

The Woods Hole Library Quilt

by Dorothy Aspinwall

"Oh, those 21st century women ... they had so much time on their hands!" Thus exclaimed Terry McKee's friend when shown a photo of several local women gathered around a table and stitching a quilt for the Woods Hole Library. The irony was not lost on Terry who, along with the nineteen other women she had assembled, is every bit as busy as the hard-working 18th and 19th century women who gathered in spare moments to sew quilts. These present-day women are all working – as artists, writers, homemakers, caretakers, and in professions. They have little extra time on their hands and yet, when asked to participate in making a quilt to commemorate the village of Woods Hole, they eagerly accepted. All have strong ties to the community, either through home, work, church, or as daughters or granddaughters of Wood Hole scientists.

Terry works in the Department of Physical Oceanography at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Terry had worked on the Falmouth Tricentennial Quilt and had been thinking of doing a community quilt for Woods Hole for some time. She brought her idea to Salley Mavor and Molly Bang who said, "Let's do it!" Salley is a soft-sculpture artist who creates animals and little people to illustrate her children's books. Molly is an award-winning writer and illustrator. With their creative genius and support, Terry was sure the project would be a success! She presented her idea to the Woods Hole Public Library Board upon joining it in 2004. The Board embraced her plan and decided that printed reproductions of the finished quilt could be used as a way to raise monies for the Recognition Fund, which had been established to honor the recently retired Library Director, Elaine Tripp.

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Woods Hole Library quilt. Courtesy Woods Hole Library.

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It was apparent to Terry and Salley that local artist Joan Kanwisher's pen and ink drawings of Woods Hole scenes and landmarks should be the inspiration for the contents of the quilt. After having secured Joan's permission to modify the drawings as necessary to enable their execution in fabric, Terry and Salley set to work designing the quilt.

Just as it is the center of life in Woods Hole village, the Woods Hole Library was chosen for the large center square of the quilt, and Salley Mavor was the one to do it. She had attended the Woods Hole School and one of her earliest memories is of her weekly walk with classmates from the school to the Woods Hole Library. Salley had spent her childhood summers in Woods Hole in the house that her sci-

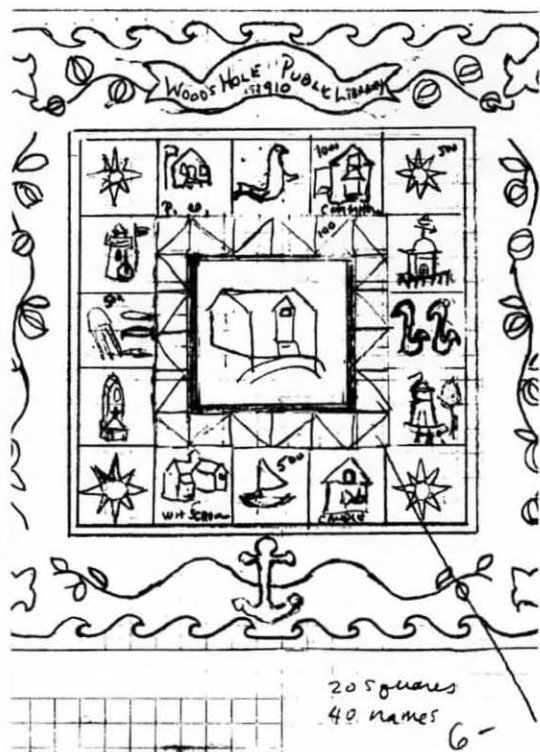


Center square featuring the Woods Hole Library. Courtesy Woods Hole Library.

entist grandfather, James Mavor, built for his family on Bar Neck Road. By the time Salley was six, her parents, the late Jim and Mary Mavor, had moved to Woods Hole full time.

Above the Library in the quilt is the Woods Hole Post Office, created by Shirley Hogg. "Forty years ago I was a new bride in a new country and the Post Office was a vital link to those I'd left behind," Shirley explained in choosing to work that particular square. Shirley and her husband moved to Woods Hole from Toronto, when he began his career at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Outside the Post Office sits a Woods Hole black dog, waiting for its master to emerge with the day's mail, and perhaps a biscuit.

Another black dog and that other Woods Hole icon, a mostly white skunk, wait outside the Woods Hole School, rendered by Shirley Farrington. Shirley moved to Woods Hole in 1970 when her husband obtained a fellowship to do research at WHOI. As



Sketch of proposed quilt. Courtesy Woods Hole Library.

a close friend of Elaine Tripp, Shirley was eager to participate in creating the quilt.

Helen Koehler is an artist who paints landscapes in water color and teaches pottery classes in summer programs in the Village. She has taken fiber arts classes and had done some quilting previous to working on the Woods Hole project. Helen chose to do Community Hall because she and her husband had attended folk dancing and concerts there, and she wanted to honor the Mavors who had founded the Folk Music Orchestra and started the folk dancing. In Helen's imaginative rendering, Community Hall is shown in the evening, with doors open, figures dancing inside, and musical notes floating out into the night!

Trish Connell's hobbies are painting furniture and sewing, and she also worked on the Falmouth Tricentennial quilt. She is an at-home mom who is the caretaker for her learning-disabled son.

Trish chose to work on the Bell Tower square because of her strong ties to St. Joseph Church. The view is of the Bell Tower shown against the backdrop of Eel Pond, complete with a catboat moored nearby.

For four days a week Cindy Limberakis works at Falmouth Hospital as a radiologic technologist. Her family goes back three generations in Woods Hole, and today Cindy lives in the house on School Street built for her great grandmother in 1879. Cindy chose to work on the Bradley House square because of her

memories serving as treasurer for the Woods Hole Historical Museum. The fine detail of the windows belies the fact that Cindy had never before done the kind of appliqué work required for the quilt.

No Woods Hole quilt would be complete without the inclusion of a horseshoe crab. Molly Bang chose this square to honor the research that her father, Dr. Frederik Bang, had done while at the Marine Biologi-

cal Laboratory. Dr. Bang was especially interested in how the crab's "blue blood turned into a thick gel at the site where Gram-negative bacteria were injected. He later developed this discovery into a test now used for determining the presence of such bacteria in human blood or medical equipment".

Amy Wilson-Sanger is a mixed-media artist and children's book author who arrived in Woods Hole thirty-seven years ago when her father came to the MBL as an immunologist. Amy was given the Bigelow cupola to

stitch. "It is an honor to be part of a project that will be cherished for many years to come..." Amy said of her experience working on the quilt. The soft, warm colors chosen for Amy's cupola depict this familiar landmark at sunset.

When her husband first went to work at WHOI in 1975, B.L. Owens found that the Library was the place to go to meet people and find out what was going on. Later she raised her family in the village and sat on the Board of the Woods Hole Historical



Soft-sculpture artist Salley Mavor points out quilt detail to Woods Hole librarian Margaret McCormick in the Ratcliffe Room. Courtesy Woods Hole Library.



Quilters at work. Courtesy Woods Hole Library.

Museum. As a way to raise funds to publish the *Book of Falmouth* for Falmouth's Tricentennial in 1986, B.L. and editor, Mary Lou Smith, conceived of the idea of a quilt depicting historic photos of Falmouth that appeared in the book. Given B.L.'s and Terry's previous history with the Falmouth's Tricentennial quilt, B.L. was a natural choice for the Woods Hole project. In her square which depicts the MBL Candle House, a perfectly rendered pickup truck sits parked outside!

Still another recruit from the Falmouth Tricentennial Quilt was Jennifer Rose. Jennifer's connection to Woods Hole came through visiting her grandparents in the summer. Jennifer met her husband when he

was captain of the SEA vessel, *Westward*. She is a self-described "at home" mom, having raised a family and now tending to her main interest, which is gardening. Jennifer created the Taft's Playground square. What memories of her own children climbing the tall wooden structure must have floated through her mind while she stitched!

Julie Child is a well-known biological illustrator who has worked on various MBL publications and taught at the Children's School of Science. Presently Julie teaches a very popular drawing class for adults. Being aware of Julie's strict adherence to biological detail, one of her students asked if the "Elegant Jellyfish" she created for the quilt was an exact rendering. Julie

replied that she tried to do some things correctly – for instance, four large tentacles are the correct number. But the number of small tentacles is not. “I experimented with ways to make the tentacles, trying out ribbon, and using beads on the smaller ones. It was lots of fun to do.”

Jane Parhiala is a massage therapist who is creative with a number of art forms. She works in fabric, yarn and paper, and has designed clothes. Currently, she is felting hats. When Jane was given a drawing of a seal and some fabric pieces, however, she admits to feeling a bit intimidated. She had never done appliqué work before. It did take a while, she explained, but the resulting square is a charming scene of a seal resting on the beach by some rocks. A bright red lobster buoy bobs in the water.

“The crisp salt-tinged breeze blowing off Nobska Point has refreshed and renewed my spirits often since moving here in 1970. My family has strolled the beach and climbed the rocks. At night we listened to the distant call of the fog horn.” Shirley Wozena’s love of Nobska drew her to choose the Lighthouse for her square. Shirley’s career is in human resource management, but her avocation is working with fabric. Besides quilting, she enjoys needlework, knitting and embroidery.

Four roses adorn the corners of the quilt, completing the scene. A three dimensional rugosa rose is so realistic one wonders if it is fragrant! Anne Edwards, retired WHOI scientist, learned how to do this from reading a book. A colorful butterfly visits Perry Davis’ rose in another corner, and a blue-winged humming bird sips nectar from Joani Desnoyers’ rose in another. Completing the picture is Cathy Offinger’s calico rose. Cathy, a college friend of Terry McKee’s, coordinates research trips for WHOI.

The finishing elements of the quilt were a collaborative effort between Terry, Salley, Anne Edwards, Shirley Farrington, Helen Koehler, and Vicky Cullen. Vicky is recently retired from WHOI and is currently president of Neighborhood Falmouth. The side panels are decorated with a pattern of three-dimensional climbing roses – Michael Walsh Rambler Roses, perhaps – individually stitched by Terry and laid out by Salley. Leaves and vines were stitched by finish quilters Helen and Shirley. The banner on the top panel spells out “Woods Hole” in rope, which, along with the tiny mariner’s compass at the very top of the quilt, recognizes the importance of boating in Woods Hole. The blue ocean waves which form the border were inspired by a quilt pattern Terry and Salley admired; it seemed perfect to frame the fabric portrait of this sea-enveloped village. A Woods Hole Spritsail boat, stitched by sailing enthusiast, Nan Logan, floats amongst the waves.

In thinking back over the time spent working on the quilt, Terry McKee reminisced about how meaningful the process was to those involved: “As we worked, we exchanged life stories and recipes and genuinely looked forward to these get-togethers for the pleasant social time. It became very easy to understand why quilting bees were the sustenance of women of previous generations.” And this no doubt explains why these women, with their already full lives, would also make time to be together and create a beautiful object such as the Woods Hole quilt. It is a wonderful, whimsical, and witty work of art which virtually sings with joy and love of the community they are celebrating.

Dorothy Aspinwall moved to Falmouth with her husband in 1987. She has made quilts for each of her seven grandchildren. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Cedar Crest College and a Graduate Certificate in Landscape Design from the Landscape Institute of Harvard University. She thanks Terry McKee for the many materials and advice she gave for the writing of this article. It could not have been written without her.

