



Sailsail

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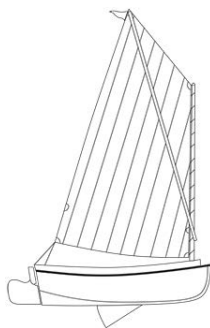
*The Woods Hole Historical Museum is
located on the traditional and sacred land
of the Wampanoag people who still occupy
this land, and whose history, language,
traditional way of life, and culture continue
to influence Cape Cod.*

On the Front Cover: Bucolic postcard of the Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole with vintage automobiles on what is now called Church Street. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

On the Back Cover: David Epstein sits between Skip Crowell at the helm and Peter Ochs on the jib of the *Ragwagon* during a Cape Cod Knockabout Regatta. Courtesy Greg Polanik.

Contents

From the Editors	2
The Complex History of the Founding of the Church of the Messiah <i>By Mary Anne Mann</i>	3
An Early History of the Woods Hole Yacht Club on its 125th Anniversary <i>By Judith Clark</i>	9
Memories of the Woods Hole Yacht Club <i>By David Epstein</i>	15
The History of the Falmouth Public Library <i>By Linda Collins, Director, Falmouth Public Library</i>	23
From the Archives: Augusta Crocker, Rebellious Servant <i>By Meg Costello, Terry White, and Thelma Spicer</i>	28



The spritsail is a small boat rig of respectable antiquity used around the world. Its name comes from the sprit, a spar comparable to a gaff, but attached much lower on the mast.

The sprit crosses diagonally to the uppermost corner of the sail, which it extends and elevates. The Woods Hole Spritsail Boat was originally used for fishing and later became popular among local and summer residents for racing and sailing. —Mary Lou Smith

From the Editors

This summer issue of *Spritsail* includes informative histories of three disparate institutions in Falmouth: the Church of the Messiah, the Woods Hole Yacht Club, and the Falmouth Public Library.

Mary Anne Mann has written an interesting chronology of the Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole. Not only does she discuss the early organization of the church and the financial contributions of the businessman Joseph Story Fay, she also relates the important role, now acknowledged, of slavery to the development of the church.

Susan Witzell's history of the Woods Hole Yacht Club is a wonderful tribute to the club's 125th anniversary. She presents a comprehensive examination of the people who contributed to the success of the yacht club during the past century.

David Epstein, a longtime resident of Woods Hole, shares his fond memories of the Woods Hole Yacht Club in a personal essay recalling his lifetime sailing adventures. He discusses the various classes of boats that were popular at the club and the various yacht club personalities he sailed with over the years.

Linda Collins, the Director of the Falmouth Public Library, has written a detailed history of the Falmouth Public Library. Beginning with the early Society Library of Falmouth, founded in 1792, to the Falmouth Free Public Library, founded in 1891, she traces the increasing importance of our town-wide library system to Falmouth's citizens.

Another feature of this summer's *Spritsail* is the article "Augusta Crocker, Rebellious Servant," written by Meg Costello, Terry White, and Thelma Spicer. This portrait of a 19th century indentured servant is from the Archives of the Falmouth Historical Society.

The Complex History of the Founding of the Church of the Messiah

By Mary Anne Mann

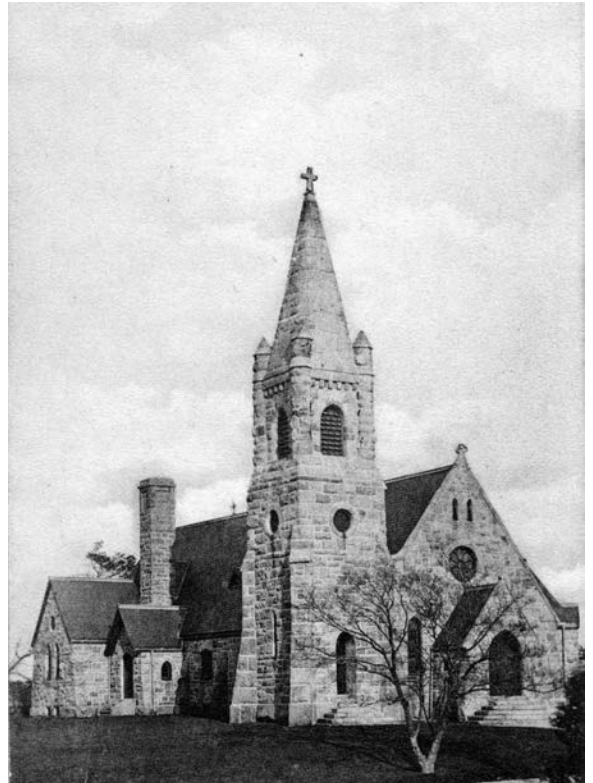
A Sacred Site

In 2020, the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts issued a “Call for Repentance and Reparations,” requesting that parishes begin to “prayerfully and purposefully explore their historic involvement in, and present wealth derived from, the forced labor of enslaved people.”

The Church of the Messiah, Woods Hole, acknowledges the fact that wealth from slave labor provided funds for its original wood church as well as for the stone church still used today for worship. The church also recognizes that the land itself was home to Native American tribes who hunted, fished, and lived off the land’s bounty for thousands of years.

The Church of the Messiah, Woods Hole, the “village church” near the heart of the Woods Hole scientific community, rests on a ridge of land, part of the rocky moraine left behind by the retreat of the Laurentide Glacier some 17,000 years ago. As the mastodon and woolly mammoth retreated with the glacier, the First People arrived on this land, following herds of deer onto the broad coastal plain of wooded hills, grassy valleys, and wetlands that stretched beyond the shores of Nantucket.

The People of the First Light—Wampanoag in their language—settled in this verdant land-



The Church of the Messiah, the first granite church on Cape Cod, was built in 1889 to replace the original wooden church. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

scape. Their culture revolved around many ways of giving thanks for the animals, plants, trees, and fish that provided them food and shelter. At first hunters and gatherers, the People adapted over time as the landscape was shaped and reshaped by the rising seas. Rivulets became rivers, ponds became bays, and ridges and outwash formed Cape Cod and the islands of Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket.

The First People established small villages in the wooded hills and sheltered valleys in the winter, and near the shoreline in the summer. They built sturdy wetus, conical dwellings constructed from soft saplings and bark. The First People, living in harmony with the natural world, taught their children to track the movement of the stars, which told of the changing seasons, and to welcome the rising sun each day with a song of prayer. They lived on their sacred land, undisturbed, for, at the very least, a thousand years.

As explorers and settlers “discovered” this sacred land, wondered at its abundance, and claimed it for themselves, they pushed 69 tribes of the Wampanoag nation from their sacred homeland. The 69 tribes included the Quamquissett, Sokones, Suconessett, and Wakoquet tribes of what is today Quissett, Woods Hole, Falmouth, and Waquoit. Only the Mashpee and the Aquinnah tribes remain today, and only on small fragments of their ancestral land.

Many years later, newcomers to this sacred site gathered to consecrate a small wooden church, unaware that the land itself had already been blessed as sacred by the People of the First Light.

In the Beginning

There is no clear date for when Jeremiah Hopkins arrived in Woods Hole to become innkeeper at the old Webster House on Little Harbor. Formerly the Parker Inn, a favorite drinking spot for British troops, the Inn had become a relay point for passengers arriving

Abolitionist Women of Falmouth

As early as 1840, 70 women of Falmouth had signed a petition to the U.S. House of Representatives calling for the abolishment of slavery in the nation’s capital. Prior to 1830, petitioning had been a right exercised by men. However, proposed legislation to remove Southeastern Indian tribes to the West to make room for white settlement mobilized women to political action.

Three years earlier, 116 men and women of Falmouth had signed a petition to immediately rescind the House Gag Rule resolution that “all petitions, memorials and papers touching the abolition of slaves...in any state, district or territory...be laid upon the table...without being read...and that no action whatever shall be had thereon.” John Quincy Adams opposed stifling the right to petition. Although stricter resolutions were passed each subsequent year, he finally had the Gag Rule rescinded in 1844.

The undersigned women of Falmouth, deeply convinced of the sinfulness of Slavery, and keenly aggrieved by its existence in part of our country over which Congress possesses exclusive jurisdiction in all cases whatsoever, do most earnestly petition your honorable body, immediately to abolish Slavery in the District of Columbia, and to put an end to the slave trade in the United States.

We also respectfully announce our intention to present the same petition, yearly, before your honorable body, that it may at least be a memorial of us, that in the holy cause of Human Freedom “we have done what we could.”

by stage coach to board ferries to New Bedford, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. Records indicate that Hopkins was the Woods Hole Postmaster from July 1852 to June 1854.

In 1849, when the Reverend Manton Eastburn, Episcopal bishop of Massachusetts, arrived at the Parker Inn on his way to Nantucket to consecrate St. Paul's Church, Jeremiah Hopkins, an active Episcopalian, invited him to conduct Prayer Book Services. According to Susan Witzell, former archivist of the Woods Hole Historical Museum, this was the first Prayer Book Service in Woods Hole. The service was held at the little red schoolhouse overlooking Little Harbor because at this time there were no churches in Woods Hole village.

In 1852, Jeremiah Hopkins hosted the Reverend William Rouse Babcock, of St. Peter's Church, Salem. Reverend Babcock preached a sermon at the red schoolhouse, a sermon that inspired the congregants to consider establishing a parish in Woods Hole. Reverend Babcock was familiar with the process of establish-



Jeremiah Hopkins, the Webster House innkeeper and Woods Hole postmaster, initiated the founding and building of the original Church of the Messiah in 1853.

Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.



The Webster House on Little Harbor, formerly the Parker House, was owned by Jeremiah Hopkins who spearheaded the creation of the Church of the Messiah. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

ing a new church, as he had encouraged his own parish to form a second Episcopal Church in Salem's growing western neighborhood.

With the Reverend Babcock's encouragement in mind, Jeremiah Hopkins and a group of local residents met at the Inn in 1852, to sign an agreement to purchase capital stock in "The Society of the Church of the Messiah." Shares were fixed at \$50, with the understanding that when the building was complete, the pews would be sold at auction (a common practice in early churches) and the proceeds divided among the shareholders. The group of 25 included two women, Sarah Fish and Mary Ann Gardner, both mariners' wives. At four shares, Sarah Fish held the most stock; Mary Ann Gardner held two shares. The other members of the Society included four mariners, a sparmaker, cooper, carpenter, blacksmith, shoemaker, farmer, laborer, innkeeper, and a summer resident. The diversity among the shareholders provides a glimpse of Woods Hole village life at that time.

The Society then directed the vestry and wardens to explore and report on sites and plans for the church building. A three-acre lot adjoining the burying ground on the east side of Little Harbor, priced at \$150, was chosen after Joseph Story Fay, a wealthy Savannah cotton broker, offered to donate the funds for building the new parish church. Designed in the "modern style of architecture" by Billings & Sleeper of Boston and built by Dunham and Baylies of Edgartown, construction of the Church of the Messiah, Woods Hole, was completed in 1853.



Joseph Story Fay was a cotton broker, businessman, and benefactor who donated the funds to build the Church of the Messiah in 1853 and its replacement in 1889. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

The first Episcopal Church on Cape Cod, the Church of the Messiah was consecrated by Bishop Eastburn on February 14, 1854. Senior Warden Jeremiah Hopkins read the request of consecration, and the Reverend George M. Randall, rector of the Church of the Messiah, Boston, read the sentence of consecration. Bishop Eastburn read the communion service and preached on the 132nd Psalm, "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

Advent of the Civil War and Its Aftermath

The years leading to the Civil War were a low period for parish membership. Jeremiah Hopkins and his wife Margaret left Woods Hole for Chicago in 1857. Eight years after the first rector, the Reverend Thomas Brinton Flower, was called there were only 12 communicants.

Between 1864 and 1866 no parish records were kept. However, with the arrival of the Reverend Hiram Carleton in 1867, the parish began to grow. Reverend Carleton "took on all the tasks of the church, carrying out the duties of

treasurer, sexton, bell-ringer, and pastor" and raised funds by sale of cemetery lots. Joseph Story Fay provided funds for a large rectory, which served as a home for boys who were tutored by Carleton.

In 1887, Joseph Story Fay asked permission to build a stone church on the site of the original wooden church, which was moved to serve as the parish hall. The new stone church was designed by William Pitt Wentworth of Boston, and built of granite from West Falmouth, Deer Island, and possibly Stone Ridge quarries. The building was completed in record time and consecrated by Bishop Paddock in July 1889. It was the first granite church on Cape Cod. With the consecration of the stone church, the Church of the Messiah as we see it today was complete.

Joseph Story Fay remained active in the parish, and at his death in 1896, provided an endowment of \$20,000 for the Church. A careful businessman, he stipulated that the fund be

The Legacy of Slavery

Minda Campbell, a former slave, wrote to Joseph Story Fay in 1860 regarding efforts to free her daughters and grandchildren (Her letter, "They belonging to themselves: Minda Campbell Redeems Her Family from Slavery," has been featured as a Massachusetts Historical Society, Object of the Month.)

Although Minda and her entire family had been born into slavery, records tell of a family with a strong independent spirit. Minda's son James, who had written the letter for his mother while she lived with him in Savannah, had bought his freedom for \$740 by extra work as a carpenter. Baptized in Savannah in the First African Baptist Church, James moved to Boston in 1864, where he was ordained a Baptist minister, an ordination not recognized by the church in Georgia. Later, moving back to Georgia, he was active in the Freedmen's Bureau and the Union League, and advocated for voting rights for blacks. He was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1868.

In 1851, Minda's daughter Cornelia was "confined in jail, kept in close confinement" for "disorderly conduct circulating abolition documents."

Minda's son Thomas Sims escaped to Boston in 1851, but was tried under the Fugitive Slave Act and returned to slavery despite protests and multiple attempts to free him. Hundreds of citizens watched as he was taken to the wharf under guard to be returned to slavery.

When U.S. Marshal Charles Devens, who had been ordered to return Sims to Georgia, became U.S. Attorney General in 1877, he appointed Sims to a position in the U.S. Department of Justice.

invested with a portion of the proceeds added to the principal until it amounted to \$100,000. The fund was to be maintained at that level, with any additional income used for various purposes, which he outlined. Should the church building cease to be used as "a Church holding the tenets of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America," the trust would terminate and be used by the Town of Falmouth for the worthy poor and for public improvements.

Joseph Story Fay, and Wealth Built on Cotton

Joseph Story Fay was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1812. He travelled to Savannah, Georgia, to learn the cotton trade from

his brother Samuel, at Padelford, Fay & Company. He moved to Savannah to take over the business in 1837.

Joseph Story Fay married Sarah Smith Bryant of Boston in 1840. During the winter months, Sarah lived with him in Savannah, but returned to Boston for the summer. He joined her in Boston until they established a summer home in Woods Hole in 1850.

After the marriage, Sarah's brother John Bryant, of the Boston merchant and shipping firm Bryant & Sturgis, sent business to Fay's company, making Padelford, Fay & Co, already buyers for Rhode Island cotton mills, one of the largest cotton buyers for New England

mills. As the textile industry grew, the fertile land from Georgia to Texas became increasingly valuable. The opportunity to grow more cotton led to the forced removal of indigenous people and increased the demand for slaves, fueling the growing tensions leading to the Civil War in 1861.

The state of Massachusetts had abolished slavery in 1783, but the interstate cotton trade presented difficulties for New England businessmen. Because textile mills depended on cotton and on the society that supported slavery, Joseph Story Fay opposed abolition. In Savannah, he enslaved at least two women and five children including "Judy a brown skin woman about twenty eight years of age and her two children Lucy and Henrietta," and "Cornelia aged twenty seven, William aged six years, Stephen aged four years and Douglas aged five months...and their future issue and increase."

With Civil War looming, Joseph Story Fay moved his business to Boston. As war broke out in 1861, he appealed to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells to lift the embargo on Southern goods.

When the slave ship *Wanderer* was impounded in Boston in 1860, Fay posted a bond of indemnity for its return to his business associate, Gazaway Lamar. Lamar's son, Charles, had outfitted the luxury racing schooner to transport 500 young men captured in Africa to be sold in Georgia. Four hundred and seven survivors landed at Jekyll Island in 1858 to be dispersed across the South. As a member of the Southern "Fire Eaters" calling for secession,

Lamar hoped restoring the African slave trade would provoke war. These events were closely followed by national newspapers, as well as the *Barnstable Patriot*.

Over the years, Joseph Story Fay purchased many tracts of land in Woods Hole and Falmouth. He donated land for St Joseph's Catholic Church, for an expanded grade school, and for Goodwill Park, in addition to the Church of the Messiah. Thus, Falmouth and the Church of the Messiah inherit the complex legacy of its benefactor, Joseph Story Fay, who provided the church with its beautiful site, a rectory, a parish house, a stone church, and a financial foundation. The historic wooden church, moved and used as the parish hall, has been transformed and renovated to become the Parish Community Center, dedicated as a spiritual and community gathering place to foster social awareness, outreach, and hospitality.

In compiling the story of the complex legacy of the Church of the Messiah, the church joins with other Massachusetts Episcopal Diocesan parishes and institutions as they begin to "prayerfully and purposefully explore their historic involvement in, and present wealth derived from, the forced labor of enslaved people."

About the Author: Mary Ann Mann, a retired scientist, is a member of the Church of the Messiah, Woods Hole. After several summers at the Marine Biological Laboratory in the Visiting Research Program, she moved to Falmouth in 2009 to join the Highstein Vestibular Lab in the Department of Sensory Physiology and Behavior. Dr. Mann holds a Ph.D. from Northeastern University, and has worked in scientific labs at Harvard, Columbia, and the National Institutes of Health.

An Early History of the Woods Hole Yacht Club on its 125th Anniversary

By Judith Clark



This was the original Woods Hole Yacht Club on the Bar Neck property across from the iconic candle factory in the heart of Woods Hole. In 1912, it became the MBL Club when the property was given to the Marine Biological Laboratory. Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

The Woods Hole Yacht Club was formed in 1896 and incorporated in 1897. A group of its members erected a pier for it on land donated by Horace S. Crowell, an early incorporator of the club and owner of the Bar Neck Company. The land Mr. Crowell donated was part of the Bar Neck property. It was located directly

across the street from the candle factory, a stone building owned today by the Marine Biological Laboratory. A clubhouse, completed in 1899, was constructed on the end of the pier. Today the same clubhouse serves as the MBL Club, having been moved back from the pier to its present location on land.

Henry K. Dyer was the original Commodore of the Woods Hole Yacht Club. He was a wealthy resident of Penzance Point in Woods Hole and contributed to many of the civic projects in the community.

Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.



Walter O. Luscombe was the first treasurer of the Woods Hole Yacht Club. He was considered to be the most successful businessman and landowner in Woods Hole. (He also served as the treasurer of the Church of the Messiah.)

Courtesy Woods Hole Historical Museum.

The incorporators of the early club consisted of both summer residents from Penzance Point and permanent residents from the Woods Hole community. Henry K. Dyer was the original Commodore and Walter Luscombe was the original treasurer. The financial arrangements for the operation of the club called for a Board of Trustees, which would act as shareholders and own the assets of the club. Members would pay annual dues that would be held by the shareholders.

The club functioned uninterruptedly until 1910. Its racing classes were dominated by catboats and spritsails. Boats in each of these classes varied greatly in design. Handicapping was difficult, and creating a second division in each class was only a temporary solution to the problems that resulted. Other problems arose among the membership concerning the dues structure. Rising costs made it necessary for the club to raise its dues. A sharp division of opinions on how this should be done led to the

withdrawal from the club of nearly all its summer residents. Social and racing events were poorly attended in the summer of 1910. In 1911 the membership voted to decommission the yacht club until activities might be continued in a friendlier fashion. Charles Crane of Juniper Point then purchased the outstanding shares from the trustees. Mr. Crane paid all the invoices that were due and assumed ownership of the property. In 1912 he gave the property to the MBL.

For a few years the club continued to function informally as a small social center for the members who were permanent Woods Hole residents in an upstairs room of the firehouse. When many members were called to serve in World War I, the club's membership was severely depleted. As a result, the club ceased its existence in 1919 in any active form.

In 1929, a group of young summer residents, who had been racing Cape Cod dories with the encouragement of Mrs. Murray Crane, de-

cided they would like to take their racing more seriously. They had been referring to themselves casually as the Woods Hole Yacht Club, but when they looked into adopting the name formally it was found that the charter of the early club was still in existence. In June 1930, a delegation of the young people called on Franklin Gifford, who had been elected principal trustee until a successor should be elected when the club again became active. They told him of their desire to revive the yacht club in Woods Hole and asked for his help in enabling them to use the name of the Woods Hole Yacht Club. Mr. Gifford arranged a meeting with as many old members and trustees as he could contact in order to introduce the two groups. At this July 12, 1930 meeting, Mrs. Crane and the group, who had been racing dories, were elevated to membership. At the meeting, Mr. Gifford resigned and Mrs. Crane was elected as commodore. In this way, the charter passed from the original group to the younger generation.

During the next few weeks, many of the adult yacht owners in Woods Hole joined the club and an annual meeting was held in August. At this meeting, a full slate of officers was elected. Mrs. Crane was to continue as commodore in the ensuing year. Frank J. Frost, vice commodore, extended to the club the use of his boat-house on Penzance Point until the club would have a headquarters of its own

Edward Norman joined the club in 1930 and was elected treasurer. His strong beliefs influenced the development of the yacht club. Mr. Norman believed in a small club without

dining rooms and bars. He insisted upon full membership participation as well as having the club join district and national governing organizations. He refused to allow handicap racing since he believed no rule was fair. He felt that more than four racing classes of one-design boats would harm the growth of the racing fleet.

During the first year of formal activity, the club held a series of races for two classes, one a combination of Cape Cod dories and mixed small knockabouts, and one of mixed catboats. At the end of the summer, the club had 73 members and some 50 craft enrolled. By 1932, the club had four small boat classes: The Cape Cod knockabout, the Buzzards Bay knockabout, Cape Cod dories, and catboats. Races were also instituted for larger boats of the S and Wianno types.

The growth of the yacht club was becoming an imposition on the Crane and Frost families, who had been allowing the yacht club the use of their facilities. In the fall of 1932, negotiations for the land on Great Harbor begun with the Bureau of Fisheries in 1930 were resumed. It was discovered, however, that the Bureau had no legal right to lease the federal land to anyone. In 1933, Congressman Charles L. Gifford of Cotuit agreed to place a bill before Congress allowing the Woods Hole Yacht Club to lease the land on Great Harbor from the federal government. The bill passed both houses of Congress and was signed by President Roosevelt in June 1934. Also during the summer of 1934, heirs and descendents of Joseph Story Fay, who had given the land to the

United States government in 1883, signed a waiver of their contingent interest in this land in case it should not be used for government purposes. The way was now clear for the yacht club. In the winter of 1935, a 25-year lease was arranged with the Bureau of Fisheries.

By the end of July 1935, the Woods Hole Yacht Club had the use of its own facilities. A pier had been constructed and a small house erected near the pier to serve as headquarters and storage place for gear. The club was able to conduct races for Wianno, Cape Cod, and Buzzards Bay knockabouts from its own facilities. Members, influenced by Mr. Norman, decided not to permit handicap racing to become established at the club. It was felt that the classes which it had offered a sufficiently wide variety to satisfy all degrees of skill, desire, and expense.

The club was only moderately damaged by the Hurricane of 1938. The storm came late in the month of September. Unlike now, when many boats stay in the water into the fall, most boats had been hauled and put away for the winter around Labor Day. The total financial damage done to the yacht club totaled \$6,000.

During the war years, the yacht club activities were restricted to harbor racing and sailing. All boats were required to have identification cards which included the owner's fingerprints and photograph. The majority of the membership were serving in the war. Dr. Elliot Clark and Robert P. Bigelow maintained the club during those years and held races for those who were able to participate.

In 1954, Hurricane Carol brought devastating damage to the yacht club. Most of the repairs could not be funded through usual borrowing methods because of lease restrictions. There was an atmosphere of defeat about the club until Commodore-elect Robert Bigelow took over his duties. He announced there were no plans to abandon the yacht club and return the land to the Fisheries. At the annual meeting, a revitalization plan gained the support of the membership. The most serious problems were financing the reconstruction of the club house, dock, and floats as well as finding boats to rebuild the fleets. The knockabouts in particular had suffered severe damage.

During the winter months of 1955, significant progress was made. A financial campaign produced the necessary revenues to cover construction. The knockabout class was brought back to original strength by new purchase or professional repairs to badly damaged boats. In June of 1955, the yacht club was commissioned with a completely rebuilt clubhouse and all floats and docks in place.

With the probability of future storms and the large amount of capital just expended to rebuild the damaged property, Commodore Bigelow decided to once again explore the possibility of land purchase from the U. S. Government. With the approval of the membership, Vice-Commodore Walter Garrey was given the responsibility to proceed with Congressman Donald Nickerson in preparing a bill for Congressional action. Accepting the risks that the property would have to be auctioned to the highest bidder and that the government



Today's Woods Hole Yacht Club on Great Harbor is celebrating its 125th anniversary.

Courtesy Leonard Miele.

would retain all rights to the property in times of national crisis, the yacht club decided to file the bill. Having no other bidders, in 1962 the government informed the yacht club that the land would be sold to them at fair market value. President John Kennedy signed the bill to complete the transaction.

Yacht club membership grew rapidly during the 1950s and 1960s. Interest in boating surged during the fifties, partially due to the introduction of inexpensive low-maintenance fiberglass boats. By 1962, fiberglass knockabouts demonstrated their ability to race with wooden knockabouts. Many of these fiberglass

knockabouts were purchased by members of the Woods Hole scientific community who joined the yacht club. Many from the group became active participants in the yacht club administration and racing. For many years the racing fleet of knockabouts averaged about twenty-five boats for the Sunday series of races.

It was during the 1960s that the children's sailing program began. Introduced by Dr. Jim Buck, the program emphasized both basic seamanship and racing. Buck's daily supervision included direct participation and teaching.

During his term (1964-1966) as commodore, James Mavor introduced a small boat called a Mirror to the club. Its design favored the sailing conditions of the area and was an outstanding boat for racing. Woods Hole had been waiting for a small boat class that could be a children's boat as well as one suitable for adult dinghy racing. The Mirror class was a success with club members and in a few years as many as twenty-five boats were sailing in Great Harbor. Lasers, Thistles, and Javelins have also enjoyed periods of popularity with club membership.

John Leiby became commodore (1966-1969) at a time when the yacht club was facing many problems caused by its increased membership. His recommendations for an enlarged parking area and a newly constructed cruising boat dock, relocation of floats and docks, and building of a marine railway for larger boats were accepted by the membership. Although there was some expression of concern by the membership about the size and the cost of the undertaking, the effort successfully solved the problem of increasing congestion.

The 1990s saw several new trends in boating reflected in its membership. Cruising over racing became the preference of many of the club's successful skippers. About 70 cruising boats registered at the yacht club during this time. Also during this decade, the club took in members from the houseboat community that had grown in Great Harbor.

The yacht club has continued since the 1960s in a favorable stable condition without the need for further land transactions, hurricane repair, or building construction. The commodores, led by the board of governors who are advised by the membership of over 600, have become managers of policy as well as racing and social events. They have been helped by hundreds of committee members and officers drawn from the approximately 2,000 members who have been part of the club over the years.

About the Author: Susan Fletcher Witzell is the former Archivist and Assistant Curator of the Woods Hole Historical Museum. She has had a varied career in art, architectural history, and photography, as well as book editing and design.

Memories of the Woods Hole Yacht Club

By David Epstein

The Woods Hole Yacht Club (WHYC) is a social center for many people. Huge numbers of activities funnel through the club's facilities: sailing, rowing, sailing lessons, excursions, and socials. Volunteers open and close the club each summer season so people can entertain guests at the club, access the water for any and all occasions, and celebrate/commemorate births, weddings, and funerals. The yacht club has never been about status or clenched-jawed Thurston Howell the Third. It's been about boating and the community of people that springs up from having this pleasure in common. I learned racing at an early age, so that is the lens through which I view the yacht club. It is the church of the mariner, with *Eldridge Tide* and *Pilot Book* its holy scriptures.

On the occasion of the club's 125th Anniversary, it's an honor to try to set down some of the more recent history. The WHYC scribe used to be the revered John Buck, a scientist whose gentle self-effacing reports went into the *Falmouth Enterprise* every summer. Other sailors wrote race accounts as well. Taken in aggregate, the *Enterprise* articles do form a



Cape Cod Knockabouts racing in Great Harbor. Courtesy Howie Roche.

splendid history of a major piece of yacht club activity. The late Harlyn Halvorson, the former director of the Marine Biological Laboratory, compiled as many of these reports as he could find. They appear in a self-published volume, *Ready About Hard Alee*, covering years 1962-2007. Besides Harlyn and myself, some other sailors who wrote about the club races included John Buck, Skip Crowell, and Katie Foster.

During the past 50 years, WHYC members have chiefly raced the Cape Cod Knockabout at the club and in annual regattas that rotate among Woods Hole and other clubs. Knock-



— *This was what
got kids away from
Saturday morning
cartoons for decades.*

The Mirror Dinghy *Jiblette* in Great Harbor being sailed by the author's wife and daughter. Courtesy David Epstein.

about regattas are also sailed in Megansett, Lewis Bay, and Waquoit Bay. There were also some regattas in West Yarmouth when the town ran a fine summer program heavily sponsored and encouraged by veteran Knockabout racer Webster Collins of Megansett. Some strange politics put an end to the much beloved Jim Hoar's tenure there about ten years ago, and the young sailors of that area are no longer so well exposed to "the Knocks." At present, three clubs have active racing fleets: Woods Hole, Megansett, and Waquoit Bay.

The club also raced Lasers, Thistles, cruising yachts, DC-10s, and Mirror Dinghies at various times between the 1960s and the present. The Mirrors were the most successful fleet other than the Knockabouts, with a small but vibrant group of racers sailing about a dozen different boats, serving as a feeder fleet for the "big" boats, the 18-foot Knockabouts. The Mirror Dinghy, a ten-foot-long plywood sloop, was available either as a kit, or ready-made. There were over 70,000 world-wide, sailed chiefly in the Commonwealth nations, the Netherlands, and in Germany. Their hey-

day was the 1960s and 1970s. The Woods Hole fleet was the last racing fleet in North America when we stopped racing them in about 2015. The boats were perfect for an adult and a child, forcing quality time on children and parents across several generations. They were also perfect for racing "Harbor" races, as they are basically slow and less risky to sail among the mooring-filled crowded currents of Great Harbor, Woods Hole.

There is an entire history of the Mirrors to be written, spanning fifty years and numerous club families, including the Silvers, Olmsteds, Rankins, Epsteins, Chases, Newmans, Childs, Dentons, Bigelows, and others. This was what got kids away from Saturday morning cartoons for decades. The races began at 10 a.m., which meant going to the beach around 9 a.m. to rig and fix and kibbitz. Usually two races were sailed, after which sodas and snacks were shared in the clubhouse, and mama got the morning off. Some years the Lasers or the DC-10s were also started by the same race committee. Everyone knows Lasers, but the DC-10, a ten-foot-long, one-person sailing go-cart, enjoyed a brief vogue in the 1980s. With a windsurfer mast, perhaps two-dozen of these kit-boats were made. They were the design of Quissett boat-builder Doug Cooper, hence the DC in its name.

The racing itself, in Great Harbor, was uniquely challenging. The Knockabouts may race out in Buzzards Bay, or in Vineyard Sound, but the harbor is filled with nuance-y currents and gyres, depending on the tides. Special races also included the "Figure-8" race,

which allowed sailors to choose their paths to complete the course encompassing both Ram Island and Devils Foot Island; the "Twice-Round-Ram Island" race; and the fabled "Helianthus Bell." This last was a hideous torture chamber involving a central starting line, and five or six marks set in every remove of the harbor, to be completed in any order, with a



1962 Regatta winners Jane Little and Arthur Parpart, members of two yacht club racing families before their marriage. Courtesy Dottie Crossley.

re-start between each leg. It was more fun than a barrel of squid. We lament the fading of the Mirror class, although many club members still sail them recreationally.

There are a number of families who figure prominently in both the competitiveness and

the bonhomie of the yacht club racing. Without a comprehensive list, there are people who will feel left off unfairly. I began racing Knockabouts with Laszlo "Lotse" Lorand, in the mid 1970s. He was a summer scientist at the MBL, who, like other scientists, aspired to achievement in this cauldron of skill and chance. He saw scientists like Harlyn Halvorson, John Dowling, Moise Goldstein, Darcy Wilson, Bob Barlow, and locals like Carl Beverly and Skip Crowell getting out on the water and having a rollicking good time. I sailed on Lotse's *Jolami* for three years and rarely finished out of the bottom slot. Malcolm Child and I will, to this day, fondly parody his encouragement and his Hungarian-accented obscenity. But we did learn our way around the Knockabout, taking our precocious Mirror Dinghy racing skills into the next arena. After that I sailed with Darcy Wilson on *Dixie*, with Moise and John on *Xiphias*, and for a long time with Harlyn, and Walter Vincent, on *Escargot*. This was during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Somewhere in there, *Xiphias* passed to Moise's stepson, Brian Switzer, who, along with Michael Dvorak and John Vose, became perennial champions.

From roughly 1994 to 2000, I was mostly away becoming a husband and father. From that point on, I was back in racing, both in Mirrors and in Knockabouts. Frank Child retired from Mirror racing and sold me his beloved *C.P.* (supposedly referencing "Child's Play," but may have been a pun on the leaking centerboard-trunk, hence "seepy"). I raced *C.P.* with each of my children in turn, and the fleet in the 2000s was vibrant, the racing very competitive. People I

remember racing regularly include Bob Bigelow, Jim Newman, Fred Denton, and Olwen Huxley. More than any of us, it was Falmouth native Jobie Chase who reinvigorated the Mirror Dinghy class. He came back to Woods Hole, journeying long hours every weekend from his home in New Hampshire to race his Mirror, *KnightMare*. Jobie and his wife Mary raised the level of both competitiveness and club spirit simultaneously. Among the Mirror racers there had developed a sense that we were out exercising our ancient horses, that there was little on the line. Not that sail-racers need to feel there's something at risk, or that one need lament a poor showing. The Chases made it all fun, and all about the kids, all while challenging us to sail better. They practiced often. And it showed. Light air was one thing, but the dinghy racers rarely went out in heavy air; we'd rather just stay home. And when, on occasion, the conditions were more challenging, it was that practiced sailor who knew how to handle the boat in gusts, whose mark roundings were smooth, who triumphed. Being consistent across all winds is the challenge of sail racing, and the Chases lifted Woods Hole sailors to new heights. And that was tantamount to summoning a competitive devil: Jobie's brother came out to race in Knockabouts.

Tom Chase, beloved local roofer, board-sailor, and curmudgeon, returned to racing at the club. He refit CCK 302, renamed her *Blue Bayou*, and proceeded to rack up wins. There are many sailors who just get on their boats year after year and re-rig and have at the season

with all its mixture of fortune and skill. Tom was about the cerebral part. What are the design considerations? What about the shape of the rudder and centerboard (the “foils”)? How best to manipulate sail shape according to conditions? And most of all, how to enjoy racing among friends for the sheer pleasure of it? There are other legends in my time who did likewise, and I’m thinking of Browne Littell and Tom Browne, with *Hecate* and *Prestissimo*, respectively. Nor should I forget the infectious enthusiasm of Chris Warner. The Chase broth-



The late Tom Chase inspects his boat *Blue Bayou* on the frozen waters of Great Harbor. Courtesy David Epstein.

ers also freshened up WHYC racing, Tom in the Knocks, Jobie in both Mirrors and Knockabouts. Both classes had seen some dwindling in the 1980s and 1990s, as had Knockabouts on the Upper Cape more generally. If one tracks attendance at the Knockabout regattas, the number of boats went from sixty or

seventy in the 1960s and 1970s, down to forty, thirty, twenty, and more recently about a dozen to sixteen boats. Where, formerly, the other clubs had been seen as enemies, the avid racers from each club now need each other. I’ve sailed the last two summer Sunday series in Megansett, where people have been nothing but friendly and welcoming, and value a Knockabout sailor’s contribution to the general competitiveness and fun of the racing.

The shrinking of the Knockabout racing class is partly demographic bulge, partly the idea of doing something else on a Sunday afternoon. The WHYC used to have its main race, with spinnakers, on Sundays, with a 2:00 p.m. start. Beginning in the late 1990s, the Wednesday evening race (5:30 p.m. start) became a no-spinnakers “Chicken Fleet.” The Sundays were well attended, with 8 or 12 boats regularly, while the Wednesdays, initially, were quieter, with fewer boats.

If I had to report one thing about the WHYC that’s changed markedly in the past fifty years, it’s been the ascendancy of the Wednesday evening race opposite the diminution and then demise of the Sunday afternoon race. Talking with sailors, they’ll say that people just stopped wanting to give so much of their weekends to Knockabout racing. It seemed to take all of Sunday, between rigging, sailing out to the start, and then the stress and joy of flying spinnakers on the downwind legs. The Sunday races had all but died by the mid-2000s when Tom Chase and Brett Longworth (sailing *Escargot*) revived them. They were

not alone, of course, and regulars on Sundays included Charlie Hokenson in *Luciole*, and *Hecate*, sailed by Rick Whidden and Gale Clark, often with owner Davey Graham aboard. The Sunday racers also often raced informally one other night of the week, doing "rabbit" starts without a race committee. The Sunday series was vibrant, if underattended, usually getting three to six boats, compared with the Wednesday night's eight-to-twelve. It was decidedly not too much of a good thing, but when Tom Chase died suddenly, in December of 2014, his brother's enthusiasm dipped, and the Sunday race essentially disappeared from Woods Hole.

The Wednesday race has changed considerably in the past four decades. Historically, there had been a Wednesday evening race, with spinnakers. But the chicken fleet eventually proved so attractive that what had often been a smaller race became the racing mainstay of the WHYC, along with the Thursday evening Ladies' race. There is a full history of the Ladies' race that should be compiled and reported. That series parallels the Wednesday group, overlapping with some of the boats and participants. And, often, the Ladies' race has had more boats than the Wednesday race. People come sit on the porch to watch the start (and sometimes the entirety) of the Ladies' race. This is part of the club history of porch-sitters in general. Witness the Adirondack chair with the brass plaque on it, emblazoned with Latin for "If Peg Olmsted were sitting here, she'd say..." During the aughts and teens, so popular was the Ladies' Race start and post-race

snack-fest, that for several years the watchers formalized into a group that would even take a date on the refreshments sign-up list, under the name "Moochers and Vultures."

There is a way to chart the progress of the Wednesday race, and it has to do with the parking lot. Snacks and cocktails are often served after the race. The women do this graciously, in the clubhouse, close to the fridge. They vie for supremacy both on the racecourse and at the post-race table, providing family favorites, audacious baking, and sometimes arranging themed events, such as the Summer Solstice Tea. But the Wednesday post-race, which certainly includes all genders, has a different history. Instead of an in-club table, with its usual array of chips, dips, sodas and beers, the Wednesday tailgate began at the far end of the parking lot, sometimes even behind the "Mirror Shed," in a trampled bramble known cryptically as "Yacht Club East." It was there, in the primitive days before enlightened legislation allowed for the legal lighting of certain herbs, that an alternate party took place. As the older generation receded, and the younger (my generation) came up, the alternate party took the shape of a tailgate party that slowly, over years, moved halfway up the parking lot. Now that there is no legal conflict, and we formerly youthful-and-virtuous have achieved the mantle of aged-and-treacherous, and a new youthful crowd of racers has come along, the post-race tailgate is always and only where the east pier meets the shore.



Guy Beaudette (left) and Kit Olmsted on the yacht club's east dock as they assist in the refloating of the swamped *Xiphias*. Note the mast in the center of the photo. Courtesy Howie Roche.

And there has been, for more than twenty years now, a fall series, mostly for the locals, that encompasses a half-dozen race dates, ending in mid-October. Begun in 1994 and 2000 respectively, these fall series are called the Viking (Wednesday), and the Valkyrie

(Ladies' on Thursdays). These culminate in an end-of-season soiree, the Valhalla Ball, an elaborate pot-luck, usually helped at a suitably impressive venue, wherever longtime *Xiphias* crew member John Vose can arrange.

I wish to relate two other major aspects of heredity and accession. One of these has to do with the Race Committee. For most of my life, Captain Kit Olmsted has been our guide and protector on the seas. The racecourse is decided by the Fleet Captain (a Knockabout skipper who hasn't learned to say "no"), usually in discussion with the race committee. For most of my life, until just recently, this has been Kit. On one hand, we sometimes chafe under the pressure of our need to sail safely in

one of the more challenging venues: powerful and merciless currents; powerful and legally merciless ferries; plus a host of summer boat traffic in this, our home port. Whenever I've tried to explain racing in Woods Hole, I fail. There can be analogies: chess or checkers on a board where the squares change color—with some degree of predictability, or dancing half-way down the bowling alley on League Night. And it's been Kit Olmsted who has had to keep perspective on things, manage our more adventurous proclivities, and see us safe home through calm and storm. I've learned to rely on his professionalism. Kit has almost completed handing over the reins to his son Matthew Bumpus, and grandchildren Sam and Abigail.

Another fixture of most of my Yacht Club life has been the longtime steward, P. S. Crowell III. In addition to racing *Elf* and being steward, and croquet player extraordinaire, Skip has taught racing classes in the winter, consulted on boat projects, and been a powerful mnemonic repository. Even having lived and



Long-admired yacht club steward Skip Crowell accepts trophies at the West Yarmouth Regatta in 2014. Courtesy Greg Polanik.

raced through the last fifty years, I doubt my memory could retain the wealth and density of fact and arcana that Skip Crowell has at his command.

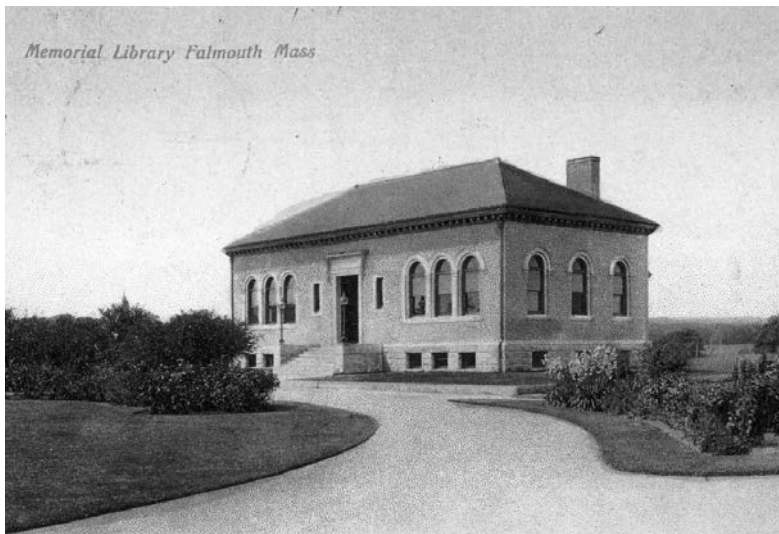
And what of the future? There is another generation coming along, a generation of all ages. I'm thinking of boats like *Brieze*, sailed by Karen Soenen and her husband, Eric Hayden; the recently refit *Wasa*, sailed by Michael Giordano; *Who's There?*, sailed by young Molly Sykes (The Sykes family bought the boat from Jobie Chase, number 301, the former *Knightmare*);

Fran Elder and Miles Ochs in *Luna Nova*; *Skimmer*, sailed by Fred Denton; and while *Scup* is a longtime racer, Chris Warner and Ann Dvorak Warner's daughters, Ava and Ella Belle, have become formidable sailors in their own right. Our current steward, Kimberly Fricke, and her husband Jake, have *Windbag*. They also, along with four or five other people, have a Shell-back Dinghy. In the late summer and early fall, these one-person rigs can be seen dashing about the harbor, each sailor's grin as wide as can be. The sail-racing future seems assured at Woods Hole Yacht Club.

About the Author: David Epstein, Ph.D., has sailed in Upper Cape waters for more than 50 years. He publishes poems and poetry reviews as well as a long-time column about Cape Cod Knockabout racing in Woods Hole.

The History of the Falmouth Public Library

By Linda Collins, Director, Falmouth Public Library



The Falmouth Public Library was erected in 1902, funded by the Beebe family that also built Highfield Hall and St. Barnabas Church.
Courtesy Falmouth Public Library.

Benjamin Franklin founded the first subscription library in America in Philadelphia in 1731; Falmouth was not too far behind in their literary pursuits. The town has longstanding relationships with libraries that date back to the establishment of the Society Library of Falmouth, organized in 1792. Names associated with the Society Library are well known to Falmouth: Swift, Shiverick, Lawrence, Hatch, Dillingham, and Palmer, to name only a few. The Society Library of Falmouth later became the Falmouth Circulating Library. The Falmouth Public Library holds the handwritten

notes of the establishment of this library, including the circulation records of each member, listing what they borrowed and when it was returned. The 22 founding members began the library with a collection of 14 books. Stackhouse's *History of the Bible* was one, another was the romantic novel, *Evelina*, a 1778 coming-of-age novel set in 18th-century England. This book was evidently quite popular and was borrowed by every member of the society at one point or another.

Henry Lincoln served as the first librarian. He would carefully examine the returned volumes and note the grease stains from the drips of candles used for reading at night. He would also fine members a penny a day for late returns. The first woman subscriber was Martha Morse, and she had no grease stains noted on her library record. Library records from this period suggest that women did not seem to have the same amount of leisure time, borrowing far fewer items than their male counterparts. After a year-and-a-half of membership reading Stackhouse's *History of the Bible* and other collections of sermons, Mrs.

Morse finally was free to read *Evelina*. By 1825 there were many women members of the Society Library, all in good standing.

The current Falmouth Public Library charges no overdue fines. In 1825 when members kept a book for more than the allowed six weeks, they would be required to pay not only the price of that volume but for each of the other volumes in the set. By then readers were now using whale oil lamps instead of candles, not dropping grease spots on the pages. However, returned books were still inspected for "being written in or having their pages turned down." About this time borrowing privileges were extended to people beyond the Society "under certain conditions."

It is not clear when the Society Library ceased to operate, but the need for a Circulating Library reappears in 1876. The question was addressed at the Masonic Hall building at a meeting of "the young women in Falmouth." A vote was taken to accept a constitution that began, "We the undersigned believing that a library judiciously selected is eminently useful for mental and moral culture, and that it offers ample means for said iprovement and refinement, agree to establish our library association and adopt the following constitution and by-laws." So began the Falmouth Circulating Library. An article in *The Falmouth Enterprise* states, "There is no doubt that where there is a free circulating library, there is an intelligent community."

The Falmouth Free Public Library was established by a vote of the town, passed at its

annual meeting in March 1891. The warrant read, "To see if the town will accept the provisions of Chapter 397 of the Acts of 1890 entitled 'An Act to Promote the Establishment of Free Public Libraries.'" With the addition of 2,263 books at a cost of \$925, the Falmouth Free Public Library was established. This was the foundation of the Falmouth Public Library, with Clara Davis serving as Librarian until her death in 1904. The library resided in the front corner room of the Town Hall. It was in 1895 that the town voted to approve the building of Falmouth Memorial Library.

The library building we know today was built in 1902 with the help of the Beebe family, major benefactors of the community they loved. The Beebe family wealth came from James Madison Beebe's successful Boston dry goods business. The library was designed by Bacon & Mears of Boston with a base of local granite and a green Vermont slate roof. The cost for the building was \$22,079 with an additional \$13,500 spent on the acquisition of the land. The Beebe family also built Highfield Hall, their summer home, and Saint Barnabas Church on Main Street. The church was built by the Beebe brothers and sisters in memory of their parents. The library was built as a memorial to Falmouth soldiers and sailors who served in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The establishment of the library was further funded by a legacy from Mrs. Esther Elizabeth Beebe who died in 1898. The library account began in 1896 with \$3,000 left to Edward Pierson Beebe by his mother to be used, at his discretion, for the benefit of the library. This



The main library as it appears today with its 2007 additions. Courtesy Falmouth Public Library.

money was well invested in railroad bonds. The library received income from this trust until December of 1976 when its total value was \$9,546. In March of 1977 the Board of Library Trustees terminated the trust and used the money for urgent maintenance needs, including trim painting and slate roof repair.

The library opened with a collection of 5,000 volumes. By 1905 the collection had grown to 6,690 volumes, including a donation of 500 volumes from Mrs. A. M. Bryant of Waquoit. These volumes were presented in the name of her late husband, Henry Bryant. By 1928 the shelves were tight. Plans and blueprints to build a mezzanine floor over the stacks were considered but ultimately rejected. Although the library was suffering growing pains at that time, no action was taken. It was not until 1967 that the double east and west wings were added, increasing the space from 7,300 square feet to 15,000 square feet. In 1978 the Adult Collections Room was added, increasing the building to 30,000 square feet. In 2007 the Reference Room and Meeting space were

added to bring the library to its current 40,000 square feet.

The main library in the center of town was not the only public library in town. In the 1870s, the North Falmouth Village began a small lending library in the balcony of the Congregational Church that was later moved to the basement of the church. In 1955 the library moved across the street to the old fire station. In 1960, the library had an opportunity to move to a building of its own in Nye Park. The building the library moved into has a very interesting history. The building was donated to the town by the Otis Air Force Base and spent five days traveling the seven miles down Route 151 from the Base to its destination in Nye Park. The journey began on December 17, 1959. The first day's progress was halted by a flat tire. The second day was slow as electrical wires had to be lifted and tree branches removed. On the third day, rain prevented further progress and the building sat at the four corners. Sunday was the crew's day of rest, so no further progress was made. Finally, on

The North Falmouth Branch Library has been located at Nye Park on Chester Street since 1961. Courtesy Falmouth Public Library.



Monday, December 21, although slowed by the removal of a large stump, the former barracks finally arrived at Nye Park.

A request to accept the former barracks was deferred at the March 1960 Town Meeting, but was accepted a year later in March of 1961. A vote to approve funding for repairs and improvements did not come until the following year. In the spring of 1964, the Town of Falmouth finally transferred control of the building from the Parks Committee to the Trustees of the Falmouth Public Library, and plans were drawn to convert the former barracks into the North Branch Library. The Parks Department requested that they be allowed to continue storing rakes and shovels in the basement. To the best of my knowledge, they are still there.

In the East Falmouth Village, library services were provided in a room in the East Falmouth Elementary School from 1935 until 1943. Unfortunately, the Branch Library was closed in 1943 when the room was needed for a kinder-

garten class. The East Branch re-opened in the school 15 years later, in 1958, and operated there until 1971. On July 30, 1971, the East Falmouth Branch Library opened in the Vidal house, located on East Falmouth Highway, overlooking Mill Pond. This home was purchased by the town as a location for the library.

The public libraries, although much loved by the community, are not without incidents. The branches experienced some vandalism in the 1970s and the Main Library was the victim of a planned crime. On December 29, 1943, a thief entered the Main Library through a basement window and stole a collection of stamps that belonged to the Falmouth Historical Society. The collection was valued at about \$2,000 (\$30,000 in to-day's dollars). A scruffy man in army fatigues had been noticed looking at the stamps two weeks earlier. Librarians were able to provide police with a description. The police contacted the librarian at Otis Air Force Base, who confirmed that an airman had bor-



The East Falmouth Branch Library, situated next to Mill Pond, was opened to the public in 1971. Courtesy Falmouth Public Library.

rowed all six stamp catalogues from the Base Library. The man in question confessed to his crime and the stamps were recovered. He had buried them in a box in his mother's garden in Framingham. The frames the stamps had been displayed in, however, had been tossed from the Bourne Bridge into the Cape Cod Canal. The details of this case were discovered through research in the digitized archives of *The Falmouth Enterprise*.

The Town of Falmouth was described by former librarian Hazel Atwood, as a "library-minded town." This has been proven true time and time again as the people of Falmouth have come forward to support their local libraries. The early Trustees of the Library had a clear vision of its purpose. In March of 1900 an article in *The Falmouth Enterprise* quotes Reverend Henry Smythe, Library Trustee, as saying, "The library should gather and store material related to the history of the town, old letters and log books, and stories and traditions. Things that

have never been written down but which are the most important material for understanding the town's life. This is by far the most valuable work the library can do for the town."

The library has continued to support this vision with the digitization and preservation of library records, local historical documents, whaling ship's logs, the Falmouth Post-card Collection, and *The Falmouth Enterprise*.

Information for this brief history of the Falmouth Public Library was gathered from these records: the Falmouth Town Reports, the *History of the Falmouth Public Library* by Christine Lynch, and from the digital archives of *The Falmouth Enterprise*.

About the Author: Linda Collins is the Director of the Falmouth Public Library. Previously, she was the Access Services Librarian at Harvard University and the Head Access Librarian at Wheaton College.

From the Archives: Augusta Crocker, Rebellious Servant

By Meg Costello, Terry White, and Thelma Spicer

Augusta Crocker began life with bright prospects. Her father, Captain John Crocker, had made a respectable fortune in the China trade and built the first mansion ever on Shore Street. Her mother, Susan Wicks, was the only child and heir of Dr. Francis Wicks, the self-made “esquire” whose opinion always carried weight with the citizens of Falmouth. Augusta’s charmed life changed, however, when a mysterious disaster befell her family. The first omen appears in the land records of August 1827. Both Wicks and Crocker suddenly sold their stately homes within days of each other. Dr. Wicks moved into a small dwelling in the business-oriented upper section of Shore Street. Exactly where the Crockers and their brood of thirteen children landed is unclear. The father—and son-in-law had apparently mingled their investments and lost badly. Soon the Crockers would find themselves on the town’s charge, while Wicks could only watch, unable to help.

Residents like Augusta and their families, who were unable to provide for themselves, came under the responsibility of three Overseers of the Poor elected by the town. The next inkling of trouble for the Crockers came in 1829 when



This was the stately home of John Crocker, now part of Shoreway Acres. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

those overseers voted “to converse with John Crocker to request him to put out [*i.e.*, indenture] his daughter Augusta & if he will not . . . to inform him that they shall put her out.” The overseers expected the able-bodied poor to work, and they reserved the right either to assign that work within the confines of the poorhouse, or to “bind out” those under their care through articles of indenture. Indentures were contracts whereby prosperous citizens would promise to feed, shelter, clothe, and educate a minor, in return for his or her service. In this way, young people could not only contribute towards their support, but they could also be taught useful skills, and thus increase their chances of escaping lifelong poverty.

The Crocker case is unusual, in that the overseers did not typically “request” people to bind out their children. Some parents did so voluntarily, making private arrangements on their own terms. Others, realizing they needed help, allowed the overseers to act in loco parentis. The involvement of the overseers in Augusta’s future suggests that her father had asked for some form of town assistance. Likely still reeling from his failure and clinging to a semblance of gentility, John Crocker did not want his thirteen-year-old daughter bound out, but he had no choice. In January 1830 the overseers, assuming a custodial role, voted to “bind out Augusta Crocker to Capt. Nathaniel Eldred” of West Falmouth. Within the year, her parents and younger siblings resorted to a two-month stay in the poorhouse. Here, they may have worked on the attached farm, growing their own food, or more probably they “picked oakum”—a tedious chore, unravelling old ropes into a mass of fuzzy fiber to be sold to shipowners, who then used it to plug leaks on their ships.

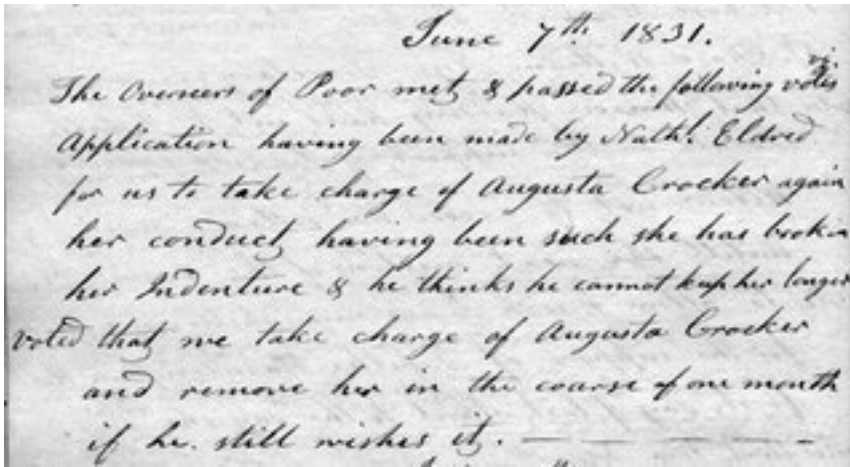


Thatcher Lewis (1772-1842) was one of the Overseers of the Poor who was sent to argue with John Crocker about the indenture of Augusta Crocker. Courtesy of Falmouth Historical Society.

Meanwhile, Augusta was not submitting meekly to her fate. She had not been brought up to be a servant, and perhaps her father’s opposition to the indenture emboldened her. She raised enough havoc in the Eldred household so that on June 7, 1831, her master requested the overseers “to take charge of Augusta Crocker again, her conduct having been such she has broken her indenture & he thinks he cannot keep her longer.” In Falmouth records, instances of a master trying to return a rebellious servant are rare. Mindful of who her father and grandfather were, and might be again, Eldred may have been reluctant to use disciplinary measures on Augusta that would have brought other servants into line.



The Falmouth Poor House on East Main Street ca. 1888. Now the Edward Marks Jr. building. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.



This official notice of June 7th states that the Overseers voted to take charge of Augusta Crocker because she had broken her indenture in the household of Nathaniel Eldred.

John, Susan, and their four youngest spent another nine-month stint in the poorhouse in 1832-33. Showing flashes of the commanding spirit that had once quelled a mutiny in the Pacific, John clashed with the overseers, who insisted that he was breaking their rules by seeking outside employment. Sensibly, John believed that finding a job outside the poorhouse was the only way he was going to get his family off town assistance. The determined 60-year-old finally succeeded, and the Crockers left the poorhouse for good in 1833. In 1840, John Crocker was once again the head of his own household in Falmouth.

As for Augusta, she seems to have gone her own way. For a while she lived in Tisbury, then returned to the Falmouth poorhouse, alone, for two months in 1839. Thanks to dogged detective work by a research volunteer, we know

that Augusta moved to New Bedford and eventually married a farmer, Isaac Jennings. She had at least two sons, Roland and Alfred—named after two of her brothers. Augusta's sister Susan, unmarried, was living with the Jennings household in the 1860 census. Black sheep or not, Augusta maintained at least some family ties. She died in Dartmouth, aged 86, in 1901. Descendants of hers were living in New Bedford in 1920, and some may be there still.

About the Authors: Meg Costello is the Research Manager at the Falmouth Historical Society's Museums on the Green where she writes and edits the "Untold Tales of Falmouth" blog. Terry White and Thelma Spicer are volunteers at the Museums who provided research for this article.



Woods Hole Historical Museum

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whhmdirector@gmail.com

woodsholemuseum.org

Museum open June 18 to October 2, 2022
11 AM to 3 PM, Tuesday through Saturday

Archives open year-round, Tuesday & Thursday, 9 AM to 1 PM. Admission: Free, donations welcome.

Guided Walking Tours of Historic Woods Hole, Tuesdays 10 AM (July-August) and by appointment.

Upcoming Events:

August 2, Annual meeting with talk by Brian Switzer on Woods Hole Yacht Club's 125th anniversary at Church of the Messiah, 5 PM

August 26, Oyster Talk and Tasting, Museum courtyard, 5 to 7 PM

2022 Exhibits:

"History of Woods Hole" — Gallery one

"Left Behind: Clues to Life in the Past on Cape Cod" — Gallery two

"Honoring Jewel Plummer Cobb" banner in hallway

Banners of historic Woods Hole will be displayed outdoors

Campus:

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, our 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.

Visit woodsholemuseum.org for a full list of programs and events.



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

Museums are open May 28 – October 8,
10 AM to 2 PM, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday,
and Saturday

Tours of the Museums' campus are at 10:30
AM and 12:30 PM. Tour includes the Wicks
House, Conant House, cannon shed, and
gardens.

Admission: Members, children under 12, and
active military, FREE; Non-Members, \$15

Historic Walking Tours around Falmouth
Village are 10 AM Tuesday, Wednesday,
Friday, and Saturday (weather permitting)

Admission: Members, \$5; Non-Members,
\$10. Meet at 55 Palmer Ave. at 9:45 AM.
Tours last 75-90 minutes. Routes vary; check
the website for details.

Research library open Tuesdays and
Thursdays, 10 AM-2 PM by appointment.
Email meg@museumsonthegreen.org to
make an appointment.

2022 Exhibits

Without Julia (Wicks House)

Falmouth: Changing with the Times
(Conant House)

The Age of Whaling (Conant House)

Cash, Credit, or Eels: Shopping Local in the 1820s
(Hallett Barn)

Chris Gall's America the Beautiful (Cultural
Center)

2022 Programs Include

July 23, Sea Shanty: A Maritime Musical
Event

August 12, Katharine Lee Bates Poetry Fest

August 20, Antique Sale

Visit museumsonthegreen.org for a full list of programs and events.



Photos, clockwise: David Epstein and his daughter Giselle built this rowboat together as a gift on her 10th birthday. Giselle is rowing the boat as her friend Ava Warner enjoys the ride. Courtesy Howie Roche.
 The original library building next to the old Lawrence High School which was built in 1895 and torn down in 1953. Courtesy Falmouth Public Library.
 The Church of the Messiah is framed by its historic cemetery. Courtesy Leonard Miele.

