



Historical Society  
of Old Yarmouth

THE BEECHCOMBER

Spring 2022

*Our seasonal newsletter for members and friends of the ...*

## Historical Society of Old Yarmouth

**The Historical Society  
of Old Yarmouth**

presents

# Styles and Stories

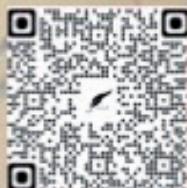


from the diaries of  
**Lizzie Ryder Taylor  
of Yarmouth Port**  
**An Exhibit of Victorian Clothing**

**June 17 to June 26, 1 to 4 PM**

at the Captain Bangs Hallet House Museum  
11 Strawberry Lane, Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts

Timed entry tickets available at [hsoy.org/events](http://hsoy.org/events)  
or at the door if space allows.





## STYLES & STORIES from the diaries of LIZZIE RYDER



What was life like for a woman in Yarmouth Port during the Victorian era? How did they live and what did they wear? Find out at *Styles and Stories from the diaries of Lizzie Ryder Taylor*, an exhibit of Victorian clothing at the Bangs Hallet House in June. The show will feature beautifully costumed mannequins in clothing from our collection in scenes drawn from Lizzie's actual diaries written between the years 1886 and 1913. View her sewing with friends, visiting neighbors, dressing to go out and even the wedding of her daughter Almira. An exhibit of Victorian baby clothing and accessories will be displayed at the rear of the house.

The exhibit will be open from 1:00 to 4:00 PM daily from June 17 to 26. Join us on June 21, 24 & 26th at 2 PM for a special chat and Q&A with curators to learn more about the diaries and the fashions. Laurel Gabel, who transcribed the diaries, and Anne Grammer, our fashion expert, will host.

Tickets are \$15. Timed entry tickets may be purchased online at [hsoy.org/events](http://hsoy.org/events) or will be available at the door if space allows. For additional information email [info@hsoy.org](mailto:info@hsoy.org)



### EXCERPTS FROM LIZZIE'S DIARY

1893 Monday, June 5th -- Pleasant. Washed and ironed. Very warm indeed. Susan [Lewis] here cutting Mimie's Wedding dress. White muslin. Anner [Bray] here sewing all day. Alice at home from store. Elbridge worked up to Simpkins.

1897 Thursday, March 4th -- Pleasant. Colder. Elbridge had Dr. Pulsifer today. Alice went over, spent the day with Myra to So. Dennis today. President McKinley took his seat today.

1901 Friday, June 28 -- Pleasant, windy, and warm. In afternoon, went to the High School graduating exercises in the hall. Alice and Ruth went in the evening to the dance. Alfred Taylor [of West Yarmouth] won the 1st and Stephen Sears, Jr. the 2nd prize money. Elbridge worked on Register Office today.

*Lizzie's husband, Elbridge Taylor, was a local carpenter who built, among other things, the Sacred Heart Chapel on Summer Street, Dr. Bacon's house (most recently known as Anthony's Cummaquid Inn), and several houses on Main Street in Yarmouth Port, including his own at 298, right across from the library.*

*The Board of Trustees of the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth  
invite our membership to  
A RECEPTION CELEBRATING THE OPENING FOR THE 2022 SEASON  
OF THE CAPTAIN BANGS HALLET HOUSE MUSEUM  
on Wednesday, June 29 from 5:00 to 7:00 under a tent on the lawn of the museum.*



## RETURN OF THE FOURTH OF JULY PICNIC

Happily, the traditional July 4th Picnic, which was cancelled the past two years due to the COVID pandemic, will return this year. This festive event will be held from 11:00 to 1:00 at the Kelley Chapel Meadow welcoming HSOY members and their guests at no charge. The Northside String Band will once again provide music. Picnickers should bring their own chairs. The walking trails will be closed to the public, and the bathroom at the Gate House will be open.

The July 4th Picnic will follow the traditional format established in the 1990's by Jack Braginton-Smith, Roy Morton, and Bob Grudzina when they put together an impromptu event which has been popular ever since. Baked beans, cole slaw, hot dogs, lemonade, watermelon, homemade desserts, Cape Codders and Bloody Marys are the menu for the day. As she has for the last sixteen years, Dona Baratta of Jack's Outback II has generously offered to supply the hot dogs and water melon. A salute to the flag and singing of the Star Spangled Banner will end the festivities with our president Aleina Laughton presiding.

## NEW SUMMER FAMILY PROGRAM AT THE WETU

This summer learn about Cape Cod before the Pilgrims with engaging hands-on discovery programs designed for children and their parents at Yarmouth Port's Native American wetu and nature trails. When the English Colonists arrived on Cape Cod in the 1600s, Native Peoples were already living here in large communities, raising their children, building their homes, hunting and fishing and growing their crops.

During these new summer programs, children and their parents will have an opportunity to learn what life was like in the past from members of the Nipmuc-Wampanoag Community as they share stories about their culture and lead hands-on activities. What would native children do for fun? What games did they play? What clothing did they wear? And what was their favorite food?

We will stay busy! Water and juice will be provided. Rest room is available. Parents must stay with their child at all times. The trails are not wheelchair accessible but the wetu is completely accessible for participants.

Programs will be held on select Tuesdays and Thursdays in the summer. Every Tuesday program is the same; every Thursday program is the same. Reservations will be available soon at [hsoy.org/events](http://hsoy.org/events).

## NEWPORT ADVENTURE

On Wednesday, September 21 HSOY is offering guided tours of two Newport mansions. In the morning we will visit Belmont House, a 56,000 square foot, one bedroom mansion built by millionaire bachelor Oliver Belmont. There was a sensation a few years later when Alva Vanderbilt divorced her husband and moved across the street. The house has been restored by millionaire jeweler maker, Carolyn Rafaelian, who received the Rhody Award for Historic Preservation in 2018.

After lunch there will be a tour of Rough Point, home of tobacco heiress, Doris Duke. This mansion at the end of Bellevue Avenue contains a priceless collection of antiques which she assembled. She was a great animal lover, somewhat eccentric and once kept a camel in her back yard.

We will carpool to Newport and have lunch on our own between tours. The cost will be \$49 per person. Space is limited and sign up will begin in August.



## OTHER EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR 2022

TUESDAY, JUNE 14 10:30AM – “South Friends Village Walk”, led by Robert Kelley and Judy LeGrand. Visit homesites and other locations in the historic Quaker area south of Route 28 in South Yarmouth, \$15.

Reservations available at [hsoy.org/events](http://hsoy.org/events).

FRIDAY, JULY 1, 1-4PM – Captain Bangs Hallet House opens Friday, Saturday, Sunday through October 8.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1-4 PM – “All Around the Common”. Open House at the four historic properties on the Green. All will be welcoming visitors.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18 - Annual HSOY Dinner at Old Yarmouth Inn. Speaker and awards ceremony. Reservations required and will be available at [www.hsoy.org](http://www.hsoy.org) (limit 100).

DATE TBA – HSOY Annual Meeting. Reservations will be available at [www.hsoy.org](http://www.hsoy.org).

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31 4-7PM – Yarmouth Port Green “Safe Halloween Trick or Treat”.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 3PM – Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service in historic Kelley Chapel.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4 1 - 4PM – Yarmouth Port Christmas Stroll.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6 – 5-7 PM New Members and Volunteers Reception at the Bangs Hallet House.

DECEMBER SUNDAY DECEMBER, 11, 2PM – Winter Salon at Captain Bangs Hallet House - Amy Whorf McGuigan speaks on the History of New England Christmas Traditions. Members \$10; others \$15. Reservations available at [www.hsoy.org](http://www.hsoy.org) or HSOY Facebook page.

## Books Available at Cobbler Shop or Online

Lost Hero of Cape Cod by Vincent Miles - \$14.99 – also through Amazon

Historical Writings of Daniel Wing – edited by Robert Kelley - \$15.00 – also Amazon

The Gnome That Lived in Yarmouth, reprint – edited by Robert Kelley - \$15.00 – also Amazon

Capturing Cape Cod History – Register Articles 2015-2019 and more - \$5.00

Capturing Cape Cod History – Register Articles 2010-2014 and more - \$5.00

Yarmouth; Images of America (Arcadia) - John Sears III & Priscilla Sears White -\$21.99 and at [Arcadia.com](http://Arcadia.com)

Mayflower Stopped Here First – Essays from 2020 Symposium by CIHA - \$26.00

Heritage And Heirlooms – Historical Genealogies of N.E. Families By Francis and Dorothy Robinson – 18.00

Main Street Cape Cod by Chatham Historical Society (towns of the Cape) - \$22.00

Yarmouth's Proud Packets by Haynes Mahoney (reprint) - \$1.00

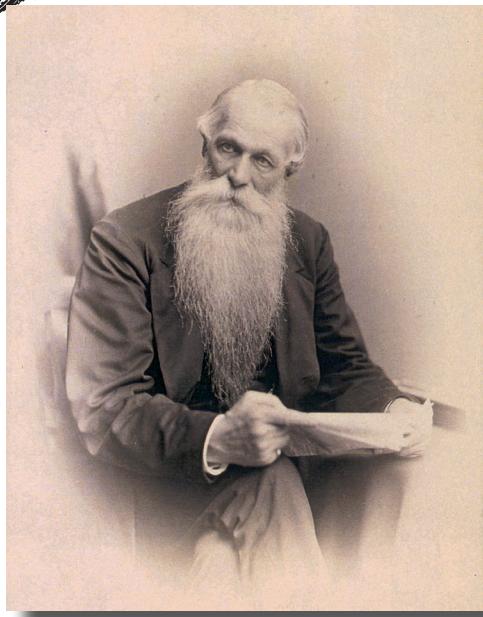
Riding Around W/ Father; Camp Meeting; Going Cranberrying-by Caroline Siebens (reprint) \$1.00

Old Cape Windmills by Daniel Wing (reprint) – \$1.00

Images In Time – Original copy – Hardcover – one copy only \$125.00

Sea Captains of Cape Cod by Dr. Michael Pregot (Captains from 15 towns) - new book

– Available from Amazon or Sunbury Press.com



## ADDITIONS TO OUR ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY

HSOY recently received a collection of papers and objects relating to Yarmouth Port's Captain Frederic Howes (1811-1882). They were donated by his descendants Leonard H. Dowse and family of Hancock, NH. Trustee Charlie Adams worked with the family for several months to bring this important collection to Yarmouth.

In addition to being master of the ship *Climax*, Howes was inventor of the Howes Rig, an innovative system of rigging topsails to maximize wind efficiency and crew safety. Among the papers received and being added to the Archives Collection are diaries, family letters from the 1820s, estate papers, genealogical information, and an 1865 patent for the Frederic Howes Improved Crupper.

Artifacts include a telescope, a log to measure the distance a ship travels, Captain Howes' camphor wood sea chest, an engraving of the rig system he invented, a four fluke anchor with a box, a piece of heavy rope from one of his ships, a map of Boston to San Francisco drawn by Howes, a book about the ship, *Revere*, which Howes captained, a log book from the ship *Revere*, a portrait of Captain Frederic Howes, a portrait of his wife, Eliza Howes, and also drawings and photographs of their summer home, known to the people of Yarmouth as the "Gingerbread House" at 134 Old King's Highway.



## OTHER RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE HSOY ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY

Glass plate negative of house on Old King's Highway

Postcard of the Yarmouth Port railroad station after devastating fire in 1941

Three letters from Daniel Wing to William Bragdon in 1920 regarding Wing's articles about South Yarmouth

Listing of HSOY programs and officers for 1977-1978 from Bill Saunders, Whately, MA

Two advertising cards for Isaac F. Smalley, Yarmouth Port, dealer in cigars, tobacco, groceries, etc.

Book *They Came in Ships* by John P. Colletta, donated by the author

Three Yarmouth High School yearbooks (1948, 1950, 1951)

Book and documents about Great Island, donated by Sharon Wimer

1821 book owned by Silas Baker, Jr., donated by Janet Ross

Yarmouth High School Class of 1946 Reunion Booklet belonging to Avis Caswell

Letter from Eliza Jenkins, dated Sept. 5, 1847 from her sister Sarah Jenkins of South Yarmouth

Two stereoscopes of the Yarmouth Camp Meeting, ca. 1870

Eight photographs of damage done by 1938 hurricane, from Janet Murray, South Dennis, MA

1909 postcard of the D. F. Parker residence at 371 Old King's Highway, sent by S. B. Ryder to Miss Lydia B. Phinney, Monument Beach, MA

Two aerial photographs of Camp Greenough, donated by Yarmouth Police Chief Frank G. Frederickson



## Belaying the “Mankiller”: Captain Howes and the Double Topsail

by Haynes Mahoney - August 2004

On a black night, with the masts of the bark *Alert* swinging 90 degrees in a storm off Cape Horn, a dozen men were on the yardarms frantically reefing topsails. With only the foot ropes for support, and laying across the yard trying to haul in the beating canvas, a young seaman slipped and was on his way to doom when the man next to him grabbed his collar and hauled him back. “Hold on another time, you young monkey, and be damned to you,” the old seaman shouted and thought nothing more of it. According to Charles Henry Dana, who describes the incident in his classic *Two Years Before the Mast*, this was a common experience among men working aloft. In the towering structures of masts, yards and sails, topsails had become the work horses of tall ships by 1840 when Dana published his book.

In Columbus’ day, the great mainsails at the bottom of masts were the drivers of square rigged vessels, while topsails were small squares of canvas above. In the Napoleonic era, when the navies of Britain, France, and Spain and sometimes the young American republic were constantly at war, mainsails obscuring vision and riddled by cannon fire, were soon hauled up. Topsails provided the speed and maneuverability to get the weather gage and rake the enemy ship with broadsides.

In later peaceful times, when speed and cargo became prime concerns in hauling adventurers to the gold rushes of California and Australia, and the seasons’ earliest tea leaves from Canton to Liverpool, top sails grew ever larger.

As Alexander Laing explains in his history *American Ships*: “It was the increasingly deep topsails of the Western Ocean packets more than anything else, that got them in the late thirties their reputation as brutal mankillers. Each of the three topsails of a modest packet at that time contained more than 3,000 square feet of heavy canvas. Imagine the task of handling a frozen wet rug, measuring about 50 by 60 feet, high aloft in a hammering winter gale, with only an icy footrope to stand on....”

For years sailors complained about the huge topsails, but ship owners and sea captains, indifferent to the comforts of beforemast hands, seldom wanted to split their sails in two, which would require more spars and rigging.

According to Laing, it was probably less humanitarian instincts than reducing the number of crewmen (and their wages) that impelled two prominent mariners to experiment with double topsail rigs. In 1844, James Bennet Forbes, the famous Boston merchant adventurer who had already made a fortune in the old China trade, rigged a double topsail system on the topsail schooner *Midas*, and published a pamphlet extolling the advantages of his “invention”. He then adapted the rig to several square rigged vessels, which, however required modification of the masts.

Meanwhile Captain Frederic Howes of Cape Cod experimented with double rigged systems and patented his rig in 1854. Forbes never patented his device, and the controversy over who actually first invented the double topsail system has lingered among historians ever since. Part of the confusion comes from the numerous Howes sea captains on Cape Cod. Even Alexander Laing ascribes the invention to Captain Frederic Howes of Brewster, when the actual registration at the Federal patent office is assigned to Captain Frederic Howes of Yarmouth.

Operating independently, both men came up with similar basic rigs. The old massive topsail was divided laterally into an upper and lower topsail, each attached to a yardarm. Halyards, braces and other lines to control the sails were belayed on deck. When winds freshened and it became necessary to shorten sail, a few men on deck could haul the upper sail down to the lee of the lower topsail, thus reducing the sail area by half. It was no longer necessary to send all hands aloft in stormy seas.

Forbes’ system was more complicated, and required modification of each mast on a square rigger to install. With a small forging and a little extra tackle the Howes rig could be more easily installed on any mast, which may account for its more widespread use on square rigged vessels.



It is also suspected that the Howes rig got a boost from a famous race by two clippers on their maiden voyages in 1853, as described by the Cape Cod historian Henry C. Kittredge in his *Shipmasters of Cape Cod*. Captain Moses Howes, of North Dennis, left Boston in the *Competitor* on March 27; and Captain Frederic Howes of Yarmouth Port, in the *Climax*, left the same port a day later, both headed for San Francisco. Though not closely related, both men were esteemed Cape Cod shipmasters.

Moses was notorious as a “driver”, crowding on the most sail his ship could possibly bear in any wind. He was said to be more interested in the glory of speed and new records, than the safety of cargo and crew. Captain Frederic was methodical, prudent, reliable and skilled in the ways of sea and ships. When Yankee captains gathered in Liverpool between voyages, Frederic Howes was called their “commodore.”

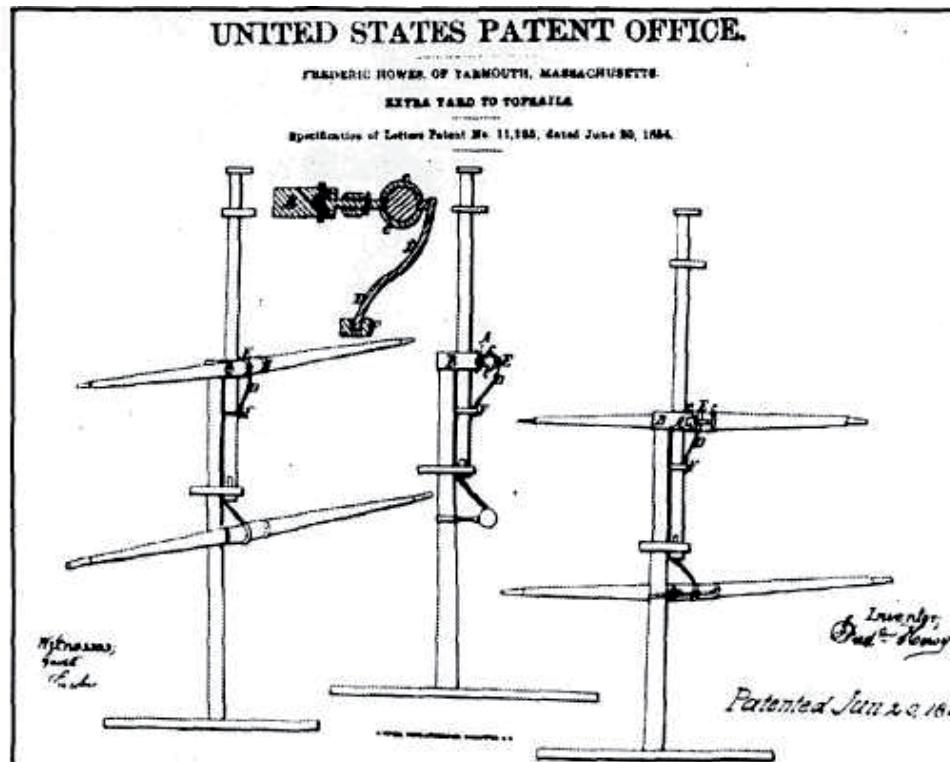
Both captains held their starting positions down to Cape Horn, the *Climax* close behind *Competitor*. Desperate to leave *Climax* well astern, Moses kept every possible stitch of sail on his ship, despite furious gales, until he split her stem, springing a serious leak. There was nothing for it but to heave to for five days, while making repairs.

Frederic kept steadily on, and for the first time put his new double topsail rig to severe test. He found that he averaged five knots additional speed while making faster sail changes in varying winds. He rounded Cape Horn and sailed into the Pacific four days ahead of *Competitor*. True to his competitive character, Moses made up the difference in the long race, and both vessels sailed into San Francisco Bay as they had started -- 115 days out of Boston, Captain Frederic in the *Climax* one day behind.

But Frederic Howes could boast that even though *Competitor* was slightly smaller it required twice as many foremast hands as *Climax* which made the voyage, using the Howes double topsail rigs, with only 14 men and two boys. Frederic patented his rig the next year, and according to historian Laing “swallowed the anchor”, i.e. left the sea, and devoted his efforts to promoting his simplified rig. He must have done well financially for his home, now a popular restaurant on the corner of Gingerbread Lane and Old Kings Highway, is one of the finest examples of Gothic Revival style in Yarmouth Port.

“The competitive edge, in the long twilight of merchant sail,” wrote Laing, “quite literally was provided by his (Howes’) simplification of Forbes’ device for eliminating the necessity of sending large numbers of skilled men so frequently aloft.”

### The F. Howes Patent for the Topsail Yardarm



Historical Society of Old Yarmouth  
P.O. Box 11  
Yarmouth Port, MA 02675

**Members will receive the Beechcomber on line only unless they notify the Cobbler Shop Office that they would also like to receive a print copy.**

**Historical Society of Old Yarmouth  
11 Strawberry Lane, P.O. Box 11, Yarmouth Port, MA 02675  
508-362-3021, [www.hsoy.org](http://www.hsoy.org)**

**Board of Trustees:**

Aleina Laughton, President  
William Archie, Recording Sec.  
Barbara Adams, Corres. Sec.  
Gayle Leaversuch, Treasurer  
Blaine Hoovis, Asst. Treasurer  
Charles Adams  
Susan Bonnell  
Joel Chaison  
Fred Ecker  
JoAnn Kelley  
Robert Kelley  
Judy LeGrand  
Michael Lorenz

Nancy Mumford  
Duncan Oliver  
Julie Pelletier  
Bill Ray  
Lynn Richards  
Pat Tafra  
Anne Whitaker  
Mary C. Woodward

**Administrator:**

Marie Zahn 508-362-3021

**Kelley Chapel Coodinator:**  
Marie Tardo 508-362-3652

**MEMBER E-MAIL:**

If you are not on our e-mail list and would like to be, let us know and you will be added to the list. Your address will be hidden on outgoing messages.

**Our e-mail address is [info@hsoy.org](mailto:info@hsoy.org)**