allow free rein to our interest and curiosity for the foreseeable future. Our focus, however, will continue to be on Falmouth.

Spritsail is now mailed to members of both the Woods Hole Historical Collection and the Falmouth Historical Society. This happy arrangement doubles our mailing list and our audience; it also increases the printing run (1500 copies per issue), thereby reducing the per copy cost to everyone. We would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the continuing encouragement and financial support of the Falmouth Historical Commission. We have been gratified by an enthusiastic response to our first two issues and we look forward to receiving more comments, ideas and historical items from our readers.

W. Redwood Wright



MBL student in the field.
Courtesy MBL.