



# **The Cellars Speak: The Old Cellars and What They Tell Us About Dogtown and Its People**

*Mark J. Carlotto*

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A colonial settlement was established in the middle of Cape Ann in the late 1600's in woodlots and cleared land known as the Commons. Some say people settled there as protection from pirates and enemy Indians. Others say it was because the land was free. Commoners earned their living as farmers, weavers, shepherds, and fishermen. The settlement doubled in size to about fifty families by the mid 1700's. But then, unlike most places that continued to grow to the present day, the population began to decline. With the emergence of coastal industries like fishing, shipping, and trading, people moved back to the harbor. The houses left behind were rented and soon fell into disrepair. By the mid 1800's all of the houses in this part of Gloucester, which became known as Dogtown, were torn down. Only the root cellars – today's cellar holes – remained. Combining maps, genealogy data, and oral history, THE CELLARS SPEAK offers new insight into the spatial and social structure of Dogtown. It explains how the original settlement started and may have developed in its early days, and how family trees “connect” the homes of parents to those of their children forming social networks. These networks suggest the Commons and later Dogtown were not unlike the rest of town, in fact, not all that different from today's Gloucester, where as someone once joked, “everyone knows everybody, and everyone is related.”

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