



TOWN MEETING TIME

We will engage in the traditional form of the government of our town since its settlement as part of Old Yarmouth in 1639, as we meet at the Nathaniel H. Wixon School on the evening of May 4th at 7:00 P.M. for the twenty-third year that the voters have met in this excellent, comfortable auditorium. The school was built by the town as a result of the rapid growth in school population in the 1960's resulting in extreme crowding of the Ezra H. Baker School. A Special Town Meeting at the Baker School on March 7, 1967 appropriated \$2,300,000 to construct the new building and authorized the appointed committee to go forward. The committee consisted of: William E. Crowell, Jr., Chairman, Kendall W. Foster, Secretary, Bertha Chase, Roland E. Connors, and Sayre T. Shafer. After frustrating delays and concern over inflating construction costs, the school was completed and ready to open in September, 1969. The warrant for Annual Town Meeting, March 3, 1970 called for the voters to assemble at the New Middle School Auditorium. It was a long warrant, containing 102 articles and it took three evenings to complete, only 30 of them being completed when Selectman Kirkwood Brown called for adjournment at 10:55 P.M. of the first night. The meeting reconvened on Wednesday at 7:10 P.M. and the voters continued with the articles in order. Eventually, article 58 came before the voters--to see if the town would vote to name the new school in memory of the late Mr. Nathaniel H. Wixon, Selectman of Dennis. It was unanimously voted to so do, and no more appropriate action could have been taken. Nathaniel Hawes Wixon was born in Dennis Port February 10, 1896. He grew up there, went to the village graded school and graduated from Dennis High School in 1913. He followed in the footsteps of his father, Edgar F. Wixon, and became a fisherman. For part of the year Mr. Wixon set weirs off the south shore, hoping to trap mackerel as his father had. At other times "Than", as he was known, would be off Chatham handling for cod, or weir fishing out of Sesuit Harbor in the Marion B. (named for his lovely wife, Marion Baker of West Dennis.) It is still said of "Than" Wixon that during the depression any man having trouble feeding his family could meet "Than" as he came in from fishing and he would be given a fresh caught fish. But he never let his profession stop him from participating in town government. "Than" Wixon served as a selectman of the Town of Dennis for three of the last years of his life. Previously he had served for twenty-four years on the Finance Committee. He was a charter member of the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School Committee and served on that board for over twelve years. He could be counted on to attend town meetings and to offer good sense suggestions on articles on a wide variety of subjects, in his direct, honest way. As a fisherman and a native Cape Codder in the ninth generation of the Wixon family to live here, his concern for the fisheries and the environment were obvious in his speech and in his action. He was equally remarkable in his interest in young people and their education. In his comments recommending the adoption of the provisions of Article 58, Selectman Henry Kelley II said:

"Of all the positions of public trust which he held over the years, his greatest pleasure came from helping the young people of Dennis as a member of the Regional School Committee."

Although the young people who attend Wixon School today never had the privilege of knowing this fine man they are blessed by the work that he did for his town and for generations yet to come. If you attend town meetings in the Middle School auditorium you can look up at the face of Nathaniel Hawes Wixon, whose portrait hangs to the right of the platform as you face it. Those who knew him keenly feel his presence there as we deliberate. Those of you who were not that fortunate might ponder the dedication and service which this man contributed to your town, and, as he looks you in the eye, make a vow to follow his good example.

1993 DENNIS TOWN REPORT

The Town Report this year has a very interesting cover. It shows the old Town Office building before the turn of the century. At that time it was the Town Lock Up. At the Annual Town Meeting on March 19, 1923, Article 24 voted to "raise and appropriate \$200.00 for the purpose of removing the cells and gratings from the Lock Up Building and to make necessary repairs and equipment that the same may be used as an office by the Town Clerk and Treasurer (one position at the time) and any other town officers that may deem it advisable to so do." It was added on to the north side to provide room for the Town Clerk/Treasurer's office and vault. The Selectmen used the original room on the south side. After the present one was built and occupied in 1950 the old one was sold in 1953 for \$290.00 and moved to West Dennis across from Christine's Restaurant. The next white building was the grocery store of Charles G. Baker. Beyond that is the grain store of either Seth Russell or Charles E. Crowell. It changed hands around 1900. Visible over the lock up roof is the railroad station roof. This picture was supplied by Robert Crowell of South Dennis. The other picture was taken February, 1904 at Town Meeting, which in those days was held in the Town House located on the east side of Old Bass River Road near Jay's Drive. The Town Meeting of March 20, 1922 was probably the last annual town meeting held in that building. \$1,200 was raised and appropriated at that meeting to refurbish the West Dennis school for a Town Hall. The old Town House was sold at public auction for \$300 and moved to Hyannis and used for storage for many years. This photo was taken by William H. Crowell (1877-1962) and furnished by Joshua Crowell of Dennis Village.

CALENDAR

Apr. 14 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meets with Susan and Henry Kelley
Apr. 24-25 All fees waived at the Dennis Landfill to help clean up for the Bicentennial. Must be Dennis resident or taxpayer.
Apr. 26-30 Dennis Recycling Days. Call 398-2331 or 398-3844 for info.
May 4 7:00 Bicentennial Town Meeting at Wixon School.

THANKS, VIRGINIA

Virginia Van Vorst of Dennis Port presented a lovely needlepoint sampler of the Town of Dennis Bicentennial Seal to Nancy Thatcher Reid at our Mid-Winter Festivity. Virginia is an excellent needlewoman and her love for Dennis goes unquestioned. This sampler will hang in the Dennis Town Office along with a replica of the 1831 map of Dennis that Virginia did several years ago. Do take a minute to inspect this work of art the next time you are in the Town Office.

DENNIS VITAL RECORDS

A seventeen year labor of love has finally come to fruition. Roberta Gilbert Bratti, Natalie Ross, Pauline Wixon Derick, and Miriam Eddy, who has since died, each one an excellent genealogist, have worked during that span of time to bring the births, deaths, and marriages of the Town of Dennis from 1793-1900 into print. This has been a monumental task as each entry in the town clerk's office for 107 years was copied by hand, cataloged, and indexed to make the information easy to retrieve by genealogists, historians, and ordinary people looking back to their roots. These researchers needed to be part magician part of the time. If there could possibly be 15 ways to spell one name, some of our early town clerks could come up with all 15 varieties. Quill pens didn't have a spell-check built into them. This three-volume set was published by the General Society of Mayflower Descendants in Plymouth and are available from them or Mrs. Bratti at \$100.00 plus \$5.00 MA state tax for the set. Make checks payable to Cape Cod Genealogical Society, Mrs. Roberta Bratti, 24 Drews Way, Hyannis, MA 02601-3223. Great job, ladies!!

GENEALOGY, ANYONE?

The Cape Cod Genealogical Society is planning a day bus trip to Boston for those wishing to do genealogical research at the New England Historical Genealogical Society on Newbury Street. They have kindly extended an invitation to Dennis Historical Society members to join them. The trip is scheduled for May 20, and cost is \$15.00 per person. First come, first served. For further information call Roberta Bratti, 775-2068.

BICENTENNIAL BITS

Have you been reading the Bicentennial Bits in the Dennis Bulletin? They are the work of Kate Byron of the Bicentennial Committee who collects all the bits of information from everyone connected with our celebration and puts it into a cohesive, very readable format. Thanks, Kate.

An added attraction at this years Town Meeting will be the announcement of the Grand Marshal for the Bicentennial Parade on June 19th. About 40 people sent in their nominations for this honor. The nominations will be judged this month by a panel of 3 people who are not part of the Bicentennial Committee. There were a number of great nominations. Dennis is lucky to have so many outstanding citizens.

The Stitch and Chatter Quilters from the Dennis Senior Center will present the Bicentennial Quilt to the Selectmen at the Town Meeting. This ambitious group of women have worked on this project since January, 1990 and we understand it is a delightful representation of our town, for our town. It will hang in the Town Office for all to enjoy.

TOWN MEETING TRIVIA

Before the old Town House was built, meetings were held in the church, which is why our ancient churches are still referred to as Meeting Houses. Here's a trivia question: In addition to Wixon School, can you name four buildings still in existence in town where town meetings have been held since the demise of the old Town House pictures on our 1992 Town Report? Answer next month.

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660

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