



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Co-Edited by Phyllis Robbins Horton and Nancy Thacher Reid

Volume 22 Number 8

August 1999

## *Calendar of Events:*

### **Saturday, August 21 Colonial Open House**

Go back in time to the 1700's. Costumed guides demonstrate crafts, foods, games skills, etc. Some audience participation. 1770 one-room school house, children's room, maritime wing. Colonial militia encampment on grounds.

**Josiah Dennis Manse**  
10AM to 4PM

### **Sunday, August 22 Everyday Life in the 1800's**

Demonstrations of skills necessary for everyday life in an 1800's home including cooking, candle-making, knitting, rug-hooking, stenciling, quilting and gardening.

**Jericho Historical Center**  
11AM to 4 PM

### **Sunday, August 22 Old Fashioned Pie Sale On the Dennis Village Green**

Come buy the whole pie, "just like mother used to make" from the best cooks in Dennis. To benefit the DHS Acquisition Fund. Freddie Trahan's Good Time Guys Dixieland Jazz Band, sponsored by the Village Improvement Society.

1 to 3 PM

*(Continued on page 4)*

## SUMMER TRAFFIC

Recently I stopped at Nancy Reid's to leave some paperwork. When I left she asked if I was going north or south, and I answered I was going north to go east to Patriot Square. The current Cape Cod traffic motto is: "Right or a light" - it being nearly impossible sometimes to make a left turn without danger to life and limb.

The Cape Cod Commission has prepared a chart with projected Cape Cod road use for 2020. They predict grid lock on numerous Cape roads, including several in Dennis - parts of Route 134, Great Western Road, and Route 28. Sections of Routes 6A, 134 and 28 and Lower County Road will be at maximum capacity. I suppose Dr. Hart, the first Dennis auto owner, could never imagine anything like that.

Sixty-plus years ago summer traffic had a minimal impact on regular traffic. Many people who came to Dennis for a vacation arrived on the train. They would be met by friends or family or would take the taxi barge - an open sided bus - to the village. People, freight and mail coming to North Dennis were met at the Yarmouth depot by Richard Hefler and anyone coming to Dennis Port was welcomed at the North Harwich station by Ed Higgins with his 10 passenger taxi. Ed's bus had a bench along either side. Roll down curtains hung from the roof to protect the passengers from inclement weather. It must have been quite a trip bouncing along the dirt road on a thinly upholstered bench, hanging on to siderails, with the curtains flapping about. Ah! The good old days!

Of course, when those people arrived they only added foot traffic to our streets. A few people of means came with one or two cars, but there weren't many in that category. On good days a number of cars filled with sightseers would motor along Route 6 (now 6A) or Route 28. If it was around noon

*(Continued on page 2)*



# SUMMER TRAFFIC

*(Continued from page 1)*

they might stop at the Sign of the Motor Car or Mabel’s Mixing Bowl for lunch. I suppose old timers complained about the increase in traffic, but the kids thought it was exciting to see all the different cars. A young Dennis Port man named Merle Chase was considered a “slow learner” but Merle could reel off the year and make of every car that went by.

The first traffic light in Dennis was installed at the intersection of Main Street (Route 28) and Depot Street – the most heavily used intersection in town for many years. Mrs. Ada Francis told her Depot Street neighbors that daughter Rena “didn’t have to stop for the traffic light as she worked for the govment.” Rena was a clerk at the Brewster Post Office. The traffic light was of short duration, as that was the site of the first traffic fatality in years.

Constable David Crowell was on summer duty at the intersection before and after the traffic light and had stern words for anyone who did not obey his signals instantly.

The next time you are stuck in traffic, think back to the halcyon days when there were open roads through the woods and fields – and the posted speed limit going down Smith’s Hill was 8 miles an hour.

PRH



## APPLE PIE, THE AMERICAN FLAG, AND MOM

Have you planned yet which one of your famous pies you will donate to the DHS Pie Sale on the Dennis Village Green on August 22nd? Some of our members have volunteered to make several pies for our fund raiser. That’s a labor of love, but it’s for a good cause.



We decided to try this event based on the huge success several other Cape societies have had. Harwich Historical Society will have their Fifth Annual Pie Sale this year. Last year they had over 100 pies donated and all were sold in less than two hours. In fact, some of their pie bakers have developed such a reputation they are apprehended in the parking lot by eager buyers. Their pies never make it to the sales table.

This should be a fun day. Freddie Trahan’s Good Time Guys Jazz Band will be playing on the green, the Antique Car Parade will pass by to its exhibition place at the Playhouse grounds, and we will have pies for sale by the piece or the whole pie. It sounds like a Norman Rockwell painting – now we just need our dedicated DHS members to help make it happen with their tasty donations. Please call Ray Urquhart at 398-0376 or Phyllis Horton at 394-0017 so we’ll know how many pies to make room for. Also, if you could lend a hand in this new venture, we surely could use some more volunteers! Just give us a call.



## A Note from Ye Olde Ed..

In order to finish some projects I started a few years ago I will need to give up some of my current activities. My contribution to the newsletter is one of them. Over the years I have enjoyed telling stories about our town and the people in it. I have also enjoyed the letters, post cards, phone calls, and conversations from so many of you because something I wrote touched you in some way. Thank you all – it’s been a pleasure.

*With love, Phyllis*

## Membership News...

*Do you remember when???* Way back when the Society was formed in 1963, members were welcomed at the meetings, no dues necessary. Along about 1973 it was voted to begin to charge \$1.00 for individuals and \$2.00 for family memberships. By the end of 1978, the cost of the new newsletter and other programs forced a membership increase to \$3.00 for an individual and \$6.00 for a family.

Here we are, twenty-odd years later, and still a bargain at \$10.00 for an individual and \$15.00 for a family membership. And look at what your dues can do! Check our calendar for on-going events and visit our museums – both free of charge! Your dues sponsor our school programs - adventures in history for the school children of Dennis and neighboring towns. In addition, members can receive a 10% discount on most items for sale in the Country Store at Jericho, and in the Maritime Room at the Manse.

Check the label of your newsletter. Your membership number and the date your membership will expire are now shown on the top line of the address label. We are beginning our annual membership drive. Watch the mail for your renewal!



### OUR SINCERE THANKS!

There are many volunteers who work “behind the scenes” who are our unsung heroes. Bill and Isabelle Flynn volunteer at Jericho, collect and deliver the mail for the Society, and keep the membership records. They were in charge of our newsletter mailing for many years, and even led our bicycle tours.

In 1992, George and Catherine Wilson took over as the bicycle tour guides (much to Bill and Isabelle’s relief!). In July they led the tour through the village of Dennis Port.

We appreciate their stamina! And hope that they will be able to pedal for many a year to come.



## Museum Hours

### 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum 508-385-2232

77 Nobscussett Road, Dennis

Saltbox home of the first minister and man for whom the town was named. Artifacts of early Dennis life, children’s room, spinning and weaving exhibit, and Dennis Maritime Wing. 1770 one-room school house on grounds. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Open June 22 – September 30  
Tues. 10 AM–Noon: Thurs. 2-4 PM  
Saturdays in September 2-4 PM  
Admission: Free/Donations.

### 1801 Jericho Historical Center 508-398-6736

Old Main Street, West Dennis

Historic house built in 1801 by Capt. Theophilus Baker. Exhibits include antiques, glassware, costumes, tools, driftwood zoo. Barn exhibits include country store, saltworks model and cranberry cultivation displays.

June 23 – September 24  
Wed. 2-4 PM: Friday 10 AM-Noon  
Sundays Sept. 15, 12 & 19 from 2-4 PM  
Admission: Free/Donations

## Dennis Historical Society

P.O. Box 607

South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

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CORRECTION REQUESTED

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South Dennis, MA  
02660

(Continued from page 1)

### Calendar of Events

**Tuesday, August 24**

**Dennis Village Garden**

**Club Annual Flower Show**  
Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the 1736 Josiah  
Dennis Manse Museum

10AM – 4 PM

**Wednesday, August 25**

**Walking Tour of Historic  
West Dennis Village**

Lead by a costumed guide, fascinating stories of early West Dennis and its residents. Meet at West Dennis Community Building parking lot, School Street, West Dennis.

10:30 AM

### Our search for old documents continues...

Burt and Ruth Derick, our DHS librarians, have spent hours organizing, cataloging and conserving our historical books and documents. A lot of work remains to be done. Burt's goals for the next months include photocopying and scanning the old documents presently in our collection, preserving them for the future while allowing their contents to be available for historical research.

Here is one of the documents found, a poignant note written by Jonathan Bangs of South Dennis to his sister, Ruth (Bangs) Nickerson (Mrs. Samuel), then of Centerville, concerning Jonathan's infant son, Eben Matthews Bangs, b. 14 November 1861. Jonathan's wife was Mercy (Matthews).

South Dennis July 24<sup>th</sup> 1862  
Sister Ruth  
our little one -  
died at ten o'clock to  
day. will be buried Saturday.  
Your affectionate  
Jonathan Bangs