



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 12

December 2002

Calendar of Events

Sunday December 8

Christmas Open House

Celebrate the season at the beautifully decorated 1801 Jericho Historic Center.

Sample seasonal refreshments as you enjoy the decorated rooms.

1-4:30 PM

Also December 8

Visions of Christmas at the Manse

Join the holiday festivities at the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse where costumed docents will serve you traditional refreshments. Stroll through the house and enjoy the lovely holiday decorations.

1-4:30 PM

"I wish you a Merry Christmas!

Let's try while we're repeating

The dear old-fashioned greeting,

To add a kind, unselfish act,

And make the wish a blessed fact."

Yarmouth Register
12/20/02

The Christmas Goose and Other Fables

Burt has organized several new notebooks for our DHS library, one containing the "Howes Tavern Collection" (items found in the attic of Tom and Becky Moran's house), one with the photos and documents from the Austin Preble Haller collection, and one containing an assortment of newspaper clippings from the *Yarmouth Register* 1902-1920. It is hard to imagine the number of hours this took. Burt well deserves our kudos and our thanks. From the last of these books we are sending you our Christmas story.

From the *Yarmouth Register* December 20, 1902

Mysterious Disappearance

On a cold morning last week, when the mercury lingered lovingly near zero, our genial postmaster, Mr. J. H. Jenks, Jr., looking from the window of his private office, saw a flock of wild geese approaching from the direction of Bass River. They were flying very low, and were evidently much exhausted. So interested did Mr. Jenks become that when they passed from view over his building he hastened out upon the street to mark the farther course of these aerial voyagers, hoping, no doubt, they were of the variety that can be captured by an application of salt. To his great surprise they had disappeared completely as if the air had engulfed them, and although he searched the atmosphere for a mile around nothing more of them could he discover. Anyone who has bagged such a flock, please communicate with Mr. Jenks.

12/27/1902 Letter to the Editor Mr. Editor:

My attention has been especially attracted to the two items published in the Register of recent dates under the West Dennis news, the first concerning the mysterious way in which the back or outer door of my marble shop was found open one morning recently, with the hinge broken; the other concerning the mysterious disap-



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“Christmas” Goose and Other Fables

(Continued from page 1)

pearance of those wild geese that were flying over that lovingly cold morning. The above has been shrouded with such mystery that I feel constrained to open up the secret in the following explicit explanation. The reader of the above-named items will note that it was stated that it was an intensely cold morning, and that the geese were flying remarkably low, and that the interested spectator, after the geese were lost from view from the rear window, immediately went out to the street in front of his building to follow their progress, and this was the mystery,—that the geese could not be seen. It now appears that while this interested spectator was shivering out in the street that lovingly cold morning the geese were busily at work at his back door, prying off the hinge with a crow bar and block which had inadvertently been left out the night previous, thereby trying to gain admittance to the warm room, it being the only one in this vicinity at that early hour. Upon the return of the half frozen gazer to his marble shop, he found to his surprise each goose carving his inscription on a tombstone, probably knowing full well the fate that awaited him. Suffice to say, the geese were all taken in and have since been given proper treatment, preparatory to serving out to your fastidious correspondent a most sumptuous feast on New Year’s day.

12/05/1903 West Dennis

A HUMMING INCIDENT

If “like attracts like,” as the wise ones have it, our esteemed townsman, the postmaster, must be somewhat of a hummer, as he was visited some moons ago, while at work in his shop, by a bird of the humming variety. This tiny creature had the freedom of the shop and seemed especially interested in the inscriptions carved by the famous flock of geese heretofore mentioned in these columns. When he became wearied of this fascinating pastime he was carefully placed on file and gently conveyed to the open door. After a parting salute he swiftly winged his way to green fields and more congenial scenes. Query: Why is this particular spot a centre of attraction for the feathered tribe?

Though your editors looked for more of these fabled adventures they have so far eluded us. Have a heavenly holiday!

It will be a difficult holiday season for the families of some friends we remember today. Lucy Thacher Baker of South Dennis, though only 12 years old, wrote this lovely poem in 1834. We quote it here in memory of Florence Bennett, Robert H. Rauh, and Carrie Smith.

*In friendship let us seek that balm
Which sympathy bestows
Its softening power our griefs shall calm
And heal our bosom woes.*

Walks and Talks and Thoughts of Spring

One hundred and four walkers joined **President Ray Urquhart** on his third annual historical walk around Sesuit Neck sponsored by the Cape Cod Commission Pathways program. From the Marina at Sesuit Harbor, near the site of the Shiverick Shipyard, down Sesuit Neck Road to Old Town Lane, and from there back to the harbor by way of Stephen Phillips Road, this 2 ½ mile walk has become increasingly popular, so much so that Eileen (Mrs. U.) had to dash to Radio Shack for a bull horn so everyone could hear.

Phyllis Horton led over 55 people on her Dennis Burial Grounds walk in October entitled "Beneath This Stone." By the end of the walk she could hardly talk. It would seem that we do need a portable PA system. Do they make such a thing?

Most of us are putting our gardens to bed while at the Manse the gardens still put on a lovely display. Lettuce or carrots anyone? **Jane Hargreaves, Ruth Derick, and Phyllis Horton** are looking toward spring with the planting of 100 daffodils near the stone wall at the Manse.

Just in time for the holidays: A selection of nine quality note cards with envelopes depicting three of the town's historical buildings will be available in time for the **Christmas Open House** tours in December. **Howard Bonnington** has beautifully captured Jericho, the Manse, and the West Dennis Graded School for our DHS cards. They have been produced in a larger size on quality paper and would make a lovely gift for anyone on your list. At \$7.00 they're a real bargain. After you enjoy the decorations and the refreshments **at the Manse and Jericho**, do ask about this new item in our collection of "history for sale."

Mystery Donation : We were very happy to receive in the mail a copy of the 1900 Annual Report for the Town of Dennis mailed from Hudson, Florida. We'd like to say thank you, but no one seems to recognize the address. If anyone knows who sent it, please let us know.

History on Loan: The Dennis Union Church would like to have back the small lap organ, now displayed at the Manse, to be put on display at the church and used at special times. This was the first organ the church had and was used there for many years. In the 1970s, during a period of modernization at the church, it was rescued by Esther Howes when it was slated for disposal. She brought it to the Manse and put it in the care of the DHS. The Board has voted to loan the organ back to the church, so that if ever they should no longer be interested in keeping it, it will be returned to the Society. All agreed the organ will serve a much better purpose its original home than at the Manse.

Our Traveling School Program

This fall costumed docents from the Manse carried our school program to the Eddy and the Stony Brook Schools in Brewster where they were joined by other presenters to convey the early history of the town. Our junior docent Melissa Hoeft went along on both occasions to demonstrate early games and enlist participation from the school children.

Ruth Derick showed the children how quilts were made 200 years ago.



Dennis Historical Society

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The Way We Were

Our Harvey Jenks, Jr. of the “wild goose” fame had his stone cutter’s shop on Main Street in West Dennis, just east of the church. It is said that Harvey Jenks, Sr. came here from Providence and started the “marble shop” which was later taken over by his son.

Burt tells us that his great-grandfather, Robert C. Baker, cut stones for Mr. Jenks. Robert Baker was the son of Captain Nathan Foster Baker who was known when he was home to be a fine gentleman. He even wrote poetry! BUT when Captain Baker was in command of his ship at sea, he was described as a *tyrant!* Given the choice of sailing with his father, young Robert decided to find another way to make a living and was hired on by Mr. Jenks.

It does sound as though life around Jenks’ shop and the Post Office was a bit more lighthearted!