



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 30 Number 2

Send letters and stories to Lura Crowell, Editor, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or sesuctfarm@verizon.net

February 2007

Coming Events

The Largest Maritime Exhibit Ever
at the
West Dennis Yacht Club
May 18, 19 and 20
Co-sponsored by the
Historical Society of Old Yarmouth
and the
Dennis Historical Society
this exhibit will be a feature of
Maritime Week on Cape Cod.

Collections from both Societies will be on display as well as other artifacts from private homes. There will be a reception on Friday evening and the exhibit will be open to the public on Saturday and Sunday.

Children under 12 will be admitted free when accompanied by an adult. Each child will receive a package of printed materials including a maritime history of Dennis and Yarmouth. Look for more details. If you would like to be involved in this exciting event call Virginia Devine (508) 385-4441.

A Letter from Phyllis

Dear Friends,

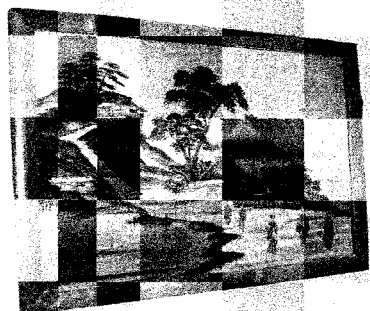
The Dennis Historical Society in partnership with the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth is planning a special three-day exhibit featuring maritime treasures of Dennis and Yarmouth. It will be held May 18 to May 20, 2007 at the newly renovated West Dennis Yacht Club. Their spacious main room overlooking Nantucket Sound lends itself beautifully to a setting worthy of the historic artifacts brought home from around the world by Dennis and Yarmouth mariners.

We plan to tell the story of the courageous men and women from our towns who traveled the seas of the world in pursuit of commerce. They found romance, peril and unknown inner strength in their travels.

We believe there are some remarkable items in private collections of descendants of some of our notable 19th century mariners, or in collections of people who appreciate the maritime history of our special place.

If you have some things that would enhance the story of our early maritime days and would consider having them on exhibit, please call me. They will be covered by wall-to-wall insurance at a value specified by you and will be under 24 hour security care while they are away from your home. Each piece will be attributed to a "Private Collection" unless otherwise requested by you.

Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,

Phyllis Robbins Horton
508-394-0017
Curator, Dennis Historical Society
for the
"Maritime Treasures of Dennis and
Yarmouth Committee"

A Letter to Phyllis

January 2005

Dear Phyllis, I woke this a.m. at five and wrote this before I went to work on the census at town hall. I am leaving Thurs. to go to MD to visit granddaughters and plan to teach the older one, age eight, to knit. This brought back a strong memory of my learning to knit. Hence, this story. Love, *Betty Dean Holmes*

Grandma Pate and Grandpa Pate lived right next door behind the fancy wrought iron fence, in the salt box addition to the big two family house on Main Street, Dennisport, where Cloyd Pate and Ann Finley lived. Grandma and Grandpa Pate were very old. They had begun to shrink with age and Grandma was about our size. We loved that tiny woman. One fall day Grandma Pate sat the three Dean girls, ages ten, nine, and eight, down on the couch in her tiny apartment and told us she intended to teach us to knit.

First, she told us, we must get supplies. This was 1937, during Depression days, and there were no extra pennies around to buy knitting needles or worsted yarn. Grandma Pate had an idea. She told us to go to Mr. Frank Foss, the manager of the First National Grocery Store right across the street, and ask him for four pairs of six-inch meat sticks, the wooden skewers used by the butcher in the meat department. With pointed ends, they'd make fine practice knitting needles. He was our friend. Mr. Foss cheerfully gave the skewers to us.

Next, we had to ask our parents if we could use the big six-inch ball of saved string for knitting practice. We each rolled off a small ball of string and back we went to Mrs. Pate's carrying our skewers and string. We gave her a set of skewers. She sat us down on the couch again and showed us how to cast on using a simple loop. She told us this was the easiest method of casting on, but not the best way to begin. Then she wrapped the string around her thumb and knit stitches off her thumb onto the skewer. Knitting on this way made a much better start for knitting. It made a firmer and more even edge.

We learned to knit and we knit happily with string and skewers until we were quite proficient.

Our Dean grandparents were so pleased to hear we had learned to knit that at Christmas they gave each of us a present of two skeins of brown yarn, one skein of orange yarn and real bone knitting needles about ten inches long. Our Nana Dean had sewn, for each of us, a short unbleached cotton apron with big pockets to hold our yarn so we could knit without dropping the yarn on the floor.

Off we went to see Grandma Pate (who) made sure we knit on correctly, and we each knit ourselves a pretty wool scarf.I turned out to be a very tense knitter and my scarf was considerably smaller than my sisters'. We fringed the scarves with alternating orange and brown yarns.In later years I made a sleeveless sweater and I tried consciously to knit looser. I did. The armholes were big enough for an elephant.I don't suppose Grandma Pate had any idea I would remember so fondly the many afternoons we spent in her apartment learning to knit.

Be Careful What You Knit!

I found this admonition in the Cape Cod Spinners Guild Newsletter of August 2006:

A woman told me about her stepmother, who loved to knit. She designed a cardigan sweater with black Chinese characters on a white background. She liked the design, copied from a Chinese restaurant's menu. She was wearing the sweater when she visited San Francisco. A charming Chinese gentleman approached.

"Pardon me, madam. Do you know what your sweater says?" he asked.

When she said no, he translated for her:

"This dish is luscious and tasty to eat, and very inexpensive."

She never wore the sweater again!

Bits and Pieces

First, a warm welcome to new member **Sarah Martin** of South Dennis, who at 14 has an interest in the **Revolutionary War** and Dennis history!

Did you catch the headline bloop in last month's Newsletter? Applications for a new editor will be seriously considered.

Dr. John Fulcher, who kindly sent us copies of letters from Louise Alexander which described life in South Dennis, wonders if anyone might know what happened to the Alexanders, and if someone of that family might have saved the letters which his mother, Louise Morgan, sent in return.

It was good to hear from member **Janice Roth**. We often remember her dad, **Ray Urquhart**, former president of the Dennis Historical Society.

Thank you for your Christmas card and welcome note, **Priscilla Perry Sprunt**! She writes *Thank you for any and all news of Dennis Historical Society and progress of W. Dennis Library and School. Mother (Ernestine Perry, one of the founding mothers of DHS!) would be so happy that the school has been honored and saved for posterity.* Which leads into a school story: Not long ago the West Dennis Graded School was opened to 5 different groups of second graders with Burt Derick as teacher (with help from Ruth) who claimed that these children were "all fired up!" They were interested in everything—the funny water cooler, the outhouse and the strict school work and teachers (even the huge dictionary in the front of the room). One child spotted an abacus in the schoolroom and was quite excited to tell Burt "That's just like we had in China!"

Sales of the new Howes Family Genealogy are going well. We were delighted that member **Barbara Sanders** of Dobbs Ferry, NY took time to include a note with her order. *My husband's mother was a sister of Hettie Howes. In our courting days he used to stay with Aunt Hettie at The Willows (early 1950's). Nancy T. Reid and Joan Young Nickerson and I were classmates at (then) Yarmouth High School, class of '48. Joan and I are still frequently in touch. I grew up on Oyster Cove, High Bank Road, S. Yarmouth.*

Thank you **Les Worden** of Ludlow Falls, Ohio for sending us an updated book on the Worden family for our library. More thanks for a generous monetary donation which was sent in addition to a copy of the 1858 map of Dennis, a panoramic view of Worden Pond in Rhode Island, and other miscellaneous information on East Dennis and Worden Hall. Your generosity is much appreciated!

Thanks also to life member **Margaret Smith** who kindly sent us a generous donation. It's always a good feeling when lifetime members show their continued support.

This letter speaks for itself! *December 22, 2006 Ladies and Gentlemen Please find enclosed a check....This gift is in honor of Phyllis Horton. Her inspired efforts to capture and share our history is noteworthy.* (Life Member) **Joel, Beth, Jacob, Caleb, Abby (Crowell)**

Thanks to **Brendan Joyce** who put on the Shiverick show for the folks at Epoch Senior Health-care and brought us in return a donation to support the DHS.

Lastly, we send our sympathy to member **Ann M. Snow** for the loss of her husband, **Stephen H. Snow**. And to Life Member **Judy Dubin** whose mother **Shirley Frank** recently passed away. Shirley and her husband, **Doc**, were well known at the Player's Pharmacy in East Dennis. Our thoughts also go out to Life Member **Camille Murphy** whose husband Miles died last November.

Feb, 2007

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The Way We Were

The 1787 Nathan Stone, Esq. House

Phyllis R. Horton

Dennis is well blessed with homes of some of our early residents still standing and being cared for in 2007. It takes a special kind of person to appreciate the value of a home that has sheltered and nurtured families for over 200 years and in some instances, almost 300 years.

From time to time DHS is asked to furnish some information about an historic home after it has changed hands. Doing the history of the first owners is always interesting; sometimes you find a life well lived with not too many bumps in the road, but more often you marvel at the grit and fortitude displayed by parents who had large families and were lucky to have one or two who survived to have families of their own. In our technical age we find it difficult to imagine a world where subsistence living was the norm for even the leading members of society. Nowhere in this narrative does it tell that Nathan and Patience kept a large garden which was tilled and weeded by hand to provide food for the summer and then extra food to be put by for the winter, who also had an orchard to provide fruit for the year that was put in a root cellar or dried (a tedious job). They also kept a few chickens that needed to be tended every day of the year for eggs and meat. Because of his status in town it seems likely that Nathan had a horse that also needed daily care. He would need to plant and cut hay and grain to keep his horse alive in the winter. Perhaps he also had a cow which needed to be milked twice a day...and on and on. It makes you wonder how he ever had time to build houses. Patience, in the meantime, was not sitting around doing nothing. Every minute of her day was filled also with spinning, weaving, making clothes by hand, cooking over an open fire, having and caring for babies, and her list goes on, too. You can bet there weren't many leisure activities going on in Dennis Village in those days, no one had time for it. *(narrative to be continued)*



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