



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 1

January 2002

## **Calendar of Events**

**Saturday, January 12  
10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon  
Board meets at Jericho**

Interested members welcome

**Sunday, January 13  
2:00 to 4:00 PM  
W. Dennis Graded School  
Cape Cod Samplers  
by Lynne Horton**

Join us for an illustrated talk showing 18th and 19th century samplers stitched by young girls from the Cape and Islands, including several done at Dennis Dame's schools. Refreshments served.

**Saturday, February 9  
Board meets 10:00 AM  
West Dennis School**

**Saturday, February 9  
Old Fashioned Covered  
Dish Luncheon  
12:00 Noon**

Find your favorite recipe, make it up and bring it to the West Dennis Graded School along with your plate and eating utensils. Rolls, coffee and tea provided. Bring one of your unique artifacts from home for after-lunch show and tell.

## **WROUGHT BY HAND**

By Phyllis Horton

In the 1700s and 1800s a well brought up young girl was required to show an example of her skill with a needle by creating a needlework sampler. This meant not only knowing how to do a variety of utilitarian and decorative stitches, but also how to prepare the cloth to be stitched. Most samplers were made of linen, which was derived from flax that grew wild in many of our local ponds. These girls, some as young as age 7, learned how to harvest, ret, hetchel, and spin the flax into linen thread, then weave the thread into cloth. These pieces were worked by young girls under the supervision of older women, often at a Dame's school, to show their proficiency with a needle. Of course, the one they were hoping to impress was their future husband, but that was neither stated or implied. Actually, girls as young as 10 or 12 could produce items that show surprising maturity and skill. There is a fine collection of some Dennis samplers in the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum and the 1801 Jericho Historical Center.

On Sunday afternoon, January 13 at 2:00 PM Lynne Horton will present an illustrated slide show drawn from her exhibit of "Cape Cod Samplers." Her exhibit featured over 100 samplers made by Cape and Islands girls. Many Dennis samplers are included in her talk. Some of those will be on display, along with some new ones that have been acquired since her show. Come to the 1867 West Dennis Graded School on School Street, West Dennis to learn how these little scraps of cloth came to be that are now such valued collectors' items worth thousands of dollars.

If you have an antique sampler you would like Lynne to examine, she would be pleased to do so. She will be glad to tell all she can about it. Refreshments will be served.



The Josiah Dennis Manse, wrought by  
Mary E. Dawley, Age 8, 1972

## GROWING UP IN DENNIS PORT

Excerpts from "Fun in Dennis Port in the 1930's" by Betty Dean Holmes

The holidays are over, but memories remain. Some of those memories go back a while. Betty Dean Holmes remembers.....

One year at Christmas we got a typewriter. Just one for all four of us kids. It was a toy and it had a wheel with all the letters on it which we turned and then pressed onto the paper. We had to take turns typing the letters. We wanted to put out our own newspaper so you can imagine how long that took.

The year we received our skis was a banner Christmas. We prayed for snow so we could try them out. We could slide our overshoes into inch-wide leather straps on the skis. We had ski poles, too. It finally snowed and we walked up Upper County Road to a slight hill. We had great fun, but before we learned to ski, we very rapidly learned how to fall down.

Sally got new ice skates every Christmas as she was the oldest. The rest of us wore the hand-me-down smaller skates. Dad would take us skating every chance there was safe ice.

Mother was a 4-H leader and held the first meetings in our kitchen. Our Mother was a charter member of the Dennis Port Village Improvement Club so later we had our 4-H meetings at the VIC Hall. Mother was leader of three 4-H club groups. She ran two groups in Dennis Port and one in Hyanis. We learned hand sewing, cooking, and crafts. One of my favorite projects was shellacking glass jars, rolling them in beach sand while they were still wet, and after they dried, painting them. We 4-H-ers had lovely Christmas gifts to give that year. Another time, we all brought in old frames with glass and we painted black silhouettes, using coloring book pictures, on the glass and then backed the glass with tin foil for another nice Christmas present.

Drury Sweetser coached a play with an elementary school cast. I played the part of a comical king who had a gouty foot. The postmaster's daughter, Lorraine Wixon, played the princess. I envied the princess in her long blue organdy gown with black lacing on the bodice. I remember I wore a red rubber nose and slippers for my gouty foot. We performed that play to a full house at the VIC Hall.

To raise money for the VIC Mother coached several very successful minstrel shows at that hall during the 1930s. Lots of school kids as well as adults were in the cast. Townspeople packed the house for two nights each year. The minstrel shows even went on the road to a few other towns. The VIC sponsored bean suppers, whist parties, and one year even a wonderful April Fools party.

Another fund raiser was a Tom Thumb Wedding with lots of little kids in it and we three Dean girls wore long pastel organdy dresses. The priest at the Catholic Church feared this "wedding" might be somewhat sacrilegious and insisted rehearsals could go on only if a hymn was sung before we began.

The year Sally was in grade eight, Priscilla in grade seven and Betty in grade six, for Christmas we received new brown suede pumps with alligator trim and three-quarter-inch heels, silk stockings, and garter belts to hold up our new silk hose. It just tickled Dad's funny bone to think we didn't have a clue! We finally figured out how the garter belts worked and made quite a grown-up group as we got ready to leave for Sunday School.

Sunday School was in the basement of the First Baptist Church in West Harwich. It was maybe a quarter of a mile walk. We received a fine Bible education. It wasn't 'til Priscilla and I took literature courses in college that we found out how much Mrs. Chappel and Ellen M. B. Shaw had taught us.

## **MORE THANKS TO OUR DONORS!**

We have had continued response to our request for donations to defray the cost of climate control for preserving the artifacts at Jericho and the Manse. Since our last report we have received the following donations:

Joan and Jim Martin

Alice Hildebrant

Robert and Diane Chamberlain

Joshua and Bette Anne Crowell,

in honor of Elinor and Joshua Crowell and Phyllis Horton

Eldon Davidson, in memory of Earle M. Davidson

Herbert Johnson, in memory of Jean Evelyn Sager Johnson, past secretary of DHS

Marion Scofield, in memory of Wilson B. Scofield

We also received a donation from the Howes Family Association. Our thanks to all!

## **MEMBERSHIP NOTES:**

Just a reminder to check the expiration date on your label. Did you remember to pay your dues for 2002?

Have you noticed the post office will return mail unless you use your correct mailing address including your PO BOX NUMBER? We have to pay 60 cents for each Newsletter that is returned to us as undeliverable. Do we have your correct address?

A note on our volunteers at work: Phyllis Horton reports they logged in 1500 hours at the Manse during the last year. (There were 1800 visitors counted at the Manse during the same time, and probably even more who were not counted.)

## **LETTERS AND NEWSLETTERS**

Do you remember the picture of the soldier and the sailor in the October 2001 Newsletter? Thanks to Mrs. Stuart Wixon who tells us this picture of Stu and brother Paul was taken when they were home on leave at the same time.

Apologies to Delores Larque whose name was misspelled in our last Newsletter.

Back in September 2001 we received a letter from Eldon Davidson of Savannah.

He wrote:

“Dear Phyllis,

I was really surprised when I looked at the back page of the last issue of the Dennis Newsletter and saw that picture of Bill King and yours truly. Many thanks for printing it and the article. I only wish that Bill could still be around as he and I had a great time traveling around all over the Cape. My father had called a couple of his friends in Washington to see if they could get Bill transferred to my Squadron so that he could be my backseat gunner in the old SBD dive bomber. Bill was supposed to be transferred to us when we arrived at San Diego to go aboard an aircraft carrier and head to the South Pacific, but he was killed in an aircraft accident before we arrived. I think many times about how we would have ‘terrorized the Natives.’....”

We also were delighted to receive a “magical” Christmas greeting from Ernestine Perry’s daughter, Priscilla Sprunt of North Carolina.

*Thank you one and all for your letters and communications.*

## Dennis Historical Society

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# THE WAY WE WERE

## DENNIS PORT RECALLED

Dear Isabelle Flynn,

Because I have been unable to go to Dennis Port for the past several years, having the DHS Newsletter has been of great importance to me, knowing what is going on in the town of Dennis has been one of the bright spots of my life in a nursing home. It is of special thanks that I have been given the honor of receiving a life membership in the DHS.

Marion W. Collins



*This 1930-40's postcard dated October 15*

*8AM, 1942 shows from right to left: Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Blake's Gift Shop, Carl Maloney's first drug store, First National Store fruit stand, managed by Nick Fenares, and the First National Store. Above the gift shop can be seen the roof and dormers of the house that was first there. James Barnaby Baker's home and general store stood on the triangle facing west.*