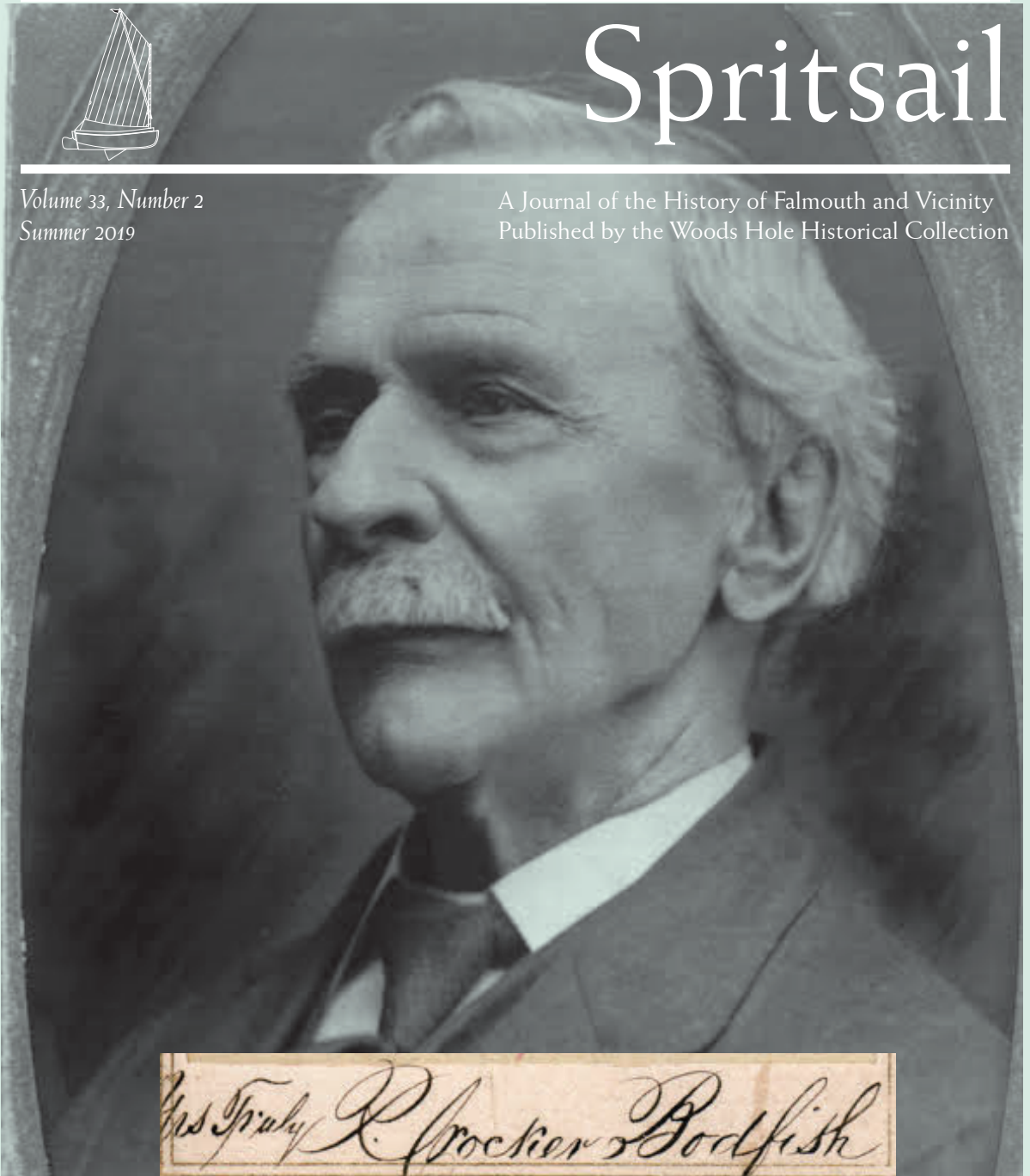




Spritsail

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A Journal of the History of Falmouth and Vicinity
Published by the Woods Hole Historical Collection



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Editors

Olivann Hobbie
Leonard Miele

Editorial Board

Stephen Chalmers
Janet Gardner
Kathy Lanson
Jane A. McLaughlin
Judith G. Stetson
Maria C. Ward

Design & Layout

Beth Ready Liles

Contributions to *Spritsail* are welcome.
Typed manuscripts and letters should be
sent to:

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On the Front Cover: Robinson Crocker Bodfish. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

On the Back Cover: Original illustration of the Community Hall from “Little Rat Makes Music” by Monika Bang-Campbell and Molly Bang. Courtesy of Illustrator Molly Bang.

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From the Editors

Today, we take for granted that Falmouth is a special place to live in and to visit. Our town's natural beauty, with its 78 miles of coastline and inviting ponds, plus the myriad summer events offered by community groups, bring visitors from all parts of the country. In the last quarter of the 19th century, however, Falmouth had yet to be discovered as a summer paradise.

This issue's first two articles look at those decades of the town's history when this discovery occurred. Maria C. Ward writes about the unrealized ambitions of R.C. Bodfish, whose goal was to see Falmouth become a major vacation destination for people on the East coast. As a land speculator, he was ahead of his time and died in poverty, his dream unfulfilled.

The hotel builders of the 1880s and 1890s capitalized on the many winning features of Falmouth that Bodfish had touted. Kathy Lanson and Leonard Miele describe the popularity of luxury resort hotels along the Falmouth seashore in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when families came to the Cape to spend much of their summer near, in, or on the water.

In her poem "Living by Waters" Olivann Hobbie captures the unique experience of swimming with the tide in Little Sippewissett Marsh.

This issue also pays tribute to the 100th anniversary of the Woods Hole Community Association. Rob Blomberg traces the history of the Association and its successful efforts to make the Community Hall a center for village activities appealing to young and old.

Irene Wright, interviewed by the North Falmouth Village Association for an oral history project, arrived in Falmouth in 1927 as a nurse. She reminisces about her years as a public health nurse and as a happy resident of the North Falmouth community.

Robinson Crocker Bodfish

By Maria C. Ward

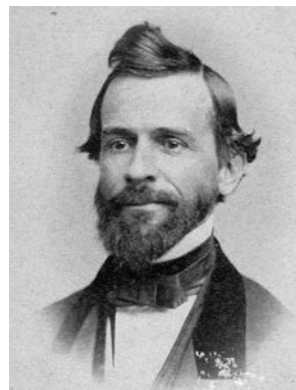
“Waiting Vainly For the ‘Boom’. Robinson Bodfish Went Broke — ‘Land Poor’ And Owning Real Estate Worth A Small Fortune Today” headlined a 1973 *Falmouth Enterprise* account of the life of Robinson Crocker Bodfish.

This son of Falmouth was born on May 11, 1818, in the white frame house on the Village Green, now the parsonage for the Congregational Church. The house had been built by his father, Captain William Bodfish, in 1814, when he moved to Falmouth from Sandwich. The Captain in turn was the son of William Bodfish, who at age 17 had been a drummer boy in the Revolutionary army. The Captain first went to sea as a teenager on a brig in the coast trade. He became a captain by age 19 and was well known for his seamanship. His

invoices and bills of lading show a lucrative trade route to and from the West Indies.

Robinson Crocker Bodfish was one of five children born to William and Mary Crocker Bodfish. He was named after an ancestor, Isaac Robinson, a 1660 settler in Falmouth.

Bodfish first left Falmouth at age 14 to attend Amherst Academy with two other Falmouth boys, Barzillai Lawrence and James M. Swift. Eighteen months later, he left Amherst for employment at a ship chandler’s store in New Bedford until age 21. He then worked as a clerk in the Weweantic Iron Works in Wareham, followed by a stint as bookkeeper in the Bay State Iron Co. in Boston. Next he worked at the Health Department of New York City and two years at the War Department in Washington, D.C., (salary \$1,800.00), as bookkeeper at a millinery shop in New Orleans, and finally as auditor of the Boston Custom House.



Robinson Crocker Bodfish.
Courtesy Falmouth
Museums on the Green.



Captain William Bodfish home, built 1814.
Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

But Robinson Bodfish, despite his years working in other cities, always had Falmouth's "treasure possibilities" on his mind. He believed the town had promise as a vacation destination far more valuable than its fisheries and farming output. Throughout his life he defied his many skeptics, including his own family, as he began investing in the town's future. He remained a man with a vision through economic times of boom and bust. Only after his death was he vindicated.

In one of his first ventures he underwrote the Reverend Frederick Freeman's *History of Cape Cod*, featuring records and memories of the early Cape, which appeared serially from 1858-1863. One third of the subscriptions which paid for Freeman's work was raised by Bodfish. The Reverend Freeman, in turn, dedicated the Falmouth portion of the book to Bodfish, citing his "filial reverence for ancestry." (See below)

Through his voluminous correspondence with local family members he kept abreast of the

attempts to make Falmouth a summer resort. Perhaps the earliest was the development of 120 acres of "Great Hill," the town name for the current Falmouth Heights. It was described then by locals as "a tangle of scrub oak and pine, briars, and wild grape" - "a dreary waste." However, in 1871 the Falmouth Heights Land and Wharf Company was incorporated. Land was cleared and roads laid out. "Cottages" were built; the 50-room Tower House Hotel opened.

At the same time, 1870 also saw increased agitation for a railroad extension. Oliver Swift, the president of the Falmouth National Bank, became president of the newly formed Old Colony Railroad. A special town meeting that fall bought \$60,000 worth of railroad stock. Martha's Vineyard added \$20,000; individuals purchased \$40,000. Bodfish was in town when the railroad reached Falmouth on July 10, 1872. It was a "heady" time!

Despite a business depression in 1873 and the bankruptcy of the Falmouth Heights Land and

To Mr. Robinson Crocker Bodfish, Secretary of the New York Cape Cod Association,
A descendant of one of the earliest settlers of Sandwich, whose lineage is also traced to Robinson, the Leyden pastor, and in whose veins is, commingling, the blood of the Nyes, the Ellises, the Dimmicks, and the Crockers: whose purity of life and excellence of character command admiration: whose filial reverence for ancestry is worthy of imitation; and whose disposition to encourage by generous acts the publication of the history of our native county deserves grateful acknowledgements, these Annals of his native town are respectfully inscribed as an expression of the kind regards of his sincere friend.

— *The Author*



The long pier built to accommodate boat traffic on the Sound. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

Wharf Co., sales of Heights land continued. Cottages sold for \$450. The wharf was extended to be the longest on the waterfront at that time. After leaving Woods Hole for the Vineyard, the steamer *Island Home* stopped there regularly. The local paper, the *Falmouth Chronicle*, reported 1000 passengers a day rode the train to Woods Hole at the height of the summer season. *The Barnstable Patriot* reported that money was pouring into Oak Bluffs with sales amounting to “fancy” prices. “Land Fever!” said the *Falmouth Chronicle*. It was at that time that Bodfish considered buying Hog Island (now Chapoquoit). In 1872, that 40 acres sold for \$1,050, to another buyer. This investment would take eighteen years to realize any profit.

Henry Jones, editor of the *Chronicle*, wrote of the need for a hotel. “Several gentlemen are having tracts of land surveyed and laid out for cottage lots.... We would advise those wishing to purchase eligible sites near the beach to secure them at once.” Hotels were coming.

The Menauhant Land and Wharf Co. was formed to develop land around Bournes Pond. In 1874, six jewelers from Attleboro began developing land in the same area. (See Winter *Spritsail*, 2019). Falmouth real estate valuation jumped from \$1 million to \$1,697,307, the increase due to summer property sales.

Mr. Bodfish, though still living in Boston, was spending more time in Falmouth, meeting and corresponding with many summer residents. One was Dr. George Faulkner, who later founded Boston’s Faulkner Hospital. He owned a summer home on Shore Street, but he considered land in Falmouth to be an unwise investment. He valued the possibility of industrial enterprise in Falmouth for the employment it would provide. He wrote to Bodfish in 1883: “I like Falmouth more and more, but nothing changed my early impression and my habit of thinking that a prudent man will be careful how he puts money into land in Falmouth, unless he wishes to live upon it.”

Bodfish made notations on Faulkner's many letters, filed them away, and paid them no heed.

Ruth Washburn Sterling, daughter of the Reverend Charles Washburn, longtime minister of the First Congregational Church, wrote in her memoir: "Mr. Bodfish was one of our town's characters....On Sundays he wore a tall silk hat, a frock coat, and carried a gold-headed cane. In his prime he had been quite a Beau Brummel." In 1880 Mr. Bodfish married Miss Lydia Soule, daughter of John Soule of New Bedford. In December 1882, Bodfish, Silas Jones, and William H. Hewins bought 500 feet of beach along Surf Drive. Six months later Bodfish, Jones, and Lewis H. Lawrence became "trustees of Falmouth Bathing Beach Association." Joseph Story Fay signed over his rights to that strip to this group in 1883. The cost to Bodfish was \$375.00. (The town of Falmouth now owns this property.) Late in life he was quoted as saying, "The town should have bought the entire Sound shore from the Heights to Oyster Pond 30 years ago when it could have been purchased for \$1000."

A year later in December 1883, Bodfish joined a syndicate formed by Lewis Lawrence, George E. Clarke, E.E.C. Swift, Joseph C. Burgess, B. Baylies King, Nehemiah P. Baker, George A. Davis, Foster S. Shiverick, and John R. Lawrence in the purchase of 40 acres on the west side of Deacons Pond, currently the Scranton Avenue location. The seller was Meltiah Lawrence, who had acquired the land in April 1872 and laid out 250 building lots. The syndicate's cost was \$2,453; his share of land cost Bodfish \$466. At the same time he bought property

at Lewis Neck, now Acapesket. And then he waited for his heavy investment in land to rise in value.

By May 1885, a stock market collapse wiped out most of the cash Bodfish had left. However, that summer there was some vindication for his vision when he was an agent for the sale of Lawrence's Neck to Edward Fenno and other wealthy Boston investors. They called their development "Maravista." (Fenno also bought a large tract of land in Quissett, today the Quissett campus of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, still called the Fenno estate.)

The many wealthy summer visitors to Falmouth in those years must have whetted the appetite of this land-poor investor. Franklin Weld, president of the Albemarle & Chesapeake Canal Co. in Norfolk, Va. built a mansion on Mill Road that commanded rent of \$1,500 for three summer months in 1886. Alexander Graham Bell vacationed in Falmouth. Even his phone system was installed at the Falmouth Hotel to connect with the line of the southern Massachusetts company.

With E. Pierson Beebe interested in acquiring property for his proposed church in town, E.E.C. Swift, owner of the neighboring Succanessett House and land, offered Bodfish \$5,000 for his home adjacent to Swift's land. No sale. (The St. Barnabas parish was formed in December 1888; the cornerstone laid in June 1889; the church consecrated on St. Barnabas Day June 1890.)

Bodfish, a lifelong Democrat, lost his job at the Boston Custom House in 1888 when Republican Benjamin Harrison was elected president. Lydia Bodfish died in 1892. Bodfish then left Boston and moved permanently to the Captain John Hatch House, which he had purchased in 1871 for \$1,500. The property included three acres of land extending from Main Street to Siders Pond.

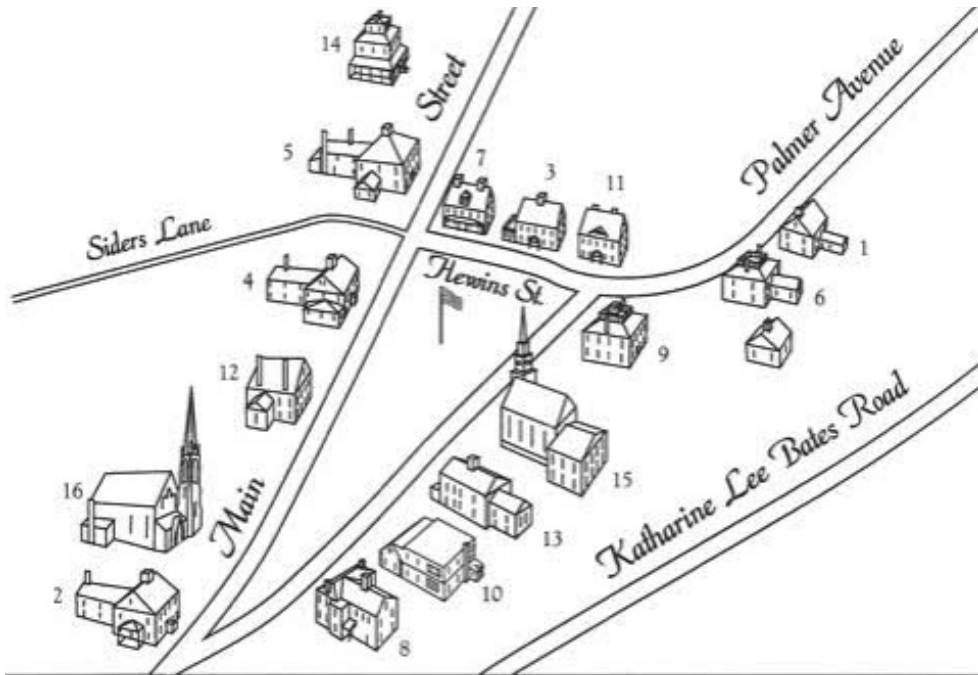
once again, to sell everything. They were appalled to read in the September 25, 1894, *Enterprise* that instead he had bought eight acres running from Lawrence Street (now Locust Street) to Fresh Pond (now Siders Pond). He proposed a tree-lined street through the center of the property which he named "Ocean Vista." After consulting a Boston arborist about what trees were best, pin oaks



Main Street looking east in 1900. R.C. Bodfish house on the right. The water fountain in the foreground was installed in 1899 as a public pump and watering trough for horses. It was a gift from John S. Bleakie whose Falmouth Water Corp. opened the original Long Pond Pumping Station. This was the first public plumbing in Falmouth. Restored, the fountain is now at the Gifford Street entrance to the pumping station. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

Coincidentally, Falmouth's principal industry, the Pacific Guano Company, had failed in February 1889. Bodfish, casting about for ways to earn money, considered turning his home into a hotel. Complaining that what little money he had was tied up in real estate, he began looking for a job at age 75. Instead his friends advised,

were planted. Lots were laid out along the proposed street, priced each at \$500; there were no takers. The final blow came when, having failed to pay the interest on the purchase note, the bank foreclosed on the property June 20, 1899.



1. Palmer (Conant) House	ca. 1760
2. Captain Jonathan Hatch House	ca. 1760
3. Captain John Grannis House	ca. 1765
4. Benjamin Sanford House	1750-1775
5. Consider Hatch House	ca. 1767
6. Dr. Wicks (Julia Wood) House	1790
7. Deacon Braddock Dimmick House	1804
8. Nathaniel Shiverick House	1812
9. Captain William Bodfish House	1814
10. Falmouth National Bank	1821
11. John Jenkins House	1822
12. Thomas Lawrence Swift House	1844
13. Erasmus Gould House	1844
14. Mostly Hall	1848
15. First Congregational Church	1857
16. St. Barnabas Church	1890

Map of houses on the Green. House #2, the Captain Jonathan Hatch House, was purchased by R.C. Bodfish in 1871. House #9 was built by his father, Captain William Bodfish. *Spritsail*, Winter 1990.

When E.E.C. Swift bought this same property in 1924, in the middle of an overgrown field there were two rows of beautiful trees. Ironically, the development dream of Robinson Bodfish was realized by another developer and named "Pin Oak Way".

In a bid for loans to tide him over, Bodfish wrote to many banks. E.K. Butler of the Lincoln National Bank on Devonshire Street in Boston replied in October 1898:

"Dear Bodfish, Your breezy letter of the 24th duly rec'd. It always gives me pleasure to read your letters or to listen to your views when we

down. However, my friend, what you want of me at this moment is to sell me a lot of land, and I very much regret that I cannot see my way clear to it. I have no use for it. There is no possibility that I can have."

The only property of substance now left in Bodfish's diminished real estate was his home, next to the new St. Barnabas Church. But they had yet to acquire a rectory for the church. When he heard that Mr. Beebe might be interested in his house for just such a purpose, he offered it for sale for \$10,000. That price was too high. The mortgage was held by the Wareham Savings Bank but he was unable to

keep up the payments. On August 1, 1901, E. Pierson Beebe bought the house at a foreclosure sale for \$6,500.

Robinson Bodfish continued to live in the house, even as remodeling for the rectory was being done. As the ceilings were taken down in each room, he moved to other rooms, until only the dining room was left. Finally, he was forced to vacate the house entirely. He sold his

valuable possessions and the family silver. He stored his few remaining belongings - trunks and boxes filled with newspaper clippings - in neighboring barns. (Years later they found their way to the basement of the Falmouth library.) The Reverend Henry H. Smythe, the first parsonage resident, wrote: "Long after I



R.C. Bodfish home after it became the St. Barnabas rectory.
Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

meet. I could wish that I could see things in so rosy a light, but I have to go along day by day, doing the best I can at the time & conscious all the time that there are gypsy moths and Colorado beetles to fight, hot suns today and torrents tomorrow, and just as the crop is ready to gather, an unexpected frost comes

occupied the house as a rectory, and until he went to the town farm, he was a constant visitor, coming and going as the mood fitted him. I always had some cigars for his reveries, and he would sit in my study, often alone, for hours."

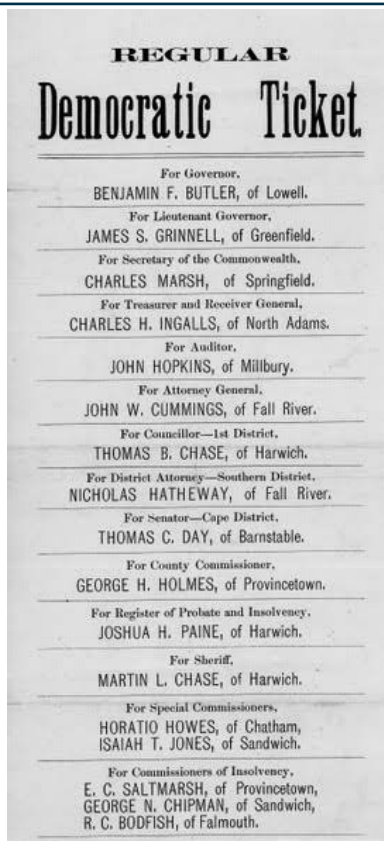
Robinson Bodfish lived twelve years longer, until age 94. Although his eyesight was failing, he was very instrumental in the founding of the Falmouth Historical Society in 1900 and was its first secretary until 1910. During that time he used the Enterprise office window to exhibit a silk needlework done by his mother in her youth in "memoriam" to her brother who had drowned at age six in 1798 in Shivericks Pond. Other Falmouth families were thus encouraged to look at their family heirlooms as possible donations and the start of the Historical Society collection was begun.

He remained a presence in the state and local Democratic party. (He once served as delegate to the state convention in Worcester.) He tried to persuade Andrew Carnegie to fund a Falmouth library. He was a registrar of voters and a member of the town board of park commissioners. He was quoted as saying: "As soon

as the town secures the shore front property at the Heights, I shall resign from the board... But I want to be on the board when the land is secured that my name may be associated with this great public improvement."

He was often observed walking about his beloved town and paid regular calls at the newspaper office where he contributed articles about the new Falmouth Historical Society. On the occasion of his 87th birthday, he walked to and from Woods Hole, a distance of eight miles, in four hours, pausing only for dinner in Woods Hole.

Robinson Crocker Bodfish died, nearly blind and a pauper, on March 8, 1912. On March 12, 1912, his funeral service was held at the First Congregational Church where he had been a devoted member. At his death he was the oldest resident of Falmouth. He and his wife are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.



Democratic ticket headed by Benjamin Butler for Governor in 1878. R.C. Bodfish's name is at the bottom. The Republicans won. Courtesy of the Woods Hole Historical Museum.

About the Author

Maria C. Ward has been on the *Spritsail* editorial board since 2005.

Sources: Meg Costello and the archives at Museums on the Green; *The Falmouth Enterprise*.

Resort Hotels of Falmouth

By Kathy Lanson and Leonard Miele

The real estate boom that Robinson Crocker Bodfish anticipated in Falmouth came to pass during the last quarter of the 19th century. With the influx of tourists and the exploding values of waterfront property, many summer hotels were built along the shore facing Nantucket Sound and Buzzards Bay. From the neighborhood of Menauhant to the east and Quissett to the west, five hotels erected in Falmouth are of particular interest.

THE TOWER HOUSE HOTEL

The Tower House Hotel was built by George Tower in 1871. It was the first building to be built in Falmouth Heights. Tower bought some of the 100 acres of land which had been purchased by the Falmouth Heights Land and Wharf Company in 1870 on the site of the last salt works in Falmouth.

The Tower House Hotel was the first major hotel to be built on Falmouth Heights. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

In 1896 L.H. Baker was the proprietor of the Tower House Hotel which could accommodate 150 guests. In brochures, it was described as a comfortable, homelike hotel for "high class patrons" who appreciated the high elevation, pure air, perfect drainage, and ocean views. The cool summer temperatures were highlighted: the noon temperatures ranged between 62 degrees and 78 degrees. Activities included bathing, boating, fishing, and steamboat excursions.

Tower owned the hotel for 30 years until his death in 1901. In May 1907, Charles W. Hadley became the new owner. He thoroughly



renovated the building and installed a system of gas lighting. He also built two bathhouses on the beach in front of the hotel. Hadley retired in 1924 and sold the hotel to George B. Moran. During World War II, in 1942, the U.S. Army took over the hotel and property so the Engineers Amphibian Command could use them for training. In 1944 the hotel re-opened, but it did not have much business because summer hotels were no longer popular in the area.



The Terrace Gables Hotel was considered the most elegant hotel to be built along the cliffs of Falmouth Heights. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

George B. Moran's five children helped him manage the hotel. When Moran died in 1955, his daughter, Mrs. Francis P. Driscoll, continued to manage the business. Eventually the hotel closed during the summer of 1959. According to an article in the *Falmouth Enterprise* on May 15, 1959, the Moran family "announced in a letter to the clientele that a new apartment type motel" would open in the spring of 1960. Moran's son, Paul N. Moran, planned to open a new 42-unit, two-story structure that would include a swimming pool and recreational area in the center of a U-shaped plan. The hotel closed in 1960 and was razed to make way for the new motel.

THE TERRACE GABLES HOTEL

The Terrace Gables Hotel was known as the "Grand Dame" of the resort hotels in Falmouth. Built on Falmouth Heights overlooking Nantucket Sound, the hotel was first known as the Draper Cottage around 1880 before it became the Terrace Gables Hotel in 1892. Vintage hotel pamphlets describe its "homelike atmosphere" with its "reputation of courteous service" and "elegant opulence."

Guests enjoyed the fireplaced sunroom, writing room, dining room, and large sociable lounge, all adorned with Oriental carpeting and offering spectacular ocean vistas. In *Hotels and Inns of Falmouth*, Arnold W. Dyer described the Terrace Gables as a "large fashionable resort hotel. Its clientele was of the wealthier

class with liveried chauffeurs and expectations of formal dining, with live dinner music and meticulous service." Those who vacationed at the Terrace Gables Hotel could walk to the nearby wharf built by the Heights Land and Wharf Company, providing them easy access to steamship transportation and leisurely sailing parties to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

The Terrace Gables Hotel catered to sophisticated guests with refined taste for nearly a century. In the 1960s and '70s, the Gables closed as a hotel and became known as Brothers 4 and Yesterdays, popular drinking destinations for a younger, more rowdy clientele. In 1988 the building was demolished and replaced with the Gables condominiums, which rise above the Falmouth Heights beach today.

THE CRAIG HOUSE

Over a span of 98 years, the Craig House summer resort, with its adjacent seven cottages, was sited on the highest point of Falmouth Heights with panoramic views of Martha's Vineyard. It first opened to guests in 1880 as the Goodwin House before it was purchased in 1891 by Henry K. Craig, a minister at Falmouth's First Congregational Church for 17 years. His family managed the hotel for 65 years, selling it in 1957. It became known as the Oak Crest Inn until it was torn down in 1978.

An early Craig House brochure describes the "congenial and homelike" atmosphere of the hotel whose "patrons are of the best class."

These patrons were offered boating, bathing, steamship excursions, long distance telephone service, orchestral entertainment, and exceptional meals in a dining room that could accommodate 100 people. As the owners noted,



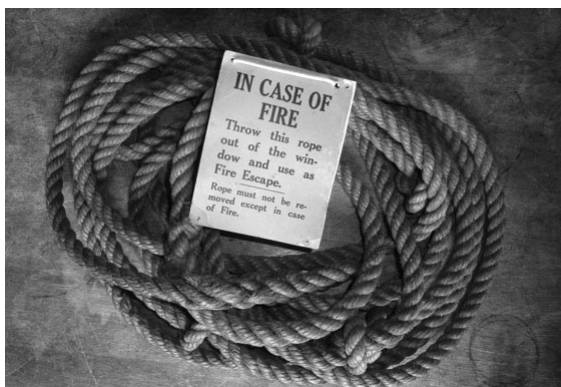
The Craig House offered picturesque views of Nantucket Sound and exceptional accommodations from 1880 to 1978. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

"We aim to set an exceptionally fine table, with homemade preserves and jellies, also eggs, cream, and vegetables from our own farm. Our rooms are large and comfortable, and our sanitary arrangements are of the latest and most approved system."

One of the most famous residents of the Craig House was Joseph P. Kennedy, the future ambassador to Great Britain and father of President John Kennedy. He stayed at the Craig House a number of times beginning in 1910 while he courted his future wife Rose Fitzgerald, whose family rented cottages near the Craig House for several years.

THE QUISSETT HARBOR HOUSE

Located on 50 acres in the northwest corner of Woods Hole, the neighborhood of Quissett facing Buzzards Bay was the site of the Quissett Harbor House. This hotel began accepting guests in 1874, but it was unlike any of the other finer hotels in Falmouth. According to a 1942 article in the *Falmouth Enterprise*, "Modern convenience is anathema to the interior of the Harbor House...if the hotel were modernized it would lose more than half of its present clientele to whom the status quo is cherished and inviolable." Since there was no running water in the hotel, guests were provided with chamber pots and pitchers of hot water and ice water each morning. Kerosene lamps and candles were used for reading and by the window in each room there was a coil of rope with the following instructions: "In case of fire, throw this rope out of the window and use it as a fire escape."



One of the original ropes from the Quissett Harbor House used as a fire escape. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

Arnold W. Dyer notes that "there were three toilets and no bathtubs to accommodate the 100-capacity hotel as advertised in the 1892 railroad booklet. The rates were \$15 to \$20 per week." The hotel was purchased by Stephen W. Carey in 1881 for \$9,675 and remained in the Carey family for nearly 100 years until the hotel closed in 1975. Although the hotel was "more ramshackle than the average" hotel, the same families and guests came year after year to enjoy the view of Quissett Harbor and the environs of Buzzards Bay.



Along Buzzards Bay, the Quissett Harbor House offered a less formal summer experience for its guests. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

THE MENAUHANT HOTEL

Seven jewelers from Attleboro, along with John Tobey of East Falmouth, formed the Menauhant Land and Wharf Company in 1874 to create a summer cottage colony on 125 acres of land at the southern end of Central Avenue in East Falmouth. Between 1875 and 1880, they built the Menauhant Hotel with six cottages and a 120-foot wharf as part of this community on the eastside corner of Central Avenue and Menauhant Road.



The Menauhant Hotel in East Falmouth provided visiting families with an assortment of oceanside activities. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

The hotel was a true family resort, accommodating 150 guests with panoramic views of Bournes Pond, Eel Pond, and Nantucket Sound. There were tennis courts, a baseball field, and a stable for horseback riding on the property as well as an amusement building where guests could play billiards and shuffleboard, bowl, and dance to an orchestra on Saturday evenings. The guests also had use of the telegraph, telephones, and the on-site post office with two mails a day each way.

Historian Helen Wise noted that "consumption and rheumatic sufferers have long known well the soothing and helpful influence of just this locality on Nantucket Sound. Boston catarrh and the minister's sore throat are almost annihilated by a few weeks' breathing of this air" at Menauhant. According to the hotel's 1881 brochure, "the location is unsurpassed by any on the coast for agreeable temperatures and pure water." At this time, furnished cot-

tages rented for \$50 a season, or \$30 monthly. Room and board in the hotel, according to the location of rooms, ranged from \$8 to \$15 a week.

Although the hotel was destroyed by fire on June 17, 1918, only 37 years after it first opened, the quaint neighborhood of Menauhant still remains at the east end of Menauhant Beach with its appropriately named Jewelers Avenue running parallel to Central Avenue.

About the Authors

Kathy Lanson is a new member of the *Spritsail* editorial board. She was the Director of Academic Services at the Brimmer and May School in Chestnut Hill, MA.

Leonard Miele is the co-editor of *Spritsail*.

Sources: *The Falmouth Enterprise*; *The Book of Falmouth*; *Hotels and Inns of Falmouth*; Meg Costello and the archives of The Falmouth Museums on the Green.

Woods Hole Community Association and Community Hall Centenary

By Rob Blomberg

One hundred years ago, on September 22, 1919, the Woods Hole Community Association (WHCA) was incorporated. The organization's starting point, however, reaches back decades earlier, to when a group of Woods Hole citizens banded together to build a hall for village gatherings, community meetings, and other events.

Dedicated in December of 1878, Liberty Hall (as it was then called) served as the location for social and civic organizations, the Congregational and Baptist churches, local theater groups, and musical shows. The Woods Hole Social Library used Liberty Hall two hours per day, when residents mingled with famous scientists to discuss the issues of the day. A

barber shop, a pool-room, and a tailor shop occupied a portion of the basement. Despite all this activity, by 1919 Liberty Hall had failed as a separate commercial venture, and at that point the Woods Hole Community Association was born.

The WHCA's 1919 Statement of Purpose notes that "The Corporation is constituted for the purposes of acquiring the property on Water Street, Woods Hole, consisting of Liberty Hall, its furnishings and equipments in order to provide for the Residents of Woods Hole a larger and adequate hall for social, civic and



The Woods Hole Community Hall on Water Street next to the Eel Pond bridge, circa 1960. Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.



Community Hall

owned by the people
of Woods Hole

Dear Friends,

COMMUNITY HALL NEEDS YOUR HELP!

to fulfill the needs of an active and growing village. This building is the only adequate space available for:

Meeting Hall
Polling Place
Art Gallery

Dance Hall
Theatre
Youth Center

IMPORTANT TO ALL PARENTS!

is the Teen Center which is open week-ends in the winter and offers a full-time trained director of youth activities in the summer. The Hall maintains facilities for such a program including basketball, badminton and pool tables.

WON'T YOU SHARE OUR RESPONSIBILITY!

by a contribution that will help us meet the operating cost of about \$2,500.00 a year. Except for small rentals, the Hall is supported entirely by the people of Woods Hole.

AND BE A MEMBER!

for \$1.00, or more, we hope. Both summer and year-round residents contribute to the Association and use Community Hall.

Trustees of Woods Hole
Community Association
(Community Hall)

Mrs. Alfred Redfield
President

A 1940s appeal from Mrs. Alfred Redfield to support the operating costs of the Community Hall. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

The original signers of the Agreement of Association were John P. Sylvia Jr., Franklin L. Gifford, Charles Hall, Grace Howes, Elinor Hughes, Gilman Drew, Frank MacNaught, George David, Nellie Gray and Sarah Fisher. Most notable is Franklin Gifford, who is better known for completing over 200 paintings highlighting the rich history of Woods Hole.

educational purposes, entertainments, amusements and for other purposes of a similar character. And also to acquire other property or take any other action for community purposes." The first significant act of the new WHCA was to buy Liberty Hall for \$2,000 and rename it Woods Hole Community Hall.

As their charter suggested, the WHCA did indeed acquire more properties and expand their activities over the years, but Community Hall remains the heart of the organization and the village. The hall has hosted civic meetings, art and craft shows, theatrical and musical performances, a men's basketball league, scout meetings, science fairs, a food co-op, and more. Perusing the archives of the *Falmouth Enterprise* one can sense the wide scope of the

hall's activities—from an "Old Maids Convention" in 1922 ("Twenty old maids looking for husbands...Tickets 40 cts...Bachelors and Widowers cordially invited"), to a photography exhibit in 1946 (cash awards of five dollars each to winners in snapshot and finished print categories), to children's square dancing classes in the 1960s.

Theatrical and musical performances have been a mainstay at Community Hall from its earliest days (and, indeed, at Liberty Hall in its time). Theater groups performing in the hall included the Calico Players, the Penzance Players, the Priscilla Players, and others. On at least one occasion, in 1944, the multi-talented staff of the Woods Hole Oceano-

Below: The Calico Players performing on the Community Hall stage during the 1930s. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.



graphic Institution “delighted” a capacity crowd with “a program of comedy, music, song, and dance.” For the past 45 years, the Woods Hole Theater Company has been the resident troupe, performing everything from Shakespeare to the campy rock musical “Rocky Horror Show,” which played to sold-out houses in the summers of both 2005 and 2008.

When it comes to music, performances in the Hall have been no less diverse and popular—from a 1925 barn dance sponsored by the Campfire Girls to a series of chamber music concerts in the 1930s, ‘40s, and ‘50s. An *Enterprise* article from 1934 gives a taste: “A good-sized audience braved Sunday night’s downpour to hear the chamber music concert at Woods Hole Community Hall. Mu-

sicians complain of dampened strings giving out less than their usual quality of melody.” The Woods Hole Folk Music Society was founded in 1973 and produced well-attended concerts for 47 years, until the sad announcement earlier this year that the society is disbanding. In 1978, village resident and WHCA board member Tom Renshaw founded Woods Hole Jazz, which continues to bring world renowned jazz musicians to Community Hall.

The building’s civic purposes have included serving as a Selective Service registration center in 1941 and as a polling place for many years. In February of 1942, under the auspices of the WHCA and with the full support of Woods Hole residents, Community Hall was used “as a recreation room for enlisted Servicemen. Recreational activities were offered to the personnel of Navy, Coast Guard and Marines who were stationed in Woods Hole. Visitors from thirty nine of the forty eight states were registered in the guest book. Home town flags covered the wall map. Pool and ping-pong were popular. Friday night dances highlighted the week.”



Popular folk singer Bill Staines at the final concert of the Woods Hole Folk Music Society in April 2019. He performed 47 consecutive years for the Society. Photo by Tim Parker.

In 1946, a Teen Center was created at Community Hall and would remain in existence until 1974, with the center's director reporting to the WHCA. While its schedule was more limited in the winter, the Teen Center was a vibrant gathering place, open every day in the summer. Dues were fifty cents. Musical acts were performed there, and dances of all types were frequent. Pool and ping-pong tables were located in the lower level, and the basketball tradition continued on the second floor. In 1953, the Cub Scouts thanked the WHCA for their support of youth groups by washing all the chairs in the Hall while the Girl Scouts planted ivy outside and "prettied the ladies room with a shelf frill and painted mirror."

Old buildings, of course, require upkeep, so a constant theme for Woods Hole Community Hall has been fundraising for repairs and refurbishment. In the 1920s, funds were raised through such endeavors as whist parties and an ongoing rummage sale in the hall's basement. A 1946 fund drive, according to the *Enterprise*, sought to raise the unusual sum of \$2,879 "to completely renovate, modernize, and equip a civic center of which any village



Cast members rehearsing *Mia's Cloud*, the 2019 spring production of the Woods Hole Theater Company. Photo by Annie Hart Cool.

might be proud." The article goes on to note that a "mailing list of 850 names has been carefully prepared," that "handbills will be displayed throughout the village," and that "Street captains under the direction of Mrs. Charles Packard will conduct a house to house canvass for subscriptions." In the end, the drive organizers exceeded their goal, raising \$2,924.50.

Just two years later, "in their annual fundraising appeal," Mrs. Martha Redfield wrote that "aside from the Library, there is but one building in Woods Hole which can be considered a public building, open to all. In Community Hall, opportunity is afforded for all ages to have healthful group sports, cultural events, recreation, and civic and public meetings—basketball, badminton, dancing, card parties, art, exhibits, job shows, club and civic meetings and theatricals." Another large-scale, multi-year renovation project was undertaken in the mid-1970s. Tom Renshaw, a local carpenter and former WHCA President, has been instrumental in leading renovations since that time. Perhaps the most notable project in recent years was the installation of an elevator in 2005 to make the building more accessible

to those who might not otherwise be able to attend events in the main hall.

Not all WHCA events take place at Community Hall. The Association is also responsible for The Old Fire Station, the Swift Barn, and the Woods Hole School. Controlled by the WHCA since the new fire station on Woods Hole Road was built in 1976, The Old Fire Station hosts yoga, drawing, and other classes, a farmers' market from June through October, and film screenings (some as a part of the Woods Hole Film Festival). Along with Community Hall, the Old Fire Station is also a key location for the extremely popular Renaissance Fair each December, with people gathering to enjoy music, a wreath making workshop, and more than thirty local food and craft vendors.

Speaking of both Community Hall and the Old Fire Station, WHCA board member Liz Saito says, "The life of the village, and what makes it so special for those of us who love it, is composed of many intangibles, but so much of it happens in those buildings. It's about people and our relationships to one another, but so much of those relationships are built and fostered and celebrated in those buildings."

The Swift Barn on School Street—nicknamed the Sugar Shack—serves the community for woodworking and other large craft-related projects. The Woods Hole School, built in 1886, no longer functions as a public school but instead houses the Woods Hole Day-care Cooperative. The Children's School of Science has held classes there every summer since 1914. And the WHCA also uses the ball field and Taft's Playground on Bell Tower Lane



Musical entertainment by the Morgan Rattler trio at the 2016 Renaissance Fair with Ron Geering, Jacek Sulanowski, and Barbara Blair.
Photo by Leonard Miele.

to coordinate and host the annual May Festival, where hundreds of residents and visitors come to celebrate the approach of summer. Longtime WHCA Co-President Catherine Bumpus adds that "the annual Eel Pond clean-up is a communal effort that the WHCA provide a space but is successful because of the volunteer energy that comes with it."

One hundred years after its founding, the WHCA Board of Trustees and members continue to take a leading role in supporting and preserving the special nature of the village of Woods Hole. An illustrative example comes from the late 1990s, when there was a move to establish a McDonald's restaurant franchise at the site of the old Lee Side, across from the ferry terminal. Concerned that the fast food chain would indelibly alter the character of the village—not for the better—residents, including many members of the Association, mounted an ultimately successful multi-year defense. Locals breathed a sigh of relief when McDonald's withdrew its proposal, and Quicks Hole Tavern eventually opened on the disputed spot in 2014.

In 1919 there were thirty-four members of the Association. Today's mailing list numbers about 700, "most of whom," according to Co-President Bumpus, "give some kind of annual donation." Co-President Steve Junker describes the monthly meetings in the Old Fire House as "formally informal," with members gathering to discuss matters ranging from



Crafters sell their wares at the annual Renaissance Fair. Photo by Beth Colt.

building maintenance to local zoning matters to upcoming programs and activities. The only requirement for membership continues to be an interest in the association and a willingness to contribute in some way. "One of the reasons I love the Woods Hole Community Association," says Catherine Bumpus, "is that people step up and take on projects almost magically, and they get things done."

About the Author

Rob Blomberg, who retired in 2015 after working 38 years for Liberty Mutual Insurance, is a trustee of the Woods Hole Public Library and a tour guide for the Woods Hole Historical Museum and at Fenway Park.

An Oral History

By Irene Wright

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on a tape made by Irene Wright on March 9, 1983, at her house. It was part of The North Falmouth Oral History Program sponsored by The North Falmouth Village Association. Her tape is in the archives of the Falmouth Museums on the Green. Jeanne Sarnosky of the Visiting Nursing Association asked Fran Ross, the VNA archivist, if there were any record of the VNA hiring Irene. Fran Ross told Jeanne that she had found the name Irene Metzner listed 6th on the inside back cover of "the little 'gold' anniversary booklet that someone put together many years ago." The editors thank these two women for their help. We salute the VNA for its many decades of service to the town. The Oral History Program of the North Falmouth Village Association is a valuable resource for historians, one much appreciated by the editors of Spritsail.

My Years with the Falmouth Nursing Association

I arrived in Falmouth on the Fourth of July, 1927, brimming over with enthusiasm for my work as Public Health Nurse at the Falmouth Nursing Association and also with appreciation of the beauty of the Town of Falmouth for I was born and brought up in the city.

At that time there were only two nurses, Ruth Newcomb and I. Our program consisted of calls in the homes, running clinics and providing school nursing in Mashpee. The fee at that time was only fifty cents. We worked and lived in the little white cottage on Locust Street in Falmouth next to what is now the Irish Pub. [now Grumpy's] The office and clinic rooms were downstairs and our living quarters were upstairs. Since we were on 24-hour call we were required to live there. There was a housekeeper who cooked and kept house for us. At one time our housekeeper was a Mrs. Dahlborg, one of the Dahlborgs of Silver Beach. Also the clerk at one time was Ida Small Sylvester, so you see North Falmouth was well represented during my stay in the cottage.

I drove a Model T Ford Coupe to make my calls which included the whole of Falmouth with its many villages. My first day, Ruth and I went together on our calls. At the Bernard Wrights' in Teaticket we attended a new mother and baby; then on to East Falmouth and across Hatchville Road to North Falmouth. It was a narrow, winding road; Route 151 was not in existence at that time.



Ruth Newcomb, Irene Wright's nursing colleague, on a home call.
Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

The one and only road from Falmouth to Boston, Old Main Road, ran through North Falmouth on the west side of town.

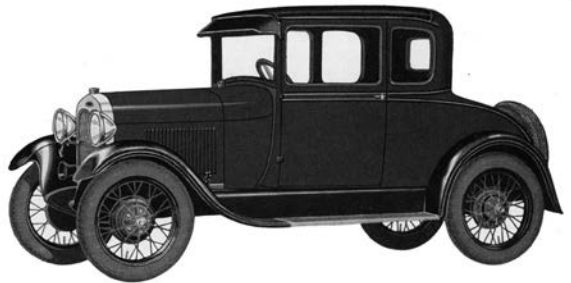
Since the nearest hospitals were in Hyannis and New Bedford, most of the babies were born at home and the nurse accompanied the doctor on all maternity cases. I remember getting a call from Andrew Rose in West Falmouth saying he couldn't reach the doctor. When I got there, he greeted me with open arms saying, "You're an angel sent from heaven!" I didn't feel like an angel; the baby arrived before the doctor

got there. During my time serving with Ruth Newcomb, quite a few babies in East Falmouth were named Ruth and Irene.

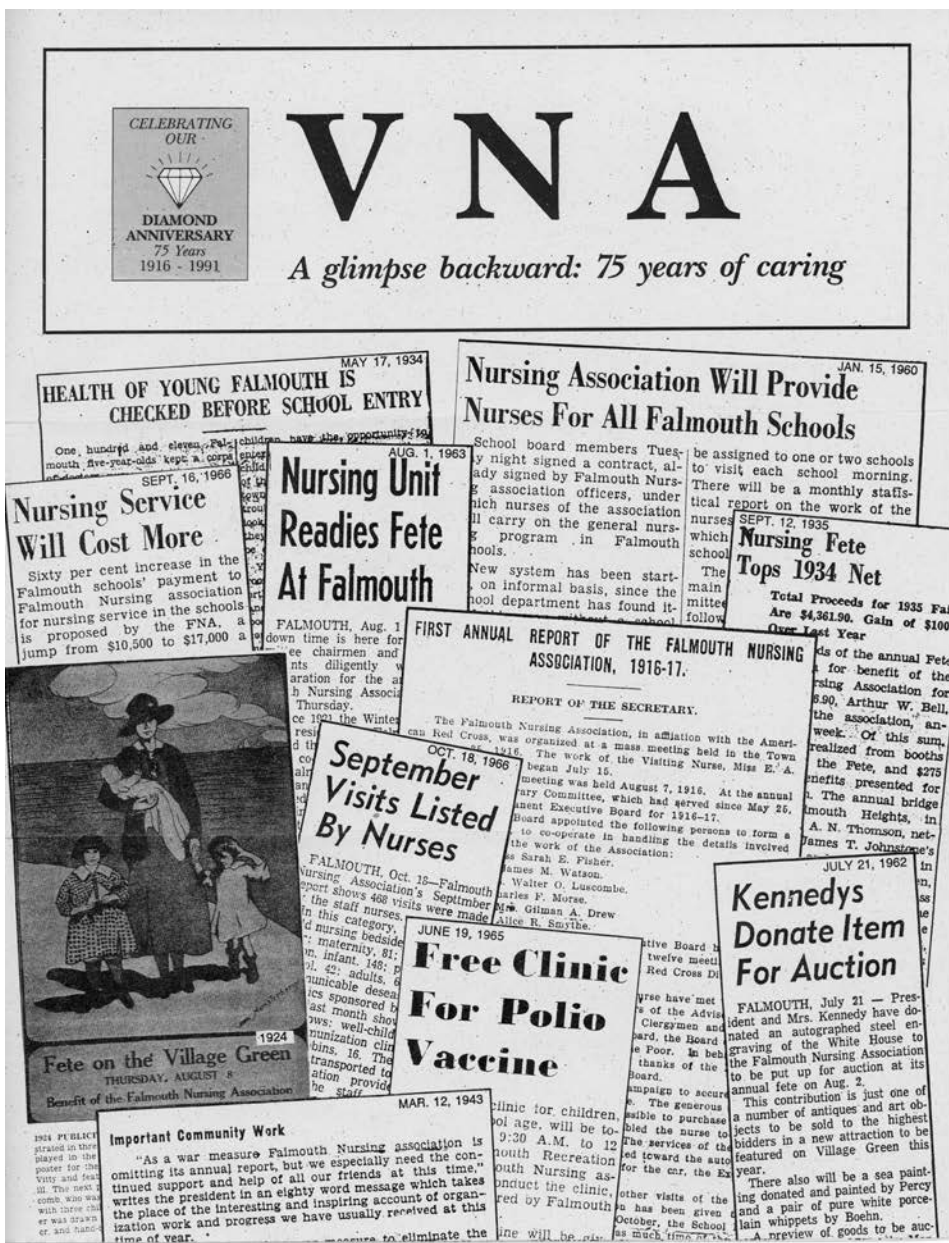
There were only four doctors in town, old Dr. Tripp, Dr. Jones, Dr. Pattee and Dr. Wiswall. The town had just acquired its first ambulance and there was a rule that a nurse must accompany the patient on all ambulance calls. I was the first nurse to ride in the new ambulance. We were taking a patient to Cape Cod Hospital and what a ride! Chief Wells drove that ambulance at 80 miles an hour.

A little over a year after my arrival in 1927, Ruth resigned and I became supervising nurse. On November 19, 1932, I married Norman Wright. Since the nurse had to live at the house center on 24-hour call duty, I resigned on January first, 1933, and became a member of the North Falmouth community.

I loved every minute of my years with the Falmouth Nursing Association from July 4, 1927, to January 1, 1933.



A 1927 Model T Ford Coupe similar to the one driven by Irene Wright to make her nursing calls.
Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.



Montage celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Visiting Nurse Association in 1991.
Courtesy Falmouth Museums on the Green.

Memories of the North Falmouth Community

Dot Swift was made postmaster when the Post Office was located in the back part of the Superette. The blacksmith shop was standing where the little cottage now stands between the present Post Office and the Superette. The Clifford Hubbards lived next to Bert and Nona Landers. Mr. Hubbard was then a selectman. Nona Landers had a cupboard where she kept medical supplies belonging to the Falmouth Nursing Association, which folks in North Falmouth could borrow.

I remember the old tavern when it was owned by Bill Nye. One time, in return for the use of his front lawn for our summer fair, the Thursday Club agreed to clean and open up the house for Bill. We had a ball, cleaning and exploring many rooms with a historical background.

Mr. Rand had an office in the area now occupied by the Village Casuals. Everyone remembered how much of North Falmouth he bought up, but I remember him by his yacht which he kept in Rand's Canal. He invited Norman's mother and me on his yacht one afternoon for tea. It was very enjoyable, my one and only time I was entertained on a yacht.

I attended the first meeting of the Know Your Neighbor Club which was held about 1943 or 1944 at the home of Mrs. Harold Hunt, now owned by the Keatings. The minister's wife invited the ladies of the church to attend and there were twelve or so there. I believe I am the only charter member now in the club.

Whenever a new minister was to come and live in the old parsonage, the ladies got together to clean and shine it in preparation for his arrival. Polly Mead usually headed up the crew and it was more or less a day of fun. Everybody brought their lunch. Speaking of the parsonage, the present parsonage was built almost wholly by the men of the church. Frank Ogilvie headed up the project and the men worked whenever they had spare time. One Saturday morning the committee wanted to hold an urgent meeting. Norman was in the midst of putting a concrete ramp into the barn and couldn't leave, so they held the meeting in the barn doorway.

I remember the night the railroad station burned. It was a frightening experience since the water pressure was too low and they had to connect the hose to the hydrant almost down to the Post Office before they could control the fire.

Acknowledgment

Spritsail editorial board member Judy Stetson prepared this oral history.



LIVING BY WATERS

We look beyond our shore
over the sheen of the Sound
to the islands enveloped in blue haze.

They beckon us,
but we save them for a day of brighter light.

We turn west,
around the first point, then the next, the next, and the next.
We reach the marsh, a golden expanse of reeds and water,
the tide going out.

Lying on our backs, faces to the wide sky,
we are carried along
on a floating magic carpet.
Our time becomes the time of the tide.

Finally, as the sun begins to set in the west—
we stand silent
before the marsh, the Bay, the dying light.
As the quiet water laps at our shore,
our breathing and heartbeat answer
to the slow rhythms of the ocean.

Olivann Hobbie
Cape Cod, May 2019





Woods Hole Historical Museum

579 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543
(508)548-7270, info@woodsholemuseum.org
woodsholemuseum.org

Museum Open: June 15 to October 12

Hours: 10 AM to 4 PM, Tuesday through Saturday,
Archives open year-round, Tuesday & Thursday
10 AM to 2 PM

Admission free, donations welcome

Guided Walking Tours

Historic Woods Hole, Tuesdays at 10 AM (July-August)

Special Exhibits 2019

- History of Woods Hole, Gallery One
- Village Views: Photographs and memorabilia of Woods Hole in the 1890s, Gallery Two
- Nature Drawing by the students of Julie Child (September)

Buildings

Bradley House, built in 1804, features galleries with changing exhibits, a permanent scale model of Woods Hole circa 1895, a collection of ships in bottles, and the offices and archives.

Swift Barn Small Boat Museum houses an 1890s Woods Hole Spritsail Boat, a Herreshoff 12 ½', a Cape Cod Knockabout, a Woods Hole Chamberlain Dory, a 1922 Old Town canoe, a Mirror dinghy, and many boat models and maritime artifacts.

Yale Workshop 1890s workshop of Dr. Leroy Milton Yale, Jr. who summered in Quissett. The Workshop includes original and representative tools, fishing gear, maps, books, etchings and artifacts appropriate to Dr. Yale's varied interests.

Penguin Shed, where children are welcome to climb aboard Cape Cod Knockabout *Penguin*, practice tying nautical knots, and pulling block and tackle rigs.

Walsh Rambler Rose Garden features a few of the hybridized Walsh Ramblers that are in full bloom June and July.

On the Museum Grounds

½ scale model of the Revolutionary era schooner *Sultana*.

A full list of programs and events are available on our website: www.woodsholemuseum.org



Falmouth Museums on the Green

Home of the Falmouth Historical Society
55-65 Palmer Avenue, Falmouth, MA 02541
(508)548-4857, info@museumsonthegreen.org
museumsonthegreen.org

Open May 24 to October 11, 2019

Hours: 10-3 Monday-Friday, 10-1 Saturday

Guided tours upon request. \$10 admission

Members, Children under 13, Active Military, FREE

Falmouth Residents FREE every Friday

Research library open Tuesdays and Thursdays,
10 AM to 2 PM or by appointment

Historic Walking Tours of Falmouth

Tuesday and Thursday (weather permitting) 10:00 AM.
Starts at Hallett Barn Visitors Center. \$10 per person.

Historic Walking Tours of Falmouth Town Green

Wednesday (weather permitting), 10:00 AM.

Starts at Hallett Barn Visitors Center. \$ 5 per person.

Trolley Tours of Falmouth

Wednesdays, September 11 through October 9

\$25 per person (member), \$ 30 for non-member.

Reservations required.

2019 Exhibits include:

- Falmouth: Changing with the Times: A Snapshot of Falmouth History
- "The Bare Necessities: Items We Need and Use"
- "What's Fun in Falmouth: The Train to Tourism"
- Katharine Lee Bates: Scenes from "America the Beautiful"

2019 Programs include:

- June 11, 5:30 PM: Around the Sound Cruise with Dixieland Jazz
- July 26, 10:00 AM: Children's Teddy Bear Picnic
- August 12, 4:00 PM: Katharine Lee Bates Fest
- August 24, 10 AM to 4PM: Annual Antique Sale
- October 26: "A Visit with the Night Watchman" Haunted House
- December 7 to 15: Christmas Traditions House Tour

A full list of lectures, programs and events are available at our website: museumsonthegreen.org



ABOVE: Ensemble Passacaglia, an Upper Cape early music instrumental quartet, performs on the Community Hall stage. Pictured are Tom Hanna, Jan Elliott, Molly Johnston, and Lisa Esperson.
 BELOW: Dressed in period costumes, the Solstice Singers present medieval and Renaissance songs during a December, 2018 concert at the Community Hall. Photos by Dorene Sykes.



WOODS HOLE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

*A lively small museum with changing exhibits
 and diverse programs appealing to people with wide interests*

