



# Sailsail

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## From the Editors

We are pleased to present this Winter 2018 issue of *Spritsail*. Three of the articles describe life in the Davisville area at various periods over the last century. Dean Lundgren takes us back to his halcyon summer days at the Stuga of his Swedish grandparents. Ruth Baker seems to have had great fun as she observed the eccentricities of the many Davisville families she knew, most of whose descendants have kept their ancestors' attachment to the area. Rene Dillingham Washburn recounts how her family's joy-filled summers were lived without any modern conveniences but with much sharing of work and the garden's harvest. The three articles together, by focusing on a narrow strip of land, create a picture of decades when the delight of a summer on the Cape came from the simple pleasures to be found in a life close to the sea and the land.

Rosemary Hoskins' "History of Spohr Gardens" relates how the vision, dedication, and imagination of Margaret and Charles Spohr led to the creation of this small but spectacular garden on Oyster Pond, a gift to the public. Lillis Palmer's poem, "Planting Bulbs," reminds us of the mysterious miracle that we witness each spring after "the white sleep of winter."

San Lyman in "The Job Shop" brings us closer to the present, as she tells how she and another female entrepreneur, Anne Yentsch, were able to start a successful business in Woods Hole by borrowing a little money and just forging ahead, making sure to have lots of fun on the way. The Job Shop was located on the current site of another valuable Woods Hole enterprise, the studios of WCAI.

## Davisville Summer Vacations, 1925-2018

By Dean A. Lundgren

Davisville is the part of East Falmouth that extends from Route 28 south to Nantucket Sound and from Green Pond on the west to Bourne Pond on the east. It is characterized topographically by outwash plain, remnants of glaciers that melted more than 10,000 years ago. It contains estuaries, extending northward from the Sound by, in some cases, two miles. Adjacent sections of Davisville have Native American names, with Acapesket to the west and Menauhant to the east. Two prominent families were among the principal early residents of the Davisville peninsula, the Baker and Davis families, with this area taking its name from the latter.

Our family has been privileged to have five generations spend their summers here in Davisville since 1925. My maternal grandparents – referred to by the Swedish terms



Dean Lundgren fishing at the age of five.  
Courtesy Dean Lundgren

of “Mormor” (mother’s mother) and “Morfar” (mother’s father) – emigrated separately from Sweden to the United States in 1903 and 1905 respectively. Mormor and Morfar met in America, married in 1912 and began their life together in Attleboro, Massachusetts, a city known for jewelry manufacturing. In fact, while my grandparents did not know them personally, six of the seven founders of the neighboring colony to the east, Menauhant, were in the jewelry business in Attleboro, thus the main north/south dirt road in Menauhant is still named Jewelers Row.

After renting one summer season in Teaticket off Maravista Avenue, they decided to look for land on which to build their modest “Stuga.” Many Swedish families built a summer cottage, known as a Stuga, to spend the delightful long



A 1929 photo of Dean Lundgren’s mother and her brothers Elsworth and Elmer Johnson in front of the family Stuga built in 1925. Courtesy Dean Lundgren

In the publication *History of Davisville*, local resident Ruth Baker, a "lifelong Davisvillian," recalled with humor and sharp observation her neighbors who lived along Davisville Road.

## Reminiscences of the Old Days

*By Ruth Baker*

Zenas Davis decided to move his family from Menauhant to Davisville in order to take advantage of our village school. The ingenious plan was to transport his house across the frozen surface of Bourne's Pond during the winter, but unfortunately the ice cracked under the weight of the building. The frustrated mover, James Mayhew, had to split the house in two and haul the halves around through East Falmouth and down Davisville Road. John DeMello, Sr., a carpenter-apprentice at the time, assisted Mr. Mayhew on the long trip, and the handsome old edifice was reassembled and ensconced at the foot of the village road. Comfortably settled on his new property, Zenas

was watching a thunderstorm from his front porch one evening and was knocked down by a bolt of lightning, an accident from which he fortunately recovered. Since 1921, this historic house has been occupied by the Moor family, and its driveway serves as an access way to the old village cemetery to this day.

Alfred and Kate Davis owned Shelley Peirce's house before Mrs. Haskell. Kate couldn't read, but pretended that she could. Once, when caught reading the Bible upside down, she retorted to her accuser, "Any damn fool could read it the other way." Neighborhood kids used to tease Kate by moving her privy from its base and hiding it in a remote spot.



Davisville Road in the 1920s was not paved and had a sidewalk on the west side of the road which passed the Andrew Baker house (now owned by Michael Kinney).  
Courtesy Davisville Civic Assoc.

Joshua Davis once owned the Pratt house, and his daughter Lena distinguished herself by riding her bicycle to Falmouth regardless of inclement weather and graduating from Lawrence Academy.

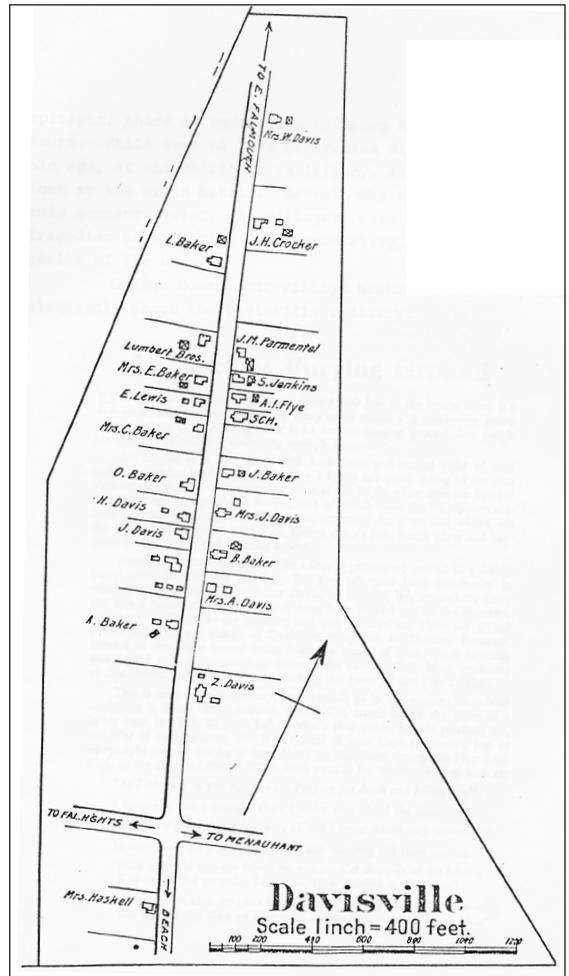
Joseph Davis and his wife Mame originally owned the Fitzpatrick house, where Joseph fished, painted, and carved working duck decoys, one of which his niece Ruth Baker still cherishes. Joseph fell out of his boat and drowned after suffering a sudden heart attack.

Andrew Baker lived with his housekeeper Johanna Quirk, a midwife, in the home later owned by Dr. Vannerman and now his grandson Mike Kinney. When Andrew died, he bequeathed the property to Johanna, who later sold it to Charles Hadley.

Orrie Baker was a hermit in the true sense of the word. Supposedly jilted as a young man, he never quite recovered. Orrie used to tear up the inside of his house, even the floorboards, to burn as firewood. The fact that he never under any circumstances allowed anyone to enter his house is quite understandable. Clad in a long overcoat and sneakers, Orrie cut a familiar figure as he plodded daily through the village carrying a hoe and potato sack for hoggin'.

Ruth Baker's father, Freeman Baker, lived with her grandfather, Henry Orlando Davis, in the white house south of Ruth's present home. At one time Henry farmed a huge area stretching from Edgar Davis' to Cogwell's, with orchards and hayfields all the way to Green Pond.

After Amanda Davis, John and Ida Dennis and family occupied what we know as the



Barnstable County Atlas map of Davisville. Ten of the fifteen families she mentions are on the map.

Otis Baker residence. Many of us remember this talented clan. Mr. Dennis was a prominent Boston newspaperman; Mrs. Davis was a dressmaker who fashioned elegant gowns for the well-to-do ladies of Boston; son Morgan sketched perky black and white Scotch terriers for the famous ad for Scotch whiskey so prominently displayed in national magazines of the time; his brother Wesley painted horses

with artistic skill; and sister Lillian was a pianist who later married theatrical producer and director William Howard and performed in his touring show "My Maryland."

Barnabas Baker owned the property later known as Lovell's Ten Acre Farm, where he tended a large fruit orchard, hiring the neighborhood kids to help pick the ample crop. A cherry tree in his front yard proved fair game for the youngsters, and Barnabas wisely permitted them to grab a handful of the succulent fruit whenever they passed by the house.

The house owned by the late selectman John DeMello, Jr., was first occupied by J.M. Parmental, who died of diphtheria. When the Carreiro family bought the property, they devoted much of their land to the raising of pigs, and the boys Johnny, Jimmy, and Raymond

picked up the neighborhood garbage for use in the pig pen, located in front of where the Falmouth East condominium now stands.

Simeon Jenkins and his wife Mary Ann lived in the home just south of the Parmentals. Mary Ann, a short, stocky lady, used to give an ice cream party for the kids each summer. Since there were no screens in the windows, the flies were thick around the party sweets. Later, the Winslows purchased the property, which remains in their family to this day.

Captain Israel B. Davis, Ruth Baker's paternal great-grandfather for whom Israel's Cove is named, lived in the vicinity of Shaker Lane where the Hand house is now located. After the sea captain's occupancy, J.H. Crocker took over the premises. The house reportedly burned down while rented by Antonio DeMello and his family.

**Source:**

*History of Davisville* by James R. Moor and Shelley D. Peirce. Their material was included in the 1986 *Book of Falmouth*. Ruth Baker's reminiscences, however, were not published at that time.

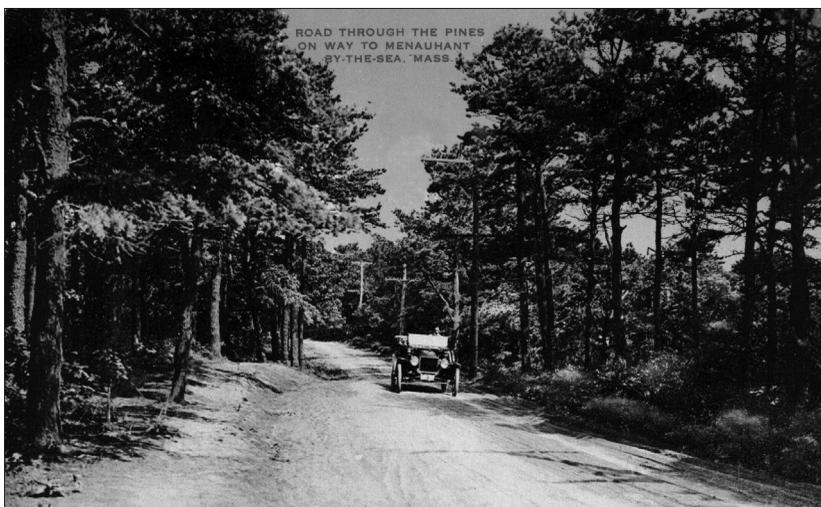
# The Summer Cottage: A Memoir

*By Rene Dillingham Washburn*

When my father was a boy in the late 1800's, his family spent their summers on Cape Cod, in a Universalist Campground called Menauhant. His father, the Reverend Frederick Augustus Dillingham, brought his wife, Carrie Alexander, and their six children, Leslie, Mabel, Alex, Paul, Sydney and Edith, each year to the same old summer house, which is still there today. On his boyhood explorations my father rambled along the shore to a village on the other side of Bourne's pond, a farming village called Davisville, a half mile inland. Near the beach sat a solitary old Cape Cod cottage. It was this house he bought years later for \$600.00, to be his honeymoon house and a summer house foreverafter.

Dad was a mathematics professor and could spend four months each summer doing what he pleased. After his wedding in 1910 to Alveda Frances Greenwood, my mother, they left Boston by train for Falmouth, where they hired a horse-drawn wagon to make the five mile journey to their honeymoon hideaway.

The sandy road to the shore was hidden by low-hanging tree branches, which they ducked and pushed aside. The cottage was a typical Cape Cod style known as a three-quarter Cape, with low eaves, two windows on the left side of the front door and one window on the right. A full Cape has two rooms of equal size either side and a half Cape has



"The sandy road to the shore was hidden by low-hanging tree branches."  
Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green

only the front door with a room on one side. These three styles never varied, and each had a kitchen wing attached to the back. Our house was built in 1820 by one of the many Davises of Davisville, and a later untraditional porch was added across the front and one side. Dad bought it completely furnished – rope beds with cornhusk mattresses, a marble-topped Victorian table with an old kerosene lamp in the living room (the lamp was of shiny nickel with a frosted white shade and a glass chimney), a platform rocker with a seat of carpeting, a large dining room table with several small caned-seat chairs. In the pantry, shelves held a full set of old-fashioned china, white with a brown border of oak leaves and acorns. This included platters, kidney-shaped bone dishes, small butter spats and a celery dish. There were cut glass sauce dishes with serving bowls of matching button-and-daisy [pattern] from the Sandwich glass works on the other side of the Cape. My parents never bought anything new as long as I lived there. We slept on the lumpy mattresses, ate off antique china and Sandwich glass and used the original kitchen utensils. We lived in a time warp. The back wing was a low-ceilinged kitchen with a fireplace and wainscoting in a putty color decorated with trompe l’oeil knot-holes in a deeper shade, made by an artistic painter. The low ceiling was plastered with crushed clamshells. The plastered walls above the wainscoting were gritty with beach sand reinforced with goat hair. I sometimes pulled out a stray hair to see what a goat hair looked like.

When I was five, Dad had a porch built off

the kitchen facing the sea, and this became an outdoor living/dining room. The house had no electricity nor running water and, without a sink or appliances, the kitchen didn’t look like a kitchen. The fireplace mantel held a ship model made by my great-great grandfather, a three masted square-rigger with hinged cannon holes. This was the *Harriet* and looked like the *USS Constitution* (this model is now in a museum). Either side of the “Harriet” was a row of candles. Some were stuck in large clam shells, and two were thin brass with handles. Each night, a candle lighted our way to the bedrooms. First we cleaned our teeth by candle light in the woodshed, then carried the candle upstairs, where our shadows towered over us on the sloping ceilings, moving as we moved. As a small child of six or seven these shadows seemed threatening and, even now, seventy-five years later, I am not happy when the only source of light is a single candle. The kitchen had a window and door on each side, the north looked over the meadows to the village, and the south faced Vineyard Sound. Behind the kitchen was a woodshed with a beehive dome which enclosed a Dutch oven behind the fireplace. It looked like an igloo, and we children could climb on top. Above the kitchen, an attic reached by a ladder held old china wash basins, matching pitchers and slop jars.

Dad contrived a dumbwaiter using a wooden box, which we raised and lowered with a rope and pulleys. This carried the milk and butter to the cellar below. A typical Cape Cod cellar is round with a brick wall, to withstand the



Very early Green Pond bridge. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green

pressure of the sand, but ours was square with a rock wall and was ten degrees cooler than the kitchen above. This was our refrigerator. Mother cooked on a three-burner kerosene stove, blue enamel with a glass jug at one end for the kerosene. The three burners had tubular chimneys below, each with a door of transparent mica. The oven was a removable metal box set over two burners. Mother was not a born cook, but she was a wizard with sour milk recipes: gingerbread, Johnny Cake, blueberry pancakes and doughnuts. Sour milk recipes always include baking soda. When the soda is stirred rapidly into the sour milk, it foams dramatically over the top of the cup, a phenomenon I always stopped to watch. Without refrigeration, there was a steady supply of sour milk, and a common sight in the pantry was a cheesecloth bag dripping whey into a bowl

for another batch of cottage cheese. During World War I, the local farmers planted cabbages and turnips in the meadows around our house, and after the war these became hay fields filled with wild strawberries, daisies and Queen Anne's Lace. As a child, I didn't know that our lifestyle was primitive.

We accomplished, without electricity, what other families did with equipment modern at that time. If there had been a stream nearby, we might have washed our clothes there. Instead, Dad pumped pails of water and heated them on the kerosene stove. He was a dignified professor eight months of the year but was not above helping on summer washdays. My parents were early risers, and by the time we girls awoke, the wash was half-finished and hanging on the line. Mother scrubbed on a washboard

in a large galvanized tub set on a stool behind the woodshed. Dad stood near and rinsed everything in pails of cold water and hung the clothes on the line. I accepted the washday scene as a child, but as my horizons widened, I noticed that no one else washed their clothes by hand outdoors. I became self-conscious about it. As soon as we were old enough, we girls were responsible for our own laundry. By then the pump was indoors in the wood shed, and we washed in a basin in the large sink. As for ironing without electricity, we heated three heavy irons, marked one, two and three, over a kerosene burner. They were called "Sad Irons" and worked well except for a little rust on the sides. Occasionally someone sandpapered the rust off. A separate wooden handle could be clamped onto each iron as one cooled and others heated. I remember the legless ironing board – one end rested on a table, the other on a blue stool (actually a chair minus its back), with a large brass-colored flour tin on top. My parents never replaced anything if it worked.

In the early years, the only house in sight was a yellow one, half-hidden by trees on the other side of the north meadow. The Pearse family lived there with three sons, Temple, Shelley and Herbert, known as "Bunny." Dad told us

that Mr. Pearse used to walk over for a visit in his underwear because there was no one to see him except us. We were usually barefoot, but it was daring to call in your underwear.

My earliest summer memories include the many house parties my parents had. They invited their old college classmates in Boston to come with their children for a visit. They arrived in their open touring cars, a novelty for us girls; we didn't have a car. With only two bedrooms upstairs and one small one off the dining room, I remember mattresses on the floor. We ate many picnics on the beach and spent most of our days there. The women cooked in quantity, the men dug clams for steamers and chowder, and the garden behind the house provided enough vegetables. After we children were bedded-down in odd places, we heard the men singing their old glee club songs. Our lifestyle must have been a novelty for all who visited. As years passed, friends wanted their children to experience our simple life, and after the house parties ended, we often had sons and daughters spend a month with us.

*Other episodes from the memoir can be read on the website of the Museums on the Green: [www.museumsonthegreen.org/archives/untoldtalesoffalmouth](http://www.museumsonthegreen.org/archives/untoldtalesoffalmouth).*

### **About the Author**

Rene Dillingham Washburn (1915-2006) was a lifelong summer resident of Falmouth. This piece is excerpted from her unpublished memoir, found in the archives at Museums on the Green.

# The History of Spohr Gardens

*By Rosemary Hoskins*

The Spohr Gardens on Fells Road are the culmination of the creative efforts of Charles and Margaret Spohr, who lived and worked there for more than forty years. At one point the Gardens, which look across Oyster Pond to Nantucket Sound, included more than one million daffodil bulbs in thirty-four varieties.

Charles Dolbeer Spohr, born in East Orange, New Jersey in 1914, was the son of the head of the auditing department at J. P. Morgan and Company in New York City. His familiarity with Cape Cod went back to childhood, when he vacationed in Centerville with his family. After graduating with honors from Mercerberg Academy in Virginia, Charlie went to Virginia Military Institute and received a commission in the Army Corps of Engineers in 1938. This led to a distinguished career as a civil engineer. He worked for Humble Oil and Refining Company (later Exxon), Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), and participated in both the Third Locks Project in the Panama Canal Zone and the building of the Texas Tower on Georges Bank. The tower was used to monitor the Soviets by radar during the Cold War. During World War II Charlie served in the Combat Engineering Battalion, 80<sup>th</sup> Division, of General George Patton's Third Army. He participated in the invasion of Normandy and continued on to the Siegfried Line in northern France, where he was

seriously wounded. He retired from the Army in 1947. Following the war, Charlie worked for the Army at Camp Edwards, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and Francis Associates in Marion, MA.

Margaret Ellen King was born in Empire, Michigan in 1915 and was a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing in Baltimore, Maryland. During World War II she served as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps. She also served for twenty years



Charles and Margaret Spohr in their gardens, a millstone at her feet.

Courtesy of Spohr Charitable Trust

in the Air Force and worked as head of the maternity ward at Otis Air Force Base.

Charlie and Margaret met at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, where he was convalescing from his wounds and she was serving as an Army nurse. They married in 1946 and moved to Quissett in 1950, where they bought the first two of what would become approximately six acres on Fells Road, along Oyster Pond. They called their home "The Fells." Thus began a life-long mission which transformed these acres into the beautiful and unique Spohr Gardens we know today.

Charlie and Margaret were equally involved in the evolution of the Gardens. She called him Doddie and he called her Skip. Their areas of interest differed. Margaret designed the gardens, intending them to be informal, friendly, and inviting. She laid them out by sections on paper and numbered slabs. Her plans can still be seen in the Gardens. During the winters, Charlie and Margaret would pore over catalogs together, selecting bulbs, trees, shrubs, and perennials to order. Careful records of the

purchases were kept, noting botanical as well as common names, date, nursery, and price. This information is invaluable for researching and replacing plants as needed today. Although Charlie participated in the selection of the plantings, he was particularly fascinated with what he called "the decorations": the anchors, millstones, cobblestones, chains, lanterns, and watering troughs. He acquired and integrated these "decorations" like sculptures among the flowers, shrubs, and trees. Charlie also designed an irrigation system that is still in use.



One of Charles Spohr's two bells. Note the millstone in the rear. Courtesy of Spohr Charitable Trust



An anchor from Charles Spohr's "decorations." Courtesy of Spohr Charitable Trust

As a result of these efforts, the Gardens provide a breathtaking succession of colorful blooms from early spring through late summer. In addition to the great variety of daffodils, Charlie's favorite flower, there were more than a hundred varieties of perennials, lilies and iris, azaleas, hydrangeas, skimmia, Andromeda, leucothoe, and Dexter rhododendrons of many colors. Trees included crabapple, cherry, noir magnolia, Paulownia, plum and fig, hollies, umbrella pines, Japanese pines, tree peonies, and three types of beech –weeping, European, and American.

Among Charlie's "decorations" accenting the Gardens are his anchors. He started to collect small anchors as a boy. He was particularly interested in early anchors, their design, age, places of origin, and their evolution into modern anchors. His collection included anchors circa 1760 and 1850, among them his most prized, a 1760 English anchor possibly intended for use on the *H.M.S. Bounty*. It was found to be faulty, so the story goes, and left ashore

for repairs. It measures fourteen feet long, has eight-foot arms, and weighs 2,476 pounds. How Charlie acquired this beauty is unknown. He also inherited a collection of large anchors from a fellow engineer who worked at the Baldt Anchor Company in Wilmington, Delaware. Thirteen historic anchors rest atop the retaining wall along Oyster Pond.

Charlie acquired 75 millstones from around the Northeast. They range in size from six inches to eight feet. Several weigh tons. He purchased some and others were given to him if he removed them from their locations. Forty millstones are embedded in the patios around the house. Other larger millstones are scattered around the Gardens, resting among bulbs and trees, catching the eye of visitors.

A huge bell, cast by the famous bell maker Jonathan Mann in 1882 for a church in Dedham that burned down, sits in the daffodil bed between the two main paths. Another smaller bell is located by the water.

Two lighthouse lanterns, prized "decorations" of Charlie's, are placed at the edge of the patio near the house. The lenses for these lanterns came from Paris more than a hundred years ago. Cobblestones from New Bedford line the main paths. Granite watering troughs transformed into water fountains and bird baths are charming accents found throughout the Gardens.

Charles Spohr and his dog, Brandon. Inscription on this 1882 bell: "SINNERS The sound of this bell calls you together for the good and eternal happiness of your soul and ONLY THIS"  
Courtesy of Spohr Charitable Trust



Over the years, Charlie and Margaret received enthusiastic community recognition for their lovely creation. The Falmouth Garden Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Cape Cod Board of Realtors, and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society have all bestowed awards on the Spohrs and their Gardens.

In 1989 the Spohrs hired Michael Kadis (Mike) to help with the upkeep of the Gardens. He became their friend and later the caretaker. Mike relates that during the winter he and Charlie would sit and organize pictures into photo albums. He has been instrumental in organizing the documents, records, and memorabilia related to the Spohrs and the Gardens. Today Mike continues as caretaker. His warm relationship with the Spohrs and his long experience in the Gardens are essential to the continuity and care of the extensive flora.

The Gardens have matured and changed over the years. The daffodils, the signature flower of the Gardens, no longer bloom as abundantly as before. The Board of Trustees is considering new ways to present the Gardens while remaining faithful to the vision of the Spohrs to maintain a waterside woodland garden for the public to enjoy without charge.

Charlie passed away in 1997. Margaret died in 2001. They had shared the loveliness of their Gardens with the public from the very beginning. To ensure that the Gardens would continue to be maintained and available as an invaluable resource to the community, Charlie placed the property in a trust. Today, The Charles D. Spohr and Margaret King Spohr Charitable Trust works to sustain their mission and legacy.



Millstones at Spohr Gardens.  
Photo by Leonard Miele

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### Credits:

Oral history of the Gardens from Michael Kadis, Caretaker.

Articles from the *Falmouth Enterprise*.

Articles from the *Upper Cape Local*.

Articles from the *Cape Cod Times*.

"Times Past": newsletter of the Falmouth Historical Society, November, 1997, pp. 7-8.

### About the Author

Rosemary Hoskins has lived in Falmouth for 47 years. Since retiring, her main interest has been Spohr Gardens, first as a volunteer worker and currently as a member of the Board of Trustees.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,  
the evidence of things not seen.”

Hebrews 11-1

## Planting Bulbs

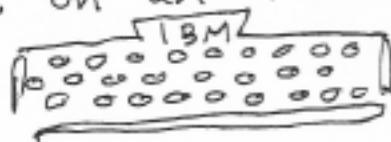
Observe the  
evidence of faith,  
the gardener  
kneeling on her piece  
of earth,  
spading the soil with  
blistered hands, breathing  
the humus sweet  
cold air;  
how she commits  
each bulb  
to its shallow bed for  
the white sleep  
of winter,  
where,  
(the gardener thinks)  
the bulb  
will dream the  
secret of itself,  
  
to be told  
in spring.

Lillis Palmer, a graduate of Brown University and a resident of Bourne, was a librarian in the Brockton school system for twenty-seven years. In 2012 she was awarded first prize in the Katharine Lee Bates poetry contest.

# The Job Shop

by Sam Lyman

A long long time ago Anne Yentsch and I decided to start a secretarial service business in Woods Hole. We borrowed fifty bucks from our husbands and made a down payment on an IBM selectric typewriter.



Then we went to the Farmers National Bank and got a business start-up loan. And rented rooms in a building on Depot Ave. Second floor. Below was a beauty parlor wafting permanent-smelling fumes upward. And a telegraph office.