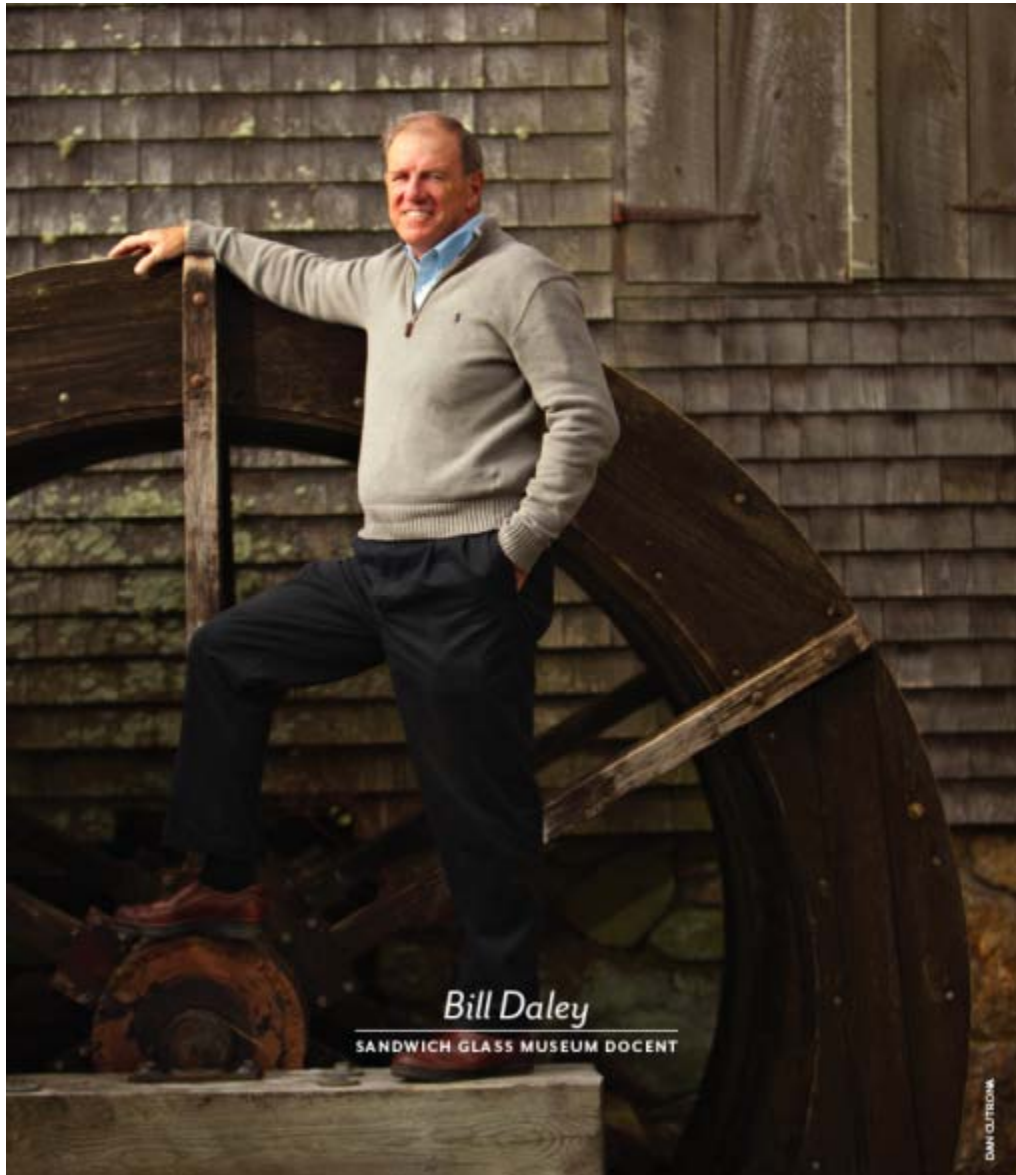


Bill Daley

Sandwich Glass Museum Docent



When I retired relatively young, at 56, my wife and I decided we didn't need to live in Boston. We went to Sandwich and I fell in love with the village area. We told our real estate agent that we wanted a lot in a small, quiet neighborhood, and that if it was near the water or a golf course that would be great. The agent came back in a couple of days with one. That was in 2001. The greatest move we ever made was coming down here.

Way back when I was in college, I was a history major. I never really did anything with it—I needed to make some money, so I ended up in the financial services business. When I retired, I

had time on my hands to do some things I really wanted to do, so I ended up pursuing some interests from way back. That's how I ended up volunteering, leading walking tours for the Sandwich Glass Museum, after I learned a little about the history of the town. I tell our visitors that Sandwich is unique in three respects. One, it's the oldest town on Cape Cod, having been settled in 1637, a short 17 years after Plymouth. Two, during the 19th century, it underwent the change that many places underwent, going from an agricultural community to a manufacturing community. It's a microcosm of the Industrial Revolution in the United States because in the mid-1800s, Sandwich was producing more glass for middle-income America than any other place in the United States. And third, it's one of the few places you'll ever see a collection of 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s houses within a mile-and-a-half walking tour, with virtually no buildings constructed after the 19th century.

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Deming Jarves was the originator of the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company here in Sandwich. He was an experienced glass manufacturer in Boston. In 1825, upon his father's death, he inherited \$30,000 and came down to Sandwich to open a glass factory. He bought a total of about 30 acres where he ultimately built his glass factory. In addition, he acquired 3,000 acres of wood lots—he wanted the wood as a source of energy for the factory, to melt the silica into glass. But one of the real reasons he came here that people don't talk about is that he anticipated the building of the Cape Cod Canal. Of course, this was 1825 and it didn't get built until 1914 (laughs). So he was a visionary. It's just his vision took a lot longer to happen than he anticipated.

He relocated about 20 glass makers from Cambridge, Massachusetts. They happened to be Irish Catholics for the most part. That was the first infusion of a different ethnic group into this area—everyone else had been English Protestant prior to that.

When Jarves first started his operations down here, he produced glass like everyone else: by having it hand-blown. It required a great amount of skill to do that, and you couldn't create much in the way of volume. But within two or three years, he capitalized on pressed glass: Rather than have everything hand-blown, he could now manufacture on a press machine and enormously increase the amount of production. This was really one of the first places to introduce that process.

Glass in the 19th century was the equivalent of plastic in the 20th century. They could now make glass any shape or size and for any useful purpose, whether it was plates or cups or lamps. The volume was enormous and the demand was enormous, and Jarves had to keep expanding to keep up with demand. By 1836, he acquired about 30 acres of farmland down in the village. He cleared the land between Liberty Street and Summer Street, and that became the neighborhood for all of his skilled glass workers. That's how it changed from an agricultural community to 30 acres all filled with houses. People weren't getting up in the morning to tend their chickens and cows anymore. They were literally walking down the street to go to work.

In Sandwich at the time, there were only about 3,000 people. At its peak, the glass factory employed about 550 people—which today would be one of the largest private employers on Cape Cod.

By 1836, the business had exhausted the wood supply here. They had been burning 24 cords of wood a day since 1825. Then they started to use coal. Jarves was clever enough to extract gas out of the coal, which he used to light lamps in the glass factory. And as a result, with the lighted conditions, they could operate 24 hours a day.

They would melt silica down and put it into a molding process, and they would press the glass on machines. Then they would extract and shape the glass before placing it in a kneeling oven because if you let it cool naturally, the glass would shatter. It would cool down more gradually, and that became the final product.

Boston was the distribution center. In the early days, the glass was shipped on small boats along the coast. When the railroad came to town in 1848, they came to service the glass industry, and that's ultimately why the railroad was extended down the rest of the Cape. But Jarves thought the railroad people were holding him up and charging an extremely high rate, so he refused to use the railroad and instead built his own steamship called the *Acorn*.

Many of the houses along Main Street were homes to the factory's executives. The skilled workers lived in the area of Liberty Street and Jarves Street. And the unskilled workers who were feeding the furnaces and hauling things out by hand all lived within the area called Jarvesville, which was along the edge of the shore. All of those places still exist today.

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