

The Isaac Hardy House, Chatham, Massachusetts

The Isaac Hardy House sits on the east, and residential, end of Chatham's Main Street, on the north side of the street. Sited in 1805 on a nineteen acre homestead which stretched to the sea, the Isaac Hardy House is a five-bay by two-bay Federal dwelling extended by a gable-roof rear ell. Sheathed in clapboard and showing simple corner-board and fascia trim, the Isaac Hardy House also has projected frame 9-over-9 sash windows.

Isaac Hardy (b.1781, d. July 30, 1846) purchased the land for his farm from the heirs of Betsy Eldridge and Daniel Stours. Upon his death in 1846 Isaac Hardy left the house to his five sons Alpheus, Isaac, Anson, Josiah and Albert. Alpheus, born in Chatham in 1815, was the most prominent of the Hardy boys. Having learned the merchant business from his father, Alpheus secured a job in a store in Boston when he was 16. For a short time he attended Phillips Andover Academy with the intention of seeking a college education, but ill health forced his return to Chatham.

Alpheus eventually became a very successful and respected mercantile businessman. He built up one of Boston's largest shipping businesses—Alpheus Hardy & Co.

"Alpheus Hardy and Ezra Baker in the early forties were successful in the coastwise trade, so much so, in fact, that for the purpose of extending their commerce they purchased the "Otho," a little brig of 150 tons, to send to the Mediterranean, and although she was very small the merchants of Boston looked with jealous eye upon her. The "Otho" made a remarkable trip, and arrived in Boston long before the rest of the fleet. At once her cargo was advertised at auction, and buyers thronged the pier where old John Tyler was reaping fancy prices, when in the midst of the sale one of Boston's merchants drove up in a chaise and called out to the crowd: "Buy easy, boys, buy easy! My bark is just signaled, and she will be here before night." Perhaps the sale would have terminated more successfully had the buyers known that this bark had not signaled, and that a fortnight was to elapse before she appeared in port. In spite of this misfortune which attended the disposition of the "Otho's" first cargo under her new ownership, the firm of Hardy and Baker prospered, and became a worthy predecessor of the later firm of Alpheus Hardy & Co. The latter firm had the distinction of owning many swift vessels. They also never sold a ship nor changed a flag through fear of either foreign or domestic foe, and perhaps as a reward they never lost a ship to the Confederates during the Rebellion. Their ships included the "Conquest," "Ocean Pearl," "Cowper," "Granite," "Wild Rover," and "Mountain Wave," and their barks were the "Young Turk," "Kepler," "Cleber," "Wild Gazelle," "The Turk," "Bounding Billow," "Daniel Webster," "Dorchester," and "Young Turk, 2nd." The "Daniel Webster" owned by the Hardy firm was usually the ship that brought the first cargo of fruit into the Boston market, a coveted honor among the vessels of those days. She was later owned by John S. Emery & Co. of Boston.

In a letter written by Alpheus Hardy at Gibraltar, November 20, 1845, he said: "I sailed from our good city, the Queen city of the States. My leaving was under the most pleasing and happy circumstances, so far as conveyance and company were concerned, our firm having prepared a new bark completely fitted for our comfort. My pride was moved by going in my own vessel, and with a cargo under my control. Poor human nature!" During this tour made by Mr. Hardy to the Nile and the Holy Land, ships belonging to the firm were frequently met with, and in them were sent home many purchases, and mementos of travel.

It was the "Wild Rover" belonging to Alpheus Hardy & Co. that in 1865 brought into the United States the first Japanese to come to this country in search of learning, and it was Alpheus Hardy who became the benefactor of and who educated Joseph Hardy Neesima, the young immigrant, and who lived to see his protégé serve Japan and there found Doshisha University. Neesima's escape from Japan to China was made in an American vessel of which William T. Savory of Salem, Mass., was master. Captain Savory kindly consented to aid the young Japanese, and, in order to secure his safety from the custom-house officers, locked Neesima in the store-room of the cabin. At Shanghai, Neesima was transferred to the Hardy ship "Wild Rover," commanded by Captain Horace S. Taylor of Chatham, Mass., and after a prolonged voyage of eight months the vessel reached Cape Cod. When the young Japanese came on board he could speak only a few words of English, and when he was asked his name by the captain he replied that it was "Neesima Shimeta." "I think I had better call you Joe," rejoined the captain, and from that time he was known by that name. Upon meeting Neesima in Boston, Alpheus Hardy undertook the education of the young foreigner who had risked his life to come here in search of knowledge. He was placed in Phillips Academy at Andover, and afterwards was sent to Amherst College, where he was graduated in 1870. He is remembered as the Apostle to Japan. Up to Mr. Hardy's death in 1887

his interest in Neesima's work was very great. Professor T. Makino and Professor Mizusaki, who have been living in Boston recently, were two of Neesima's pall-bearers when he died in 1890.

Alpheus H. Hardy succeeded his father as a member of the firm of Alpheus Hardy & Co. The younger Mr. Hardy in 1853 -- when but thirteen years of age -- crossed the Atlantic in the 320-ton bark "Young Turk" belonging to his father and manned by a Chatham crew. During this voyage young Hardy kept a diary in which he recorded impressions of the sea and of places visited, his last entry, November 9, 1853, giving a vivid picture of the lad's joy in seeing Boston again. "On Long Wharf," he says, "I recognized father among the crowd, and also the blacks (black horses) and mother's face at the carriage window. I touched the wharf before the ship and was soon out of the crowd and where in comparative seclusion, I might be welcomed at home."

At the two hundredth anniversary of Chatham, Mass., in 1912, Mr. Hardy recalled this early voyage. "In the years," said Mr. Hardy, "when we still owned ships, so far as possible, we chose Chatham or Cape men as masters. Among them was John Paine, to whom was gladly paid a higher wage if he would take his wife with him; David Nye Nickerson, Thomas Crowell, Thomas Sparrow, Andrew Reynolds and others. The choice was based upon the confidence and belief in the character and ability of the men. In connection with this, let me mention an incident which occurred this morning. Captain Ephraim Smith told me that my father told him when he had chartered him for a special voyage, 'I have not chartered your vessel, but you.' It was not the ship, but the but the man he wanted. I recall the unwillingness to let the now Rev. S. S. Nickerson go to sea in command of the 'Heroine,' which he had chartered, because of his extreme youthful appearance, until he learned that he was a Chatham boy. That settled it, and he made a successful voyage." (Excerpted from *Some Old Merchants and Sea Captains of Old Boston*, Copywrite, 1918, State Street Bank of Boston.)

Alpheus Hardy went onto become a Trustee of Amherst College, and a Massachusetts State Senator in 1861.

Before the end of the 19th century the Isaac Hardy House was sold to Benajah Crowell, the well-known skipper of the Alpheus Hardy's barque "Wild Rover." In 1919 Captain Crowell sold the property to Benjamin Bevins. The Clausewr family bought the house in 1953, using it as a guest house in the summers. In 1971 the home was purchased by Frank Kennedy for use as a family home. In 1986 the house was converted to an inn, The Dolphin, which ceased operation in 2005.

Source: <http://www.isaachardyrestoration.com/history.html>