

## *Preface*

On July 7, 1890, the Biological Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor welcomed its first students for an eight-week course in biology. Now, in 2015, we celebrate notable events of the past 125 years—the establishment of the Biological Laboratory and of the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Station for Experimental Evolution (1904), and the growth of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (1963). The Laboratory has become one of the world’s leading research and educational institutions, and my hope is that the stories of the men, women, and science told in this book give some insight into how this remarkable and in many ways unlikely transformation took place.

This book owes much to two unpublished manuscripts. In the late 1980s Bentley Glass, a scientist who had been chairman of the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Board of Trustees from 1967 to 1973 and then an honorary trustee, began to prepare an account of the Laboratory to mark its Centennial in 1990. About a decade later, Nathaniel Comfort, then the Laboratory’s science writer and currently Professor in the Institute of the History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, undertook a major revision of the Glass manuscript and added new and more recent material. I have made liberal use of the valuable information in the Glass/Comfort manuscript in preparing this book and I am indebted to both authors.

I have also benefited in countless ways from working over the past 25 years with the two most recent Presidents of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Jim Watson made his first visit to Cold Spring Harbor as a graduate student in 1948 and immediately became aware of the special

nature and historic importance of the site. His desire to help secure and build up its scientific heritage brought him to the Laboratory as Director in 1968 and his wish to honor the past while planning for the future informed many of the decisions he made as a scientific leader, visionary of campus development, and instigator of numerous educational programs. Jim was succeeded as Director in 1994 by Bruce Stillman, whose sense of the history of the Laboratory is equally acute and whose recall of the details of the recent past, after 35 years of service at the institution, is remarkable. I have learned an extraordinary amount from both of these individuals who have dedicated so much of their lives to making the Laboratory an exceptional place.

A special thanks is also due to John Cairns, first Director of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. John's insights and lucid prose, whether in letters to the trustees or in his annual reports and other writings, capture so well the nature of Cold Spring Harbor.

The story of how a small harbor on Long Island's Gold Coast became home to one of the world's great biomedical research institutes is 125 years long and complex, and this small book cannot be a comprehensive account of the origins and development of the Laboratory. Several minutely footnoted volumes would be required to do justice to all that has gone on here over the years—useful for historians of 20th century science perhaps, but they are not the primary audience for this book.

It is instead intended as a celebration of the fact that despite numerous crises over the years, there is now a world-renowned Laboratory to celebrate. The book is for anyone who knows Cold Spring Harbor by having worked or visited here, or who has driven along Route 25A and wondered about the buildings on the west shore of the harbor. I have tried to provide sufficient information to cover the broad story without getting bogged down in detail or, in describing research, getting lost in technical jargon. I may be thought obsessive by those who do not know Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory and superficial by those who do,

especially since in a short history there are inevitably omissions. These are more numerous closer to the present, as the range and complexity of the Laboratory's science increased and the number of researchers rose. There is simply not room to mention all the possible research topics and people involved.

The events described are in chronological order, except on occasions when it seemed more sensible to complete a story from its origin to the present time. The account of an institution is that of its people and its environment and I hope the photographs of people and buildings provide context for the history. I have also included images of some of the key documents in the history of CSHL.

At the end of almost every chapter will be found one to three short essays focusing on a scientist and an experiment or result. Many of these discoveries have been superseded by subsequent research but they were important at the time, both for the work of the institutes at Cold Spring Harbor and the development of biological science more generally. As this is not intended to be an academic history, I have not provided footnotes or references. Instead, I have listed books and papers that I hope will provide a starting point for further readings on Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.

Many people contributed to this project. At CSHL Press, Maryliz Dickerson (Project Manager) kept track of the project, text, revisions, and figures and had an eagle eye for errors while Kathleen Bubbeo (Production Editor) and Denise Weiss (Production Manager) assembled text and figures into the elegant pages you have in your hands. I am also grateful to Carol Brown, Susan Lauter, Joanne McFadden, and Inez Sialiano for their contributions. Clare Clark and Stephanie Satalino in the CSHL Library and Archives were indefatigable in finding items for me in the archive collections. Judy Cuddihy read the manuscript for errors and wrote several of the vignettes, as did Peter Tarr and Jaclyn Jansen—I am very grateful to them having taken on that job.

(Their contributions are indicated by initials at the end of each vignette.) At Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Alex Gann, John Inglis, David Micklos, Mila Pollock, David Stewart, and Bruce Stillman read sections of the text. Bruce was particularly helpful with dealing with the science of the last chapter and he graciously wrote the Foreword. That the Banbury Center kept running efficiently through the long gestation of this book is due to the diligence of Janice Tozzo and Pat Iannotti in my office. At the CSHL Press, John Inglis (Executive Director) and Jan Argentine (Director, Editorial Services) made sure that the project moved smoothly.

The striking painting gracing the cover is by William B. Jones, based on many photographs taken by Art Brings, Chief Facilities Officer at CSHL. It was commissioned by Dill Ayres, Chief Operating Officer of CSHL, and I am very grateful to Dill for letting us use it.

Many people helped find illustrations: Jim Childress (Centerbrook Architects), Jim Duffy (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory), Richard Gelinas (Institute for Systems Biology), Karen Martin and Robert Hughes (Huntington Historical Society), Scott Schultz (Cold Spring Harbor Library), and Ann Skalka. Thank you all.

Finally, many thanks to my wife, Fiona, who sustained me through the process of writing this book even though my preoccupation with it often taxed her good nature.

**Jan A. Witkowski**  
*August 2015*