

From the Editors

As we tack over into the new millennium, we want to remind our readers why we chose to call our journal of history *Spritsail*. Here, reprinted from our very first issue, the Summer of 1987, are the words of our chief editor Mary Lou Smith:

The Spritsail

The spritsail is a small boat rig of respectable antiquity used around the world. Its name comes from the sprit, a spar comparable to a gaff, but attached much lower on the mast. The sprit crosses diagonally to the uppermost corner of the sail, which it extends and elevates.

The Woods Hole Spritsail Boat was originally used for fishing and later became popular among local and summer residents for racing and sailing. Slimmer, deeper, and with more freeboard than a catboat, it was fairly easy to row and was a good boat in the fierce tides of Woods Hole. The spritsail rig was certainly influenced by the stone bridge built across Eel Pond Channel in 1878–1879. The mast of the spritsail was stepped far forward and held at the bow by a pinned bracket. When approaching the fixed bridge, the boatman removed the pin, and the mast and sail dropped into the boat, allowing the spritsail to enter Eel Pond.

As we launch this new *Spritsail*, *A Journal of Falmouth History*, we hope it will prove to be as useful and “handy to have around” as the old spritsail boat. We want it to be jaunty and trim, good for all weather, fun to use, and valuable to year-round and summer residents alike. To this community of Falmouth, with its splendid maritime past, we offer this *Spritsail* for pleasure, adventure and exploration of the currents of local history.

