

From the Archivists

Jennifer Stone Gaines, Curator

Woods Hole Historical Collection and Museum

The Woods Hole Historical Collection has just received a new gift which is a thorough delight, both in its own appearance and also in the way it fits into our standing collections. It is a sterling silver trophy from the Woods Hole Yacht Club races of over one hundred years ago. Standing just over six inches high, it is modeled after the old toasting mugs, with a rounded bowl and a flared top and two opposite handles. The inscription reads:

*Woods Hole Yacht Club
Commodore's Cup
Class "B" Sprintsail Boats
1900
given by
F. Apthorp Foster
First Race, August 11, 1900
"In It", C.L. Harding
Second Race, August 25, 1900
"Susie", E.E. Swift, Jr.
Third Race, Sept. 11, 1900
"Susie", E.E. Swift, Jr.*

In 1900 the yacht club raced several classes of boats including two sprintsail categories: "A" which were the newly built light racing boats (owned by the wealthy summer people) and "B" which were usually the older, heavier and often locally built fishing

boats. In those days some of the wealthier members would offer cash prizes and silver trophies for the races.

Eddie Swift was a Woods Hole carpenter, in business with his father, who in his spare time built three sprintsail boats in his shed on the shore of Eel Pond. Eddie was evidently not only a superb boat builder, but also a consummate racer. When delving into the records to research this trophy, we find that *Susie* was so successful that after 1900 she was moved into Class A with the boats designed by the professionals, including even Herreshoff. Digging farther into the records, we find that Eddie gave this trophy back to the Yacht Club when he was 100 years old. Since then it has rested happily in sequential commodores' attics, safe from hurricanes and destruction. (This removal to safety has long been an annual tradition in this shore-side club).

The three sprintsail boats built by Eddie Swift were *Susie*, *Spy* and the third, which Eddie had been building for his brother Helon, abandoned when Helon died. After Eddie died, this boat was found in his shed just as he left her, almost finished, and was given to Mystic Seaport where it is on display in the small boat shed. *Susie* now lives at the Mystic Seaport also, a gift from the widow of Bob Baker, boat builder, who found and restored *Spy* for us. *Spy* now holds pride of place in our own Woods Hole Small Boat Museum.

During our fund-raising for the restoration of *Spy*, Bob Baker came over to Woods Hole from Westport

trailing the then eighty year old *Susie*. Several lucky people were given the opportunity to sail her here in her local waters. What a delight she was! She took the waves like a little duck, tacked happily close in to shore among the rocks, flew downwind, altogether great fun to sail!

So now *Susie's* trophy comes out into the light, at rest here in the museum with *Susie's* sister *Spy*, in a

barn also built by Eddie Swift. It is with great personal delight that we welcome this trophy, a symbol of many hours of happy sailing and successful competition in the rigorous waters of Woods Hole, won by a boat and a man whom we consider friends.

Jennifer Stone Gaines became archivist of the Woods Hole Historical Collection in 1982. She advanced to curator in 1994. She is also an assistant librarian at the Woods Hole Library and a teacher at the Woods Hole Children's School of Science.



Woods Hole Yacht Club Sprintsail Trophy. Photo by Janet Chalmers.