



GALE FORCE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF GALE FREE LIBRARY FGFL.ORG

Gale Free Library: Opening doors for 127 years.

Summer 2015, Vol. 25, No. 2

Editor's Note

Two Benefactors

In this issue we pay tribute to two remarkable figures: Samuel Chenery Damon (page 2), man of the cloth, who inspired the creation of Gale Free Library and after whom our building, the Damon Memorial, is named; and Kenneth Happe (this page), man of letters, an ardent supporter of GFL who died in 2013, leaving the library a generous legacy.

Whenever I think of Damon, I remember *Two Years Before the Mast*, which I read many years ago and which describes an epic sailing voyage around Cape Horn, much like the one Damon and his wife took in the early 1840s from New York to their new home, Honolulu. For Happe, I think of Charles Dickens — more specifically Dickens' eccentric and benevolent characters, such as John Wemmick in *Great Expectations* and John Jarndyce in *Bleak House*. "Dickensian" truly applied to Happe, who exuded charm, enthusiasm, and mordant wit.

In other news, we report progress on the children's room renovations (page 4), which was one of the projects of the 125th endowment campaign; we note the library's new e-book service (this page); and don't forget to clip out the coupon on page 4 for your free book at the Book Cellar. The coupon is good on August 20th and 22nd.

Ken Happe's Memory Lives on at Gale Free Library

BY RICHARD MAURER, GFL TRUSTEE

IT WAS A PERFECT EVENING of theater, that October night seventeen years ago: two actors in Gale Free Library's program room, exchanging the witty, moving repartee of A. R. Gurney's *Love Letters*. The audience was in stitches and finally in tears. There was a reception afterwards. The whole lovely experience was the brainchild of Holden's irreplaceable impresario Ken Happe, who acted (with co-star Karen Ludington), directed, and donated the ticket proceeds to the library's 110th anniversary endowment fund.

Ken was like that. He loved to show people a good time and pull out the stops with generosity. Two years ago we were all saddened at his passing, at age 78. But he had one last surprise for us. In his will he left Gale Free Library \$100,000.

Ken was a Greek and Latin professor and used to long time horizons, so we think he would understand the deliberate approach that we, the library's trustees together with library director Susan Scott, have taken in deciding how his legacy can best be used. After talking to Ken's friends, we have determined that our guiding light should be his example: we want to enrich the experience for our patrons the same way he did for his students, friends, family, and acquaintances.

Our first step was to purchase an outdoor bench for the Helen Harding Library Park beyond the library parking lot. The plaque reads: "In memory of Ken Happe, a lover of books and nature." Anyone who visited Ken's home on Winthrop Lane remembers his backyard, which was an inviting mix of amphitheater, sculpture garden, and wilderness.

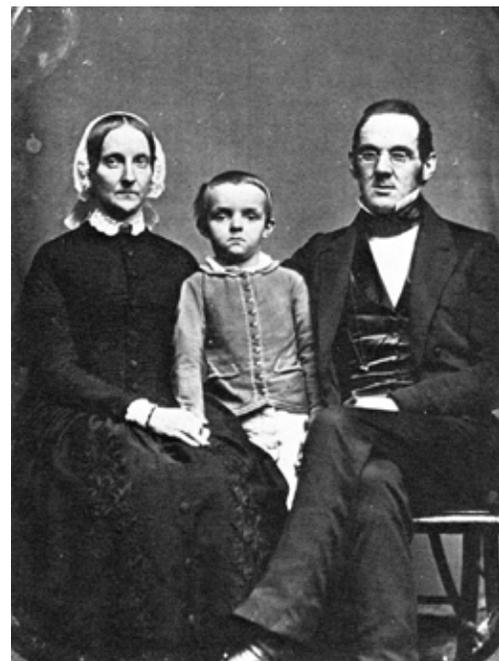
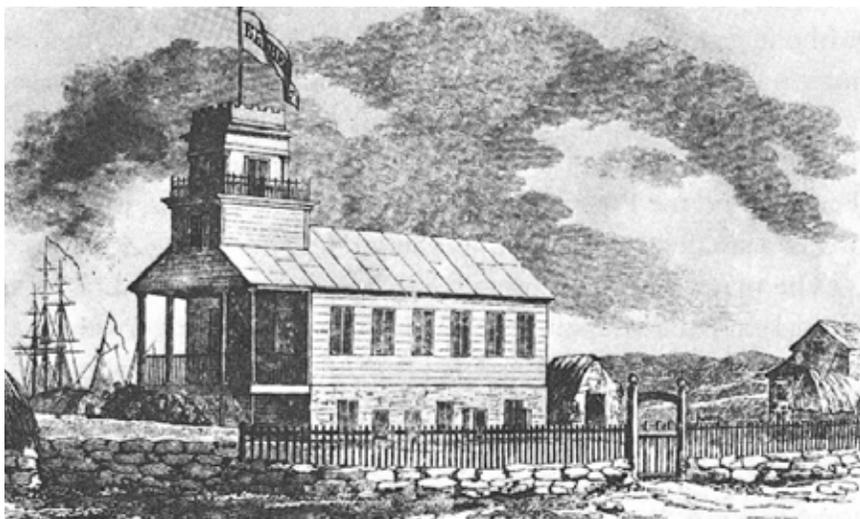
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Kenneth F. Happe (1934–2013), professor, actor, and avid user of Gale Free Library. Happe taught classics for many years at Holy Cross College, where he also directed student theater productions. (College of the Holy Cross Photo Archives)

More e-Books Than Ever!

GFL has shifted beyond Overdrive, which is our e-book service accessible through the GFL website. In addition to Overdrive, we now offer access to many more electronic materials via the Commonwealth e-Book Collection. Go to galefreelibrary.org and look for the link under "E-Resources." Questions or problems? Ask at the reference desk or call (508) 210-5569. Happy e-reading!



Samuel Chenery Damon: From Holden to Honolulu

ABOVE, LEFT:

The Seamen's Bethel church in Honolulu, 1843, the year after Reverend Damon arrived as minister. (Hawaiian Mission Children's Society)

ABOVE, RIGHT:

Damon with wife, Julia, and son Samuel Mills Damon. The couple would have five sons. (Bishop Museum)

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Honolulu Harbor, 1853. The Damons' voyage from New York to Honolulu took seven months, including nearly two months ashore in Chile and Peru. (Library of Congress)

BY MARGARET WATSON

Editor's note: The Damon Memorial that houses Gale Free Library is named after the Damon family — particularly Reverend Samuel C. Damon, who left Holden in 1842 for the Hawaiian Islands. There, he ministered to itinerant sailors until his death in 1885. Three years after his passing, his brother-in-law Samuel C. Gale gave the citizens of Holden the beautiful Damon Memorial, equipped as a school and Holden's first public library. The library, said Gale in his dedicatory speech, was Damon's inspiration. Here, Margaret Watson tells the story of this fascinating man.

ONE OF Holden's most accomplished citizens, Samuel Chenery Damon, decided early in life to become an ordained minister of the Congregational church and dedicate his life to laboring in missions.

Samuel's father, Colonel Samuel Damon of Holden, had become successful in real estate, textile manufacturing, and the mercantile business. The Damon home was located in the center of the village at the intersection

of Holden's Main Street and Highland Street. Known as the Damon Block, the site was once occupied by the town's first meeting house. Colonel Damon's mercantile business occupied the first floor; the second floor provided the family's living quarters. The original building was destroyed by fire in 1901 and was immediately rebuilt in 1902. This site is now owned by the Town of Holden, and the present building is known as the Damon House.¹

Samuel Chenery Damon was born in Holden on February 15, 1815. He was educated in Holden schools, which he praised for their excellence: "It was most interesting to trace in the history of Holden . . . the progress of the gospel and the public instruction of the young."² Samuel then attended Amherst College; he also studied at Princeton Seminary and Andover Seminary, for he aspired to become a missionary and not a businessman like his father. Initially he intended to serve in India, but a fervent call came from Honolulu; the Seamen's Bethel desperately needed a chaplain. Samuel responded to the call and sailed to Hawaii in 1842 with his new bride, Julia Mills Damon. Seven lay missionaries from Holden had already preceded him in service to Hawaii.

The Seamen's Bethel was engaged by the American Seamen's Friend Society to serve the



sailors of ships that entered the port of Honolulu. At that time, more than 100 whaling vessels with approximately 6,000 sailors passed through Honolulu annually. The chapel was average size, measuring 48 feet by 30 feet. The main hall seated 300 persons; the basement had a reading room, a book depository, and a marine museum. A residence for the chaplain was built nearby.³ Dedicated in 1833, the chapel stood until 1886, when it burned down.

Damon served as chaplain there for over forty years. He preached two sermons on Sundays, with an additional service on alternate Wednesdays. He ministered to the needs of the visiting sailors, providing food, clothing, and temporary shelter. He encouraged sailors to refrain from liquor and carousing while on leave. He also collected the sailors' mail until a post office was established in 1851. Concerned with educating his seagoing flock, he collected books on spelling and arithmetic.

Perceiving the need for a newspaper, Damon founded *The Friend*, which published local and world news, announcements, messages from sailors, and articles and sermons written by the chaplain himself. One homily appearing in *The Friend* was Damon's "Lincoln Sermon," preached on May 14, 1865, one month after President Lincoln's assassination. Printed

regularly, the newspaper totaled an estimated one-half million copies over the years.

Samuel and his wife, Julia, visited missions overseas in Egypt and Syria. They also made a trip to the United States in 1849 to observe the settlements in California. In 1876, he revisited Holden during a trip to the centennial celebration in Philadelphia, where he was a delegate. A member of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Damon donated many materials that became the genesis of their Hawaiian collection.

Damon's Holden legacy includes an address he gave on the history of Holden at the town's centennial celebration on May 4, 1841, the year before he left for Honolulu. As a lasting record, Damon published this address together with important information concerning the town's early history and names of important personages in its development.⁴

According to his granddaughter, Ethel M. Damon, Samuel enjoyed perfect health in mind and body. His personality was warm, buoyant, and pleasant. He passed away in 1885 at the age of 70 and lies buried in the cemetery in Oahu. Of him it was said, "He was one of nature's noblemen . . . a truly model Christian . . . and the world was made better by his having lived in it."⁵

NOTES

1. *Damon Memorial; or Notices of Three Damon Families who came from Old England to New England in the XVIIIth Century*. Honolulu, 1882.
2. Damon, Ethel. *Samuel Chenery Damon*. Honolulu, 1966.
3. *Portraits of American Protestant Missionaries to Hawaii*. Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Company, 1901.
4. Damon, Samuel Chenery. *The History of Holden, Massachusetts, 1667-1841*. Bibliolife Reprint.
5. Estes, David Foster. *History of Holden, Massachusetts. 1684-1894*. Charleston: Nabu Press, 2010.



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Ken Happe from page 1

And anyone who entered his house knew that he was a book lover like no other. Among his favorite subjects were music, nature, theater, and animals. The library has been adding to its holdings in these subjects, with new books (and also DVDs of theater and music productions), marked with a bookplate in Ken's memory.

Like many of us, Ken had a tumultuous relationship with technology. Our former reference librarian, Stan Haney, recalls that Ken frequently came to GFL to use the public computers. For all his brilliance, he found this a daunting and frustrating experience. One day, when things were not going well on the computer, he slammed his palm down and swore. Stan reminded him that that was

not appropriate language in a library. So Ken started swearing in Latin and Greek!

This story is connected to another way we are honoring Ken. Our municipal budget allows for the purchase of additional computers, but we could also use more flexible work stations for them. Thanks to Ken's legacy, the newly designed computer area in the reference room will include two six-position computer carrels, suitable for conducting computer classes — something Ken might have found useful! There will also be two comfortable chairs for quiet reading.

Of course, this does not begin to exhaust Ken's generous gift, which we will be drawing on in the years ahead, always remembering his kindness, his love of learning, his hearty laugh, and those puzzling words in Latin and Greek.

The Children's Room Gets a Big Desk . . . and More!

BY JAMIE CHASE GALVIN

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED changes in the children's room at Gale Free Library. Director Susan Scott reports that the remodeling includes "restoring the interior windows using the old original windows, and adding a door to reduce the sound travelling to quiet study areas of the building. We have also installed a renovated circulation desk that makes the room look more inviting and professional. The desk was the former circulation desk from downstairs, which we had partly cut down so it's the right size for our young patrons."

The goal is to make the children's room more sheltered, while retaining the historic character of the building. Susan adds, "We like

all of our patrons to have rewarding experiences wherever they go in the library. This way, activities in the children's room aren't overheard as much in other areas."

The renovations were funded by the 125th anniversary endowment gifts and were aided by historical research by Nancy Richards, head of GFL's local history room. As recent readers of this newsletter recall, the Friends of Gale Free Library held a series of fundraisers in 2013, one of whose goals was this project, which will be completed when the town's Buildings and Grounds Department finishes and installs the door between the children's room and the atrium. Susan notes that the door will have the historical color and feel of the building, and she thanks Buildings and Grounds, who have been "crucial to assisting and guiding our vision."

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This coupon is redeemable for
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