

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 30 Number 6 Send letters & stories to Lura Crowell, Editor-in-Chief, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to sesuetfarm@verizon.net December 2007

To DHS Members:

Many of you may have wondered what has happened with the DHS newsletter. Lura Crowell, our faithful and very competent newsletter editor, sent the June issue out in May and it was delivered in a timely fashion. So, where is July through November?

Our dear Lu met up with a varmint (some variety of tick) about the size of a pencil lead probably when she was taking her dog, Babe, for their daily walk on Crowell's Point. That put her in Cape Cod Hospital with numerous problems and a damaged heart. In time Lu came home, weak but unbowed, but that nasty bug was not finished with her. In just a few days Lu suffered a massive stroke and was back at CCH again for an extended stay. In time she was well enough to be moved up Cape for rehabilitation where they did some wonderful things with Lu, and now in November she is back at Sesuit Neck Farm in East Dennis.



Lu has more recuperating to do and with her grit and spirit we know she'll do it. We're inviting all of you who have enjoyed Lu's newsletters to send her a card or letter of encouragement. She'll be glad to hear from you. *PRH*

Send it to: Lu Crowell, Editor-in-Chief, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis MA 02660.

Ye Olde Eds

To date no one has been found to take over the newsletter while Lu recuperates so Nancy Thacher Reid (NTR) and Phyllis Robbins Horton (PRH) are being taken out of mothballs to refloat the newsletter and endeavor to keep it on a steady course.

We'll do our best to keep you informed about your society and the new changes that will occur and we'll throw in a few old time tales, too. Some other members have volunteered to come up with a story now and then that will help us a lot.

However, we ask you to be part of a column that will run periodically—"Why I (We) came to Dennis". Some of us were born here and had no choice in the matter. Many of you made a conscious decision to make your home in Dennis. Everyone has a story to tell and we'd like to hear yours. We'd especially like it if you would write it in your own words. Send it to DHS, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660. If you'd prefer not to do that but will tell one of us your story we'll talk with you and write it for you. Call 508-398-8842 or 508-394-0017 to get your story in print. And we thank you very much!

With Heartfelt Thanks -----
Dear DHS Members,

The lovely party at the Manse, the beautiful cakes, and the accolades were more than enough, but then the new Dell Vista computer was over the top (when it finally dawned on me what the picture and mouse pad meant!). Thank you with all my heart.

With love, Phyllis

A Nineteenth Century Christmas

The First-comers to our beloved peninsula did not celebrate Christmas. Religion was serious business and left no room for merriment. The only holy days in the church calendar were occasional days of fasting and penance and even more occasionally, Thanksgiving. But as other cultures were woven into the fabric of Colonial life, the celebration of Christmas became common in New England. From the Dutch came Santa Claus, from the Hessian soldiers who served as mercenaries in the Revolution came the Christmas tree, from the Episcopalian Virginians the English traditions of the Yule Log, the holly and ivy, and the Wassail Bowl.

By 1854 Christmas traditions were so much a part of the New England life that a clipper ship owned by Joseph Nickerson & Co. was christened Santa Claus, and had a figurehead representing the old gentleman complete with his legendary pipe. Capt. Bailey Foster of Brewster was for some time Master of this vessel, which was designed by noted naval architect, Donald MacKay

The Dennis Historical Society wishes you all a happy holiday season!

NTR



Streets of Our Town

A recent survey of cities and towns indicated that the most used name for a street in various towns and cities of the U.S.A. was Maple Street. Dennis has a Maple Terrace in South Dennis so that will have to do. There are other trees, Silver Leaf, Hickory, Elm, as well as two Pine Streets and two Pine Roads. But a street named for a tree with some historical significance is Sassafras Road off Scargo Hill Road in Dennis. Sassafras bark and roots were among the first cash crops sent from Cape Cod to England. Bartholomew Gosnold, who gave Cape Cod its name, gathered loads of sassafras to take back to England on his exploratory trip around the Cape in 1602. Sassafras was highly regarded as a medicine, used as a spring tonic, was made into a tea and given to chimney sweeps to soothe their throats after their sooty days work. I don't know of a sassafras tree on Sassafras Road, but a fine stand of it grows in South Dennis. It makes a tasty, soothing tea, and its "mitten" shaped leaves in summer can identify the tree.

An early account of Gosnold's journey says that sassafras brought 3 shillings per pound to the importers—and this means 336 British pounds per long ton—a remarkably profitable plant product for those times. You can have some free—by digging a small sassafras root from the trees that grow along the streets of our town.

NTR



Census Capsules

Census Capsules are various bits of information drawn from the United States Census data thankfully transcribed by Burt & Ruth Derick and his family as well as from other sources. All of the Census data resides in the Dennis Manse Library. Lying in wait in all of those pages of dry and sterile numbers are nuggets that illustrate how the folks of Dennis went on with their lives during those far past times, as well showing the growth of the area. These census data present a capsule view of the past.

This is the first of a series of articles that will try to produce some interesting facts about the families of Dennis at the ten-year census intervals (or whatever years we have!) and hopefully you will find this even amusing at times. However, let's start – set the stage, so to speak -with the earliest Cape Cod census data. Now I'll warn you at the outset, the early information is quite sparse, reflecting the absence of Government (especially compared to today!), spelling errors abound and other such challenges pop up from time to time. So let's start.

"The first census was by order of Governor Bernard in 1765. The eleven towns of Barnstable had the following population: Barnstable 2,008, Sandwich 1,376, Chatham 678, Eastham 1,327, Truro 924, Wellfleet 917, Provincetown 454, Yarmouth 1,740, Falmouth 1,063, Harwich 1,618, and the District of Mashpee 108 for a total of 12,376."¹

Twenty-five years later, in 1790, the U. S. Government Decadal Census commenced. In this year of the first Government Census, the town of Dennis did not yet exist, not being founded until 1793, and the land was a part of Yarmouth, then spelled as "Yermouth". The amount of data collected by the Census takers is sparse, although probably far more than the people wanted to give. However, it provides an interesting view of the early town.

The tallied population of Yarmouth was 2,660 souls residing in 449 families. These were most probably grouped near the coastlines. The age distribution in this census is given as:

1790 Census Population Grouping

Free White				"Negros & Mulattos"
Males		Females	Other	
16	Under			
& Over	16			
649	662	1,316	10	23

The distribution shows clearly the greatly different way that the human race was considered in 1790. Not what we'd call 'politically correct'. There were no entries under the "Slaves" column in the Census. "Other" is assumed to be domestic help of some type as differentiated from Slaves of which there were none listed. One wonders what criteria were used for 'Other' – perhaps domestic help?

Table 1 - Families With "Other" Members

Silas Jr. Baker Jr.	Lot Crowell
Prince Baxter	Joshua Gray
Thomas Bragg	Isaac Hamblen
David Chapman	Elisha Hedge
Tho's Chase	Micazah Sears

We'll start at this point next month with a look at some iconic Cape Cod family names.

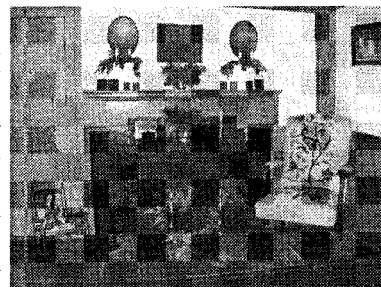
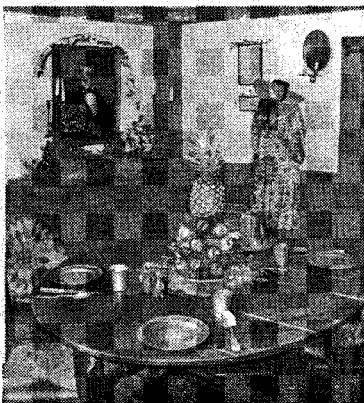
Pete Howes

¹ Swift, Cape Cod p362

**Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02990-0607**

**Non-profit
Organization
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 2
South Dennis,**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Calendar

Sunday, December 9 12:00P.M.- 4:00 P.M.

Christmas Open House at the Manse

Experience a Colonial Christmas as the costumed interpreters serve you with traditional refreshments. Stroll through the house and enjoy the lovely holiday decorations.

1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum 77 Nobscusset Road, Dennis Village.