



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 35 No. 3 Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or pjhowes@verizon.net
Copyright 2012 - Dennis Historical Society

April 2012

**Please visit our all-new website!!
And we have a new e-mail address**

**www.dennishistoricalsociety.org
info@dennishistoricalsociety.org**

AN EARLY SCHOOL NEWSPAPER

The first accession to DHS in 2012 was the first newspaper for the South Dennis Academy, Vol. 1 No. 1, Friday May 29, 1857, *The Academic Quarterly*, Published by the Scholars in District No. 2, Dennis, Mass. Edited by the Teacher: Alfred B. Adams, Original Compositions. Every article is written under a pen name and appears to be mostly 10 to 12-year-old-girls. Reading the articles would lead you to think they were older, but in all honesty, today's students with their Facebooks, Twitters, etc. would be hard pressed to equal the prose in this little newspaper.

I have selected one small article to demonstrate:

Description of Dennis

The Town of Dennis once belonged to Yarmouth, and was separated from it in 1793. It is about eight miles in length and three and a half in breadth. It is bound on the north by Cape Cod Bay; on the east by Harwich; on the south by the Atlantic Ocean; and on the west by Yarmouth. There are four villages in the town, called North, East, South and West Dennis. As I have never visited North or East Dennis, I am unable to describe them. On the south side of the town embracing South and West Dennis, there are two Post Offices, three churches—Methodist, Universal and Congregationalist—and several stores; the oldest of which is Capt. John Baker's. I will not attempt a description of the schools in this town, except the one which I attend, which to me is very pleasant indeed. I think So. Dennis is a very pretty place, although there might be many improvements. I think if there were more trees and flowers there it would be much more pleasant. I hope there will be more sometime.

You will note there is no mention of Dennis Port because at that time it was called Crocker's Neck and had no Post Office. The reference to no trees is because Cape Cod was just about clear-cut in those years.

Another article titled "The Book Worm" begins: He who derives his knowledge alone from books is a secondary scholar. The ideas which he might perchance retain, are at once dim and unnatural.

"The Guardian Angel" begins with: Night had again drawn her dark mantle over the earth. The sun had sunk behind the western hills, from a cloudless sky, into a sea of gold.

The only reminder of South Dennis Academy is Academy Hill Road off Duck Pond Road where it intersects with Main Street.

This newsletter was a gift of Dennis Historian Nancy Thacher Reid. Nancy wrote this newsletter for years until she needed to retire to finish her "Dennis Cape Cod: From Firstcomers to Newcomers", which is once again in print and available for sale at Dennis Town Clerk's office, the Dennis Chamber of Commerce, on the Dennis Historical Society Website or by calling 509-398-3183 or 508-394-0017.

Phyllis Horton

THE LEGENDS OF PRINCESS SCARGO

I have been asked to tell the story of Princess Scargo. Nothing could please me more, for this beautiful lake is one of the loveliest inland waters of the Cape and the story adds to its charm. Bear in mind that there are as many versions of the formation of the lake as there are children who grew up hearing it from their parents and grandparents. Two different stories appear in the book, *The Narrow Land*, by Elizabeth Reynaud. A nice telling is in Jeremiah Digges' *Cape Cod Pilot*. There is also a children's version which can be obtained at the local libraries, and a long, quaint poem which appeared in the Cape Cod Magazine, January 1922, on file at the Sturgis Library, also tells the tale. Here is my favorite version. I'd enjoy hearing yours.

Once upon a time there was born to the wise and great Chief Sagam of the Nobscussets, a tiny and beautiful daughter whom he named Princess Scargo. Her mother, who was much beloved by Sagam, unfortunately died shortly after the princess' birth. The grieving chieftain decreed that in all of her life the little Princess should never suffer the grief and agony he felt and the tribe was instructed to keep all knowledge of death from his daughter. Under the shelter of the loving tribesmen, the Princess grew to be a beautiful young woman. She was especially admired by a particular handsome brave, who one day presented her with a gift. He was going on a long journey of several months and his gift was a handsomely carved pumpkin shell in which swam five fish. He promised to return to her and claim her as his bride in the time of the flaming of the trees. Princess Scargo tended her little fish carefully, but as the weeks passed by, they became too big for their pumpkin shell home. Princess Scargo undertook to dig a small pond for their home, but while she worked, one of the fish died. The Princess was terribly distraught, and she appealed to her father for help. Chief Sagam ordered his squaws to dig a large lake for his daughter's fish. His strongest brave shot arrows North to South, East to West, to mark its boundaries. All summer the squaws dug. They heaped the dirt from their digging on the south side of the hole. By the time of the fall rain, the lake was finished. The rain filled it with water, and Princess Scargo's remaining fish were freed to swim in the clear water where their descendants swim even today.

There is another Wampanoag legend which ascribes the formation of the Lake to the Giant God Maushop. (I will tell you some of the Maushop legends some day.) The geologists would probably say it was a kettle hole pond of glacial origin. But as you stand at the top of Scargo Hill Tower, you can easily see that the squaws have shaped the lake exactly like a fish, and if you listen quietly, you can hear the grumbling of Chief Sagam's squaws as they dig throughout the hot summer months.

Dear little Princess Scargo, I hope that your handsome brave did return before the snow fell, and that after many moons, you sat contently on the beach which bears your name and watched your children grow tall and as straight as the arrows that flew to mark the bounds of the lovely lake by which they played.

Nancy Thacher Reid, August 1979

Notes from Lester E. Bachman

A few months before he died in 1993 at age 81, Lester Bachman of South Dennis, dropped a manila envelope on my desk at the Cape Cod Times, containing several typed stories of his boyhood memories of Dennis "era of 1918."

"Do with them whatever you want," he said. "Some have been published, some not."

The envelope was filed in my Cape Cod histories folder which came to light again in my recent efforts to put some order into my overflowing collection of notes and articles of some 30 years of writing for the Times.

Though Lester was born in New York, he spent most of his childhood on Cape Cod, attending the 1867 West Dennis Graded School and the South Dennis Graded School. A veteran of the U.S. Navy and a former Federal Aviation air-traffic controller in New York's La Guardia Airport and later the Nantucket Airport, Lester retired to his South Dennis family home in 1968.

Lester's family lived on Wrinkle Point in West Dennis in 1918. The area then was mostly open pasture surrounded by thick woods, quiet and remote from the village center. That year the family moved to Montana, only to move back two years later to a home on Main Street in South Dennis.

At first, Lester was disappointed not to be living on Wrinkle Point. He wrote:

"I longed for Wrinkle Point and the nearness of the river (Bass River). We settled in a house in the bend in the road almost beside the South Dennis church." His greatest disappointment was that there were few boys near his age nearby.

"But new excitement started up one day. Senator Forte, somehow related to Dr. Wilbur on South Point and the Hubbell family living across from the church had purchased the large, old Greek Revival house next door. It set in the corner of the huge and hilly lot, looking like an abandoned ark with its huge pillars frowning down on the dainty and beautiful gardens of its neighbor Mrs. Peck. So, the senator, with the agreement of his family, decided to move the house –as big as it was – up to the hilltop where it would command a better view of the river.

"In those days, moving any type of building was a common practice. Two moving companies were active at that time, and the Morin Company, if my memory serves me correctly, won the bid for the job. They arrived with at least 10 or 12 truck or wagon loads of timbers, pulley blocks, hawsers and rigging. The old iron screw-jacks would have filled half a railroad car. With all that equipment, unbelievably, one horse was brought to provide all the power.

"They jacked the house up, seating it on long, heavy wood beams and then planted a huge timber vertically in the ground about 200 feet away. Weaving block and tackle rigs to a turnstile and tying in the house bridging, that part of the operation was ready to go. Meanwhile, another crew had installed a new foundation up on the hill. So the horse went to work, walking slowly but steadily, around and around the turnstile, inching the house on its way.

"Finally, the building was astride its new site. The blocks and rollers were exchanged for huge pieces of natural ice. As the ice melted one of the crew constantly circled the foundation with a gasoline blowtorch. Ice on the sunny, windy side melted faster, so the man with the blowtorch worked mostly on the lee side. Gradually, the house settled down exactly on its planned place. Completion time? A good chunk of one summer."

And, apparently enough of interest to keep a restless, but curious young boy content with his new location.

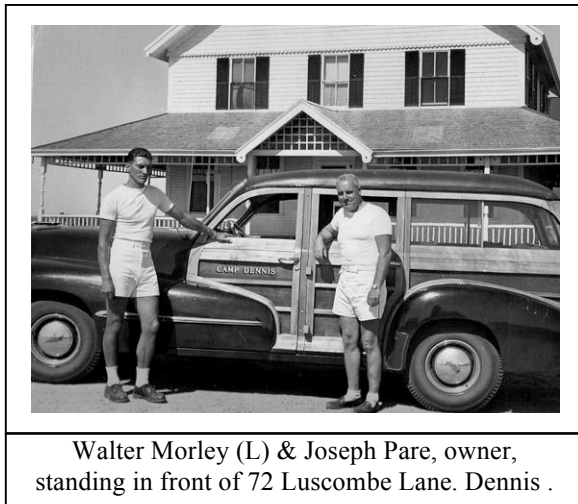
Peggy Eastman

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEETING

Note: All members are invited to attend all monthly DHS Board Meetings. The next meeting is at 2 pm on Tuesday, April 10 at the Jericho Historical Center, 90 Old Main St., West Dennis.

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

Non-profit Org.
US POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 24
South Yarmouth, MA
02664



Walter Morley (L) & Joseph Pare, owner,
standing in front of 72 Luscombe Lane. Dennis .

Sunday April 29th 2-4 p.m.
Dennis Memorial Library
Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village
“Camp Dennis”

Do you remember Camp Dennis, a boy’s camp located at the end of Nobscusset Rd. from the late 1930s until 1955?

Kevin Morley will share the history of the camp with stories and photos including when his family lived at the camp while his father was director from 1947-1955.

It’s another piece of Dennis history we can learn about together. Please bring *your* stories and photos to share.

DHS Calendar Correction: May 19th Event

Our Apologies to our guest author, Mrs. Deborah Hill whose first name was inadvertently listed as Dorothy in our Annual Calendar. Her comprehensive post-revolutionary historical novel, *This Is The House*, is set in the late 1700’s to early 1800’s in the period leading up to the War of 1812. Written while she lived on Cape Cod, the original 1975 600+ page volume sold over 700,000 copies and now has been revised, updated and re-released for a later generation of readers.

Come and meet with our special author on Saturday May 19th at 1:00 p.m. at the West Dennis Graded School.