



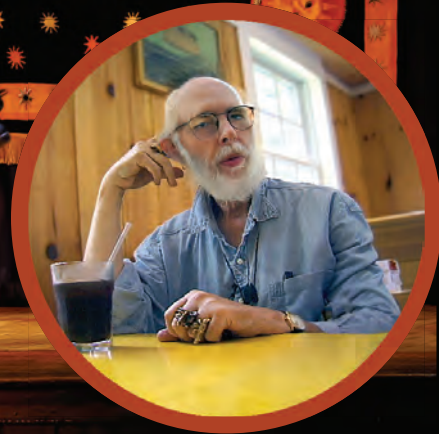
Sprintsail

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



Dance as a Woods Hole Tradition



Memories of Edward Gorey

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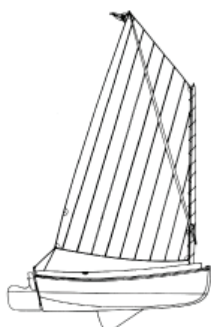
The Woods Hole Historical
Museum is located on the
traditional and sacred land of
the Wampanoag people who
still occupy this land, and whose
history, language, traditional way
of life, and culture continue to
influence Cape Cod.

On the Front Cover: Benjamin Miller Angell and Lucia Gómez-Ibáñez of Nobska Lights Morris and Sword perform a “split caper” as part of a Morris dance, December 2023, at Woods Hole Community Hall (Photo by Dorene Sykes Photography). Edward Gorey at Jack’s Outback for lunch, August 1998 (Photo by Christopher Seufert Photography).

On the Back Cover: South Street Seaport Museum’s 1885 schooner *Pioneer*, formerly owned and operated as a work boat by Woods Hole’s Dan Clark (Photo by Richard Bowditch, courtesy of the South Street Seaport Museum Archives).

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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

The stories in this *Spritsail* issue range from a biography of Edward Gorey, eccentric and brilliant illustrator, artist, set designer and dramatist, to two articles that highlight the value of our museum's archives and facilities.

Leonard Miele has interviewed several Falmouth residents who interacted with Gorey, whose legacy is maintained at the Edward Gorey House museum in Yarmouth Port.

Our story on the history of dance in Woods Hole came about when Heather Payne, daughter of the recently deceased Sheila Payne, found the story in her mother's attic and donated it to the museum archives. She is not sure who wrote it, but the many dance enthusiasts of Woods Hole have loved reading it and endorse its authenticity, and so we share it with our readers. We include remembrances from several current leaders of the Woods Hole dance scene. There is so much information to share that we have decided to run a second story on this topic in our next issue.

Our article on the history of the schooner *Pioneer* began when Francesca Violich Kennedy and James Patrick Fitzpatrick paid their annual family visit to the WHHM. While walking through the Small Boat Museum, Francesca was stunned to find a model labeled *Pioneer*, now a sail training vessel owned by the South Street Seaport Museum in Manhattan that she sails in the waters surrounding New York City. She researched and wrote the ship's history, and interviewed Peter Bumpus, who worked with Dan Clark when Mr. Clark owned *Pioneer* at one point in her 139-year history.

And finally, we honor two beloved members of the museum community: Olivann Hobbie, former co-editor of *Spritsail*, who died in December 2023; and Beth Ready Liles, a member of the museum steering committee and designer for *Spritsail*, who passed away in May 2024. We are so grateful for their contributions to our journal.

In Tribute: Olivann Hobbie and Beth Ready Liles

Olivann Hobbie

Olivann Hobbie passed away on December 4, 2023 at the age of 88. From 2016 through 2022, Olivann was the devoted co-editor and contributing writer for this biannual journal. She was an exacting grammarian and will be missed as a valued asset to our editorial board. As a community leader and educator, she was one of the founding teachers of Falmouth Academy. Over a 37-year career, she served as the head of the school's English, History and Arts departments. Olivann will be remembered as a talented pianist who shared

her passion for music with her students and her friends, often hosting musical evenings at her home. Perhaps her most lasting legacy for *Spritsail* readers is the wonderful 17-page article "A Life in Motion" she wrote about the dancer Klara Koenig and the poignant poems she contributed to the journal during the past decade. The poem that follows captures Olivann's love of music and language as she describes the end of a Schubert sonata played by Paul Lewis:

"Listening to Paul Lewis Play Late Schubert Sonatas on a Winter Night"



Olivann Hobbie. (Photo by Susan Moffat)

O do not give that signal that we may now applaud—
For a long moment
let your miraculous hands remain still and aloft—
that the music may linger and sing to us beyond that last note.
For when your hands fall, we too must fall back into the ordinary.
Let Schubert's spirit hang above us, let us forget
That we belong, mostly, to the earth.
Let us float on this transcendent, inexplicable gift of music,
Transported beyond.

*"Olivann will be remembered
as a talented pianist who
shared her passion for
music with her students
and her friends."*



We are deeply saddened to report the passing of Beth Ready Liles, museum steering committee member and graphic designer of *Sprintsail*. She died on May 6 of this year at the age of 65 after a battle with cancer.

Beth Ready Liles



Beth was so talented and had the perfect sense of how to incorporate all our text and photos into this journal. She dealt with our last-minute edits and still could get her file to the printer for publication by deadline. She was also our social media expert, helping us to get the word out to the younger generation.

Beth was a good friend of all of us at the museum, supporting us as we set up for events and staying late to clean up. We will miss her more than we can express and are grateful for being part of her world.

Memories of Edward Gorey

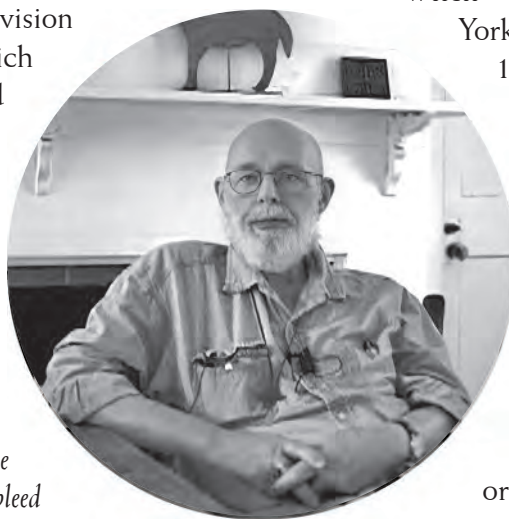
By Leonard Miele

The Edward Gorey House at 8 Strawberry Lane in Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts, is a major tourist attraction on Cape Cod. Built in the mid-1820s, this former sea captain's home was Edward Gorey's permanent residence from 1986 until his death on April 15, 2000 at the age of 75. The house is now a public museum celebrating Gorey's eclectic interests and accomplishments as an illustrator, author, set designer and dramatist. For almost half a century, Edward Gorey has been part of the American literary landscape, most notably for winning the 1978 Tony Award for designing the costumes for the Broadway production of *Dracula*, for creating the animated introductions to PBS's television show *PBS Mystery!*, which began airing in 1980, and for writing and illustrating 116 books and dozens of plays.

Gorey's books have been described as eccentric and macabre with such titles as *The Fatal Lozenge*, *The Sinking Spell*, *The Hapless Child*, *The Curious Sofa*, *The Glorious Nosebleed* and *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*. Each of these books is set in an Edwardian or

Victorian setting with captioned pen-and-ink illustrations, often with eerie or gruesome storylines. In *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, for example, Gorey creates a macabre alphabet for children:

A is for Amy who fell down the stairs
B is for Basil assaulted by bears ...
E is for Ernest who choked on a peach
F is for Fanny sucked dry by a leech ...



Gorey at his Yarmouth Port home in August 1999.
(Photo by Christopher Seufert Photography)

When Gorey moved from New York City to Yarmouth Port in 1986, he continued working on commercial illustration assignments, fabric arts, toy making, and etchings. His creative interests also turned to drama and he began writing and producing nonsensical, yet cerebral plays and puppet shows for audiences on Cape Cod. He organized an amateur theater troupe to perform these entertainments, a

repertory group of loyal actors who worked with him for the next 13 years. Four of those actors who live on the upper Cape have fond memories of working with Gorey over 30 years ago at the Woods Hole Theater Company in Falmouth, the Theater on the Bay in Bourne and the Cotuit Center for the Arts in Cotuit.

Cathy Smith, the finance manager for the Falmouth Art Center, is a veteran community actress who first met Edward Gorey in 1987 when she auditioned for his play *Lost Shoelaces*



Gorey and the puppets of his Le Theatricule Stoique puppet company. (Photo by Christopher Seufert Photography)

at the Woods Hole Theater Company. She became one of the original members of his acting group who would work with him during the last decade of his life. Gorey "had a quirky sense of humor," recalls Smith, and "he would just burst out laughing when he liked things the actors would do" at play rehearsals. "He took joy in working with people," especially

the actors and stage crews who brought his theatrical visions to life. Although "he was generally a private person, he was collegial with his actors" and would join them after rehearsals for sustenance at the Hearth and Kettle or the Silver Lounge in Falmouth. "He never discussed politics, but he loved talking about all the offbeat movies he saw at the former Nickelodeon movie theater in Falmouth. He always wore white sneakers, blue jeans, an occasional earring, and perhaps one

or two rings on each finger," all remnants of his bohemian days in New York City when he would wear long scarfs and full-length fur coats.

Gorey's *Lost Shoelaces* consists of 20 vignettes that were adapted from a group of his unpublished stories. Although it was called a musical entertainment presented by the Magical Oysters Theatre, the play was a series of unrelated, often incomprehensible, stories performed by Gorey's cadre of actors and

his puppet company known as Le Theatricule Stoique. One of the vignettes or playlets was titled "The Indeciphered Postcard" featuring Smith as Madame Grave-Aigue in a situation she describes "as plotless, with various people at a resort who have different accents." In "The Folded Napkin," an actor who is dressed in a black turtleneck and tights silently



MAGICAL OYSTERS THEATRE PRESENTS
 A MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT
 DEVISED AND DESIGNED BY EDWARD GOREY
 DIRECTED BY GENIE STEVENS
 THURSDAY THROUGH SUNDAY AT 8:00 PM
 AUGUST 13-16, 20-23, 1987
 WOODS HOLE COMMUNITY HALL
 TICKETS \$10 FOR RESERVATIONS CALL (617) 540-3603 OR 548-3984

Gorey's *Lost Shoelaces* consisted of 20 unrelated and often nonsensical vignettes, including "The Indeciphered Postcard" and "The Folded Napkin."

demonstrates the numerous ways a napkin can be folded, and in "The Besotted Mother," a child dressed in bunny fur is eaten by wild dogs while its mother shops for eggplants and the music of Frederic Chopin plays in the background.

According to Smith, *Lost Shoelaces* "was not everybody's cup of tea. It was peculiar and disturbing, and the audience had to be in the proper frame of mind to enjoy it." Gorey's "vision was not traditional, and he did not care if the audience was bored by the action of the play. He had no tolerance for the mundane or for the pacing or acting of his actors that would impose on his words. He wanted his words to speak for him and his vision."

Gorey "loved the puppets" he created for

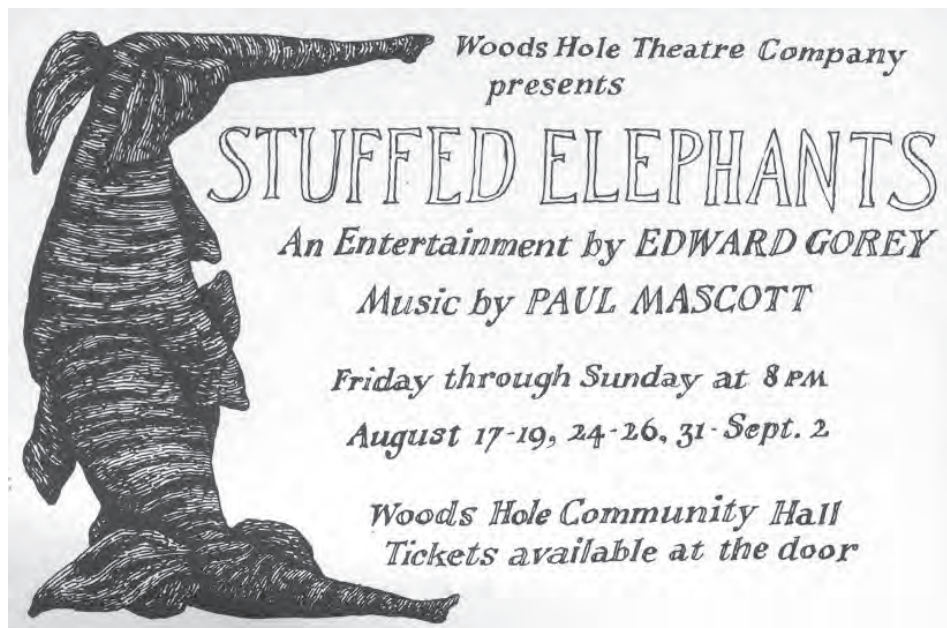
his plays. "He sewed all of them by hand out of pieces of cloth that would cover the puppeteer's hand. They had small, claylike heads with just eyes and a nose. Unless you were sitting in the front row of the theater, they were difficult to see." Smith recalls one incident during the rehearsal of the play *Lost Shoelaces*. In the vignette "The Bug Book," she was manipulating a clothespin puppet that she bounced up and down as energetically as possible. From the audience, Gorey asked her "to get more feeling, more emotion" into the character. Smith's retort: "It's just a clothespin!"

Bob Bock, the former director/advisor of the Falmouth High School Drama Club and member of the Massachusetts Educational

Theater Guild, has been acting and directing in local theater for over 30 years. He first met Gorey in 1990 when he became a cast member of *Stuffed Elephants*, Gorey's rather dark play about murder, incest and kidnapping. Bock notes that "the acting style he wanted was different from mine. He had a dry sense of humor and required only minimal acting from his cast, with very little stage direction. He often rewrote scripts, giving his actors their line changes during a dress rehearsal or on the day of a performance. I trained as a method actor, an analytical, internal approach to acting which summons up memories to enhance the life of a character." As a member of Gorey's acting troupe, however, Bock would not get to experience the character motivation or

structured script of a traditional play.

In *Stuffed Elephants*, Bock appeared in two significant vignettes: "The Abandoned Sock" and "The Admonitory Hippopotamus." Cast as the sock in the first vignette, he portrayed the sock as falling off a clothesline. It was a very physical performance in which he was blown over rocks, tumbled on the ground, and somersaulted across the stage. From the audience, during a rehearsal of the play, there was "an explosion of HA, a genuine belly laugh of joy" from Gorey and a sure sign of his approval. In "The Admonitory Hippopotamus," Bock was the hippopotamus who antagonized Smith's Angelica, a woman who cannot function as she is admonished by



Stuffed Elephants included the vignette "The Admonitory Hippopotamus," featuring local actors Bob Bock playing the hippopotamus and Cathy Smith playing the woman being admonished.

the hippo. When *Stuffed Elephants* ended, Bock lamented, "I'm always cast as an inanimate object or an animal. Will I ever be cast as a human being?"

Bock got his chance to be a human being in 1995 when he played the three roles of Cousin Ripley, Dennis and Herkimer Rusk in *Stumbling Christmas, or a Corpse in the HaHa*. This absurdist dark comedy reflects Gorey's admiration for the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett. The setting of the play is the Hellbent Hall estate in the wilds of Mortshire. The Stumbling family is arriving for a Christmas reunion, including Great Aunt Augusta, Great Uncle Augustus and their sister Charlotte. With tongue-in-cheek, Edward Gorey also introduces Mrs. Forsooth, Henrietta and George Toehold, Violet Gentian, Subfusc and Mrs. Uh who discovers a body in the haha. Contributing to the nonsense of this play, all the guests, who are described as professional page turners, have each brought a fruitcake to the reunion. Bock believes that when a cast of seven actors must play 19 characters "you are not using all your tools as an actor when your time is consumed by so many costume changes."

The puppets in *Stumbling Christmas* reenact past events and amusingly remind the audience of the snowfall outside. Bock recalls that the heads of the puppets never stayed on and his arms as a puppeteer often got tired. "The actors behind the puppet screen were all different heights and were constantly bumping and climbing over each other. We were almost pirouetting and in need of a choreographer."

According to Bock, he "wasn't a Goreyphile at times. To me he was a reserved man and not overly friendly." There were, however, "some people who gravitated to him and dressed like his famous drawings" that appeared in his popular books. He even "had a following of people who would come from New York City to see his plays in Falmouth and Bourne." Without question, Gorey "was very creative and you had to respect his artistry. He had a vision and you never doubted that he controlled the reins of that vision."

Jill Erickson, a former head reference librarian at the Boston Athenaeum and the retired head reference librarian of the Falmouth Public Library, was voted the most theatrical senior at her high school. Two decades after receiving this accolade, she was part of the backstage crew of Gorey's 1994 production of *Chinese Gossip* at the Theater on the Bay in Bourne. "He asked me to read from the script," recalls Erickson, "when I was there just to help out reading part of the script with someone else who was trying out. He ended up offering me a part in the play." Gorey wrote, directed and designed the sets and costumes for this entertainment with incidental music by Erik Satie. Four of the 15 vignettes were called "The Clueless Widow," "Helpless Doorknobs," "The Salt Herring" and "The Child of the Street." Not surprisingly, there was no plot to this play and the vignettes were not related in any way. Erickson soon "learned from this first show that people were either enthralled with every word of the play or they fell asleep." Gorey was indifferent to the size

of an audience and its reaction to his stories, and as actors "we all wanted to please Edward even more than the audience. We entertained him, and he enjoyed our using his words" and bringing them to life. "When I heard Edward laugh from the audience at some line a cast member said, I was delighted."

In 1995, Gorey designed and directed a production of Oscar Wilde's one-act play *Salome* at the Theater on the Bay, which he dedicated to George Balanchine, one of his cultural heroes. It was a serious endeavor with music by Richard Strauss. Although it was about the vindictive death of John the Baptist, played by Eric Edwards, there was a moment of levity in the play when Vincent Myette embraced his role of Salome and performed the dance of the seven veils with hilarious gusto. Appearing in her second Gorey production, Erickson was given five minor roles to play: the Young Syrian, the Blind Man, Tigellinus, a 3rd Jew and a 2nd Nazarene. She "did not think the play was one of Gorey's best productions. There were no crowd-pleasing puppets and all the dialogue was by Oscar Wilde. I always had more fun working with Edward's scripts."

The puppets, however, did appear in a small playlet called "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil" by Stuart Walker, which served as an opening act for *Salome*. With music by Igor Stravinsky, it is basically a morality play about a boy who is trying to keep a promise. Erickson notes that "there was something magical about the little hand puppets Edward made. People loved them as much as Edward loved making them. Sometimes they were enchanting,

and sometimes not at all." Theater critic George Liles was far from enchanted when he described the playlet as "a plodding and self-indulgent exercise."

In October of 1998, Gorey devised and directed the entertainment *English Soup* at the Cotuit Center for the Arts. With two overtures and 12 vignettes, this play was also taken on the road and performed at Storyopolis, a children's bookstore and gallery in Los Angeles over the following Halloween weekend. Among the vignettes listed in the program were "The Epileptic Bicycle," "The Doubtful Guests," "The Forgotten Trip," "Ferry I, II, and III," and "The Eggplant Frog," with musical accompaniment by Vivaldi, Ferdericks (sic), Muller, Mozart, Rosser and frogs. The program also noted that "the Ferry Tales were from the *Contes au bac* by Madame Machine, englished by Mrs. Regeera Dowdy." In typical Gorey fashion, he used ferry tales as a play-on-words of fairy tales, used the word englished as a playful Gorey verb, and used an anagram of his own name to acknowledge Regeera Dowdy.

Erickson felt "the trip to Los Angeles was an unbelievable adventure for the Gorey troupe of actors. Because of Edward's large fan base in California, we did five standing-room-only shows in three days." The audiences loved Cathy Smith's performance as Gertrude, a woman who would not leave her home because she was afraid of eggplants, and Eric Erickson's punchline after telling the audience he threw away a chain letter he did not believe in: "Nine days later, I died." For Erickson, the

most memorable lines of *English Soup* were the non sequiturs that Gorey wrote for each actor to end the play. Since "he loved librarians and they were important to him," he wrote the following litany about Jill:

Jill Erikson refuses to check out library books.

Jill Erikson looks for shoes at yard sales.

Jill Erikson sits in hotel lobbies.

Jill Erikson is learning to tat antimacassars.

Jill Erikson admires Lizzie Borden.

Eric Edwards, a well-known Woods Hole poet, educator and postal carrier, was one of the most valued core members of Gorey's acting company. He was both a theatrical colleague and as close a friend to the reclusive Gorey as anyone could be. One afternoon in 1992, while attending a performance of *Amphigorey* at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Edwards spotted Gorey sitting in the middle of the theater all by himself amid empty seats. Whether or not Gorey preferred this isolation, Edwards sat next to him, determined to keep him company. "I felt comfortable with the man and shared many of the same interests, including a surreal view of the world and a Japanese aesthetic of the movies and theater." For almost 30 years, Gorey attended almost every performance of the New York City Ballet until George Balanchine, its director,

died in 1983. In like fashion, Edwards notes, "my parents shared with me their love of ballet, serving as trustees of the Boston Ballet Company." Just as books and poetry are important to Edwards, Gorey accumulated more than 20,000 books during his lifetime. His interests were totally eclectic, from his love of reading, viewing Japanese movies, attending the opera and ballet, and being an avid fan of "The Golden Girls" and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

According to Edwards, "writing nonsense is actually more difficult than writing ordinary narrative." When Gorey writes about the fear of eggplants, catapulting babies, animated socks and clothespins, and the switching of gender roles, he is whimsical and macabre at the same time. Edwards notes that an audience "can't impose its own values on Gorey's plays." When a child is eaten by a wolf in *Lost Shoelaces*, for example, one cannot judge the act as violent. From a surreal or absurdist point of view, Gorey "demonstrated there is no separation of the beastiality of humans and anything elevated or exalted."

"The classic example of a Gorey entertainment," says Edwards, is *Blithering Christmas* in which he appeared in 1992. This nonsensical play had "a storyline, even though it didn't go anywhere." The absurdist plot with "catapulting babies and fruitcakes" takes place in the nursery of Blithering Hall in Victorian England. Edwards played Otto, an automaton who was left in charge of three children with Odile, a crocodile nanny. In 1996, he also appeared in *Stumbling Christmas* about the

Stumbling family reunion at Hellbent Hall. He played three roles: the gender-bending Great Aunt Augusta, the Great Uncle Augustus and Subfusc. As Edwards notes, "Christmas is so cliched, reiterating the same holiday events over and over again. Gorey is a breath of fresh air" with his whimsical, unorthodox depictions of Christmas.

The *Epistolary Play*, presented in 1997 at the Cotuit Center for the Arts, is one of Edwards' favorite Gorey plays. As a satire of A.R. Gurney's *Love Letters*, two actors read letters while portraying 12 amusing characters. These roles were rotated at each performance among three actors: Edwards, Jane MacDonald and Joe Richards. The plot is as absurd as any Gorey play can be. A priceless Hingeless Lump, whatever that may be, has been stolen from St. Cucumber's School for Girls. In the process of solving this mystery, a panoply of witty characters is introduced to the audience. Among the most unforgettable are the explorer Elihu Hatrack, the actress Dame Esme Waffle, the aviator Dugold McMoot and the foreigner Madame Tilde Umlaut-Cedilla, whose name is a play-on-words similar to Madame Grave-Aigue in *Lost Shoelaces*.

Gorey had a heart attack on April 12, 2000 and, recalls Edwards, "he remained in a coma for three days before his New York lawyer gave the directive to turn off his life support." Gorey, aged 75, had been working on the libretto of his final play, *White Canoe*. The *Falmouth Enterprise* described the play as "an Opera Seria for hand puppets, a tongue-in-cheek mini opera featuring soprano Joan Kirchner, mezzo Joan

MacFarlan, baritone Michael Weber and tenor Thom Dutton. The play opened on September 1, 2000 at the Cotuit Center for the Arts just four and a half months after Gorey's death, with Edwards and Bob Bock performing as two puppeteers.

Eleven years would pass before Edwards and Bock would appear again with the puppets at a public event. On June 25, 2011, they joined many of Gorey's friends and colleagues to celebrate his life and to spread his remaining ashes around his Yarmouth Port home. Key to this event was a classic story about Jill Erickson and her pet cat Jane. When Edward Gorey died, his estate sought homes for his five cats, with the assurance that all their lifelong health expenses would be paid by their own lawyers in New York. Erickson was the grateful recipient of Jane Cujo Gorey, whose medical bills were paid by the law firm of Collyer and Boose for the remaining 10 years of her life. In typical Gorey fashion, it was agreed that when the five cats died their ashes would be mixed with Gorey's ashes and placed on the grounds of his Cape Cod home. With Jane's death in 2011, the celebratory event in Yarmouth Port featured Gorey's beloved puppets. Edwards notes that as puppeteers, "we wore the gloved puppets and handed the people the ashes" as a final tribute to Edward Gorey.

About the Author:

Leonard Miele is a member of the *Spritsail* editorial board and the author of the biography *Voice of the Tide: the Cape Cod Years of Katharine Lee Bates*.



Dance as a Woods Hole Tradition

From the Archives, with contributions by Salley Mavor, Bill Roslansky, Jan Elliott and Ellie Armstrong

Introduction

In November 2023, former Falmouth resident Heather Payne thoughtfully donated an unpublished manuscript to the Woods Hole Historical Museum about the history of folk and other styles of dancing in Woods Hole. She had discovered the manuscript, along with editorial notes, in the house of her late mother, Sheila Payne.

The *Spritsail* editorial board decided to publish the article in full, together with remembrances from other local residents involved in dancing, as the first in a series of articles about the history of dance in the Falmouth area. Although we have been unable to determine the author of the manuscript, it appears to have been written in late 1981.

Sheila Payne, who passed away on September 27, 2023, was a creative force of nature. In the 1960s, she and her friend Stella Livingston started a bag lunch business in Woods Hole that developed first into the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution's Endeavour House lunchroom and then the beloved Buttery on WHOI's Quissett campus.

An avid folk dancer, as well as a singer and batik artist, Sheila also helped to establish the Woods Hole May Festival and other folk

dancing events that continue to this day.

In donating the manuscript, Heather Payne noted the influence of both her father, Richard Payne, and her late mother on her own lifelong interest in dance. As she wrote:

"Both my parents were involved in the Woods Hole dancing scene, my dad as a musician and mom dancing. There were stories of me as an infant in a basket on the stage in the Community Hall during folk dancing. Apparently I was quiet when the music played and cried when it stopped. My parents instilled the love of dance in me and I still do folk dancing where I now live in Gainesville, Florida."

History of Dance in Woods Hole

(As written circa 1981)

The history of a lively Woods Hole interest in English country and other folk and international dancing seems to date to the mid-1930s and summer gatherings on Fay Road organized by Dr. Leonard and Dorothy Olcott Elsmith. The house on what was then the Witte property had burned down, and the foundation was covered over to provide a lovely ocean-view setting for Friday afternoon dancing to Victrola music. These activities were followed by a swim in Nantucket Sound.

The Elsmiths had participated in the 10-day Folk Dancing Festival in London about 1934 and were taken with the beautiful traditional music and the set, formal patterns of the English country dances, especially. They also danced on occasion with the English Country Dance Society in Boston.

Mrs. Elsmith describes her husband as particularly graceful at the dance patterns. The Friday dances included Mrs. Elsmith's five children, who bore the surname of her first husband, Dr. Frederick Lamont Gates, who died in 1933 when the children were small. The Elsmith/Gates family interest in dance continued into 1981 as at least one of them, Deborah Senft (Mrs. Alfred Senft), and her daughter joined in the weekly village dance sessions.

The strains of country dance music from the Victrola could be heard on the Sound over several summers until the war diverted family interests to other matters.

From the early to mid-1940s, a large number of young people employed by WHOI's war effort were housed in the Fisheries residence building. Square dancing was popular among this group in 1946 and 1947 with Hank Catley, a Navy 7 project draftsman, as a principal organizer. Barbara Bunker (Mrs. Andrew Bunker) reports that Catley used to keep speakers and record-playing equipment in his car, and a dance could be organized "at the drop of a hat." The Community Hall was the usual setting for the square dances, which seem to have taken place more or less weekly,

although in summer the group sometimes moved outdoors to the parking lot where the WHOI Smith Laboratory now stands.

The MBL (Marine Biological Laboratory) Club was the setting for square and contra dances for many years beginning in the early 1940s. Barbara Little (Mrs. Elbert Little), who has been a major force in continuing the dancing tradition in Woods Hole, remembers that her interest was first sparked in August of 1944 when she was expecting her fifth child. Having sent the students living in her house off to a dance she knew about at the MBL Club, and just settled down for a bit of peace, she was roused by the returning students complaining that "there weren't enough girls" and wouldn't she come along and help out. She did, "and a whole new life began," she says.

Throughout the forties, a regular summer Wednesday night MBL Club square dance flourished, and the fifties brought frequent Saturday square dances. Well-known callers Ted Sannella and Charlie Webster were among the musicians and callers from Boston enticed to Woods Hole by the enthusiastic group made up of scientists, students and their families. The Littles' house was also a frequent site for dancing.

When Jim and Mary Mavor began spending summers in Woods Hole, they brought additional sustaining enthusiasm for folk dancing. Jim had a lifelong interest in folk dancing through his mother, who was a physical education teacher at Skidmore College. When he was in San Francisco during the war, Jim



Woods Hole Folk Orchestra providing music for the dancers at Community Hall, mid 1970s.
(Photo courtesy of Ann Little Newbury)

was folk dancing as much as four times a week — there were some 25,000 people interested in folk dancing there and several groups meeting each night, he reports. Mary became interested in international and folk dancing while a student at the Rhode Island School of Design. “I went to Boston after graduation to look for a job because the dancing was good there,” she remembers.

Barbara Little and Jim and Mary Mavor spelled one another at the microphone during the summer dancing at the MBL Club during the forties and fifties. The Mavors moved to Woods Hole year-round in 1961 and since that time have been the mainstays of weekly, and

sometimes more frequent, dances for many years. These have included New England-style squares, which are partly French in origin — dances with simple figures for which the music is more important than the caller; contra or line dancing, a New England tradition based in English and Scottish country dancing, which have also enjoyed local popularity; and international dances — Balkan, Israeli, Scandinavian, Russian and others. Whatever the current interest, there has been international dancing every Wednesday night, rain or shine, sometimes including Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve (the occasion for marathon dancing!) for 21 years. Thirty to 40 dancers participated at the

height of wintertime interest and as many as 80 in the summer. From October 1976 to the present, there has also been monthly Saturday night square and contra dancing with the well-known caller Tony Parkes.

A folk orchestra with Dick Payne and Jim Mavor as principal organizers has been important to the success of these gatherings since 1975. The Woods Hole Folk Orchestra has spawned two well-known folk orchestras, Swallowtail and Fiddleheads, when players have moved on to other places, and has been in demand for the annual New England Folk Festival.

Another small group of dancers led by Bob Guillard concentrated for some years on

English country dancing. Bob came to Woods Hole as a postdoctoral researcher at WHOI in 1954 and joined the staff in 1958. He has just moved to Maine, but a relative newcomer, Emily Ferguson, is continuing the English country dancing tradition with bi-weekly meetings.

Bob Guillard was also a prime mover in a Morris dancing group initiated in Woods Hole in 1966 and continuing today under Emily's tutelage. Morris dances are an English tradition said to predate Christ. They are associated with rites of spring and a mystical enhancement of fertility in crops and people. The white-costumed Morris dancers have enlivened many a Woods Hole event with their drum and penny-whistle music, bells on their knees, flying white handkerchiefs, clacking sticks, and flying leaps known as capers.

Another group that shares its enthusiasm with the community frequently is the Woods Hole Scottish Country Dance Society. Barbara Little was first enchanted with Scottish dancing at the New England Folk Festival held at the Boston YWCA in 1949. She immediately joined the group, which had been meeting for about a year then and which later became the first American branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society headquartered in Edinburgh. At the urging of Mary



Morris Dancers.
(Photo by Dorene Sykes Photography)



Dancing down Albatross Street during the May Festival in the early 1970s.



Barbara Little and Jim Mavor lead the way across the drawbridge in the parade.

(Photos courtesy of Ann Little Newbury)

Mavor and Mel Briscoe (who had seen her demonstrating a Scottish country dance at a Robert Burns birthday celebration in Boston), Barbara organized a group in Woods Hole in 1978 after she moved here. Meeting Thursdays first at WHOI's Endeavour House and later at Community Hall, as many as four sets of eight people have participated. The Scottish dancers have enjoyed their own pipers — four different pipers have played with them with Bill MacLeish being the most regular one. The group's fourth Scottish ball is scheduled for March of 1982. These gala occasions have drawn many dancers from the Boston area.

The Scottish and Morris dancers have been regular performers at such community events as the May Festival and Renaissance Fair, and they have participated in welcoming ceremonies for WHOI ships after long cruises.

Many folk dancing demonstrations have been done for local schools, especially Woods Hole and Teaticket Schools. A locally organized Christmas revels in Falmouth in 1976 featured the dance groups.

Mel Briscoe, one of the most active members of the dancing groups as of this writing, offers the following comments on them:

"The tradition associated with most folk and country dances is that they are done by the common people, the simple folk of the country, hence the name. This aspect is so strong that in some of the countries of origin their native, traditional dancing style is dying out as the young people move to urban areas and reject their roots. There are exceptions, notably Scottish country dancing, which has always been a social form for everyone from

lowliest peasant to kilted highland chief.

It is in this spirit of the shared joy for all that dance flourishes in Woods Hole, where a Greek line dance may be executed by a world-famous oceanographer beside a high-school student born of Cape Verdean immigrants, or a Scottish country dance may be enjoyed by dancers name[d] Lajthe, Schimmel, Mavor and Schlee."

Ballet and modern dance have also bloomed in Woods Hole. Klara Koenig began teaching in Community Hall when she and her husband, Zoltan, moved to Woods Hole in 1961 after many summers here. As a Hungarian student, Klara studied at the famous Rudolf von Laban School in Germany, the basic school of the modern dance world. The Koenigs moved to New York City in 1941 and to Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1947, where Klara had her first studio. She taught all ages from 4-year-olds to grandmothers in her creative movement, classical ballet and modern dance classes at Community Hall until 1980, when she began concentrating on her classes at the Cape Cod Conservatory and at St. Barnabas Hall. She has launched a number of more than casual dancers, notably five professionals who began together as fourth graders and who are all now about 28. They are Dianne Hulburt (who dances as Dianne McPherson), Lynn Hirsey, Lynn Elliott, Georgiana Holmes and Marla Bingham.

A resident modern dance company formed in the summer of 1981 as the Summer Dance Theater has continued beyond its "summer"

designation under the guidance of Heather Shepley. Heather had danced, taught and worked with school-related companies in Hawaii and Florida and joined Conservatory classes here. Invited to stage a performance for the Arts Alive festival in Falmouth, she gathered 20 adult dancers and a technical staff headed by Bill Lange. That performance was followed by another at the MBL Club, and continued enthusiasm has carried the group to a schedule of quarterly performances at various locations and a New York engagement planned for March of 1982.



Mary and Jim Mavor, 1949.
(Photo courtesy of Salley Mavor)



Woods Hole Village Morris at the Waterfront Park, late 1990s. (Photo courtesy of Jan Elliott)

Here is a closing word from Mel Briscoe:

"The combination of traditional and modern dancing in Woods Hole offers a variety of moods in which one can participate: the quiet reverie of a Greek line dance suits the mid-winter ocean rolling continuously onto the beaches; gay abandon cloaked in precision describes the Scottish country dances and the scientific community; and sweeping, challenging choreography of the modern dancers displays a contrast of movements and patterns that mimics the breadth and verve of the Woods Hole residents.

It is not surprising that the interest in dance in Woods Hole is so strong: it combines physical and intellectual efforts to produce satisfying patterns and activity, while being sociable, as well. It is time, someone said, that keeps everything from happening at once. It is surely the spirit of Woods Hole itself that keeps dance happening here."

We welcome any additional information about the article and local dance history in general, as well as archival photographs. Please contact whbmspritsail@gmail.com.

Mary and Jim Mavor: Folk Dancing Memories

By Salley Mavor

From the start, folk dancing was an ever-present part of my parents' life together and a way to connect with their community.

They met and fell in love while folk dancing in Boston in the late 1940s. When our family transitioned from being summer people in Woods Hole to living there year-round in 1961, it was only natural for my parents to teach folk dancing at the Woods Hole Community Hall.

For more than 50 years, running the weekly international folk dances and monthly contra dances was their mission. Every Wednesday night my father would lug the heavy record

player and boxes full of 45s, 78s and LPs down to the Community Hall. Through our parents' example, my sister, brother and I learned the value of creating a regular time and place for people to gather and let loose to the melodies and rhythms of music from different parts of the world.

My mother always stressed the social benefits of the dances, including countless match-making successes and the fostering of friendships across generations. The fact that dancing in Woods Hole has continued for years after they've passed on and is still a defining feature of the uniqueness of our community is a testament to their vision and dedication.

Woods Hole Folk Dancing Is Still Going Strong

By Bill Roslansky

The Mavors are who I credit as the driving force behind Woods Hole folk dancing, which is still going strong. They had their inimitable styles of leading and teaching dance. Mary would summarize a dance and just start the music. Learning was often "monkey see and monkey do," fine for what we now call visual learners.

Hartley Hoskins was an ardent supporter for decades lugging in the old equipment, and folks like Jan Elliott, Nina Tannenwald, Rocky Korr, Jeremy Korr and I still pitch in to teach the dances. Rich and Ellie Armstrong have been here throughout, helping with music and remembering the footwork. We encourage the younger folk to teach a dance of their choosing

and we have even had 6-year-old kids teach.

Summers remain the most active season for folk dancing. The hall is packed and toward the end of an evening there is a large exodus of folks to the drawbridge for jumping into the Eel Pond channel. (There is a reminder for no wet bathing suits on our beautiful wooden dance floor.) Some evenings the adult diehard dancers jump off the bridge and then swim out and around Dyer's dock and arrive at the back of the Landfall Restaurant for a cocktail. Lots of fun is had swimming through the dark black night, joking about sharks, and who is the last swimmer in the pack.

There is a winter spinoff of little kid folk dancing, which is popular and led by Marcie Van Cleave. There are contradances year-round on the first Saturday of each month serenaded by the Woods Hole Folk Orchestra. It is wonderful good fun.

Many of us have been strongly influenced by folk dancing in our early years. It has led into lifestyles of contra dancing, swing dance, ballroom, sword, rapper, Morris, and any kind of dancing you might imagine. It is a healthy and joyful part of growing up, and a social introduction no matter where life leads you.

Thank you, Mary and Jim Mavor, for launching us on our dancing ways!

Future Looks Bright For Morris And Longsword Dancing

By Jan Elliott

Morris dancing, an ancient English tradition, came to Woods Hole in the early 1970s, thanks to Bob Guillard. Bob was a member of America's oldest team, the Pinewoods Morris Men. His group of men and boys danced at the May Festival and other local occasions. Incidentally, my own Morris career was inspired when Bob told me girls couldn't dance Morris; by high school graduation I had started my own team in Boston.

The second iteration of Woods Hole Morris was a mixed men's and women's team, founded by Emily Ferguson and Steve Adams in 1980. Excluded from America's biggest Morris event, the Marlboro Morris Ale, which was for single-sex teams only, they hosted the first ever Mixed Morris Ale in 1981. (The Marlboro Morris Ale now welcomes mixed teams, and the Mixed Morris Ale continues as well.)

Morris in Woods Hole continued with Woods Hole Village Morris, founded by my husband Tim Radford, a pioneer of village revivals in England. It thrived for several years in the late 1990s, but eventually folded due to an aging membership.

Meanwhile, longsword dancing had developed on Martha's Vineyard with the Vineyard Swordfish. Eventually I joined this team, and after a few years it moved to the mainland, where it now thrives in Woods Hole.

Rapper sword dancing has also been performed by local young people — for almost two decades — first by Clownfish Rapper, a spinoff of Vineyard Swordfish founded by its younger members, and more recently the Nobska Lights, a thriving team of rapper and Morris dancers. Most Nobska Lights dancers started as children, and the oldest are now graduating from high school. One member has joined the Swordfish, making it a truly intergenerational team once again.

The future looks bright for Morris and sword dancing in Woods Hole.

Dancing Is Dear To Her Heart

Ellie Armstrong

I started when I was about 7 or 8, going with other kids to the MBL Club for folk dances. For a while square dances were held at the Woods Hole Golf Club, and I remember looking for turtle eggs in the sand traps after the dance.

I left Woods Hole for a time, and returned in 1981. My husband Rich and I got involved with the Woods Hole Folk Orchestra; I was on fiddle, Rich on concertina, with Jim Mavor on accordion and Dick Payne on hammer dulcimer. Then we began playing at the dances in Community Hall on the first Saturday of the month. These continue to be held year round. The folk orchestra plays all kinds of dance music, from contra and square to the more complicated English and Scottish folk songs.

I discovered folk music after years of violin lessons and playing classical music. It was

more fun! Smaller groups, where we could work on harmonies and in riffs, were much more relaxed and fun.

I have also been running the family dance on Sunday afternoons at the Community Hall with Marcie Van Cleave for 30 years. I took over from Mary Mavor.

Dancing is near and dear to my heart. It is an important part of the Woods Hole community.



Marcie Van Cleave has taught family dancing at Woods Hole Community Hall for 30 years. She is pictured here with her 7-year-old grandson Ben O Flatharta at family dancing in April 2024. Ellie Armstrong continues to organize the family dancing events. (Photo by Deborah Scanlon)

The Odyssey of *Pioneer*

By Francesca Violich Kennedy and James Patrick Fitzpatrick

By now it's become a family tradition to visit the Woods Hole Historical Museum each summer. Together we stroll through the familiar rooms, pointing out details in the scale model of the town, showing visiting friends the ship in a walnut shell, and standing transfixed by the looping footage from "Down to the Sea in Ships." As we shuffle through the galleries (and make a mental note of the new hat colors in the gift shop), the excitement builds until the moment we can cross the small side yard and swing open the barn doors of

the WHHM's Small Boat Museum. Here the long summer days of a century ago are still alive. Running our hands along the gunwales of the Buzzards Bay Boy's Boat or the old Knockabout, we envy the days when teenagers were captains of their own gaff-rigs and knew the tides and currents as well as Eldridge (of *Eldridge Tide and Pilot Book*) did.

Last summer, as I took in the details of the room more slowly, trying to identify the signal flags and yacht club burgees lining the walls,



Pioneer as she sails today in New York. (Photo by Richard Bowditch, courtesy of the South Street Seaport Museum Archives)



Schooners off Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard.
(Photo courtesy of Marine Biological Laboratory)

my companion James called me over to an unassuming boat model hanging just behind the Herreshoff's bow. I had spent a week on the *Clearwater* earlier that summer up on the Hudson River, and the model's rig and hull seemed familiar to me. I took a cursory peek at the label on the off-chance I would recognize the name of some bygone Hudson River Sloop. But the label said:

Pioneer, Delaware Bay Cargo Sloop

Built in Marcus Hook, PA 1885

The model in front of me was red-and-white-hulled, single-masted, tiller-helmed. But I know *Pioneer*. In fact, I sail on her multiple times a week in New York Harbor. I'm used to the sounds of *Pioneer*: the gentle sounds of her sails flapping, the water breaking on her bow. I'm used to her look, too: black-hulled with two steel masts and a gray deck, white spars and green trim. And I'm used to seeing her where she usually is: bobbing peacefully in the wakes

of ferries in Manhattan's waterways. The 1885 schooner *Pioneer*, owned by the South Street Seaport Museum, spends her days as a sail training vessel doing educational and charter sails around the New York Harbor, a program on which thousands of New Yorkers, including myself, have learned marlinspike seamanship. So what was a model of her doing here in Woods Hole?

We had walked into a mystery in this old cedar shed. We hope, in this short article, to consider the life of *Pioneer*, how she fits into ship-making tradition, and her connections to Woods Hole — and why her model, displaying a rig she hasn't had since the late 1800s, is in the WHHM boat museum in the first place.

Every *Pioneero*, as sailors on *Pioneer* are familiarly called, knows at least three basic things about her: that she was built in 1885, that she was made of iron, and that she is from Pennsylvania.

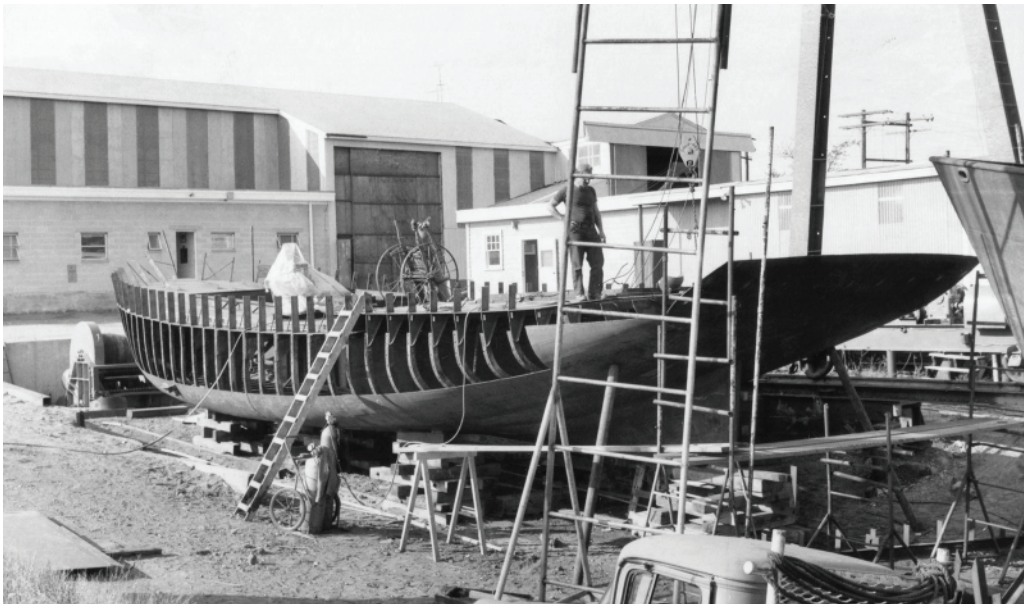
Built in 1885 as a cargo sloop, *Pioneer's* early days were spent freighting sand from Collins Beach to the foundries at Chester Rollings Mills, an iron and steel works established in 1873 by shipbuilder John Roach. The vast majority of cargo sloops built in United States shipyards at the time were constructed from wood. Roach, however, already had a solid history of iron ship construction with vessels like the *Kaulani* (1882) and was responsible for later creating — as the industry moved from iron to steel — the ABCD ships, the Navy's first four steel vessels (USS *Atlanta*, *Boston*, *Chicago* and *Dolphin*). *Pioneer*, built at just the

right time before the advent of steel ships, is the first and only surviving iron cargo sloop built in the United States.

In today's world of gigantic cargo ships and their shipping containers, the phrase cargo sloop no longer confers much meaning. In fact, many nautical words, such as sloop, schooner, jibboom and baggywrinkle, were once as well-known to the layman as tech terms like clouds, blockchains and AI are today. The cargo sloop 150 years ago was the (rather elegant) inshore workhorse of the American maritime scene: a trusty vessel of one mast with a gaff-rigged mainsail; in the model of *Pioneer*, the gaff spar is not raised and therefore sits above the boom, a jib, and often a topmast for carrying a topsail. (Cargo sloops could likely even have set a

flying jib or a jib topsail, too!)

Cargo sloops were not unique to the Delaware Bay. They were the box trucks and tractor trailers of the 19th and early 20th century, and could be found along the entire Eastern seaboard, including Woods Hole and Vineyard Sound. They used long tillers instead of wheels, and often had a slightly elevated quarterdeck. Sloops were reliable and efficient: they could cruise along at a respectable 5 to 6 miles per hour on the Hudson, for example, and had plenty of space for both cargo and crew. These sloops were once as plentiful as seagulls, their skippers masterfully maneuvering them along coasts and into ports loaded with the materials that would build American cities and industry: stone, sand, timber, steel. They often also



Pioneer during her repairs at Gladding-Hearn. Her original iron ribs can be seen here.
(Photo courtesy of the South Street Seaport Museum Archives)

carried passengers, foodstuffs, even mail — albeit two-day delivery was not yet guaranteed.

As fate would have it, *Pioneer* was only a sloop for a brief part of her long life. In 1895, just 10 years after she was launched, *Pioneer* was re-rigged as a coastal schooner, a two-masted vessel. Why the change, if sloops were so well-suited for their work? Well, several factors likely motivated this. The first (as always) was economics: a sloop, with its single enormous mainsail, required six men to hoist and handle it, whereas a schooner, with the sail area divided between multiple masts, could be handled by just four. Another was the ease of handling: a schooner can “run” before the wind much better than a sloop of equal size. Booms on cargo sloops were hugely heavy and could be 75 — even 90 — feet long. In order for a sloop to sail downwind (i.e., with the wind behind it), its huge boom — and the mainsail attached to it — would have to be sheeted all the way out at almost a 90° angle to the vessel. One can imagine that ports and channels would have been a bit cramped; just imagine an 18-wheeler taking up the width of all of a highway like Route 28. In the end safety was also — finally — taken into account: a sudden change of wind could cause an accidental gybe, an uncontrolled swing of the boom across the deck from one side of the boat to the other. In strong winds with massive sails this presented real danger for the crew, who could be hit by the boom (often said to be the onomatopoeic origins of the term) or tangled up in the suddenly slack then taut sheet (rope) as the boom swung wildly. A sailor at the helm was

once decapitated by the mainsheet in a gybe on the sloop *James Coats* (*The Sloops of the Hudson*, p. 26). But safety of the boat itself was arguably more important to the ship owners than that of poor Jack Tar: these main booms were so enormously heavy that they could damage the mast if they were to smash against the standing rigging uncontrolled. We might add that uncontrolled gybe can still be dangerous in a schooner, but with a lighter, shorter and easier to handle boom, the potential for damage is somewhat minimized. Today’s young sailor is lucky to learn the dangers of accidentally gybing on an Opti or Sunfish, where the boom is really more of an unwelcome *thud*.

Our experience has only made me more impressed that cargo sloops only had six sailors. On our day sails aboard *Clearwater*, we often asked (and occasionally begged) for passengers to take part in hauling up the mainsail. Even with three crew members as halyard captains — one ready to go with a rousing short-haul shanty like “Haul Away Joe” — and 10 people on each line, it’s a serious effort. After all, with the boom and gaff, *Clearwater*’s mainsail weighs about 3,000 pounds. On the contrary, sailing on *Pioneer* with her schooner rig, two to three crew and six to seven volunteers can get the mainsail, foresail, staysail and jib up in less time — no shanty needed!

With this history for context, it is easy to understand why *Pioneer*’s rig — and that of many others — was changed to that of a schooner by her 10th birthday. In fact, as far as we have been able to research, this little model in the WHHM boat museum might



Pioneer as Dan Clark owned her. Compared to the South Street Seaport Museum's model, you can see the tough life *Pioneer* had led.
(Photo courtesy of the South Street Seaport Museum Archives)

be the only representation of her as a sloop. But we still haven't answered why we find this anachronistic model in Woods Hole of a ship born on the Delaware and currently living in New York? And so we come to — as one often does when it comes to tales of boatbuilding in Woods Hole — Dan Clark.

In her article in the Winter 2021 issue of *Spritsail*, "Dan Clark: Marine Contractor and Woods Hole Legend," Pamela Nelson has already written a touching and thoughtful overview of Clark's life and impact on Woods Hole, which I encourage all to read to get a more comprehensive view of this extraordinary man. Needless to say, Clark was a committed

marine contractor and boat restorer, and when he came across *Pioneer* in 1956, he surely saw something in her. Between 1885 and 1956, *Pioneer* had seen 14 owners, had lost her masts, had worn through multiple engines, and was registered in Philadelphia, New York, Boston and New Bedford. She spent the 1930s and half of the 1940s as an oil tanker at the Boston Fish Pier for the Hanley Oil Company. She then continued working as a lighter (a type of barge used to transfer goods and passengers to and from moored ships) for the Stanley Oil Company for another decade in New Bedford, until her compartments were no longer structurally sound enough to carry oil. And this was how Dan Clark found *Pioneer* in

1956: an old, beat-up hull, no masts, but still a workhorse, hiding her original glory.

As George Matteson writes in his *Centennial History of the Pioneer*, "Clark, a man ready to undertake almost any job so long as it has something to do with the water, fitted the *Pioneer* out with a small derrick on the bow and set a winch where the engine room trunk had been located. In the forward cabin he installed a stove to thaw out his divers. The *Pioneer* was thus transformed into a rough and ready vessel to engage in salvage, dock building, submarine cable repair, and now and then, equipment handling for the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution." And this was the rough work *Pioneer* would be used for during her decade or so in Woods Hole.

Although Dan is no longer with us, there are still a very few who remember *Pioneer* in Woods Hole. Peter Bumpus, who worked with Clark, recalls his impressions of *Pioneer* when she came to Woods Hole, as well as Dan's commitment to restoring vessels:

"[Dan Clark] was a dreamer. He would take on lost causes of all kinds.... He had a bunch of them, almost every one of them in disastrous condition, as the *Pioneer* was. What did I think about her when I first saw her? Well, she looked to me like a barge with a point on it. And that's about what she was, shoal draft. I'm sure the centerboard was gone by then, and there were no sticks in her except for a little short one, up on deck with a little boom on it. But none of the original masts were there. It had a wheelhouse to run

the boat from, which was painted bright red. It looked like an oversized shoebox with two windows on the front end with a brow over them. And really what it looked like was a tatted-up plaster wall. Oh my God, she was ugly. I think the rails were gone, but I'm not absolutely positive. But it was easy for them to get stuff over the side. She would carry a lot of weight. She was low, she was close to the water, so she was nice to work over the side."

Peter gave us an even more succinct impression, when we asked what color *Pioneer's* hull was at the time. The one-word answer: "Rust." Despite her less-than-aesthetic look, *Pioneer* was a solid vessel for a while, or as Peter puts it, "She was perfectly seaworthy. She just leaked like hell."

When one thinks of the tall ships likely to be seen now in Vineyard Sound — like the Sea Education Association's *Corwith Cramer*, the Martha's Vineyard Ocean Academy's *Shenandoah*, the Black Dog's *Alabama* or the *Lynx* — it is difficult to think of them being relegated to the work of a barge. But Peter explains:

"When I was young, old schooners, retired schooners, schooners still working often had been converted to fishboats. All kinds of ancient marine rigs were still around, and they were cheap. People were giving them away. People were trying to find a place to beach them. People were taking them out when no one was looking and not coming back with them because what do you do?"

[...] I remember walking on the point by Naushon on Cape Cod. Eleven miles of sand, and we must have gone by a dozen schooner wrecks sitting on the beach from the days of schooner shipping. They weren't remarkable then."

Hard to imagine your own fleet of schooners free-for-the-taking in today's world where you're hard-pressed to find an old Beetle Cat for less than \$5,000!

When discussing this period of *Pioneer's* life, we've rarely heard any specifics or details of what that work was like. The mention of the stove Dan Clark installed in *Pioneer's* forward cabin led to this example:

"There was a buoy out there [Dan] worked on called the Buzzards Bay Tower. ... [It] was a big lighthouse on legs off Cuttyhunk and it had one broken leg. So she was kind of startling to be on board in the storm. ... But when you're working in wintertime and



South Street Seaport Museum's model of *Pioneer* as she is now, made by Col. Walter R. Bruyere III (c. 1986). (Photo courtesy of the South Street Seaport Museum Archives)

working around as [Dan] did, the two things that made money were being a diver or being a welder. I became a welder because the diving was just too damn brutal. After you've hauled a bunch of [divers] out of the water, you would heat the stove in the fo'c'sle. ... You keep the temperature in there around 90°, so you can haul these frozen people out and two people would help them down the deck and down the stairwell and sit them down in front of the stove and leave them for an hour to thaw out again. ... It's brutal, brutal, brutal work."

These hardworking days of *Pioneer* are almost impossible to imagine, when you see her today, as guests watch the sunset behind the Statue of Liberty, drink or snack in hand. Although Peter is quick to share, even this has a historical basis:

"Dan would take the family picnicking sometimes ... [*Pioneer*] was a big flat surface. You could easily throw a picnic table and some benches on board, go down to Tarpaulin Cove and anchor up and have a wonderful swim and a picnic and come home. Nice spot for it."

Our conversation with Peter has filled in some of the glaring gaps in *Pioneer's* history. But our central question, wherefore this model, remained unanswered. As Peter put it:

"Woods Hole is one of the strangest places I've ever been. I grew up there ... and when I was young, the Nobel prizes, per capita, were the highest of any town in the

world. So we're dealing with a town where people are maybe strange, but they're very intelligent. And people do things that don't seem to make any sense. Somebody may very well have made that model for Dan, and walked by the office one day and handed it off to him. [Maybe] sat down and had a couple of glasses of Newfoundland Screech. ... Dan had many models in his downstairs office. He liked boat models, but he was not a modeler [himself]."

Unfortunately, we had merely ruled Dan out as making our mystery model. But Peter's comment struck me with an obvious truth. While *Pioneer* with her schooner rig has been an icon of New York Harbor for over 50 years, this context did not yet exist for anyone in Woods Hole in the 1960s. In her first 10 years, she sailed as a sloop. In 1895, she was rerigged as a schooner. However, between 1907 and 1912 her masts had been removed and she was used as a barge for the 44 years before Dan acquired her. Anyone at the time in Woods Hole, seeking to represent *Pioneer* in her sailing glory days, would have logically chosen her original rig, regardless of how synonymous she has become with schooners today.

The South Street Seaport Museum's model of *Pioneer* as she is now appears on the previous page. Made by Col. Walter R. Bruyere III (c. 1986), one can easily recognize her two-masted schooner rig, her small wheel. Every detail of *Pioneer* is recreated in painstaking detail down to the reef nettles in her sails. In comparison, the model in the WHHM's Small

Boat Museum gives a more impressionistic evocation of days gone by. Its rough-hewn nature reflects her original work; her folksy simplicity invites the viewer to imagine their own seafaring adventures upon her deck.

Considering the bright little model sleeping anonymously through the years in the boat museum leaves us with a sense of mystery and of profound peace.

Over her 139-year voyage through time, one can certainly say that *Pioneer* has been both witness to and participant in the tides of maritime evolution. Perhaps we'll never know who crafted this miniature replica or what inspired them to capture the historic essence of *Pioneer* in such painstaking detail. But in many ways, any act of boatbuilding is an exercise in anonymity — all the countless hours that go into a traditional ship, from its sails to its handmade blocks and tackles to its woodcarving and lines, are often made by craftsmen found neither in museums nor in history books. And so there is perhaps something traditional and fitting in the fact that we don't know the model's provenance; when you create something for a ship, you do it not for individual recognition, but in the understanding that you're contributing to something greater than yourself.

So to this unknown artisan, whatever their connection to *Pioneer* and the maritime community of Woods Hole might have been, we owe a debt of gratitude. Through their work, they have continued to inspire us to look back into the pages of maritime history,

to imagine all the lives that have intertwined with *Pioneer's* journey, and to appreciate the enduring legacy of tall ships in connecting the Eastern seaboard through maritime tradition. In Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Citadelle* (1948), he writes that "building a boat isn't about weaving canvas, forging nails, or reading the sky. It's about giving a shared taste for the sea, by the light of which you will see nothing contradictory but rather a community of love." *Pioneer* has grown: no longer a sloop where men baked in the Delaware sun hauling iron nor a lighter nor a barge of Woods Hole, she is now achieving what de Saint-Exupéry suggested, connecting new sailors of all ages and backgrounds over the sea, which is all our heritages.

If you ever find yourself in New York during the sailing season (May through October), you can visit *Pioneer* and join us for a sail. As Peter puts it, "I've been down to see her in New York. ... You know, you look at that and you think, they managed all that with that old piece of junk? Great. That's wonderful."

More information for visits can be found at the South Street Seaport Museum's website: southstreetseaportmuseum.org.

Editor's Note

As Francesca and James were in the process of writing this article, the museum asked Dr. Ed Thieler — one of our boat shop volunteers and a master model maker — to thoroughly inspect and clean the model of *Pioneer*. He embarked on a down-the-rabbit-hole research project to see if he could determine who made the model and its provenance, as we have not been able to find museum records about its origins.

In the course of his comprehensive research and assessment of the model, he discovered that it was a True Scale Ship Model made from 1937 kit plans by the Marine Model Company — not of *Pioneer*, but of the Hudson River Sloop *Victorine*.

Victorine was built in Piermont, New York, launched in 1848 and carried cargo on the Hudson River until 1879. So Francesca's initial impression of the model as a Hudson River

Sloop was indeed correct.

Based on Ed's research, Francesca speculates that the model was made for Dan Clark:

"We take Ed's research to both confirm and add to the mystery. It seems like our mystery model maker bought the *Victorine* kit, knowing that Hudson River Sloops and those from the Delaware were probably pretty similar and with the intention to use it to more easily make a *Pioneer* model. A pretty clever shortcut. Ed also noted something very interesting, which is that only one side of the model is actually finished.

Peter Bumpus suggested that Dan Clark had a collection of models in his office back in the day and that he often received gifts of models. If we had to guess, I would say our model maker wanted to make a model of *Pioneer* for Dan. So they bought a pre-fab kit

Sources

The Sloops of the Hudson by William E. Verplanck and Moses W. Collyer

Pioneer Lives by Peter Stanford

The Centennial History of the Pioneer by George Matteson (originally published in *Seaport Magazine* Summer 1985 "Pioneer Centennial Issue")

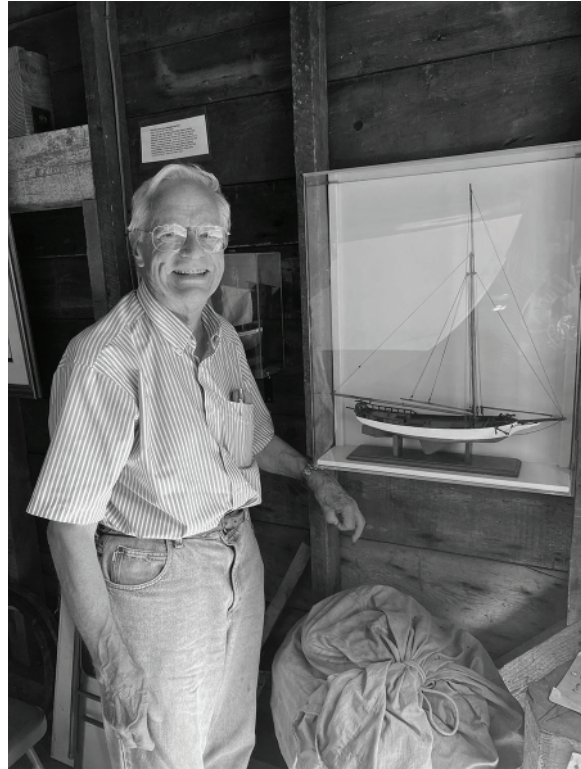
Phone Interview of Peter Bumpus about *Pioneer's* time in Woods Hole conducted by Francesca Violich Kennedy and James Patrick Fitzpatrick on March 14th, 2024

to simplify the task. In our article we already reason out why a modeler would be likely to make a *Pioneer* model with her sloop rig (she only became famous as a schooner after Dan Clark). It seems that the model maker knew exactly where this piece was likely to go, hence only finishing one side. Another clever shortcut. I wonder if anyone is around who remembers where/how Dan displayed the models he owned."

For those interested in reading Ed Thielers' complete report on the model, please contact whhmdirector@gmail.com.

About the Authors

A lifelong summer kid and fulltime pandemic resident of Woods Hole, Francesca Violich Kennedy is a youth ambassador of Tall Ships America and granddaughter of the biochemist Eugene P. Kennedy, who fostered a deep family connection to the area. James — to his knowledge — has never had a scientist in his family. Both James and Francesca sail on *Pioneer* regularly in New York; in addition to sailing, they are fond of history, literature and each other.



Dr. Edward Thielers III in the WHHM's Small Boat Museum with the refurbished model. (Photo by Francesca Violich Kennedy)



Woods Hole Historical Museum

579 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543

(508) 548-7270

whhmdirector@gmail.com / woodsholemuseum.org

Museum open June 15 to September 28, 2024, 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, by appointment only. Email whhmdirector@gmail for information.

2024 Exhibits

“History of Woods Hole,” an exploration of village history from the 1600s to the present day — Gallery One

“Delicious Food and Good Company: 50 Years Celebrating Woods Hole’s Love of Food,” highlighting the 1975, 2002 and 2024 editions of the museum’s celebrated cookbook, *Woods Hole Cooks Something Up*, and marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the museum archives — Gallery Two

“Honoring Jewel Plummer Cobb” hallway banner highlighting the career of pioneering biologist and cancer researcher Jewel Cobb and her longtime connections to the Marine Biological Laboratory.

New for September

“Resilient Woods Hole” exhibit panel, featuring information about historic storms in Woods Hole, the increasing impact of climate change, and the establishment of the collaborative Resilient Woods Hole initiative to adapt to future sea level rise — Gallery One

“Fishmonger Memories” poster display with photos, menus, recipe cards and other memorabilia from the iconic Fishmonger Café — Gallery Two

Campus

Bradley House, built in the early 1800s, features galleries with changing exhibits, a permanent scale model of Woods Hole circa 1895, the Museum gift shop, the Museum archives, and staff offices.

Swift Barn Small Boat Museum houses an 1890s Woods Hole Sprintsail 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.



Falmouth Museums on the Green

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

Museums are open May 24 through October 18,
10 AM to 2 PM

Free general museum admission for the 2024 season
thanks to the Highland Street Foundation.

Tours

Campus Tours: Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday

Walking Tours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and
Saturdays through October 18.

Routes will vary; current schedule is listed below. Tours
depart promptly at 10:30 AM, unless otherwise noted.
Meeting Place: Hallett Barn Visitors Center; please
arrive by 10:15 AM.

Tour of Village Green - Saturdays

Tour of Locust Street - Mondays

Tour of Depot Avenue - Tuesdays

Women's History Tour - Fridays, Sept 6, 20

Tour of Local History Scandals – Sept 13, 27

Tour of Old Burying Ground - Grave Undertakings -
5:30 PM Oct 4. Meet at Cemetery Lane.

Events

**The Hurricane of 1938: Memories of the Storm of
the Century,** September 12, 4 PM

Falmouth Fall Fest, September 28, 11 AM-3 PM

**From Armenia to Falmouth: The Incredible Story of
Moses Gulesian & How He Helped Save the USS
Constitution,** October 8, 4 PM

**Wicked at Wicks: A Children's Halloween
Celebration,** October 25, 4 - 5:30 PM

Sins, Sips, and Secrets, Halloween tour of
Dr. Francis Wicks House, October 26, 4 to 7 PM

"Becoming Cape Cod: Creating a Seaside Resort,"
by author Jim O'Connell, November 13, 4 PM



Woods Hole legend and marine contractor Dan Clark, who restored *Pioneer* in the 1960s as a workboat. (Photos courtesy of WHHM Archives)

WE'RE COOKING!



Illustration by Barbara Mathews Whitehead

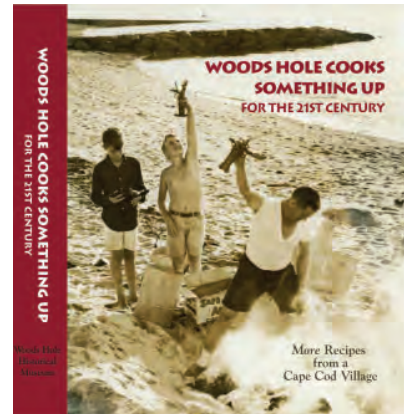
Woods Hole Cooks Something Up for the 21st Century: More Recipes from a Cape Cod Village

In celebration of our 50th anniversary, the Woods Hole Historical Museum is proud to present our new cookbook, featuring:

- 300 tantalizing recipes incorporating local, regional, and international flavors
- Historic photos and remembrances of Woods Hole village
- Beautiful illustrations by local artists

To purchase your copy, stop by the museum gift shop Tuesday through Saturday, 11 am to 3 pm, order online using the QR code, or visit our website at woodsholemuseum.org.

All proceeds from cookbook sales support the Museum.
Thank you for your purchase!



We are honored to have Eight Cousins Bookstore in Falmouth as a corporate sponsor.





The Odyssey of *Pioneer*