



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

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**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 11th, 2:00 pm at the Dennis Memorial Library
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village**

Members Welcome

Please send information & stories for the newsletter to Dave Talbott at the DHS Website email address: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

John F. Kranz

On the back wall of the East Parlor at the Josiah Dennis Manse Museum, there is an oil on canvas painting of a three masted schooner the *John F. Kranz*. It is depicted departing Leghorn Harbor in Italy in 1875, under the command of Captain Marcus Lafayette Howes. Having sat in the East Parlor for many Manse Committee meetings, I was aware from the information posted with it that the painting was gifted to the Dennis Historical Society from the estate of Miss B. Evelyn Crowell, granddaughter of Capt. Howes. In addition, the following snippet of history is posted - *The captain's wife Desire Hall (1839-1922) and daughters Gracie Evelyn (1871-1942) and Blanche Linwood (1874-1963) were also aboard. Capt. Howes was a Master Mariner transporting cargo to Europe and Asia for most of his life and a member of the Boston Marine Society.*

Large Chinese porcelain, polychrome vases which he brought back to Dennis are on display in the Maritime Room. In the summer of 1887, while master of the bark Freeman, Capt. Howes shot and killed Japanese crewman Hidakah Kikumatsu while defending himself during a mutiny attempt. He was tried, convicted of manslaughter and imprisoned in the Barnstable House of Correction until he was pardoned by President Benjamin Harrison. He never went to sea again. His daughter Blanche Linwood Howes married Seth Crowell in a gala wedding on June 24, 1896.

My knowledge of the *John F. Kranz* would have ended with what was posted on the wall had it not been for the following email which arrived unexpectedly in the DHS Inbox. –

Hello, I'm led to believe that your museum might possess a companion painting of the tern schooner John F. Kranz. If you can confirm this, I'd like you to come see it. This is a William Stubbs version that came down in my family from Richard Rich Freeman. The identity of JF Kranz remains a mystery to me. Thnx, Richard, Wellfleet. Ed. note: I have received permission to share the emails, but have chosen to omit the sender's last name for privacy reasons.

Attached to Richard's email was a photo of his family's painting of the *John F. Kranz*. Ed. note: Because it is so necessary for readers to see the image in color, this issue is a change from the previous greyscale format.

Hello Richard,

There is a painting of the JF Kranz in the Josiah Dennis Manse Museum. Thank you for including a photo of your family's!

The following is copied from the Manse Docent Handbook: "Painting of the sailing ship 'John F. Kranz.' Gift from the estate of Miss. B. Evelyn Crowell. Miss Crowell's grandfather, Captain Marcus Lafayette Howes was master of the ship. Capt. Howes and his wife, Desire Hall Howes, lived on Whig Street, not far from the Manse. Capt. Howes sailed all over the world during his "deep-water" career. This painting was done in Leghorn, Italy in 1875."

I have emailed two of our Board members in the hope of attaining information about the identity of JF Kranz. When I have heard from them, I will be back in touch.

Regards, Dave



Photo of the John F. Kranz provided by Richard of Wellfleet

My next email to Richard included the following information from our Treasurer and Chair of the Dennis Historical Commission Diane Rochelle. Diane again came through as one of our *go to* sources!

John F. Kranz may have been the original owner of the boat and had it built in Boston to carry a cargo of ice.

John F. Kranz – schooner built 1871 in Boston; home port New Orleans & Boston; 519.54 tons; 140.9' long; 32' breadth; 16.8' depth; 3 masts; 2 decks; figure head billet.

Johann Friedrich Kranz (Thedinghausen, Germany 12/23/1823) – New Orleans, LA 1/22/1905 age 82, occupation ice merchant; purchased Grand Isle Hotel in 1878.

As you will see in the next email from Richard, Diane provided the clue to what will become a fascinating look back in time as the history of the vessel, its owner and a once thriving business unfold!

Thanks for that info. According to Samuel Eliot Morison ('Builders of the Bay Colony,' I think), the pioneer of the ice trade was Bostonian Frederick Tudor, who began taking ice from Boston to the West Indies in 1805 or so. By 1850, he was taking it to India. So, there's good precedent of Boston being an ice trade port.

I'd be delighted to see a picture of your JF Kranz, if there's an artist's signature, that would be interesting too. I think yours might be a rare instance of showing the sails from the windward side, which serves to reveal the strangely triangular (rather than typically trapezoidal) fisherman stays'ls, or topmast stays'ls or whatever to call them. The Stubbs painting carries the same sails, but they don't appear as prominently in the leeward view. Best, Richard



*Photo provided by Richard of Wellfleet
Oil on canvas by William Stubbs*



*Photo by Dave of the painting in the Josiah Dennis Manse Museum
Oil on canvas by L. Renault*

It is amazing to see the photographs of the two paintings side by each, one on a starboard tack and the other on a port tack! Richard's observations about the wind and the sails are spot on.

It turned out that the *sweet spot* for both Richard and me was Diane's link between the vessel *John F. Kranz* and the ice trade. The connection provided Richard with the identity of J. F. Kranz and me with the *rest of the story*. It led us both to the following article compiled from the research of Andrew Robichaud, a Boston University College of Arts & Sciences assistant professor of history whose studies of a long-gone industry reveal how climate change would have made it virtually impossible today! The following is excerpts with full credit and much appreciation to Devin Hahn and Amy Laskowski for the article at <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2022/tracing-the-history-of-new-england-ice-trade/>.

Thank you!

Tracing the History of New England's Ice Trade

In the spring of 1845, the naturalist Henry David Thoreau began building a small cabin on the shores of Concord's Walden Pond to escape the noises and activity of the city. He couldn't have predicted that his tranquility would be cut short in the winter by what was then the most modern of industries: the ice trade. Writing in Walden, Thoreau says his peace was disturbed once 100 Irishmen "came from Cambridge every day to get out the ice," bringing with them "many carloads of ungainly-looking farming tools—sleds, plows, drill-barrows, turf-knives, spades, saws, rakes." "Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well," Thoreau grumbled. The huge blocks of ice carved from Walden Pond—and other lakes and ponds in Massachusetts—were expertly packed in sawdust and sent on ships around the world to warmer climates. Ice was treated as a crop, a short-lived product that was strategically cultivated and harvested.

That industrialists made fortunes from ice—a product that is so ubiquitous today—may seem bizarre, but the birth of the ice industry is a crucial historic development, says Robichaud, whose scholarship covers American, environmental,

and urban histories. Ice was so valuable because it was both something that could be consumed in a drink and could refrigerate fresh meat, milk, and vegetables on trains. It could also be used to keep dead bodies chilled, and as ballast in a ship to keep it balanced.

For so long, ice was a commodity that only the wealthy—or those in cold climates—could access. (Thomas Jefferson installed an ice house at Monticello for chilling meat.) One opportunistic Bostonian saw a chance to change that, reportedly after hearing at a party that there was a market for ice overseas. His name was Frederic Tudor and he hailed from a wealthy Boston Brahmin family. While carving ice from ponds wasn't new, Tudor was the first who was brave (or perhaps foolhardy) enough to try to ship blocks of it to warm climates. His first trip in 1806 carried ice to Martinique, but the ice melted shortly upon arrival as there was no ice house to store it. Tudor subsequently built icehouses in the ports he shipped to.

At its height in the mid-19th century, ice harvesting was done across the cold climate regions of the United States and Canada. In the year 1847, 353 ice-packed vessels left Boston Harbor on their way to the American South, as well as to international ports like Rio de Janeiro and Hong Kong. Boston alone exported almost 75,000 tons of ice that year, and used another 27,000 tons here. Much of it came from Fresh Pond in Cambridge, Mass., where Tudor's ice company was based. By the time he died in 1864, Tudor was worth \$200 million in today's dollars.

Historians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries liked to tell triumphalist stories of American capitalism and American development and progress. They picked up on Tudor as this sort of entrepreneur, this brilliant businessman who had this idea of cutting ice and sending it to places.

Tudor, in fact, owed much of his success to his employee Nathaniel Wyeth, who grew up on the shores of Fresh Pond. Hired in the 1820s, Wyeth revolutionized the way ice was harvested, making use of horse-drawn plows and cutters. It was only with Wyeth at the helm that Tudor's business finally became profitable.



An illustration from Gleason's *Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, 1852.

The ice industry began to experience decline in the early 1900s when refrigeration was introduced, making carved ice and icehouses unnecessary. But climate change like we are experiencing now would have eventually crippled the ice trade. In the 19th century, Walden Pond froze two weeks earlier than we see today. It doesn't stay frozen for as long, and is usually much thinner. This is a reflection on the change in climate, and thinking about how [the] cold was more of a part of this region's history and culture: they enjoyed being outside.



Illustration of men sawing and breaking off ice at Fresh Pond in Cambridge, Mass, published in August 1875 addition of *Scribner's Monthly*.

Ed. note – The harvesting of ice continued in Dennis Village on Scargo Lake well into the 20th century. There will be more about this local connection to the *ice trade* in a future issue.

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Postscript



Image Courtesy of Find A Grave & Diane Rochelle

John F. Kranz (1823-1905)

Is buried in the family plot in the Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans, the home of his ice trading business.

His name appears in the fourth row from the top.

*A final note provided by Richard
from a Facebook page –*

‘Ain’t There No More New Orleans’

*The Crescent City Ice Company
was located opposite the Soraparuru
Market on 71 – 73 South Front
Street and Soraparuru Street.*

*It is [sic] the oldest ice business in
the city, having originally been
organized in the early 1850s as a
joint venture with Addison, Gage &
Company of Boston,
and John F. Kranz of New Orleans
to import Northern ice.*