

QUARTERBOARD

CUTTYHUNK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Serving the Elizabeth Islands Since 1978 ■ Summer Telephone 508.984.4611

23 Tower Hill Road ■ Cuttyhunk, Massachusetts 02713

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

SPRING 2006

CHS HAILS YACHT CLUB'S 50TH & CHURCH'S 125TH

WITH SPRING IN THE AIR, thoughts turn to summer on Cuttyhunk. We're looking forward to greeting members and guests at the Museum again. This year, *The Nature that Connects Us: The Natural History of the Elizabeth Islands* will continue, updated by Allison Thurston, Shelly Merriam, and others. We are also helping two island organizations celebrate anniversaries. The Cuttyhunk Yacht Club turns 50 in 2006, and we will display its story with the exhibit *Kids on the Water* in the Akin Room.

The Cuttyhunk Union Methodist Church is marking 125 years, and the Society will display an exhibit panel at the Church. We will hold an "Island Memories" evening on August 3, as part of the Church's *Honoring the Past* program, with islanders sharing experiences of the church.

We can look forward to some celebrating of our own, with our traditional Opening Party on July 1, and the family Barbeque at Avalon on August 19. This year the Barbeque will include outstanding entertainment

for all ages. "Circle of Song," the touring ensemble of the Cambridge-based Revels, will present a Chantey Sing. Eight sea music performers will sing, dance, play instruments, and lead singing (using songbooks for the audience to keep). They will conduct "dock-side games" for the kids, as well. This will be an evening of great fun and great food, so be sure to sign up early at the Museum or by mail after June 15.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT: Gifts continue to enrich the Museum's collection. One interesting recent gift is a Plan of Cuttyhunk Harbor and Pond, surveyed and published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Harbor and Land Commissioners' Office in 1900. Startling to us today are the three different proposed channels into Cuttyhunk Pond, as well as a wharf at Canapitsit! Members who have seen the chart all exclaim at how different things might have been if the plan had been adopted. Copicut Neck would have been two islands! Come see the chart this summer. We are grateful to the donor, Henry Wood of Shrewsbury, MA.

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Cuttyhunk Junior Yacht Club sailors preparing for a race on dock by Main Dock, 1938.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

CUTTYHUNK'S STONE WALLS RECEIVE CHS GRANT

HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT CUTTYHUNK at least twice a month during the off-season, I find it amazing to see how the island continues to change. One huge change is the installation of new underground water tanks at the top of Tower Hill Road. The old green water tank is no longer a part of the landscape as it has been torn down. When a section of the stone wall had to be moved during this project, it became apparent to all that the massive stone walls along Tower Hill need repair.

One way in which the Society pursues its mission is to encourage "preservation of and public access to significant properties of scenic and historical interest." The cemented stone walls that meander along paths and roads on Cuttyhunk are an integral part of our island's history, dating from the time of

the Woods' ownership of a large part of the island. Clearly, they require safekeeping.

To aid the Town in what will certainly be a long-term project, the Board of Directors, on behalf of the Historical Society, has given a gift of \$10,000 towards the first phase of this important project. We are proud to be involved in a community endeavor that will preserve our stone walls for future generations.

During this past year, the board embarked on a self-examination. We have grown tremendously, both in terms of membership and collections, since first occupying our Museum building in 1991. An Ad Hoc committee was asked to review the CHS organizational structure and by-laws and to make

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PHOTO: PAULA DIMARE

Water Tank removal, Tower Hill, 2005.

SEARCH IS ON!

The CYC is still looking for copies of the CYC song for the years 1958, '59 & 1961-64. Please contact Shelly Merriam at sjmerr@rcn.com.

CUTTYHUNK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Serving the Elizabeth Islands
Box 181
Cuttyhunk Island,
MA 02713
Summer Telephone:
508.984.4611

The purpose of the Cuttyhunk Historical Society is to preserve the traditions, records, and history of the Elizabeth Islands for the benefit of present and future generations. The Society, launched in 1978, was incorporated in 1982 and opened its Museum in 1991.

Museum Director
Alexandra Earle

Directors 2005–2006

Gail Blout, *President*
Ann Conway, *Vice President*
Kris Lombard, *Treasurer*
John Moore, *Secretary*

Paula DiMare
Paul Elias
Christopher Hart
Roxy Leeson
Lexi Lynch
John Medeiros
Shelly Merriam,
Museum Associate
Ned Prevost
Robert Smith
Mary Todd
David Warr, *Membership*

Quarterboard is the newsletter of the Cuttyhunk Historical Society and is published twice a year.

Louise Garfield Bachler, *Editor*

IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to report the recent passing of island friends:

William A. Parsons
Laura "Frisky" Thurston



PHOTO: MIKE RILEY

CHS '07 Calendar Cover

SAILING ON NAUSHON

NAUSHON HAS A LONG HISTORY of boat ownership. Families there believe everyone should be familiar with tides, rocks and ledges, winds, and handling sail boats. There is no formal yacht club, but the main resource for learning these things is the ownership by the Trust of four Herreshoff 12's purchased in 1914. Over the years, most of the young people on Naushon learned to sail on these boats, and there is special affection for them. Family or staff members provide instruction, and there are tests given to assure competence before children are allowed to take the boats out alone.

Frequent informal races are held in Buzzards Bay and Woods Hole. Near Labor Day Weekend, there is an all day race around the island for larger sailboats. This is a great test of knowledge of navigation, the timing of the tides running up the bay and the sound and through Robinson's Hole, and of wind patterns. Because the boats are different sizes and types, some handicapping is applied. Nevertheless, the finish time may differ by a few hours; winds die or change direction, fog may settle in, and the tides may have been misjudged. The winner is expected to organize the race for the following year and to put on a cocktail party for all participants.

Another tradition is the annual Bennet Yacht Club Regatta. The race is of model boats of different sizes made by builders old and new. Named after Bennet Forbes, brother of John Murray Forbes and a captain of a clipper in the China Trade, the race is held just once a year. That is the only activity of the "club."

HOLLY LEON



PHOTO: KIT GREGG

*Bennet Yacht Club Regatta,
Naushon Island.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

recommendations. Committee members Paula DiMare, Ann Conway, Roxy Leeson, and I, worked diligently this past year. The board approved several measures this spring.

One change already in place is the restructuring of Sandy Earle's position. Sandy's new title is Museum Director. She continues to be responsible for all Museum operations and coordinates a variety of activities, including publications, education, special events, the Museum Shop, and volunteers. In addition, she is in charge of collections and archival management. We are fortunate to have Sandy as our Museum Director.

The board also created a new volunteer position, Museum Associate, to assist the Museum Director with curatorial and/or museum responsibilities. This is an annual appointment, and I am pleased that Shelly Merriam will be this year's Museum Associate.

A By-Laws Committee, comprised of Chris Hart (Chair), Sandy Earle, and Jamie Nemiah, was appointed to review current by-laws and recommend revisions to the board. Both the By-Laws Committee's and the ad hoc Committee's work continues. We will keep members informed of additional changes as they are approved.

Thanks go to all who spend so much time and energy to make the Historical Society and its Museum thrive, in particular, Sandy Earle, Shelly Merriam, and Allie Thurston for our exhibit, *The Nature that Connects Us*, and our devoted volunteers. Special thanks to my fellow board members for their extra hard work, dedication, and commitment to improving the Cuttyhunk Historical Society, especially the members of the ad hoc and By-Laws Committees.

GAIL BLOUT

NEW IN MUSEUM SHOP

From over 250 images of the Elizabeth Islands, Judges Gail Blout, Gail Spear, and Tammy Zimbone selected 14 photos for the 2007 CHS calendar (and four more for postcards). The 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners were Ralph Wright, Janice Arruda, and Mary Todd. The judges also chose a photo by Jennifer Hart to be made into a poster for the auction at the Opening Party. Congratulations to the winners and a big "Thank You" to all the contestants.

The Calendar will be on sale in our Museum Shop (or by mail, for \$20+ \$2.50 shipping). The shop will also carry new books relating to the natural history and yacht club exhibits, note cards by Laura Twichell and Sandra Hall, a Cat's Meow wooden miniature Fishing Club, and placemats with Buzzards Bay charts.

FROM THE ARCHIVES "PARENTS START CHILDRENS YACHT CLUB"

ON MONDAY MORNING July 2 [1956], the official "revival" of the Cuttyhunk Yacht Club was launched, ... and 28 young people were going up and down to the new float-dock... At various levels from the top of the embankment to the float, the children were being instructed in groups of five on how to tie important knots — slip, square and bowline. This preceded talks about sails and balancing in boats. As they qualified in the knot tying tests they were allowed to try guiding their skiffs out further in the shallow harbor, where four small Turnabouts were riding at anchor.... [T]he children began to learn how to raise and lower the red or white sails. But no boats left moorings that first day.

The sky was a perfect blue, the tide was falling as a very serious group of young folk were obeying instructions carefully and taking criticism in a sportsmanlike way. On the fourth of July there was a stiff wind and grey waters, as [Charlie] Currier and his "crews" now settled in Groups A, B, and C, according to skills, were ready for their first race.

From dawn to dark safe sailing through knowing how to use the winds and the tide has boundless allure.

Wheeler, M.P. , *Georgetown Times*, 7/19/56.

Werner Bargsten and Susan Schwarzwald conducted interviews with and took videos of people who played a part in the Yacht Club's 50-year history. Their DVD will be part of the *Kids on the Water* exhibit at the Museum this summer.



Werner Bargsten at CYC Party, August 2005.



The Yacht Club Dock, with few changes, 1979 and 2005.

NEW CATTLE & TREE HISTORY ON NAUSHON

Paul Elias, CHS Board Member, reports on an analysis of the history of Naushon's forest and a restoration of its historic pasturelands. The history of early forests on the other Elizabeth Islands was, most likely, similar. But only Naushon has trees remaining from the time of colonization. The story of flora on each of the other islands depends on patterns of human use. The research complements the CHS continuing exhibit on natural history.

TO STUDY THE FOREST HISTORY, scientists from the Harvard Forest took sediment cores from the bottoms of three Naushon ponds. The deepest of the cores — some twenty feet long — from Blaneys Pond, contains sediments going back 15,000 years when receding glaciers formed the Elizabeth Islands. The cores contain decade-by-decade records of the pollens that settled on the pond bottom from nearby plants, providing a timeline of changes in vegetation.

The pond cores show that the first forest, comprised of pine and spruce, was replaced by an oak and beech forest about 6,000 years ago. Since then the forest composition has fluctuated, but it has always been dominated by beech with varying amounts of oak. The entire island was probably forested until colonization in the 17th century, when the first grass pollens from cleared pasturelands appeared.

Next, 700+ trees were cored for tree ring analysis in order to review more recent forest history.

Sample plots were studied with respect to tree species, height, number, and diameter. Findings are being evaluated in conjunction with historical records and photos to reveal shifting forest makeup. Preliminary results suggest that humans have had a relatively minor impact. It appears that the forest was shaped more by topography and exposure, the occasional hurricane, and chronic grazing by deer and sheep.

The project's second phase involves an assessment of open lands. Historically, livestock grazed about half the island after colonization. Scrub and thicket have been taking over old pastures in recent decades. The community looked to the Harvard Forest and the Nature Conservancy for restoration advice. Last autumn a prescribed burn of forty acres of old pastureland was conducted, and a herd of Galloway cattle arrive in May. The Galloways are black and dark brown. They have the advantage of being relatively small and naturally hornless, while still being very tough, and capable of living pretty much on their own year-round. The larger cattle with huge horns on less-populated Nashawena are the Scottish Highland breed.



Scottish Highland Cattle on Nashawena will be joined by Galloways on Naushon.

BOARD BUSINESS

The Annual Meeting of the Cuttyhunk Historical Society, Inc. will be held at 9:30 A.M. on Saturday, August 19, 2006, at the Cuttyhunk Church. All members are invited to attend.

GAIL BLOUT, PRESIDENT
Minutes of the 2005 Annual Meeting are available at the CHS office on the island, along with the Treasurer's Report.

TARPAULIN COVE LIGHTHOUSE FUND

APRIL 2005–MARCH 2006

CHS OBTAINED THE LEASE on the lighthouse in 2001. The fund is used for restoration and long-term maintenance of the only standing lighthouse in the town of Gosnold.

Thanks to all donors for funds to repaint the lighthouse and replace its catwalk railing in 2005. An open house at the lighthouse is scheduled for Sunday, August 13 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

PAUL ELIAS

Allen Ames	Mr. & Mrs. George Epple	Mr. & Mrs. Erik Mollo-Christensen	Katy Tripp
Mrs. David Anderson	Mr. & Mrs. Peter Farrelly	Brendan, Maggie & Connor Murray	Mr. & Mrs. David C. Twichell
Elizabeth Anderson	Mrs. Elliott Forbes	Mr. & Mrs. David Nemiah	Mr. & Mrs. David C. Twichell, Jr.
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Mr. & Mrs. Elkan Blout	Mr. & Mrs. Wyatt Garfield	Paulette Richie & Dean Alles	Hester Whitcher
Jack Bulwidas	Dr. Francis W. Glock	Dr. H. F. Riley	Mr. & Mrs. John Williamson
Edward Camara, Jr.	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Gregg	Leo-Pierre Roy & Perry Russell	Redwood Wright
Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Chace, Jr.	Mr. & Mrs. Brent Hall	Paricia Saltsman	Mr. & Mrs. Stewart Young
Gloria Coder	Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Hart	Mr. & Mrs. John Senning	Mr. & Mrs. Paul Zimbone
Mr. & Mrs. James B. Conway	Weston Howland III	Hunter L. L. Senning	
Judith Cook	John Paul Hunter	Skylar N. L. Senning	
Elaine Doran	Doris M. Johnson	Douglas B. Smith	Omission
Mr. & Mrs. Melbourne Dorr	Peter Lehner	Dr. Marjorie E. Readdy Sullivan	F. Paul Mooney was inadvertently left
Diane Droste & Bruce MacPhail	Mr. & Mrs. Gonzalo Leon	Mr. & Mrs. Alan Symonds	off the list of <i>In Memoriam</i> donors,
Mrs. David Emerson	Dr. & Mrs. Ned Lund	Laura Thurston	for Christine Dodge, in the Winter
	Dr. & Mrs. Jay Merriam	Emil D. Tietje	2006 <i>Quarterboard</i> .

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

VOLUNTEERS: We look forward to seeing many of you as volunteers at the Society this summer. If you have volunteered in the past, please join us again. If you haven't, why not give it a try? It's fun, and won't take a lot of time — we know your vacation is precious.

Groups such as Elderhostel have already contacted us for Museum talks and walking tours of the island. We will welcome museum docents as usual, and we're looking for people to help with children's activities and educational events; hospitality; library, office, and computer projects; as well as greeting cruise boats and giving visitors golf cart rides. There's also landscaping, research and writing, photographing and taping events, interviewing (see Weezie's request) and much more.

A special thank you goes to those who responded to the New Bedford Whaling Museum's request for information about the *Wanderer*. Curatorial Intern Sarah Parks will visit Cuttyhunk this spring to talk with people who have expressed interest in her project. She plans to share her findings with CHS.

GOSNOLD UPDATE: As many of you know, we have been following the efforts of researchers at Historic Jamestowne, Virginia, to identify remains discovered in 2002 as those of Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, who explored the Elizabeth Islands in 1602. DNA testing

has been inconclusive, but tests on bone samples and teeth continue. Dr. William Kelso, Director of Archaeology at Historic Jamestowne, stated, "Until questions about these new interpretations [relating to Gosnold's sister, Elizabeth] are answered and we can learn more from further tests, we will continue to rely on the historical and archaeological evidence that so far tips the scale to Gosnold." This evidence includes a decorative captain's leading staff ceremoniously placed along one edge of the coffin lid, indicating a person of high status. The Jamestowne Captain was European, male, and the same age as Gosnold when he died.

Credited by Captain John Smith as the prime mover of the colonization of Virginia, Bartholomew Gosnold captained the *Godspeed* on the 1607 voyage to America, in company with *Discovery* and *Susan Constant*. This summer, as part of Jamestown 2007, the 400th anniversary celebration of the colony, a full-size (65') replica of *Godspeed* will visit six East Coast ports, including Boston (July 14–19) and Newport (July 25–30). The Society tried to arrange a visit to our Elizabeth Islands as well, but that could not be worked into their schedule. We're still hoping we'll have a chance to view the ship under sail, however. And we encourage members to visit Gosnold's ship in port and to enjoy the accompanying shore-side performances and exhibits.

SANDY EARLE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

CHS is planning to add to its collection of oral histories. Two volumes of *People of Cuttyhunk*, containing interviews with such luminaries as Mary House and Howard Cornell, have been for sale in the Museum Shop. Meanwhile, new interviews have been done and others are slated for summer 2006. Volunteers are needed to conduct and transcribe interviews in order to complete and publish a third volume of *People*. If this sounds enticing, please contact Louise Garfield Bachler for an assignment: 802.387.5548 or weezrock52@yahoo.com