

Woods Hole Historical Museum Archives
P.O. Box 185
Woods Hole, MA 02543

REGISTER
Boats: Sprintsail Collection
1896 -2017

2 boxes

BOATS

Woods Hole Spritsail Collection

History

The use of the spritsail boat in Woods Hole is believed to have originated in the 1870s. The local fishermen found the spritsail boat more suitable for their work than the popular catboat. The areas where they wanted to fish were subject to the six foot tidal current of the channel and the strong southwest prevailing wind coming down Vineyard Sound. The spritsail was a strong boat with excellent sea keeping qualities and handled well especially when the current opposed the wind with the resulting Woods Hole rip tide. Local fishermen worked alone and the spritsail, unlike the catboat, was narrow enough to be rowed by one. Woods Hole boats also needed a mast which could be unstepped in a hurry. Most of the boats were moored in Eel Pond and had to pass under a fixed stone bridge too low to admit sailboats with their mast stepped. The loose footed spritsail rig helped speed the operation and allowed quick access to the pond.

At first the spritsails were used only for fishing, lobstering, and transportation. These working boats were only occasionally raced until the summer residents became interested in them. They soon wanted their own spritsails to sail and race. However they did not want the strong sturdy boats of the fishermen. While maintaining the same general pattern of the fishing spritsail, the spritsails built for the summer people had a lighter and faster hull and lacked the very high freeboard and coaming of the fishing spritsails. George W. Rogers and Co. of New London, Ct and Herreshoff of Bristol, RI were designers and builders of some of these boats.

The Woods Hole Yacht Club was formed in 1897 to sponsor the races of this mixed fleet of racing and fishing spritsails. To even the odds, the club established a special classification for spritsail boats. The racing boats were placed in Class A and the Woods Hole fishing type were put in Class B.

Few of these boats exist today. Three can be found at Mystic Seaport in Mystic CT. The *Explorer* (c. 1898, built by Crosby Boatyard, Osterville, MA) and the third of Woods Hole carpenter E. E. Swift's spritsails (c. 1913) are part of its small craft collection. Also at Mystic Seaport, is the *Sandy Ford*, a replica of *Explorer*, which it built and sails on the nearby river. At the WHHM is E.E. Swift's first spritsail, *Spy* (c. 1890). The second of Swift's spritsails, *Suzy* (c. 1899), is owned privately.

Scope

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the spritsail boat was popular in Woods Hole. During this time, the Woods Hole Yacht Club had a large fleet of spritsails. In the collection are a 1903 photograph and post card of a 1902 Franklin Gifford painting which show just how large the fleet was. Included in the collection are a history of the Woods Hole Yacht Club, 1896-1936, a copy of the 1898 “Constitution, By-Laws, Sailing Regulations, Etc., Etc.,” of the Woods Hole Yacht Club, and excerpts from the 1899 Woods Hole Yacht Club Racing Schedule. All give insight into the spritsails place in the community of the time.

The collection contains information on well known spritsails of that early yacht club fleet. Letters, notes, and line drawings reveal limited information on the early spritsails *Elf*, *Dude*, *Dove*, and *Ace of Clubs*. The history of *Tough Cuss/Explorer* (c. 1890), is revealed by many news clippings, articles, and letters. Similar ephemera as well as restoration notes shed light on *Spy*, *Susie*, and a third uncompleted spritsail which were built by Eddie Swift, a Woods Hole carpenter, between 1890 and 1913.

Information is also included on more recent spritsails. There is an article from 1983 describing David Martin’s building of the spritsail *Nonamesset*. A brochure and a flyer from boat builders Taylor and Sneiker describe their spritsail *Roberta* built in 1997.

BOATS Woods Hole Sprintsail Collection

Box 1

- 1.1. History: The First Forty Years: A History of the Woods Hole Yacht Club 1896-1936. Written by John Valois. 1 typed copy.
- 1.2. Booklet: Woods Hole Yacht Club, Constitution, By-Laws, Sailing Regulations, Etc, Etc. 1898. Copy of a booklet belonging to Franklin Lewis Gifford donated by Browne Littell. 1 photocopy.
- 1.3. Excerpts from 1899 Woods Hole Yacht Club Racing Schedule: "Sprintsail Boats – Special Classification." 1 typed original. 1 photocopy.
- 1.4 Sprintsail Boats: Information on individual Woods Hole Sprintsails.
 - a. Post Card: Woods Hole Sprintsails Racing Great Harbor (1902). Reproduction of a Franklin L Gifford painting. Post card caption lists boat names and owners. 1974. 1 original.
 - b. WHHM exhibit caption explaining the 1902 Franklin L. Gifford painting of the racing sprintsails.
 - c. Letter from Pauline Cahoon to Cynthia which mentions John P. Sylvia, Jr. and his sprintsail *Dove*. April 10, 1931. 1 handwritten original.
 - d. Letter from Otis H. Trowbridge to Jan Hahn discussing the c. 1900 WHYC records of boats, skippers, and owners. Mentioned were the two sprintsail boats, *Elf* and *Dude*, belonging to Hermon Hibbard. April 13, 1960. 1 typed copy.
 - e. Line drawing of the Herreshoff sprintsail *Dude*. 1896. Source: Haffenreffer-Herreshoff Collection. 1 photocopy.
- 1.5. Book excerpts: *Sprintsails And Lugsails* by John Leather. Chapter 11: Sprintsails in New England (pages 325-331). Chapter 13: East and West Coasts (pages 362-367). Adlard Coles Nautical, 1979. 1 photocopy of each chapter.
- 1.6. WHHM Exhibit Caption: "The Development of the Woods Hole Sprintsail." Written by John Valois. n. d. 2 typed copies.
- 1.7. Notes by Prince S. Crowell. "Woods Hole Sprit Sail Boat." n. d. Taken from information furnished by Crowell to Mystic Seaport. 1 typed final copy. 1 typed corrected draft. 2 corrected photocopied drafts.
- 1.8. Receipted invoice of Geo. W. Rogers & Co. for purchase of one 14-foot lap work boat. 1879. 1 photocopy.

- 1.9. Sprintsail *Ace of Clubs*.
- a. Note identifying the owner and builder of the *Ace of Clubs* as well as boat builder Rogers of New London, CT who built other WH sprintsails. 1 handwritten original.
 - b. Line drawings of the *Ace of Clubs* done by computer at Mystic Seaport Museum. 1998. 5 photocopies.
 - c. WHHM exhibit caption – The Woods Yacht Club Sprintsail Fleet. Background information on the 1902 Franklin L Gifford painting pointing out the location of the *Ace of Clubs* in the picture.
- 1.10. Letter: from Dr. Robert P. Bigelow, WH YC secretary, to Dr. Alfred G. Redfield concerning a 1903 photograph of the yacht club sprintsail fleet. 1946. 2 typed copies.
- 1.11. Excerpts of articles in the *Falmouth Enterprise* relating to the history of the WH sprintsail boat *Explorer*. April 12, 1960. April 8, 1960? 2 typed pages.
- 1.12. Articles regarding Dr. Alfred G. Redfield's donation of the *Explorer* to the Marine Historical Association (Mystic Seaport).
- a. "Old Sprintsail Boat Will Be Enshrined." *Falmouth Enterprise*. April 8, 1960. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - b. "Museum To Get Oldtime Sprintsail Boat." *Falmouth Enterprise*. April 12, 1960. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - c. Excerpts from article in *Maine Coast Fisherman* by Jan Hahn. May 1960. 1 typed copy.
 - d. Line drawing of Wood Hole sprintsail *Tough Cuss/Explorer*. 1 laminated copy.
- 1.13. Letter and photographs from James P. Warbasse Jr. to Edouard A. Stackpole, Curator, The Marine Historical Association, Inc., regarding enclosed photographs of the sprintsail *Explorer* under sail in 1895 and 1934. January 26, 1966. 5 pages of photocopies from the Mystic Museum Curatorial Dept.
- 1.14. Correspondence of Dr. Alfred G. Redfield, Paul F Smith, and J. Revell Carr, Curator, Mystic Seaport museum, regarding a set of plans for *Explorer*. May 1977. 4 letters of which 2 are original and 2 are carbon copies.
- 1.15. Article: "The Woods Hole Sprintsail *Explorer*" by Vera Warbasse Spooner. *Sprintsail*. Volume 8. Number 2. Summer 1994. 1 photocopy.
- 1.16. Letter from E. E. Swift & Son to Geo. W. Rogers & Co (?) regarding boat plans and parts. Sept 22, 1900. 1 photocopy.
- 1.17. Eddy Swift Clippings.

- a. Photograph: "Oldest Male Resident." *Falmouth Enterprise* (?) n. d. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - b. Article: "His Span Of Life Overlapped A Century." *Falmouth Enterprise*. May 12, 1964. 1 original. 2 photocopies.
 - c. Article: "Edward Swift Had Longest Tenure As Post Cane Holder." *Falmouth Enterprise*. May 12, 1964. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - d. Photograph: "Edward Ellsworth Swift." *Falmouth Enterprise*. May 12, 1964. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
- 1.18. Article: H. V. R. Palmer. "Those Handy Little Boats." *The Skipper* XXVII, No. 12. December 1968. Discusses Woods Hole spritsails and Edward E. Swift, builder of spritsails. 1 original article. 3 photocopies.
- a. Magazine: *The Skipper*. XXVII, No. 12. December 1968. 1 copy.
- 1.19. Article negatives: "Those Handy Little Boats." Pages 20, 21, 30. Page 31 is missing. *The Skipper* XXVII, No. 12. December 1968. 1 of each.
- 1.20. WHHM caption "Eddie Swift and the Woods Hole Spritsail Boats." used on the Swift spritsail boat, *Spy*, on display in the museum barn. n.d. 1 original. 1 draft.
- 1.21. Robert Baker and the Swift spritsails *Spy* and *Susie*.
- a. Bill of Sale from Robert Baker to the Woods Hole Historical Collection. May 17, 1980. 1 photocopy.
 - b. Notes concerning "Woods Hole Sprits-sail Boats." by D. W. Dillion. August 1982. 1 typed rough draft.
 - c. Notes – "Sail for *Susie* – Woods Hole Spritsail Boat." by Stephen Baker. n.d. 1 photocopy.
 - d. Notes on finishing the *Spy* by Bob Baker with Greg Newell and Kevin Dwyer. n.d. 7 photocopied pages.
 - e. Brochure for Baker Boat Works. n.d. 1 original.
- 1.22. David Dillion Spritsail Notes.
- a. "Notes Concerning Woods Hole Sprit-Sail Boats." Rough Draft #1 August 1982. 3 typed pages.
 - b. "Notes Concerning Woods Hole Spritsail Boats" Rough Draft #2 August 1982. Notes regarding the condition of E. Swift's spritsails *Spy* and *Susie*. 2 typed pages.
 - c. Notes – "Sail for *Susie* – Woods Hole Spritsail Boat." by Stephen Baker. n.d. 1 photocopy.
 - d. Notes and drawing about sail, mast, and sprit of WH spritsail boat. n.d. 1 pencil original.
 - e. Letter from Dave Dillion to Jalien Hollister and Jennifer Gaines regarding *Spy*. December 14, 1984. 1 copy.
 - f. Note about seaming on spritsails according to Browne Littell. January 1996. 1 pencil original.

- 1.23. Mystic Seaport: E. E. Swift spritsail #3 and spritsail *Explorer/Tough Cuss*.
- a. Letter to the Editor and Editorial Board of "The Log" of The Marine Historical Ass. (Mystic Seaport) regarding the donation of Swift spritsail #3 to the Association. Volume 20 Number 4. December 1968. 1 original clipping. 1 photocopy.
 - b. Photograph: Mystic staff at Osterville's Crosby's boatyard where 1890 spritsail was built. "The Wind Rose" of Mystic Seaport. Vol. 3 No. 1. January 1972. 1 original.
 - c. Photograph: Woods Hole spritsail boat under construction at Seaport's Small Craft Laboratory. "The Wind Rose?" Mystic Seaport. n. d. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - d. Article: "Woods Hole Spritsail Boat." "The Wind Rose." Vol. 4 No. 7. Mystic Seaport. July 1973. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - e. Photograph: "Woods Hole Spritsail." *The Falmouth Enterprise*. December 31, 1973. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - f. Booklet: "Small Craft In Use On The Mystic River – Sailboats and Rowboats From The Small Craft Collection at Mystic Seaport. Mystic Seaport Inc. 1974 2 original.
- 1.24. Syl Costelloe Thesis: "The Building of the Woods Hole Spritsail Boat." December 1972. 1 photocopy.
- 1.25. Miscellaneous.
- a. Note regarding the donation of E. E. Swift ½ models to Mystic Seaport. Author unknown. n. d. 1 handwritten pencil original.
 - b. Note concerning spritsails being built by Crosby of Osterville and the many boat builders of Monument Beach. February 26, 1998. Author unknown. 1 handwritten pencil original.
 - c. Exhibit caption: "The Woods Hole Yacht Club Spritsail Fleet – 1902." n. d. 1 photocopy.

Spritsail Collection – Photographs

- 1.26. Negative of lines for spritsail *Tough Cuss/Explorer*.
- 1.27. Photograph: Eddie Swift. June, 1943. 1 photocopy.
- 1.28. Eddie Swift spritsail *Spy*.
- a. Envelope: "Spritsail Boats – Eddie Swift's boats in his barn." Negatives from Tom Renshaw(?)." 8 negatives.
 - b. Envelope: Labeled "Swift Spritsail at Mystic Seaport." 2 snapshots with negative of each.
 - c. WHHM captions of spritsail boat exhibit. 2 typed pages.
 - d. Envelope: Labeled "Mrs. Hollister." 10 negatives.

- e. Letter: from Benjamin A. Fuller, Curator of Mystic Seaport Museum, to Paul Ferris-Smith, Woods Hole Historical Collection, regarding gift shop sales of the plans of Swift's 3 spritsail boats. 1 original.
- 1.29. Photograph and negative of spritsail fleet at W. H. Yacht Club. ca.1903. 3 photographs. 1 negative.
- 1.30. Warbasse spritsail photographs from the Mystic Seaport collection. 6 photocopies with Mystic Seaport copyrights.
- 1.31. Racing Spritsail Negatives: Copy negatives from original photos. Originals have been digitized and are part of the WHHM photo collection. Digital images numbers 1900 – 1945. 6 negatives.

Spritsail Collection – Redfield

- 1.32. History of the Spritsail and W. H. Yacht Club.
 - a. Letter from R. B. Bigelow, club secretary, to Dr. Redfield concerning the 1903 photo of the club's spritsail fleet and club history. January 12, 1946. 2 copies.
 - b. Photograph of 1903 WHYC spritsail fleet. 1 photocopy.
- 1.33. Line drawing of Woods Hole spritsail *Tough Cuss*. 1 laminated photocopy.
- 1.34. Letters from Mystic Seaport to Dr. Redfield concerning the donation of *Tough Cuss/Explorer* to Mystic. April 1, 1960. January 21, 1961. 2 original letters.
- 1.35. Miscellaneous information about *Tough Cuss/Explorer* and WH spritsail boats.
 - a. Notes with information on *Tough Cuss* from Charlie Grinnell. April 1960. 1 original handwritten pencil note.
 - b. Letter to Dr. Alfred Redfield from Prince Crowell regarding Crowell's correspondence with Mystic about the history of the spritsail boat. August 5, 1960. 1 handwritten original.
 - c. Letter to Jan Hahn from Otis B. Trowbridge regarding various Woods Hole spritsails and their skippers. April 13, 1960. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
- 1.36. Newspaper articles regarding the donation of the spritsail *Tough Cuss/Explorer* to Mystic Seaport.
 - a. Article; "Old Spritsail Boat Will Be Enshrined." *Falmouth Enterprise*. April 8, 1960. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
 - b. Article: "One Of The Last Spritsail Boats Leaves Home As Museum Piece." *Maine Coast Fisherman*. May 1960. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
- 1.37. Annual Report: Maritime Historical Association, Inc. "Forty-first Annual Report for the year ending December 31, 1970." Reports the *Tough Cuss/Explorer* was completely refinished during 1970.

- 1.38. Correspondence between Alfred C. Redfield and J. Revell Carr, Curator, Mystic Seaport, Inc.
- a. Carr corresponds with Redfield mentioning the catboat rigging Mystic has used on the *Tough Cuss/Explorer*. May 12, 1977. 1 original.
 - b. Redfield writes Carr concerning the ketch rigging of *Tough Cuss/Explorer* as Mystic had once considered. May 17, 1977. 1 carbon copy.
- 1.39. Letters between Alfred C. Redfield and Paul Ferris Smith concerning Redfield's background notes on *Explorer* and his donation of a set of *Explorer's* plans to the Woods Hole Historical Collection . May 17, 1977. (1 carbon copy). May 19, 1977. (1 original).
- 1.40. Figures, tables, and sketches comparing Woods Hole spritsail boats. Handwritten original on graph and note paper.
- 1.41. Photographs: Series of photographs received from Mystic Seaport showing arrival and handling of *Tough Cuss/Explorer* at Mystic Seaport. These photos are kept in the archives fire proof file.
- 1.42. Woods Hole Yacht Club regatta form. 189_. 1 original.

Spritsail Collection – Clippings

- 1.43. Clippings related to *Explorer* and *Susie*. 1960, 1970, 1973, and 1978.
- a. "Old Spritsail Boat Will Be Enshrined." *Falmouth Enterprise*. April 8, 1960. 2 photocopies.
 - b. "Museum To Get Oldtime Spritsail Boat." *Falmouth Enterprise*. April 12, 1960. 3 photocopies.
 - c. Excerpts from various publications mentioning the *Explorer* or the Woods Hole spritsail: *Falmouth Enterprise*, April 12, 1960; *Falmouth Enterprise*, April 8, 1960; Woods Hole Yacht Club Racing Schedule 1899; *Maine Coast Fisherman* May, 1960. 1 typed carbon copy.
 - d. "Seaport Builds Spritsail Replica." *The Day*. New London. Conn. July 11, 1973. 3 photocopies.
 - e. Photograph: "Back Home." *Falmouth Enterprise*. May 19, 1978. *Explorer* returns to WHHM as temporary exhibit. 2 original. 1 photocopy.
 - f. "Spritsail Boat Is Theme Of Historical Collection." *Falmouth Enterprise*. June 2, 1978. 2 original. 1 photocopy.
 - g. Photograph: "*Susie*." *Falmouth Enterprise*(?). July 21, 1978. 2 original. 1 photocopy.
 - h. "Bob Baker." Publication unknown. n. d. Interview of Bob Baker who restored several spritsails and owner of *Susie*. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
- 1.44. Clipping - *Susie* and *Spy*.

- a. "Plan Fund-Raiser For Sprintsail Boat Work." *Falmouth Enterprise*. July 8, 1980. 1 original. 2 photocopies.
- 1.45. Miscellaneous Sprintsail Articles.
- a. H. V. R. Palmer, Jr. Rough Draft: "Woods Hole Sprintsails and Sprintsailors." *Skipper*. 1968. 1 edited carbon copy.
 - b. Ann Martin. "W. H. Sprintsail." *The Woods Hole Weekly*. September 8, 1983. 1 original. 1 photocopy.
- 1.46. Sprintsail *Roberta*.
- a. "Historical Collection Conversations Sprintsail *Roberta* At Candle House." *Falmouth Enterprise*. October 24, 1997. 1 original. 2 photocopies.
 - b. Brochure by Taylor & Sneiker Woodworking, the builder of *Roberta*. Includes 4 color photos. 1 original.
 - c. Flyer by Taylor and Sneiker: Describes *Roberta* and the origin of the Woods Hole sprintsail. 1 original.
 - d. Email from Michael McClure, current owner of the *Roberta*, to WHHM offering to donate the boat to the museum for auction. "The proceeds are to fund in part or whole an annual internship of a young person to work at the museum as the Jennifer Stone Gaines Internship Awardee'." April 21, 2017. 1 printout.

Sprintsail Collection
Box 2
Ephemera

- 2.1. Wooden patterns – lines taken from "T. C."/ *Explorer* by Doug Cooper.