



WOODS HOLE LIBRARY NEWS

Spring 2014

Volume 11, Issue 3

This spring Woods Hole was honored as one of the "Best Small Places to Visit" by *Smithsonian* magazine. For the past three years, members of the magazine's staff have conducted a "search-and-enjoy mission" to "single out communities for particular strengths in history, music, visual arts, learning, food, theater, and science." Using a geographic information systems company to analyze data, the staff selected "towns or cities with fewer than 15,000 residents where cultural opportunities abound." The article appeared in its April 2014 issue, and is titled "When Small is Big."

Woods Hole was listed as number 5 in their chosen 20. Not surprisingly, the description of Woods Hole focuses on our many science institutions, but, to their credit, the authors recognized that with scientists come creative people of all varieties. The article mentions The Geostrophic String Quartet, who performed this past winter at the Library, local potter Joan Lederman's glazes made from ocean sediments, our public radio station, the Falmouth Forum, and The Woods Hole Film Festival. Pie in the Sky gets a nod, as does the Shining Sea Bikeway.

Smithsonian representatives visited the Library and the Historical Museum to gather information for their article. Due to limitations of space, they could not mention everything that makes Woods Hole stand out. If they could have, they might have added that, in addition to starting the Woods Hole Children's School of Science, many early scientists and their spouses were responsible for founding our Library. Decades later, others started the Historical Museum.

The fear of increased traffic is what crossed the minds of many residents when they first heard of the honor. This may indeed be an unfortunate side

effect, and the *Smithsonian* article didn't seem to consider adequate parking in their criteria. But the fact remains that the village of Woods Hole has benefited greatly from the existence of the science organizations and from the continuing efforts of the organizations and individuals who work to preserve its history and culture. The newsletter editors felt it was timely to use this award as an opportunity to recognize some individuals who have made the types of contributions to Woods Hole culture that attracted the attention of *Smithsonian's* researchers.

Therefore, we offer a conversation with Library board President Prosser Gifford and an interview with this year's Library Annual Meeting speaker, local entrepreneur Beth Colt. In addition, we provide a brief review of local author, Jamie Cat Callan's *Writer's Toolbox*, and take you on another CLAMS Library field trip to visit the Sturgis Library in Barnstable. A transplanted international Library patron compares his library experiences here and in his native Italian coastal village. And we bring you up to date on upcoming events.



photo reprinted from Smithsonian, April 2014

Library Hours

Mondays Noon - 5:30, 7 -9

Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays 3 - 5:30

Wednesdays 10 - 5:30, 7-9

Saturdays Noon - 5:30

Woods Hole Public Library

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A Conversation with Prosser Gifford

by Pamela Nelson

Stopping in at the Woods Hole Public Library in 2005, Prosser Gifford mentioned to a librarian that he was available if needed. He had just retired from a fifteen-year post as Director of Scholarly Programs at the Library of Congress. Shortly after that brief conversation, Pross was invited to join the Library's board of trustees, accepting the position of board secretary when it became available. In 2010, the Library's centennial year, he was voted president of the board, a position he still holds. One could say, looking at his career through the reverse end of the telescope, that Prosser has downsized with dignity and grace.

During his long career, Pross has spent time in an impressive list of distinguished libraries. In addition to the Library of Congress, his haunts have included Yale's Sterling Memorial Library, the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England, and the collections at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. In his study carrel at Yale, Prosser penned his senior thesis on Wallace Stevens, and subsequently, as a Rhodes Scholar, he read English at Oxford, where its program covering Beowulf through Wordsworth gave him an excellent foundation in literature. At that point, however, he decided that he did not want to become a professor of English, went on to get a law degree at Harvard, and eventually returned to Yale to earn his Ph.D. in African History. He was enjoying teaching undergraduate and graduate level courses at Yale when one of several unexpected career detours presented itself. Prosser was offered—because of his interest in education—the position of Dean of Faculty at Amherst College, a post that he accepted and held for a dozen years (1967-79.)

From 1980-88, Pross was deputy director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. Subsequently at the Library of Congress, he brought in scholars in the social sciences and humanities—scholars equal to the resources—to do research in their vast collections. As director of the Poetry Office there, Prosser ran a program to bring poets to read on a regular basis and support its successful Poetry at Noon presentations. Prosser also assisted in selecting the Poet Laureate, not an easy task, he says, as many poets shy away from the spotlight—even though the statutory duties are minor, consisting of three readings per year. He laughs, recalling the reactions of Mary Oliver and Denise Levertov: "No, no, not me. I don't want to do that!"

When, in 2010, the president of the MBL Associates asked Prosser to organize the talks and

invite speakers for the Falmouth Forum, he accepted the offer with enthusiasm. Indeed, he saw the position as a continuation of his work at the Wilson Center and Library of Congress, except, he points out, that the Forum is not so well funded. "The great thing about the Falmouth Forum," he says, "is that it gives me an excuse to do what I want to do anyway, which is to read." Then he adds, with emphasis, "Reading *with a sense of purpose*." Three good-sized stacks of books outside Prosser's living room contain some of the books he read this past year in his search for appropriate Forum speakers. Other books, he hastens to add, are on his Kindle.

There are many considerations in selecting a presenter, Prosser says. The speaker must appeal to the community, which fortunately does have a broad range of interests. Someone who is too eminent simply may not wish or have time to come. Prosser can and does reach back to connections from his past life. For instance, Francis Deng of the Sudan, whom Prosser knew from the Wilson Center, spoke on "Genocide and the problems of identity" in 2011. Pross also knows quite a few eminent poets, but allows that the Forum can only host one poet per year. Next year the poet Rosanna Warren will come from the University of Chicago, where she is also the Hanna Holborn Gray Distinguished Service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought. Prosser likes to have a musical program, and twice has brought New York Polyphony to perform. Next year he hopes to bring pianist Michael Mizrahi, recommended to Prosser as a good speaker as well as musician, by Smithsonian Scholar and pianist Robert Wyatt.

Once a scholar, always a scholar, it seems. Prosser's days are filled with books—reading and writing them. (He recently collaborated on the Quissett Yacht Club's Centennial history book, *Glorious Good Times*, and is working on a personal history of the Prosser and Gifford families, focusing on their professional endeavors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.) Prosser's enthusiasm and appetite for scholarly research, his previous duties at the Library of Congress, and his wide network of contacts make him an ideal person to select programming for MBL's Falmouth Forum. He relishes the task and plans to continue for at least one more year before stepping aside to allow someone else to take on the challenges and satisfactions of this role.

Newsletter Staff

Terry McKee and Pamela Nelson, with Emma Dvorak
Contributors: Laurie Raymond and Anne Macaulay

Village Vision: Beth Colt, Woods Hole Entrepreneur

by Laurie Raymond

It is clear from the moment you meet her that Beth Colt is a woman who loves people and loves Woods Hole, a fortunate mix for this entrepreneur. She has successfully resuscitated the Woods Hole Inn since buying it in 2008. Furthermore she has recently purchased and breathed new life in to the iconic Leaside bar and restaurant, reincarnated now as Quicks Hole Tavern.

Beth's ties to the village go back a long way. From early childhood, Woods Hole was the departure point for yearly family vacations on nearby Naushon Island.

Before returning with her husband, P.K. Simonds, to live on the East Coast, they spent 18 years in Los Angeles, immersed in the fast-paced world of television production. There, Beth started her own talent management company, working with both up-and-coming actors and established veterans like Sam Waterston. She made occasional forays into TV production.

Her entrepreneurial inclinations have been a constant in her life. In addition to running her company, Beth purchased, renovated, and sold LA homes. She was a key player in getting a small start-up tech company off the ground, throwing herself into raising significant capital only to have the venture fail two years later. In her characteristically positive way, Beth reflects on this very difficult period as an invaluable lesson in business.

Despite their impressive professional success on the West Coast, Beth and P.K. felt the irresistible pull of family, friends, and roots back in New England. They wanted their boys to see their grandparents and cousins more often than yearly visits to Naushon allowed. When her father became ill, the enormous distance between the coasts became painfully apparent, and a decision to move 'back East' was made, fueled also by the attraction of high quality schools in the area.

In the meantime, the Woods Hole Inn had been for sale for several years. Beth remembered seeing the "For Sale" sign year after year while en route to Naushon, and saying, "someone should really buy that place and do something wonderful with it..." It took five years for Beth and her husband to decide THEY were the people to do just that. She was relieved to see the sign still in place in the summer of 2007. Phone calls and extensive negotiations followed, and the Inn was ultimately theirs! After major, gradual renovations

the Inn has again become a busy part of year-round village life. Quicks Hole Taqueria opened in 2008 along with the Inn and became a village hot spot. Another enterprise, the Quicks Hole Tavern restaurant recently reopened to become an instant success, while the downstairs bar remains a welcoming watering hole.

If there appears to be a pattern in Beth's entrepreneurial interests and ventures, it's not accidental. She derives great satisfaction from helping people and places achieve their full, glowing potential. Whether taking on an actor whose career needs help, restoring a tired home, or resurrecting an established business fallen on hard times, she skillfully uses her keen eye to bridge the temporal and economic distance between a successful past, a faltering present, and a brilliant future.

What is it about Woods Hole village that Beth Colt finds so appealing and rewarding to live and work in? It's a small town with a truly cosmopolitan feel, with a vibrant arts and science community. It's a place where water and its associated recreational activities are a common denominator, bringing Nobel award winners, fisherman, carpenters, and retirees together over a cup of coffee or a beer to discuss who caught what where, or just about anything else. It's a place where the dramatic presence of Woods Hole Passage, Vineyard Sound, and Buzzards Bay, and the view down the Elizabeth Islands never fails to draw a second or third glance. It's a village where the ferry terminal draws crowds of people from around the world heading to the Vineyard each summer, and the research institutions attract global clientele with their intellectual capital, making the place buzz with activity and excitement. It is a hamlet that

is not insular and closed but open to new ideas. Even in the toned down winter months, Beth feels it is dynamic, active, and creative.

Whether warmly greeting guests at the Inn, chatting them up over breakfast, welcoming visitors to the restaurant, mingling with the locals at the bar, participating in Woods Hole Business Association meetings, forging the future at

Falmouth Academy as board chairman, or greeting friends on Water Street, Beth Colt is completely committed to the people and the village of Woods Hole.

Beth will be the speaker at the Library's Annual Meeting on Tuesday, July 8th at 8 pm. See the back of the letter for the recipes from the Inn that she generously shared with us.



An American Library Experience

by Terry McKee

At a recent Library board meeting, Vice-President Bob Pelletreau reported that, while traveling in China, he attempted to visit local libraries, only to be told, "Who needs libraries? We have Kindle." No matter how useful we Americans may find our electronic reading devices, we have—thanks to Benjamin Franklin—come to believe that access to the services of a public library is a fundamental right that we treasure. But how global is that expectation? It seemed to me that insight into this question could be obtained by interviewing some of our own international Library patrons, who might be willing to compare for us their American library experience to that offered in their native countries.

Alex Bocconcelli, from Cavi, Italy, was very interested when I posed the question to him. A WHOI Ocean Engineer, Alex, along with his wife, Laela, children Carlo and Luisa, and their dog, Erskine, have been appreciative Woods Hole and Falmouth Public Library patrons for many years. Despite his typically overcommitted Woods Hole lifestyle, Alex made time for me to visit him at his lab on WHOI's Quissett campus to hear his views on the subject.

Recently back from a research trip tagging blue whales off the coast of Patagonia, Alex barely managed to stay seated in his chair as he talked enthusiastically with me. He came to Woods Hole in 1985 as a summer student and immediately fell in love with the working environment and with windsurfing. He went on to receive his Master's Degree from MIT and returned to work in Woods Hole after spending some time in North Carolina where his wife, Laela, was a tenured professor at the University of North Carolina. During their time away from Woods Hole, they returned with their children to the small coastal village of Cavi to be with his mother when she was ill.

Cavi, located in the Italian Riviera, had its origins as a fishing village and is now a summer resort as well. It has a winter population of about 600 people, and is part of the small city, Lavagna, which has a population of 15,000 to 20,000.

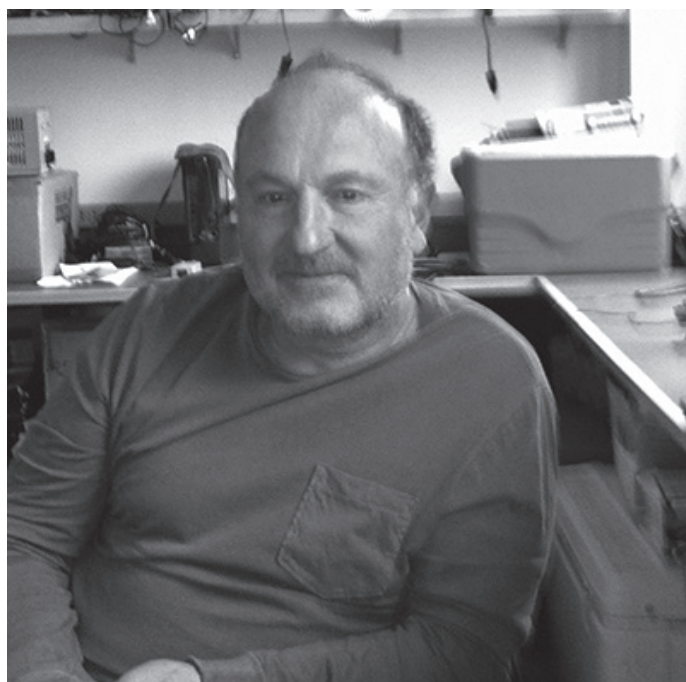
The main building of the Lavagna library is 500 years old. It was originally a convent, then a school. Few books and no audio-visual media are available for circulation, though the collection is multi-lingual. There is a small children's library that did not exist when Alex was growing up and using the library. A few computers serve the students who come in to study or simply to use the Internet. Although it can't compare to what is offered to his family in Woods Hole, Alex says he was impressed with how hard the library tries to provide services, and that it had

improved greatly since his childhood.

Libraries in Italy, Alex says, are often housed in very old, magnificent family houses. Family foundations have donated the books, so the collections tend to be made up of rare and valuable books that are not made available for circulation. Italy's libraries are dependent on regional economic resources and are also affected by changes in the political administration. For instance, a socialist mayor who is pro-culture will allocate funds to improve library services. Since Italy has been a republic for only about one hundred years, the culture of libraries has not developed to the same level as it has in America, which has, over three hundred years, come to expect the services of a local library. Italians hold a cultural expectation that the government should provide rather than a sense that individuals can be involved in improving and shaping their library experience through generosity and donation of time and services.

Alex's family has enjoyed many of the offerings of the Woods Hole and other local libraries. His daughter Louisa held a summer job at our library when she was 12 years old. His son Carlo worked last summer for the Historical Museum and will again this summer. Now teenagers, both have attended many of the workshops for children, and Louisa took babysitter-training classes at the West Falmouth Library. Alex's dog, Erskine, often accompanies a family member to the Library, where he is almost guaranteed to receive a treat from behind the Librarian's desk. (Alex donates dog treats as one of his forms of supporting the library.)

When entertaining visitors from abroad, Alex brings them to the Woods Hole and Falmouth libraries as part of their tour, and his visitors are invariably impressed. *Grazie per il complimento (thank you for the praise!)*



Summer Events

July 2, 7:30 pm: *Dance in America: the Russian Connection*, by Iris Fanger

July 5, 10 am: Tag Sale and Kids Carnival

July 8, 8:00 pm: Annual Meeting with speaker Beth Colt

July 9, 7:30 pm: *Himalayan Rim Dancing* Lecture by Joseph Houseal

July 16, 7:30 pm: Nancy Lassalle interview with Iris Fanger

July 19, 9 am: Museum Auction

July 21, 12:00 pm: *Renewal* Art Exhibit opens

July 23, 7:30 pm: An evening of Balanchine Films

July 31, 6 pm: *Renewal* Art Closing Party and Silent Auction

August 3, 3 pm: Lawn Bowls on the Redfield Garden lawns

August 9, 7:30 pm: Geostrophic String Quartet Concert

August 16, 9 am: Summer Book Sale

See the Events page of www.woodsholepubliclibrary.org for more information.

Bill Cooper's Memoirs

The Woods Hole Historical Museum's eagerly awaited publication of Bill Cooper's memoirs *Atlantis Stories* will arrive in time for the summer season. The wait has been well worth it. The book is richer and fuller as a result of new material given to the editors even as the book had been on the verge of being delivered to the book's designer, Barbara Whitehead, a Gansett summer resident.

Additions include sidebars with fuller information on topics such as the U-boats that cruised coastal waters as the *Atlantis* sailed the waters from Massachusetts to Texas and descriptions of some of the research and instrumentation used during those years. In addition, sidebars about several of the captains Bill served under have been added.

It is expected that the book will be available by the Museum's opening on June 21. Look for announcements as the date approaches. The book will be available for purchase at the Museum Shop. For hours of operation, see the website at www.woodsholemuseum.org.

Library Babies—New and Old

Eli William Porter, son of Librarian Kellie Porter and her husband Ben, was welcomed into the world on February 9, 2014 by his older sister Helen, 4. Helen's birth in the Library Centennial year, 2010, has given her a special place in our Library history. With a librarian for a mom, she is a regular Library patron, now accompanied by baby Eli. The children are cared for by their grandparents Otis and Nancy Porter while Kellie works in an environment she loves, and where we love to see her.

Kellie's children were not the first babies to become part of the fabric of the Library. Jennifer Gaines joined the Library staff in November, 1977, coming to Woods Hole with her husband Arthur, who was a chief scientist at the Sea Education Association. Their two daughters, Sarah and Hannah, were born while Jennifer worked at the Library, in the spring of 1978 and in the summer of 1981. Since the grandparents were not close by, the girls became part of the evolving culture of quality childcare and early childhood development that was starting to blossom in Woods Hole.

In their early years, the girls were cared for by friends, babysitters, and Sandy Gifford's Family Day Care while Jennifer worked. When the Woods Hole Day Care Cooperative was formed, Sarah was a member of its first class. Both enjoyed their preschool years at the Woods Hole Child Center. They also attended the Children's School of Science and cultivated an enduring friendship with our local lepidopterist, Becky Lash. Becky's influence

certainly contributed to Hannah's decision to complete a PhD in Entomology, studying native bees in Madison, Wisconsin, where she lives with her husband, Steve Day. Sarah works for UNESCO in Paris and enjoys taking her baby, Henry, on tours of France with her husband, Bob Mohr.

Jennifer is proud that Woods Hole contributed to raising Sarah and Hannah. Eli William and his big sister, Helen, are already reaping the benefits of the nurturing atmosphere of our own Library, so they're off to a very good start.





Listening at the Library

Logo Contest Winner

The Woods Hole Public Library has selected a winner for its logo contest. The objective of the contest was to produce a logo to represent the Woods Hole Library's new concert series, "Listening at the Library." The winter series included five concerts, and the Library board thought a good logo would serve as a visual identifier of the series on posters and other announcements.

Members of the Events Committee with no knowledge of the originators reviewed artwork submitted to the logo contest. "The winner was obvious," said one of the judges. "All the submissions had good points, but when we saw the winning entry, we all felt it was spot on, just perfect! Agreement was unanimous."

Judges were delighted to find out later that our own webmaster, Tom Inoue, of Montreal, Canada, had submitted the winning entry. Tom, who summered in Woods Hole as a child, works on the Library's website from his home in Montreal.

When informed that his logo had been selected, Tom wrote back, "I'm very happy to hear that the logo evoked the kinds of things that I hoped to convey. The idea was to keep it clean and simple, yet come across as fresh and dynamic—which was part of the reason to include the colours, which would speak to the 'colourful' musical diversity of the series. I felt it was important to capture, in a tangibly symbolic manner, the integrative nature of the music series with that of the Library's own identity. Finally, of course, I felt that bookending everything with the two Ls was a nice and conveniently neat reiterative way to tie it all up into its own little arts ecosystem."

The concert series began with Stephanie Miele's Judy Garland retrospective concert in early November. The next few months brought concerts by the Proteus Consort, playing early Baroque Italian chamber music, Bill Simmons and his Geostrophic String Quartet playing chamber quartets, Tom Goux and Jacek Sulanowski singing Songs of the Sea, and pianist Deborrah Wyndham playing ragtime and her own original works. A summer concert by the Geostrophic String Quartet is planned for August 9.

Local Author Jamie Cat Callan's Writer's Toolbox

by Anne Macaulay

The Writer's Toolbox: Creative Games and Exercises for Inspiring the "Write" Side of your Brain, by Jamie Cat Callan (Chronicle Books)

Jamie Cat Callan's clever "Toolbox" is for those times when a writer's battery is dead and no amount of jumpstarting will turn things around. Housed in a snappy brown and blue box, the kit features 125 moveable parts: wooden sticks bearing provocative situations, glossy cards imprinted with still more mini-scenarios, paper "dial-a-wheels" with titles like "protagonist," "action," "obstacles," and "goals." The idea is to shuffle the cards, close your eyes and pick a stick, spin a wheel, and get writing. A handy egg timer helps with the timed exercises Callan describes in an accompanying booklet. (Timing helps to keep the writer from "self" editing; often the first thoughts are the best.) Designed for use with groups or singly, the Toolbox is a fresh take on the problem of the blank page and how to fill it. The booklet alone is worth the price; in 63 quick pages, Callan lays out the fundamentals of story building in clear, fuss-free prose.

Callan draws on her many years of experience teaching writing workshops in places as varied as Yale, Wesleyan, NYU, UCLA Extension, the Payne-Whitney Psychiatric Clinic, and the Falmouth (MA) evening school program, among others. Callan's husband, Dr. William Thompson, is an oceanographer at WHOI.

Callan will speak at WHPL on Saturday, September 6, on "How the French Invented Joie de Vivre," a topic she explores in her own books. On Saturday, October 25, at 2 pm, she will offer a 3-hour writers' workshop at WHPL, "Writing from the Right Side of the Brain," for individuals age 16 and up, (cost \$35.) On December 30, at 1 pm, she will offer a free 1½ hour writing workshop for kids, grades 4 through 8.

Beth Colt to Speak at Annual Meeting

On Tuesday, July 8th the Library will hold its Annual Meeting. Beth Colt, owner of the Woods Hole Inn, Quicks Hole Taqueria, and the Quicks Hole Tavern and Restaurant, will present "Village Vision: An Entrepreneur in Woods Hole." The presentation will begin at 8:00 following a short business meeting. A brief reception will follow.

Dance Education Series Continues

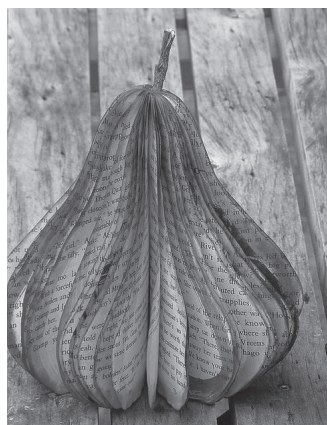
The Library's popular Dance Education Series, initiated last fall through the generosity of long-time summer resident and lover of dance Nancy Lassalle, will continue with several special events planned for this summer. Ms. Lassalle, Director Emerita of the New York City Ballet, has wanted to share her interest in dance with the Woods Hole community for years. She will do so in person on Wednesday, July 16, at 7:30 pm, in an interview with Iris Fanger, dance historian, critic, and past director of Harvard's Summer Dance Center. They will discuss her experiences in the world of dance and her working relationship with the renowned Lincoln Kirstein, best known for having founded, with George Balanchine, the New York City Ballet and its school.

In addition, Dr. Fanger will give a presentation entitled *Dance in America: the Russian Connection*, on Wednesday, July 2. Joseph Houseal, dancer and scholar, will speak and show footage on Himalayan Rim Dancing on Wednesday, July 9. A showing of George Balanchine films will take place on Wednesday, July 23. All events will start at 7:30 pm.

Renewal: Recycling Books into Art

This summer the Library will celebrate the art of the recycled book with an exciting project called *Renewal*, inviting artists to create a work -- sculptural, pictorial, large- or small-scale -- using recycled books as a medium. The pieces will be displayed at the library from July 21 to 31, after which they will be auctioned off by silent auction at a closing party. Artists interested in participating in the show should contact Margaret or Kellie at the library.

In addition, workshops for both adults and kids will be held, featuring projects that use old books to create new items such as flowers, garlands, and more. *Playing With Books* and *The Repurposed Library*, available at the library, offer inspiring ideas.



Paperback pear image reprinted from flickr.com



As part of the Dance Education Series, Jan Elliott (left) demonstrated the art of Morris Dancing and spoke on its "chequered history."

Woods Hole Women's Portraits

As part of the Centennial celebration of the Woods Hole Woman's Club, Joan Pearlman, who displayed an exhibit of her photographs of Woods Hole houseboats at the Library last summer, has paired with Sally Casper in capturing the images of many Woods Hole women over the age of 75. The photographers had a special "call out" day at the Library last summer when they photographed several dozen women, and the Library cooperated by beginning to gather a collection of one-page biographies from the women.

In August, the photographs, accompanied by the biographies, will be on exhibit next door in Gallery 2 of the Woods Hole Historical Museum, a division of the Library. Several events will coincide with the exhibit: a panel discussion by some of the participants on Tuesday, August 12, at 1 PM, a lively biographical performance by San Lyman at the Museum's annual meeting on August 7, at 7:30 PM, and a gala "exhibit opening" in mid-August.

The Woman's Club was started by a group of women interested in building friendships and bettering the community. One hundred years later, active and engaged women who continue to fulfill that mission still populate the community.

The Woods Hole Children's Science School's book, *Wet Sneakers and Nets*, published last year to celebrate the school's centennial, has a chapter that includes background on the early beginnings of the Woman's Club. The book is available for loan at the Library.

Do you recommend the CLAMS?

CLAMS de la Saison: Sturgis Library

by Pamela Nelson

When I heard an announcement on radio station WCAI that the Sturgis Library in Barnstable was launching a Seed Lending Library, I was sufficiently intrigued to investigate in person. “What exactly is a Seed Lending Library?” I wondered. I found my answer during a delightful visit to this historic library, on a rare mild day in early March.

Before going, I visited the Sturgis Library website, which palatably provides far more fascinating and diverse information than one can digest in a single sitting. The library’s history goes back to 1644, when a small house was built for Barnstable’s Reverend John Lothrop. A member of the Congregational Church, which at the time was outlawed in England, Lothrop had sailed to Massachusetts after years of persecution and incarceration in his home country. An early colonist seeking religious freedom, he traveled with his bible, which was damaged during the voyage and which he subsequently repaired. This bible is now displayed in the front room of his Barnstable house, which he opened for public worship. What remains of his original house is part of the Sturgis Library and represents the oldest building still in use as a library in this country. The Sturgis Library is not, however, the country’s oldest library. Other libraries make this claim, and there is an amusing page on the website which lists bids for this distinction made by numerous other libraries.

Upon arrival, I was eager to see the historic front rooms, but to my surprise a velvet rope blocked access. At the circulation desk, Library Director Lucy Loomis relieved my companion and me of our driver’s licenses and purses, before leading us beyond the rope to the three historic rooms at the front of the library. Along the way, she conducted a friendly and informal tour before leaving us to browse on our own. The historic section includes a maritime history room with books and artifacts, and a more recently built gorgeous reading room with a high ceiling, once a lady’s apartment, which now houses a valuable collection of *Genealogical Notes of Cape Cod Families* in 50 hand-written volumes.

I was surprised to discover from Lucy Loomis that the Sturgis Library, like our own independent Woods Hole Library, is a private library, although free and open to the public. While a respectable 40% of its operating budget comes from local taxes, they must raise the rest through memberships, programs, gifts and grants. Fundraising events are challenging for all libraries, and it was interesting to see what the Sturgis Library offers. The library hosts an annual dinner, this year at the Hyannis Yacht Club, with tickets costing \$60, and a yearly Autumnfest

cocktail party with music and an elaborate silent auction. Other fundraisers include concerts, a very small book sale area, and a thrift shop. Their free programming is extensive, with creative activities for children and a LEGO Olympics in March that offered timed-challenges and the opportunity to take home what each child created. For adults a book discussion group is offered, as well as a Mass Humanities-sponsored reading and discussion series, this year entitled “Odd Couples: Literary Feuds,” which addresses four sets of authors who had conflicts that were interpersonal or related to their writing.

A beautiful exhibit of landscape quilts, small depictions of Cape Cod scenes, hung on the outer ends of the floor-to-ceiling shelving in the fiction room. Two other exhibits were housed in glass cases near the library entrance.

As for the Seed Lending Library, the kick-off program included a talk in the library’s attractive community room, with the speaker standing in front of a functioning gas fireplace. After a few pointers on starting seeds in early spring, the young volunteer talked about saving seeds after harvest to share with the community. The program is sponsored by the Cape Cod Food Hub and based at the Sturgis Library. Inside the front doors stands a set of drawers reminiscent of library catalog drawers, each holding packets containing a few seeds. Interested gardeners are invited to borrow seeds for the coming year’s crop and to return seeds from their fall harvest, to share with others. Various methods of saving seeds—dry, wet, and fermentation processing—were described. The Sturgis Library hopes other libraries will follow its lead.

On my way out, I picked up several items: a copy of the library’s March newsletter listing programs and events for the month; a handout from the Cape Cod Food Hub with guides to resources in the form of books, websites, and gardening groups; an audio book on CD; and a lovely small, lined notebook with attached pen, pockets, and the Sturgis Library logo. It was a very satisfying visit.

SUPPORT THE LIBRARY WITH AN ONLINE GIFT

We’ve added the convenience of secure on-line giving to the library website. Click Secure Donations in the left sidebar of our main page to choose an amount and then enter your credit card information or your PayPal account details.

We acknowledge all donations immediately via email and by hand-written snail mail. For guidance, please see Kellie at the front desk.