

# ***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)*

***Fall 2011***

## ***Art Bight!***

This autumn the museum kicked off *Art Bight*, a series of events designed to bring visitors to the museum during the off-season. The concept behind *Art Bight* was developed by Jennifer Gaines, museum director, and local artist-naturalist Jenny Junker, who are delighting in the event as well as the flavor of the nautical name.

The first program, *Harvest!*, was held October 15 and 16. Jenny Junker, guest curator, assisted by museum steering committee member Lauren Leveque, designed a lovely installation filled with art, seeds, and flowers. Amy Wilson Sanger's "X-ray of the Harvest Moon" presided over the room which, with the addition of a projecting microscope, joined art and science in a mirror of our community.

Approximately 80 visitors streamed through the museum throughout the weekend, including local residents and tourists who were enjoying the end of the "shoulder season." As one visitor said to docent Ellen Yoder, "This is exactly what I was looking for! I love it!"

Since our exhibits are usually open only in the summer and the galleries stand mostly unused the rest of the year, the "Jenns" have come up with the idea to hold short-term themed exhibits of local artists, not usually on view to the public. Based on the success of the inaugural event, the next *Art Bight* will be in December in celebration of the winter solstice. A third event will be held in the spring. Be sure to visit the museum the weekend of December 17 – 18, from noon to 4 each day, to see what seasonal surprises await! There will be an initial peek provided at the Museum's Holiday Party on Thursday, December 15.

***FUTURE PLANS:*** Details will soon be released by the Long Range Planning Committee, a joint committee of the Woods Hole Public Library and its division, the Woods Hole Historical Collection & Museum. Many of you may remember the exhibit of work done by architecture students from the Rhode Island School of Design in the spring of 2010 focusing on Bradley House, the Library, and the whole Museum campus. Ever since then, the committee has been continuing the work of defining exactly what is needed to refurbish and improve the Museum & Archives.

**JOIN US FOR OUR HOLIDAY PARTY**

**Thursday, December 15, 5 to 7**

## Boats for sale!

The “Boat Shop guys” in our Boat Restoration program have been very busy building, restoring, and finishing boats. Two completed boats are now available for sale, and as has become our tradition, we are offering them to our membership first, and at a discount! Last year one of our members bought the Nutshell Pram and has been receiving compliments all summer as she rowed around Woods Hole’s Great Harbor.

This year’s first offering is an Aleutian style wood and canvas kayak which is 17 feet long and weighs approximately 35 lbs. It is very easy to handle. It was given to us, almost finished, so the boat shop guys could learn a few more skills, such as bending in the cockpit coaming and the rub rails. Ted Tavares with his attention to detail and drive to finish a task, has done most of the work himself. This boat is so light-weight, it would be easy to carry it into the house to place under the Christmas tree!



**Asking price:  
\$600 with \$50  
discount to  
WHHM  
members.**

The second boat also is 17 feet long, but is altogether much more boat and has been under construction for more than a year. The rough cut planks were given to us with the message that it was a Swampscott Dory, so the building project started with a lot of research by the boat shop guys, especially Paul Donnelly and Bob Spates. They all proceeded to build this dory with two rowing stations, centerboard, mast, and rudder so it can be rowed or sailed. It comes with two sets of oars and a sail. The Spritsail rig was developed by Ryan Schenck, who in his

striving towards authenticity, even hand sewed the grommets and rigged it to the mast and snotters with hemp line.



**Asking price: \$5,400 with \$100  
discount for WHHM members.**

To see the boats, call the Museum 508 548-7270 or stop by Saturday mornings.

### **STEERING COMMITTEE**

of the  
**Woods Hole Historical Collection  
& Museum**  
*A Division of  
The Woods Hole Public Library*

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#### *Assistant Curator and Archivist*

Susan Fletcher Witzell

#### *Archives Open*

Tuesday and Thursday

10—2

And by Appointment

Year Round

#### *Exhibits Open*

Mid-June—Early October

Tuesday—Saturday

10—4

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P.O. Box 185  
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*Written and Edited by*

*Susan F. Witzell and*

*Jennifer S. Gaines*

## *Prosperity from whaling created new-style houses in the 1840s.*

In 1842 two new homes were built on the main road into Woods Hole village. One was near the Fays' "Homestead" (Challenger) and the other was on the high corner where Water Street descends down the hill to School Street and Luscombe Avenue. They were both built in the new Greek Revival style, inspired by Greek temples, gable-end facing the street, wide corner boards and gutter returns, solid-looking window frames with little hollow squares on the upper corners and classically detailed front doors with pilasters. Both houses were faced with clapboard and painted white or light off-white colors.

Thomas Davis, his brother Jabez Davis and their cousin Owen Eldredge (or Eldridge) were in business together as ships' suppliers, probably starting in the 1820s when the Swifts began building whale ships in Woods Hole and provisions and supplies of all kinds were needed for the long voyages. By 1842 the partners, Davis and Eldredge, were well-to-do enough to build brand new homes. Prosperity from whaling caused an explosion of construction in the village. New buildings, stores and houses were built all up and down Water Street.

The Davis house was three stories high, with a store on the basement level built into the hillside. The store's entrance was on the side along the hill facing west. The family occupied the upper two floors; their front door, with elaborate moldings and side-pilasters, was on the second floor, accessed from a porch with stairs to the street level. The Eldredge house was a family dwelling with no store in the structure. It had a side-wing with a porch, not unusual on a gable-end Greek Revival house.

Both houses changed gradually over the years. The Eldredge house porch became trimmed with Victorian brackets and later yet this porch was enclosed completely. Both houses were eventually sheathed in asbestos shingles. In the case of the Davis house – later known as "The Job Shop" – the asbestos shingles became covered in dirt and lichens. The lovely square-cornered window frames remained on many of the windows but the porch was removed as well as the second-floor pilastered doorway. Another door was inserted on the first floor.

The Eldredge house is now owned by WHOI and is kept in

good shape, although asbestos shingles still cover the walls. There are a few hollow-squared window frames remaining.

The Davis house, now owned by WGBH for its WCAI and WNAN radio stations, is in the midst of a complete exterior restoration. The asbestos shingles have been removed and replaced with cedar clapboards. Window frames with hollow square corners have been copied from the few remaining originals. The entire structure has been painted two shades of a lovely pale cream color. Its position on the high corner above the village makes it shine like a new marble temple.

Work has ceased for the winter season but next spring will bring the completion of a second-floor pilastered doorway and new porch across the second floor front and perhaps shutters in a dark color.

Congratulations to WGBH-WCAI for the stunning restoration of a long-drab and neglected building. Some of the funds used for this work came from a Town of Falmouth CPC grant.

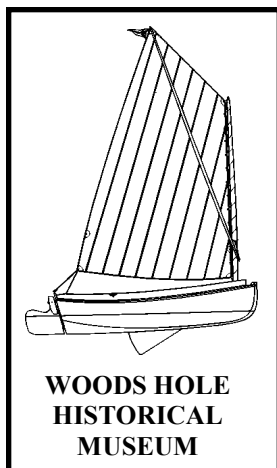
*Susan F. Witzell, Archivist*



*Thomas Davis house, c. 1870s-1880s.  
Howes Family Collection*



*Eldredge house, c. 1900,  
Fay Family Collection*



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## ***ROSES FROM THE NORTH***

The archives often receives inquiries from afar about aspects of Woods Hole's history . Some of these questions make us pay closer attention to those chapters in our history and help us appreciate them all the more. Often the questions are about facets which are well documented in our files and which already delight us.

Here is a letter that recently came to us by email, concerning one of our great delights, Michael Walsh's rambler roses, which were developed at the end of the 1900's here in Woods Hole just behind the Museum. We have a memorial garden just at street-side on our Museum campus with several varieties of his roses, including 'Excelsa'. Be sure to look at them in early July when they are at their peak.

*Hello. I am writing from Stouffville , a small town in Ontario ,Canada. Our town has something of an interesting connection to the Michael Walsh rambler rose garden at your facility.*

*In 1927, the local lawn bowling club in Stouffville planted a hedge of Mr. Walsh's rambler rose 'Excelsa' along the fence of the bowling green. It had grown there and bloomed gloriously ever since and was well known and well loved in our town.*

*This fall the bowling green was expanded and it was necessary to remove the roses from their location as they were right in the road of the expansion. We decided to try to propagate and preserve the roses and over the summer rooted hundreds of cuttings into little rose plants which we distributed throughout the community. On Sept 1 we removed the old hedge roses, and kept them in pots to get over the shock of being dug up. The old plants survived the removal and even continued leafing out in their pots. I guess they are tough little New Englanders!*

*We have just replanted them for the winter and will hopefully relocate some of them eventually to the bowling green property when the final landscaping is done. The others will be "adopted" by local gardeners. We are hoping the old plants and their offspring survive the Canadian winter after all they have been through.*

*I wondered if by chance you have any information about Mr. Walsh's development of 'Excelsa'. I did some research in the spring to figure out what species the rose was and that was the first time we had even known the rose's name. I'd be very interested in any info you might have, or any comments Mr. Walsh might have made about the 'Excelsa' rose etc. I have been to the very attractive website about Walsh's ramblers but I wondered if by chance you have any more info to add to 'Excelsa's story?*

*Thanks.  
Jill McWhinnie*

