

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 26 Number 8

August 2003

Dennis Festival Days

Saturday, August 16

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Colonial Open House

Josiah Dennis Manse

*Corner of Nobscusset Rd.
and Whig Street, Dennis.*

Step back to Colonial times as costumed interpreters demonstrate early American skills in food, spinning, weaving, candle dipping, dyeing, children's games and adult pastimes. 1745 one-room school house open and Colonial Militia Encampment. Refreshments.

Sunday, August 17

11:30 AM to 2:00 PM

Jericho Old Fashioned Skills Day

*Corner of Trotting Park
and Old Main Street,
West Dennis*

Costumed guides demonstrate skills needed for 1800s life. Children's games. Refreshments.

**Monday, August 18,
2:00 PM**

"Beneath This Stone"
*Route 6A by the Village
Green, Dennis*

Phyllis Horton guides us to 18th and 19th century gravestones— how they were decorated, what the symbols mean, and who lies beneath them.

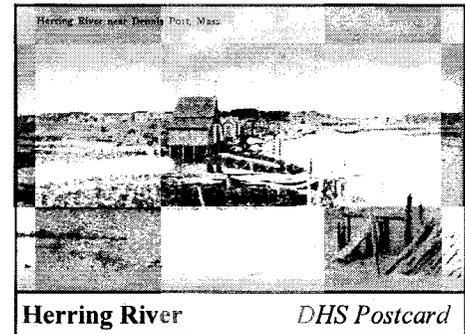
Rain Date August 19

"And Rivers Run Through It"

by Phyllis Robbins Horton

This spring's heavy rains were a blessing for our aquifer but a large headache for Dennis Port merchants, residents and the Dennis Public Library. Dennis Port is almost an island being bracketed by Herring River, Swan River and numerous swamps, bogs and at least two other rivers.

One river drained the area known as the Plashes. The river came out into Nantucket Sound between the present day Glendon Road Beach and Chase's Campgrounds and was called "The Guzzle." According to local legend, in the 1800s there was a building near The Guzzle known as The Molasses House which was a rum distillery.



It operated undisturbed for a number of years. The proprietor's name or names have been lost over time but it probably was a profitable business. The Guzzle was also noted for the abundant high bush blueberries that grew along the stream. Pickers could fill a large pail in no time at all.

As years passed parts of the river turned to bog, but the water still flowed through it. By the 1920s the only sign of the river was the fresh water rivulets that ran out of the beach at low tide. The 1944 hurricane opened up the old river and washed out a piece of Old Wharf Road. The fresh water flowing over the rounded stones left no doubt that it was a stream bed.

At one time there was a culvert that crossed diagonally under the Lower County Road/Shad Hole Road intersection to facilitate draining the Plashes. I remember the screen on the culvert was cleaned annually by Dennis Road Surveyor Bartlett Sears in the mid-1940s. Later Wallace Garfield

cleaned the screen when water backed up near his home and I've been told that others did the same. This river does not seem to be a problem today.

The other river, however, which some of us call the Pound Pond River, has given numerous problems over the years. According to my great-grandmother Phebe Chase Murray (1858-1943) it ran from the Stafford Road area of Swan Pond (she



called it Otis Kelley's Swamp) and meandered down to what is now the Dennis Port downtown area, notably the Dennis Public Library and 671 Antiques. From there it went south between present day Edwards Avenue and South Street. It continued south until it turned east behind the present day Colonial Village Motel, went across Summer Street, then turned south across the road from Playland Golf Course and continued south to Nantucket Sound coming out at the Inman Road Beach area. In the 1920s and before there was a small bridge on Summer Street where the river crossed. In my youth there was a large culvert that carried the water under the street and down past the tennis courts at Whispering Willows Camp for Girls.

Playland Golf Course and the area across Lower County Road was called Pound Pond. Ships were built there in the 1800s. We have never seen any records but all the old timers talked about it and about the steam house (to shape the ribs) run by "Big Allie" Wixon. We heard about the sail loft and the blacksmith shop which made and repaired iron fittings for the ships. The blacksmith shop was run by Foster Rogers and later his grandson William Rogers and is now Grandma Daisey's Gift Shop on Lower County Road.

Before the golf course was built the land was a flat meadow with a stream running down the center and a road near the east bank that led to a small barn about 300 feet south of Lower County Road. The meadow and barn were part of the Finnegan Farm built in 1917. (See *DHS Newsletters October, 1995 and June, 1998.*) A long culvert was installed from the south end of Finnegan's meadow to Inman Road Beach in the late 1930s in hopes it would help the water flow away from the business section of the village. The screen on this culvert also received an annual cleaning.

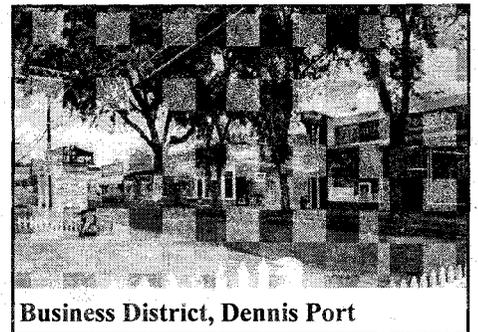
In the late 1930s and early '40s my father kept his cows in Finnegan's meadow. During the 1944 hurricane, water came up through the old stream bed and the salt water standing at the low spot of Lower County road was 8 feet deep. My father could not get across so he asked Bart Sears to help him. They went around and came down Division Street, walked along the bank, then swam to the barn door to release the cows which swam to high ground and had to be rounded up all over Dennis Port and West Harwich the next morning. The bull that was staked out in the meadow drowned because they could not get out to him.

When the Dennis Fire Department bought their first fire truck in 1930 there was no town water system. A tile pool was built in the stream bed on the west side of Edwards Avenue near Center Street so the fire department could fill the truck's tank. The water ran in the north side and flowed out the south side leaving the pool filled with fresh water at all times. This was discontinued in 1946 when the Dennis Water District started installing town water. In later years the old stream bed was filled in and the Sandpiper Apartments were built. The weight of the building diverted the water so it now flows around it and neighbors on both sides who never had wet basements were suddenly buying sump pumps.

In the 1950s portions of the stream could still be seen and skated on in freezing weather. In the spring it was a rite of passage for young kids to catch their first tadpoles there.

When the Charles Shea Construction Co. was installing the water main on Hall Street in 1947 near the present library they uncovered the stream flowing over smooth river stones. It was no surprise to Carl Maloney, who had his first Rexall Drug Store in today's 671 Antiques. He had to have his furnace in the basement raised up on a cement platform to keep it out of the water that collected periodically. When Carl built his new drug store next to the old one (now 673 Main Street—Dennis Public Library) that water problem was there also. This year's water problem at the library is just history repeating itself after a long dry spell.

Many of the old swamps and bogs were filled in before the Wetlands Act was established. That didn't eliminate the water, it simply moved it to another spot. Early Dennis Port settlers were very careful about locating their homesites on high ground. The Dennis Port section of the 1880 Barnstable County map shows where the high ground was—it's where all the houses are marked. The rest of the land was used for farming or drying nets, but mostly it was land with a soggy bottom and *rivers running through it!*



Business District, Dennis Port

ARTICLE IV continued:

B. OFFICERS:

The officers shall be President, one or more Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Corresponding Secretary. All officers shall be elected for a term of one-year at the Annual Meeting.

C. DIRECTORS:

1. **ELECTED DIRECTORS:** Of these six directors two are elected each year at the Annual Meeting for a term of 3 years. Elected Directors are limited to two consecutive terms.

2. **APPOINTED DIRECTORS:** Four directors are appointed each year to represent their committees on the Executive Board—one from each of the following:

- a) Dennis Historical Commission
- b) Jericho Historical Center Committee
- c) Josiah Dennis Manse Committee
- d) West Dennis Graded School House Committee

D. **VACANCIES:** Vacancies on the Executive Board that occur between Annual Meetings, whether among Officers or Directors, may be filled by a majority vote of the remaining members of the Board. Any Officer so appointed shall serve until the next Annual Meeting. Any Director so appointed shall serve until expiration of his predecessor's term.

ARTICLE V – STANDING COMMITTEES

Standing Committees shall be appointed by the Executive Board as needed. Executive Board Members are expected to serve on at least one committee and shall be encouraged to chair a committee.

ARTICLE VI – ANNUAL AND SPECIAL MEETINGS

- A. The Annual Meeting of the Society shall be held in October, and Special Meetings may be called at the request of the President and other officers as they shall deem necessary. Any ten members may also request a Special Meeting.
- B. The Recording Secretary shall issue the call to all meetings and will see to it that a written notice and an agenda shall reach the members at least seven days before the meeting.
- C. The quorum at an Annual Meeting or Special Meeting shall consist of 20 members in good standing.

ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS

These Bylaws may be amended at any Annual or Special Meeting of the Society, due notice having been given to the members of the intended changes, by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting (constituting a legal quorum).

ARTICLE VIII – CONTRACTS

All contracts shall be approved by the Executive Board and be signed by the President or a person authorized by the Board.

ARTICLE IX – DISSOLUTION CLAUSE

Upon dissolution of the corporation by any procedure whatsoever, the Executive Board of the Dennis Historical Society, Inc. shall take the necessary steps to dispose of the assets of the corporation in a manner acceptable to the IRS and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. BYLAWS

(Submitted September 2003)

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization is the Dennis Historical Society, Inc. being duly incorporated as a non-profit organization under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The Dennis Historical Society, Inc. is an educational organization established to stimulate an interest in local history, to promote scholarly effort, to foster the continued collection and preservation of historical data and material, and to cooperate with individuals and other organizations having similar interests.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Membership is open to any interested person upon payment of the requisite dues. Dues for each category will be established by the Executive Board and approved by the members at Annual Meeting. If annual dues of any individual or family member are not paid by the end of the fiscal year, these individuals shall forfeit membership privileges. (The fiscal year is September 1 - August 31.) Newsletters and reminders may be sent, but after December 31 delinquent members will be removed from the membership list.

- A. Individual Members - Upon payment of the requisite dues, an individual becomes a member entitled to one vote at Annual and Special Meetings if present and voting.
- B. Family Members-- Upon payment of the requisite dues, family membership shall confer a maximum of two votes at Annual and Special Meetings, one per adult present and voting.
- C. Present Life Members and Honorary Life Members shall retain their status, shall be exempt from payment of dues and shall have all the rights and privileges of a voting member. New Honorary Life membership may be conferred on individuals by the Executive Board in recognition of outstanding service to the Society.

ARTICLE IV - EXECUTIVE BOARD: OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

- A. EXECUTIVE BOARD The Executive Board shall consist of a minimum of six officers and ten directors. All must be members in good standing.
 - 1. Duties: The Executive Board shall have general control and supervision of the funds, property, and affairs of the Society and shall have full power on behalf of the Society to accept or reject donations and legacies and proposed loans of personal property for exhibition. It may appoint additional officers as it may deem necessary and proper, and define the power and duties thereof, and may appoint any member of the Society to temporarily perform the duties and powers of any officer during the absence of such officer.
 - 2. Meetings: The Executive Board regularly meets once a month on dates and at times set by the Board. A written notice will be sent to Board members. All Executive Board meetings are open to members of the Society. Notice of Board meetings is published in the Newsletter.
 - 3. Quorum: Seven Executive Board members shall constitute a quorum.
 - 4. Attendance: Any officer or director who, without notification and/or just cause, misses three consecutive Executive Board meetings may be removed from the Board by a majority vote of the remaining members after being duly notified that this vote will take place.

Call to the Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held at 12 noon Saturday, September 20th at Christine's Restaurant in West Dennis. You will see and hear of the interesting things your society has been involved in for the past year and enjoy a social afternoon with your fellow DHS members. You will be asked to vote on changes to the DHS Bylaws. These changes should bring the workings of your Board into the 21st century. You will find the proposed bylaws enclosed with this newsletter.

The Mid-Cape Chorus will entertain us after lunch. Their lovely voices are noted throughout the Cape. Also below you will find the reservation for the luncheon. We look forward to seeing you there! *(For your information, we pay Christine's \$12.30 per meal which includes tax and gratuities. The \$2.70 extra is to cover the cost of the menu and entertainment.)*
Please cut off and return

Just circle your choice(s) and enclose a check for \$15.00 for each meal to DHS, PO Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660. Also please enclose a stamped return envelope so we may send you your tickets. Note that all luncheon entrees include soup, potato, fresh vegetable, rolls and butter, dessert, coffee or tea.

- | | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| Number | |
| _____ | Baked Scrod |
| _____ | Yankee Pot Roast Jardiniere |
| _____ | Chicken Marsala |

Farewell, Mrs. Collins

Marion Watkins Collins of Dennis Port and Warwick, RI passed away recently. Born in 1900 we believe she was our oldest member. The newsletter staff enjoyed a lively correspondence with Mrs. Collins and hope we can be as sharp at 80 as she was at 100. Granddaughter of Captain Fernandez Kelley, she is resting in the family lot in Swan Lake Cemetery in Dennis Port.

Lucy Lord Howes Hooper's Latest Adventure—The Book

During Festival Days we hope you will have the opportunity to meet Gerry Waters who has recently finished editing her great-grandmother's journals published by DHS under the title, *Privateers, Pirates and Beyond...* The response to the pre-publication notice was gratifying, but if you haven't yet got your copy, you can pick one up at the Manse or at Jericho, or the West Dennis School House, and if all goes well, Gerry will be there to autograph it for you. (Look for publicity on book signings.)

You may have heard that as the wife of Capt. Benjamin Perkins Howes Lucy had several adventures at sea, one of Capt. Howes' ships being captured by Confederates during the Civil War, and later another ship being taken over by pirates as they left Hong Kong. Her husband and a daughter were buried in China. Returning home Lucy eventually married again and had further experiences which she recorded in her diaries, leaving us with new insight on the life of a woman in the 1800s.



AN INVITATION The DHS Board cordially invites you to attend a dedication and reception honoring our President, Raymond M. Urquhart, on Sunday, August 10 at 4:00 PM in the 1867 West Dennis Graded School House, School Street, West Dennis.

Dennis Historical Society

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 2
South Dennis, MA
02660

The Way We Were

The Manse season has started off with very busy days with visitors from many parts of the United States as well as the Virgin Islands, Trinidad, and England. On June 28 Susan Kelley and Sandy Wilkins were on hand to show some of the younger visitors how to card wool and weave. Under Susan's guidance sisters from Chester, NH are very seriously working at the upstairs loom. We have to thank Nancy Howes for taking the picture and giving us the information for the Newsletter.

Don't forget to visit the Manse this summer on Tuesdays from 10 AM to Noon and Thursdays from 2-4 PM. For an visit to the 1800s Jericho is open Wednesdays from 2-4 PM and Fridays from 10-12.

See the Calendar of Events on the first page for Dennis Festival Days activities.
Nest Board Meeting is Wednesday, August 16, at the Manse, 7:00 PM. Members are welcome to attend.



The Bachelder Sisters of Chester, NH—Hannah Rose (weaving), Erin and Lauren