



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or pmrhorton@aol.com

October 2010

## LETTERS TO GRANDDAUGHTERS ON FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, 2010

The day I started third grade I was so scared. I was going to have a red-headed teacher, Miss Gill, who was considered a cranky woman. I never had a problem with her. She simply was rather strict and wanted the boys to behave. They didn't dare to miss-behave. I learned local history in third grade and I learned all the multiplication tables, up to twelve times twelve and how to do short division. So I was well prepared for grade four and long division the next year. In local history we learned about clipper ships built in Dennis at the Shiverick Ship Yards. Big sailing ships that sailed all over the world. We had a boy and a girl, twins, Ethel and Oren Foley, in my class who were Shiverick grandchildren. We learned how boys in our town went to sea as cabin boys on sailing ships that went after whales, when they were ten or twelve. And we learned how the townspeople made salt. They'd take salt water from the sea and evaporate it in big wooden containers. They built rolling roofs which were rolled to cover the vats to keep the rain out. That was a grand moneymaker until salt mines were discovered in New York. Mining salt was much faster than the evaporating process to get it. We learned of cranberry bogs and how they grew. We learned of fishermen as well as whalers. Many many sea captains came from our little town.

In the middle of the year, our young red-headed teacher got married and left teaching. She was replaced by the mother of a girl in my class. That older woman, Mrs. Howes, was a real unreliable lady, I thought. One day she promised to teach us to do crossword puzzles and I was dying to learn how. She got mad at the antics of the boys and as a result, she refused to teach us about crosswords. I never forgave her. I still like to do crossword puzzles, but I don't know how I learned. Maybe I taught myself.

My first day in ninth grade, at John Simpkins High School in Bass River, Mass., was a scary day. I took the bus from Dennisport. It went through South Dennis, and West Dennis, over the Bass River Bridge, into South Yarmouth, to Simpkins High. Our town of Dennis did not have a high school, so we had to go to the town of Yarmouth's High school. Maybe six or seven miles away. Well, I was there for three full weeks, just getting used to the classes and how to get from one class to the other, and finally had stopped being frightened. I could manage in the new school. Suddenly, I was no longer going to that school. One day without saying a word to us, my parents moved the whole family and the Dean's radio store, too, from Dennisport, to Hyannis, nine miles away. I was terrified. Another new school with NO ONE that I knew. At least at Simpkins High I had all my old grammar school classmates, along with all the Yarmouth kids I did not know at all.

That first day at Barnstable High School, I wore my best light blue wool suit, with pleated skirt, white bobby sox and brown and white saddle shoes, and a felt light blue scot's style hat. I was sure I looked good. Dad took us to the principal's office. GULP! Well, we three sisters, Sally, Priscilla, and Betty, eventually got registered, assigned home rooms, and schedules. I had no idea of my locker number that day, so I wore my hat all day. I simply had no idea where to put it. Must have looked pretty silly. After the classes were over, I went to my home room, sat in the last seat in the last row, and looked around. Over 40 kids. To my amazement and delight, I saw two familiar faces in that classroom. One was Eddy Lovell, who'd been in my grammar school from grade 1-8, and had moved to Hyannis, the other was Bruce Besse, with whom I had played as a ten year old kid when I went to my parents Hyannis Radio and Record store on a Saturday. He lived nearby. Whew. At least two familiar faces. That helped a lot. Well, I survived. Met some nice girl classmates, who invited me to sit with them at lunch and the group became my high school pals. We ate lunch together every day in the cafeteria. Girls sat apart from the boys at lunch. Not that we didn't give the boys the once over, cuz we did. I did survive, but it was not a happy time to move.

*Betty Dean Holmes*

## MORE DENNIS TREASURES

DHS is the recipient of two lovely framed pieces of calligraphy executed by eleven year old Puella G. Swift of South Dennis.

Puella was the daughter of Dr. Alfred Swift of Rochester, MA and Elizabeth Grey of Edgartown. They moved to South Dennis in 1828 where he became the primary doctor for the south side of Dennis.

Their daughter, Puella, was born in 1819 the oldest of five daughters. She was a student at the South Dennis Academy and she lived near enough to be a day student. The school had a very good reputation and there were a goodly number of boarding students.

One of the pieces was the Swift Family Register. The detail around the names and dates seems truly amazing for an eleven year old. The other piece has two documents. One is the poem "The Last Rose of Summer" topped with a rose in full bloom drawn by Puella. The other document has three short verses, one by Lord Byron and the other two by Puella at age thirteen each meticulously crafted by that young hand. One other feature that is most desirable but seldom found is that she added, "Under the direction of Miss S. White, May 17, 1833".

These pieces were in the same auction as the portraits of Capt. Levi and his wife Mary Howes discussed in the September newsletter. The board voted to buy the portraits but was reluctant to spend more as our treasury is stretched rather thin, as is everyone's these days.

We have nothing like it in our collection and I felt we should make every attempt to obtain it. I called Edmund Rhodes Nickerson who has worked tirelessly to keep historic South Dennis as you see it now to brainstorm how we could raise the money to purchase these documents. He went to Eldred's, looked at them and promptly volunteered to fund one half the cost. He then called another South Dennis friend, Ken Foster, who is descended from Dr. Swift, and he agreed to provide the other half. Thanks to the generosity of these two gentlemen these lovely Dennis treasures will stay in Dennis. We are most grateful to have these special pieces in our collection. They will be on display at the 1801 Jericho House and Barn Museum.

*Phyllis Horton*

## TREASURES FROM THE MANSE

Not all the treasures found in the Stone family collection are to be enjoyed for their wonderful historical content. Some of the documents are down-right shameful, reflecting on stages of our past history which some would rather not know. This document is one of those.

Included in the papers was an original bill of sale from the estate of Shubael Taylor to Silvanus Bourne of Barnstable – a slave-woman called Sabrina. Dated 1745, Mercy (Lord) Taylor, widow of Shubael, sells this woman for 145 pounds (old tenor, which means it is terribly discounted from the face value, probably no more than about 50 pounds sterling). An account of this transaction is found in Nancy Thacher Reid's *History of Dennis*, page 168.

The actual bill of sale reads as follows:

[Front:]

These presents Witness that I Mercy Taylor of Yarmouth in the County of Barnstable Widow as Administratrix on the Land Chattels Rights and Credits of Shubael Taylor late of Sd Yarmouth Deceased In Consideration of the Sum of one hundred forty & five pounds (old Tennor) in hand paid by Silvanus Bourn of Barnstable in the County aforsd Esq<sup>r</sup> Do herby Sell tranfer Set over Convey and Confirm unto him the Said Silvanus and to his Heirs Exer<sup>s</sup> Administrators or assignes, Sabina a Sarvant for life part of the Estates of Sd Deceased of which he Died Siezed which Sd Sabina is a maid Sarvant Supposed to be part negro born of a Spanish Ind<sup>n</sup> Woman Slave or Sarvant for life then to my Hond<sup>r</sup> Father the Rev<sup>nd</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Joseph Lord of Chatham which sd Sarvant Sabina was given to me by my Sd Hond<sup>r</sup> Father before my Inter marriage with sd Shubael Taylor Deceased and sd Sabina now Dwells with sd Silvanus In Witness wherof I the Said Mercy have herunto Set my hand and Seal this twenty fifth day of Nov<sup>r</sup> AD 1745

[Witness:]

Mercy Taylor [seal]

William Bourn  
Isaac Gorham

[Rear:]  
Nov<sup>r</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> 1745

I hereby acknowledge that I have actually rec'd the one hundred forty & five pounds mentioned as a Consideration of the Sale of my Servant in the within writeing bill of Sale

Sign'd in presence of  
William Bourn  
Isaac Gorham

Mercy Taylor

*Burt Derick*

### **Shady Window Fund**

Our thanks to all of our generous readers who contributed 80% of the cost of purchasing special light-blocking window shades in the second floor of the West Dennis Graded School. The room is now much cooler – and our artifacts are sheltered from damage.

*Pete Howes*

### **A Note About Our Newsletter**

Dennis Historical Society is exceptionally fortunate to have Dennis members of the Society with superb historical and wiring skills, and who are, thankfully, regular contributors, saving me from straining my creative (!) skills to fill these pages. However, as you can see from the lead story as well as from past issues, we are also very fortunate to have communications and inputs from our members who reside outside of Dennis. Our lead author this month is Betty Jean Holms of Swampscott, MA, and a member since 1979.

And if any of you have some remembrances, stories, items, news, pictures (we return them!) etc., please send them in. I'll be more than happy to feature them in upcoming issues. Just send in those nuggets of memory, however brief or long. So many folks have told us stories, stories that I wish were written. I'll even gladly omit the names of the innocent and/or guilty – if the author wants!

And many thanks to Jennifer and Susan of the Woods Hole Historical Museum for their wonderful comments about our Newsletter – and thanks to all of our authors who contribute the articles that they enjoy!

*Pete Howes*

### **Our Best Wishes to Bob Williams**

I received a note from Bob Williams of Raynham, MA who has been sidelined this summer by illness, and keeping him from coming to Dennis for the first time since 1942!!!! He asks all of us to keep up the good work, and that his Sears and Chase clans will be happy.

We all hope that he fully recovers and returns to Dennis next summer.

*Pete Howes*

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**Note: All members are cordially invited to attend monthly DHS Board Meetings. The next meeting is at 3 pm on October 13 at the Jericho Historical Center.**

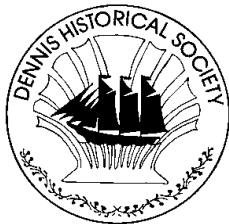
### **PLEASE NOTE – THE NEWSLETTER CANNOT BE FORWARDED**

Have a Seasonal address? Moving? PLEASE NOTIFY US at [dennishs@cape.com](mailto:dennishs@cape.com) or send us a note! The Post Office Will **Not** Forward Your Newsletter. You lose a newsletter and the USPS charges us \$\$\$.

When your newsletter is returned we have to remove you from the mailing list until we learn where you are. Don't miss a copy! Emailed Copies & Address Changes – We will *gladly* change your newsletter delivery to email *instead of* snail mail. Just drop a note to us at [dennishs@cape.com](mailto:dennishs@cape.com) with "Newsletter" in the subject line – or by regular mail. This is a wonderful way to keep your newsletter coming, especially if you're a 'snowbird'!

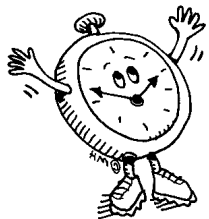
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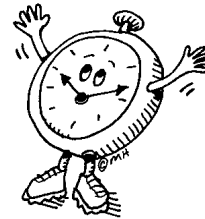


RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming DHS Events



**There's still time to make your luncheon reservation!**



The deadline is **October 8**, the luncheon date is **Saturday, October 16**, gather at **O'Shea's Olde Inne** by **11:30 a.m.** for Social time.

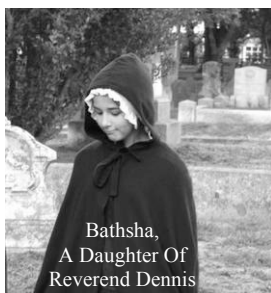
Call me with any questions: June Howes at **508-385-9308**

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It was twilight in Dennis Village Cemetery on September 11<sup>th</sup>, the weather was balmy; the 'spirits' were lively; they moaned, they 'floated', they waited for the 30 fearless folks to find them. Terri Fox led the crowd down the paths and between the tombstones, where laying in wait were several vocal but friendly spirits of those gone long ago. Below are pictured just three of our ghostly cast of twelve. (Photos by Richard Howes)



Capt. John Hedge



Bathsha,  
A Daughter Of  
Reverend Dennis



Maj. Micah Chapman