

# ***Mainsheet***

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*The Newsletter of the Woods Hole Historical Museum*  
P.O. Box 185, Woods Hole, MA 02543  
[www.woodsholemuseum.org](http://www.woodsholemuseum.org)

***Summer 2021***

***Director's Message***

Dear Members and Friends,

As I write this letter, Woods Hole village is already in bloom, and soon our beautiful, historic Walsh roses will be blossoming. I am feeling very hopeful that the museum this summer will once again be enjoyed by many.

I hope that you have managed to stay connected with us this past year through our various online communications and events, our website, and our most popular recent issue of *Spritsail*. We have had record numbers "attending" our conversations, which were video recorded and are online on our website. We just completed issue number 46 of the *Dispatch*, our online newsletter, and are all available on our website.

As we turn the page to the summer of 2021, we're planning our opening party for members for June 26, when we will welcome you into Bradley house to see our new exhibit, "Left Behind: Clues to Life in the Past on Cape Cod." In this exhibit, we explore the archaeological material associated with the earliest Indigenous settlements on Cape Cod, ranging from approximately 12,000 to 450 years ago, along with artifacts and images to tell us more about the culture of earliest inhabitants of our region well before the Mayflower landing in 1620.

Please check our website or Facebook page for updates on this year's programming, and stay tuned for more information on the members' party. We will continue to follow Massachusetts COVID guidelines.

We are also pleased to report that Rob Blomberg will once again be leading our popular walking tours, beginning June 29.

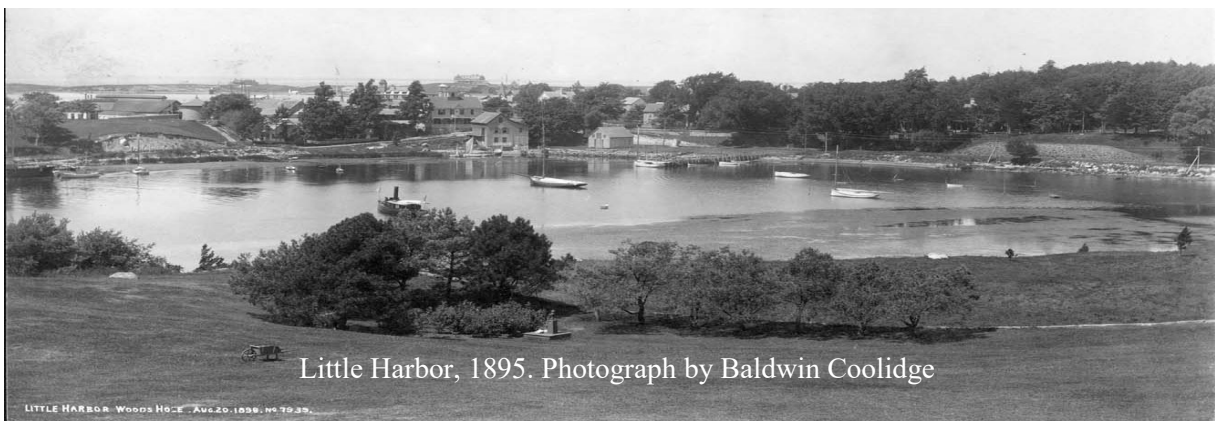
All of this would not be possible without your support. Your generosity to last winter's Annual Appeal was unprecedented, and for that we are most grateful. We will be using those funds to fund our internship program, to improve our online access, and other essential aspects of keeping our museum operating.

We are now asking for you to renew your annual membership, which allows us to provide the services and programming that make us unique in the community. You may become a new member or renew your membership by completing the enclosed card or using the online option on the website.

Enjoy this issue of Mainsheet and I hope to see you soon - in person or online!

Sincerely,

Deborah Griffin Scanlon



## Message from the Chair

2020 has been a most difficult year for museums, but at the Woods Hole Historical Museum, thanks to our staff, interns and volunteers, we have embarked on a number of innovations, including using the Zoom meeting platform. We turned to Zoom for virtual Steering Committee meetings, our opening party last year, our 2020 Annual Meeting and numerous Conversations, which have really been a highlight this year.

When the pandemic restrictions began in the spring of 2020, we had already hosted several successful Conversations, including a standing room only panel discussion about Dan Clark.

Once in person gatherings were no longer allowed, our Conversations moved to Zoom and we seem to have held more of them than any year in recent memory—quite a feat on the part of Debbie Scanlon, Colleen Hurter and particularly our summer intern Griffin Kerstetter, who has helped us year-round with Zoom technology.

Our plans for this summer continue to evolve but we look forward to welcoming visitors inside for refreshed exhibits. We are all particularly excited about our new exhibit exploring Indigenous populations in the region.

The Woods Hole Museum continues to celebrate our area's history, offering exhibits and compelling activities. We always welcome the support of new members and volunteers, as docents, for event support or on committees.

Thank you for being a friend of the museum. We look forward to seeing you this summer.

Laura Reckford,  
Steering Committee chair

### **Woods Hole Historical Museum** *A Division of* *The Woods Hole Public Library*

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#### *Executive Director*

Deborah Scanlon

#### *Archivist/Assistant Director*

Colleen Hurter

#### *Archives Open*

Tuesday and Thursday

10—2

And by appointment

#### *Exhibits Open*

June 26 to September 25

Tuesday—Saturday

11-3

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Published by the

Woods Hole Historical Museum

P.O. Box 185

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#### *Written and Edited by*

Deborah Scanlon and Colleen Hurter

## Farewell and thank you to Tom Chilton!

After six years of designing, building and installing exhibits for the museum, designer Tom Chilton and his wife Christie have moved to Colorado. We are sad to see them go, but happy that they will be near family and grandchildren.



Tom Chilton

Before his move in April, Tom was also actively involved in our upcoming exhibit on the Indigenous people, "Left Behind: Clues to Life in the Past on Cape Cod."

He was also very willing to pitch in at the bi-annual auctions, and craft signage for the boat shows, and all events the museum hosted. Tom, you will be missed!

### Calendar for 2021

June 9	Conversation (Zoom) with Jon Hare, Fisheries Director, "Celebrating 150 Years of Science at the Woods Hole Fisheries Lab", 7 PM
June 26	Museum opening and reception for members, 11 AM to 3 PM (registration details to follow)
June 29	Museum opening for general public, 11 AM to 3 PM
June 29	Walking tours begin; will be offered every Tuesday, 10 AM
July 7	Conversation (Zoom) with Peter deMenocal, WHOI Director, 7 PM
July 8	Jewel Cobb exhibit reception with library in courtyard, 4:30 PM
August 4	Annual Meeting. Speaker will be Holly Herbster, Public Archaeology Lab, 5 PM

Many thanks to Tom Renshaw and Todd Johnson for building these lovely bookshelves in the reading room upstairs in Bradley House, and to our very generous members who donated the funds to pay for them!

It allows us much easier access to our library, and has allowed us to better organize the room.



*When the pandemic started and we wanted to keep in touch online with our members and visitors, we decided to write an newsletter on some piece of Woods Hole history – not too long, and with lots of photos. Here is one of our most popular Dispatches on the Eel Pond Drawbridge. And if you're not on our email list, email [whhmarchives@gmail.com](mailto:whhmarchives@gmail.com)*



"Bridge's Up" by Deborah Handy

## The Eel Pond Drawbridge

Have you ever wondered about the yellow gate and gears on the lawn outside Bradley House? Read this history of the Eel Pond bridge.



Eel Pond channel was originally crossed by fording the shallow waters at low tide or rowing a skiff across. Elijah Swift, who was one of the founders of the Bar Neck Wharf Company that built whaling ships at the present site of the WHOI dock, Smith and Bigelow buildings, petitioned to have the main road (now Water Street) extended in 1843, and a wooden bridge was built to span the channel.



In 1878, the old wooden bridge was condemned and a second bridge was built of cut granite blocks. Due to the new bridge's low height, the sturdy Sprintsail sailboat became popular because its mast could be lowered to fit under the low span.

The second bridge had a keystone that said "Woods Holl 1879".  
(see explanation below)

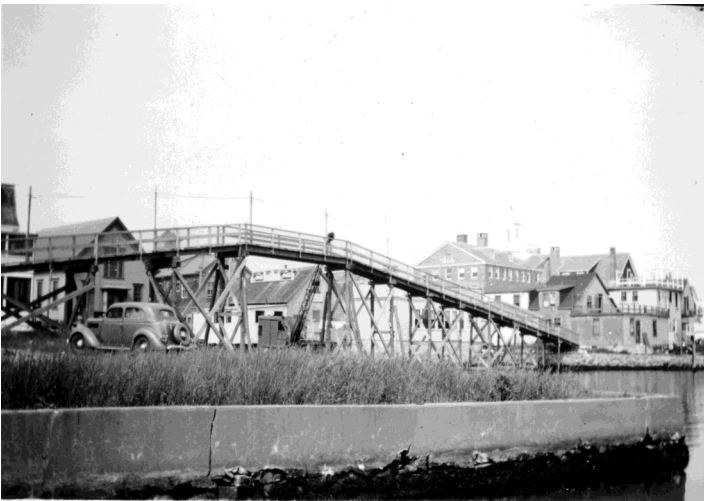
In 1912, the second bridge was taken down and the first drawbridge was constructed, which opened in 1914. Steel was used for the structure but it had wooden rails and possibly a wooden deck.



During this construction, the channel was dredged to 8 feet, probably at the request of the MBL. This changed Eel Pond from a place for just skiffs and small boats because larger vessels were able to enter the sheltered pond.



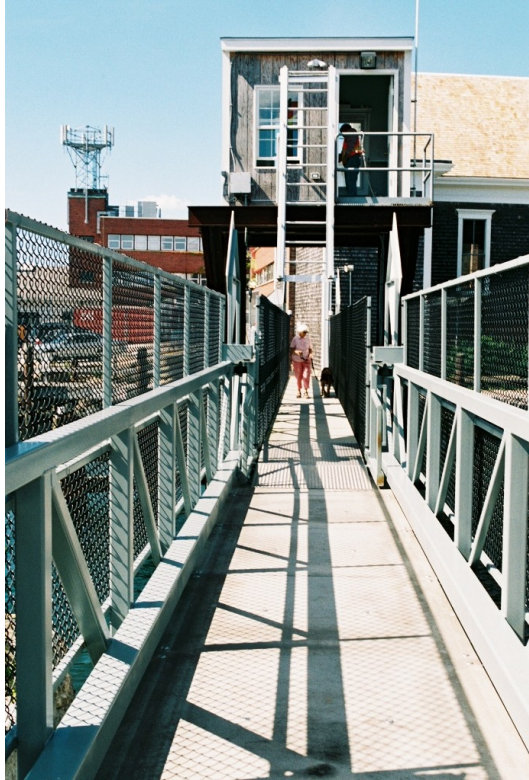
The Hurricane of 1938 destroyed the steel drawbridge and left it in a slightly “up” position. An enterprising youngster of the village earned money for a while rowing people across the channel. The first thing that was done to enable people to pass over the mangled bridge was to construct a wooden ramp on the Great Harbor side of the bridge opening.



Then after the bridge was removed from the channel crossing, a narrow temporary footbridge was built across the channel. Some months later a tall awkward-looking wooden footbridge was put up, called the “Sky Sidewalk.” It resembled a roller-coaster and ran from the area near what is now the Cap’n Kidd to what is now Redfield parking lot. The extra height was to allow boats to pass beneath. This was replaced with another steel drawbridge in 1940.

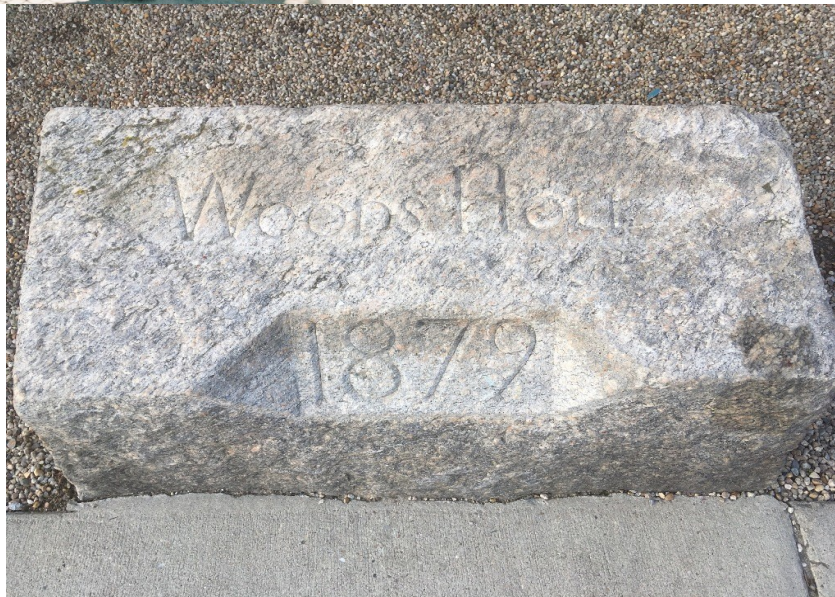
In 1971, the bridge needed repairs, and enterprising WHOI engineer Al Vine and his colleagues rigged a “tire ferry” to carry people across the channel.





Finally, in 2009 the present bridge replacement was completed, which is how the museum got the aforementioned gears and gate. During construction, yet another walkway was built along with a temporary bridge tender's shack on stilts.

In 2012 during Hurricane Sandy, the bridge machine room flooded and destroyed the two 15-horsepower electric motors causing the bridge to be inoperable for many months. Once or twice a week, the Falmouth Department of Public Works would send about three men down to manually crank open the bridge, which took about 30 minutes to open and 30 minutes to close. This was an extremely labor intensive operation and would wear out a worker in just a few minutes when another man would have to relieve him. Since the bridge has been fixed, the concrete foundation of the cellar has been raised and two big pumps have been added to avoid future catastrophic flooding occurs again.



This granite block from the second (stone arched) bridge is located in front of the Community Hall. It says "Woods Holl 1879". Joseph Story Fay was fascinated with the term "holl" and wrote a booklet that discussed the theory that "hole" was "holl," a Norse term for hill. He was convinced that Vikings had been in the area. Fay also persuaded the Post Office to change the spelling from "Woods Hole" to "Woods Holl" in 1877. It was changed back to "Woods Hole" in 1896 after Fay's death.

*Thanks to current bridge tender, Tom Mountford, for his contributions to this Dispatch.*



## Exhibits for 2021

### "Left Behind: Clues to Life in the Past on Cape Cod"

In this exhibit, we explore the archaeological material associated with the earliest Indigenous settlements on Cape Cod. With the Public Archaeology Laboratory in Pawtucket, RI, we have developed a display on Native American archaeological sites, ranging from approximately 12,000 to 450 years ago, along with artifacts and images to tell us more about the culture of the earliest inhabitants of our region well before the Mayflower landing in 1620.

Our exhibit includes the Upper Cape, where the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has had continuous presence for thousands of years. On display will be arrowheads and tools discovered in Upper Cape villages, maps of walking trails that later became roads, as well as trails that connected to Martha's Vineyard prior to sea level rise.

The other areas featured are recorded archaeological sites that document Indigenous occupation across the Cape. Families and groups almost certainly travelled seasonally across these sites: Hathaway Pond in Barnstable, Mattaquason Purchase in Chatham, Freeman-Paine in Brewster, Round Swamp in Bourne, Sandy's Point in Yarmouth, Stony Brook in Brewster, and Carns Site in Eastham.

-- **Jewel Plummer Cobb banner**, created by Ruth Gainer, will be installed in the hallway in June.

--**Woods Hole History** in gallery one with new poster on Fisheries' 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary

--**Banners of historic Woods Hole** will be displayed outdoors, as well as gift shop

## 2021 Conversations— these are all on our website

### *To Date:*

*January 13*

*Judy Laster*

*"30 years of the Woods Hole Film Festival: Celebrating the past and looking toward the future"*

*March 10*

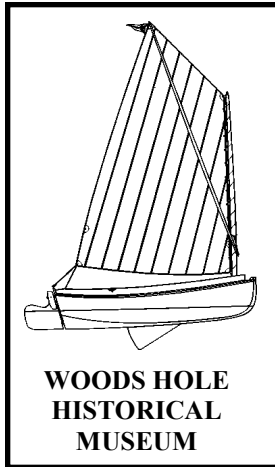
*Nipam Patel*

*"Marine Biological Laboratory's 133 years of scientific discovery"*

*April 14*

*Philip Duffy and Heather Goldstone*

*"Woodwell Climate Research Center: Influencing the influencers: an evolving approach to driving climate action"*



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### **Volunteers, Interns and Docents Are Key to Our Success!**

We are delighted to welcome several new and talented volunteers this summer.

Nancy Driscoll, who has joined us to design our newest exhibit in gallery two, has an extensive design background, and is owner and creative director of Artois Design. She and her husband have homes in Davisville and in Glastonbury, Connecticut.

Also providing us with design expertise is Kirsten Karplus, a graphic designer and graphic artist who lives in Falmouth. Kirsten is designing our panel on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NOAA Fisheries.

In the gift shop this summer, Becky Mountford is modifying her duties, handling the online duties while turning over the in-person shop to our new volunteer Elizabeth Mazes. Elizabeth is a retired New York City high school counselor and adjunct college professor, who has spent many summers in Falmouth.

Our summer interns, whose energy and enthusiasm – and computer savvy! – are so important to us. This year, we welcome returning interns Griffin Kerstetter and Dory Amon and our new intern, Jeremy Duckett.

Our docents will continue to welcome visitors to the museum, explain our exhibits, and answer questions on the area's history. If you would like to be a docent, please email [whhmdirector@gmail.com](mailto:whhmdirector@gmail.com).