



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 24 Number 1

January-February 2001

Calendar of Events

**Sunday,
February 18th
Old Fashioned Games and
Taffy Pull**

The DHS Board is planning a busy year for our members. To help drive away the February blues, we have dusted off a 1986 program that was so much fun it's worth doing again. On February 18th from 2-4 PM at the 1867 West Dennis Graded School we will have an old fashioned Sunday Social and Taffy Pull. Tables will be set up with games and puzzles of all kinds, some old, some not so old, but all challenging and interesting. You are all invited to participate, watch or kibitz if you feel so moved. The other activity is an old fashioned taffy pull. This may bring back fond memories for some of our more senior members and will prove to be fun for all who try it. Many a blossoming romance was enhanced, under the watchful eyes of chaperones, during a taffy pull at the turn of the century. I can't guarantee those results today, but you are sure to have a good time.

**West Dennis Graded
School House, School
Street, West Dennis
2:00 PM**

Save the date...March 10th for a covered dish luncheon. Remember the great time at our last one? Sort through your favorite recipes. More next month.

HELPING HAND SOCIETY – PARTS I and II

Phyllis Horton

A number of years ago there was a Helping Hand Society affiliated with the Reformed Church of the Latter Day saints in Dennis Port.

Organized under the direction of T.W. Smith on 6 March 1879 its purpose was to give aid and assistance to others who were in need. Some of the first good deeds listed under "Helps to the poor" was 1 quilt to a needy widower, stockings and cloth for a dress for an orphaned girl, and someone's funeral expenses. One notation was "address needs of Mrs. Abby Chase – 1 nightdress – 3 yards of material.

In my young days a number of ladies not affiliated with the church belonged to the Helping Hand Society to assist their good works. In the 1920's and 30's the dues were \$1.00 per year plus 3 cents a week dues. The ladies raised money by making and selling quilts. Some quilts were given to needy persons. Quite possibly some of those quilts might be collector's items today. They also held rummage sales and had a thrift shop, which continues today for the aid of the church. During World War II the Society knit socks for the boys overseas and made cash donations to the Red Cross.

The Helping Hand Society lasted until the 1980's when the majority of their membership had dropped out because of age and changing times.



Working on the "Big Dig" in East Dennis
Farm photos thanks to Howes & Howes

Fall 2000, Part II...Seth Crowell of Sesuet Farm in East Dennis had an altercation with an electric saw. Score: Electric saw...1, Seth ... -1 (finger). After healing, Seth managed to cope fairly well with his farm chores until it came time to dig and clean several thousand gladiolus bulbs.

[Lu Crowell interrupts the narrative... The call went out to the DHS/Manse Committee friends, thanks to Margie and Hugh Wheeler, and on November 28th help arrived.

On this overcast and chilly morning they came in muck boots and warm jackets or vests, gloved and armed with spading forks and oyster knives. And they kept

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HELPING HAND SOCIETY – PARTS I and II

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coming! Phyllis Horton, farm girl that she is, said she wouldn't miss it for the world. Richard and Nancy Howes knew what they were getting into, but they came anyway. Susan Kelley thought it was more fun than putting her own garden to bed. (FUN?) Chris and Dave Talbott went right to work and kept plugging, even when some of us were taking a break! Jean Twiss joined us in the trenches (rows, that is). And bless Jean Goheen, who worked right up until it was time for her chiropractic appointment. (Maybe she was hoping one or the other activity would aid her aching back) All this work for a cup of soup and a little bread around noontime, and they worked on – and on! Now back to Phyllis...]

The bulbs were dug as fast as the cleaning team could remove the old corm with the knife (an oyster knife is a handy tool with many uses), clean up the bulb, and check it for disease, in which case it was discarded. The good bulbs went into cranberry boxes, were liberally sprinkled with moth crystals by Seth, and stored in the root cellar under the old barn.

At noon Lu rang the dinner bell and we all left our muddy boots by the back doorstep, and trooped into her country kitchen. We were greeted by large kettles of homemade vegetable beef and kale soups steaming on a vintage cast iron cookstove. Our appetites, whetted by a morning of manual labor, were tantalized by the aroma that surrounded us.

Sitting around their large dining table we all gave hearty testament to Lu's cooking skills and hospitality. The laughs and camaraderie that flowed through the room made me think of older days in Dennis when neighbors and friends gathered to help someone out with a barn raising, husking bee or some other chore.

With difficulty we tore ourselves away from that enjoyable atmosphere and returned with renewed vigor to finish up the bulbs.

Seth and Lu gave their heartfelt thanks. They never dreamed it could all be done in one day.

I can think of no better name for the group than the Helping Hand Society – Part II – neighbor helping neighbor in true Dennis fashion.



Is There, After All, A Cape Cod Tunnel?

(Thanks to Ray Urquhart)

An off-Cape couple, well along in years, pulled off the Mid-Cape Highway at Route 132 and followed traffic signs to the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce. They had traveled 13 miles along Route 6 through Sandwich and Barnstable. So, why had they decided to stop at the Chamber office? Let's just listen to their conversation with a nice Chamber lady...

Elderly woman, "Are we on Cape Cod?"

Nice Chamber lady, "When you cross the Cape Cod Canal bridge you are on Cape Cod."

Elderly woman to elderly male companion, "I don't remember crossing a bridge, do you?"

Elderly companion, "No, I don't remember crossing any bridge."

Elderly woman, "We must have come the other way."



The Tale of Two Old Houses..... (or – Whoops, We Goofed!)

Lura Crowell



**THIS is the James Paine Howes House
Sesuit Neck Road, East Dennis**

We goofed, but we gained a new member because of it! In December's issue of the Newsletter, we showed a picture of the Christopher Crowell house on Old Town Lane – but it wasn't. Cousin William H. Crowell of Rome, New York and Sesuit Neck Road took a look at the picture taken from Aunt Jack's (B. Evelyn Crowell) photo album and showed us we had taken out the wrong picture. What we showed you was the James Paine Howes house on Sesuit Neck Road. According to Nancy Reid's History, Eli Howes (1793 – 1878) of Sesuet Neck did early experiments in cranberry culture. He found a variety

that was a good keeper, and using cuttings, he propagated the berry. His son, James Paine Howes (1826 – 1901) continued to improve the strain and named it the Howes berry, which is still popular today. The house was probably built by Eli around 1816, and it is thought that James P. was born and raised there. Around 95 years ago, Helen and Jesse B. Eldridge (that's Eldridge with an "i," we were told, since those who spelled it with an "e" were just too lazy to dot the "i") bought the house where their family, the Richardsons, still live today. To keep us out of further mischief, cousin Bill joined the DHS.

THIS is the Christopher Crowell house on Old Town Lane. It was built on the parcel of land granted by lottery in the early 1700's to Christopher Crowell, which at that time stretched from the bay to the creek. According to the book, *John Crowe and his Descendants*, this first Christopher Crowell (John, John, John) was born July 24, 1698 and married Sarah Matthews in 1724. He sold the old homestead at Nobscusset, and they "removed" to Sesuit Neck where they raised ten children. It is told that he had a whale house on Crowell's point, where there was a lookout to spot whales in the bay. Once spotted, men took to small boats to chase the whales to shore where they would perish. There is a hollow near the dunes which is still known to the family as "the whale hole" where whales were tried out. By 1742 the family was settled in their home on what is now Old Town Lane. A second Christopher lived there with his family, followed by his son, Nathan. After Captain Nathan's death, the house was bought by Mr. Riley who came to East Dennis to work at the Shiverick Shipyard. The Riley's daughter, Lydia, married Mr. Wallace P. Sears and they inherited the house. The Sears children were Emilie and Frazier Louis. "Loui" served in the merchant marine and went down with his ship. Miss Emilie married Edgar Goodspeed and they lived in her family home. After her death, the house was sold to the present owners, Emily and Lawrence Levine.



**The Christopher Crowell House
Old Town Lane, East Dennis**

Dennis Historical Society

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THE WAY WE WERE...

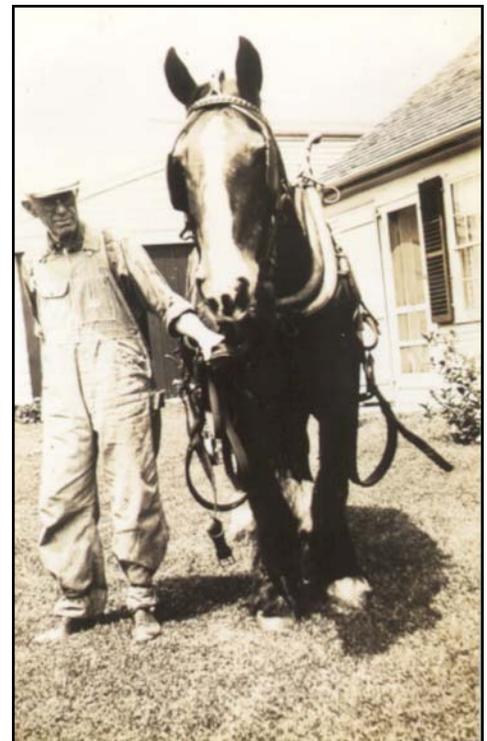
Josh Crowell told this story about his uncle, Seth, and his father, Nathan.

Why you should never loan your horse to a friend...

Seth Crowell and his brother, Nathan, formed a farming partnership – perhaps for tax reasons, since heifers, cows and horses were all assessed. Each owned half the barn, etc.

One day, Seth loaned his horse, Jane, to a friend who worked it hard and left it tied to a hitching post sweaty with no blanket. The horse sickened and went blind. Nathan’s horse, Smug, worked in tandem with Jane after that and became a “seeing eye horse,” perhaps the first in East Dennis.

The moral of the story is, don’t loan your horse unless your brother has a spare.



Seth Crowell and Company
at Sesuet Farm of Old

