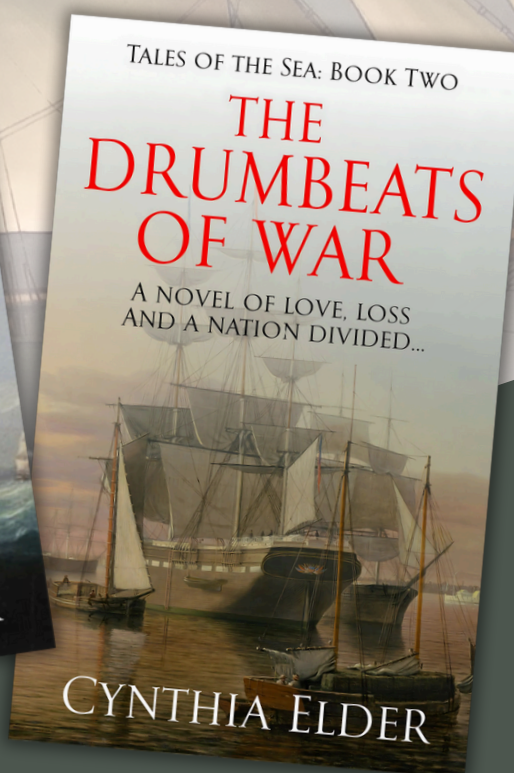
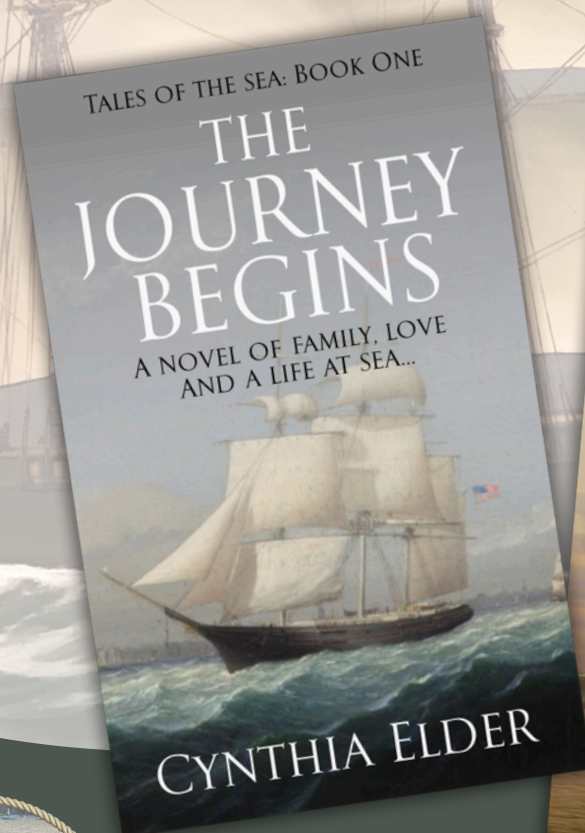


Books available
on Amazon & at
Local Bookstores

BOOK CLUB KIT: TALES OF THE SEA

A two-book historical fiction series
by Cynthia Elder



CynthiaElder.com



A story that might have been lost to time now emerges in *Tales of the Sea* by Cynthia Elder. Immerse yourself in the lives of real people who lived and loved during the Great Age of Sail and the Civil War years. Their words, captured in original ship's logs, letters and personal journals, lay tucked away in family homes for more than 150 years. Now, Elder breathes life into their experience in this two-book historical fiction series.

Synopsis: *Tales of the Sea*

A two-part historical fiction series by Cynthia Elder
Holand Press, 2025

The historical fiction novel, *Tales of the Sea*, reveals the inner lives of three generations from a seafaring family in the 1800s during a time of global change and political upheaval. The two-book series is based on extensive research and hundreds of pages of unpublished ship's logs, letters and journals.

Tales of the Sea tells the true story of a family from West Barnstable, Massachusetts, during the final chapter of the Great Age of Sail and the tumultuous years leading up to and through the Civil War. Through their own words, the novel elevates the voices of men and women who braved years-long sailing voyages. The plot intersects with the stories of soldiers and slaves as the United States splits apart at the seams.

In book one, *The Journey Begins*, we see West Barnstable in 1830 through the eyes of lighthouse keeper Joseph Nickerson and members of the Jenkins and Fish families whose livelihoods are tied to the sea. Young James Jenkins follows the sailor's life, rising over a decade to become a merchant ship captain who transports guano, tea and coal around the globe. He finds his match in Ruth Fish, the daughter of a ship's captain who bristles with passion to see the world and escape the confines of her small town.

Separated for years from his family, James binds himself to them through letters that span the vastness of oceans and time. At home, the rumbles of conflict over slavery reverberate into every corner of life. As book one concludes, James and Ruth are united in their vision to sail the world together while their country strains under the tension between North and South.

Book two, *Drumbeats of War*, follows the journey of James, Ruth and their daughter Minnie aboard the ship *Hoogly* as they cross oceans, endure unimaginable loss and watch their country devolve into brutal conflict. Ruth's brother Josiah is swept into the Civil War, while Ruth's father spirals into mental illness. Aboard the *Hoogly*, they take on a ship's cook who fled slavery through a network of abolitionists. Ruth and James sacrifice everything for each other and discover that the life they had run from now beckons them home.

More at CynthiaElder.com

Book Club Discussion Questions:

Tales of the Sea

- ✦ Cynthia Elder's novel is based on hundreds of pages of original letters, ship's logs, and journals found amongst her husband's family records. Do you have family records stored away in boxes? If you transformed your family's history into a novel, how do you think family members would react?
- ✦ Cynthia sought to bring the stories of real people to life by directly quoting source material whenever possible. How did this method of writing influence your feelings about the characters? Did anything surprise you about the way James, Ruth, and Josiah communicated in writing?
- ✦ The first book in the *Tales of the Sea* series, *The Journey Begins*, introduces three generations in a seafaring town. How did the world change over the course of the novel? How did technological change affect the lives of everyday people? What parallels can you draw with technological change in today's world?
- ✦ The second book in the *Tales of the Sea* series, *Drumbeats of War*, provides a deeply personal look into the lives of soldiers in the Civil War, as seen through the eyes of Josiah. Do you have ancestors who served in the Civil War or family members who served in more recent military conflicts? What emotions did you feel as you watched Josiah grow from a boy into a young man serving in the bloodiest war in U.S. history? What lessons can we learn today from the conflict which nearly divided the country?
- ✦ During the time period covered by the two-book series (1830-1870), many political parties arose, morphed, or disappeared, as people struggled to align over specific issues, like the abolition of slavery. Do you think our current two-party system is destined to remain, or can you envision a time when the Republican or Democratic parties evolve into new coalitions?
- ✦ Thomas, a freedom-seeker who became a ship's cook, speaks of his flight from slavery and the plight of slaves who toil for a lifetime to enrich their masters. Did his story alter any of your perceptions about slavery? Where does Thomas' story fit within our current discourse on how we teach about our country's history?

More at CynthiaElder.com

Author Bio: Cynthia Elder

Tales of the Sea: The Journey Begins

Tales of the Sea: Drumbeats of War



Cynthia "Cindy" Elder is a novelist, poet and nonprofit leader. Her two-book novel, *Tales of the Sea* (Holand Press, 2025), tells the true story of a seafaring family from West Barnstable, Massachusetts, during the final chapter of the Great Age of Sail and the tumultuous years of the Civil War.

Kirkus Reviews, one of the publishing industry's premier book review sources describes *Tales of the Sea* as "a well-developed novel that uses copious historical sources to vividly bring its characters and setting to life." Kirkus gave the novel a "Get It" recommendation, a designation achieved by 25% of authors associated with independent publishers.

Cindy's poetry has appeared in many literary magazines over the last four decades, including recent editions of *The Last Stanza Poetry Journal*, *Frost Meadow Review*, *Blood & Bourbon*, *Blue Heron Review* and elsewhere. She received the Grand Prize in Notable Works' 2023 *Voices of the Earth* anthology.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts in creative writing and career writing from Roger Williams University and a Master of Public Affairs from Brown University. Cindy is working with both universities to research a freedom seeker born in 1816 whose remarkable narrative of flight from slavery and life as a ship's cook was found in her husband's family records.

Cindy serves as executive director of the Barrington Land Conservation Trust, a local nonprofit dedicated to preserving open space and educating the public about our natural resources. Her long history in nonprofit service includes roles as executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Rhode Island and Coggeshall Farm Museum. She also served as communications director for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and Hospice of Central Florida.

Cindy and her husband, Bob, have sailed the waters of Narragansett Bay and elsewhere for 30 years, along with their children, Emily and Elizabeth. They live on the edge of Hundred Acre Cove in Barrington, Rhode Island.

More at CynthiaElder.com



Advanced Praise for *Tales of the Sea*

A two-part historical fiction series by Cynthia Elder

Holand Press, 2025

"A well-developed novel that uses copious historical sources to vividly bring its characters and setting to life."

~ *Kirkus Reviews*

"*Tales of the Sea* elevates the voices of real, everyday people who lived in a small seafaring town in Massachusetts in the mid-19th century. **Cynthia Elder** lets us step into their shoes and experience a pivotal moment in our country's history, as seen through the eyes of the men, women and children who lived through it."

~ *James E. Donahue,*

President & CEO, Old Sturbridge Village

"*Tales of the Sea* brings to life the world of nineteenth-century seafaring with depth and humanity. Building upon extensive analysis of recently discovered manuscripts, this eagerly awaited novel offers an insight into life during a period of change and upheaval in both American and Global history. **Cynthia Elder's** engaging writing style ensures that the characters in the book become far more than words on a page as the reader is immersed in their personal and political worlds. The book is a must read for historians and lovers of historical fiction alike."

~ *Dr. Charlotte Carrington-Farmer,*

*Professor of History, Roger Williams University,
Author of Roger Williams and His World*

More at CynthiaElder.com



"It is rare when a literary talent bursts upon the scene without warning but that is the case with **Cynthia Elder**, author of *Tales of the Sea*. Her novelized true story of the 19th-Century seafaring Captain James Hamblin Jenkins and Ruth Jenkins is a masterpiece. This is a must-read for all audiences.

I enthusiastically recommend it!"

~ *G. Wayne Miller,*

Journalist, Author, Filmmaker,

Co-Host of Story in the Public Square

"Author/historian **Cynthia Elder's** historical novel grabs the reader on page one. James' and Ruth's story is one of love and adventure. It is a true tale of a 19th century couple from Cape Cod. Most of their words, their thoughts, were written on the high seas or at their homes in the farming village of West Barnstable. More than 100 pages of their letters, as well as the research of local historians over the last 175 years, make this story uniquely authentic. The novel paints an accurate picture of life in a seafaring town, from describing the lightkeeper's day at Sandy Neck Light, to caring for family 'in sickness and in health,' to experiencing the high seas (or dead winds) that could end a sailing trip with disaster. There are wonderful moments of happiness, and passion, to the delight of the reader. *Tales of the Sea* brings a world before us and does so with detail. It also carries the story of life, love, and achievement that fill our world today. This book is spell binding. A motion picture in its future?"

~ *Nancy Shoemaker,*

West Barnstable Historian and publisher of books on Cape Cod history and conservation