

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 27 Number 1

January 2004

Calendar of Events

Board meetings are open to all interested members of the DHS. It has been our practice to move the fall and winter meetings from Wednesday evenings to Saturday mornings from **10:00 to Noon**. Our next meeting will be on **January 10 at the Josiah Dennis Manse**.

What's in Our Library?

A workshop for members led by Burt Derick Wednesday, January 21 10AM to Noon

Includes our genealogical resources, books, picture collections, etc..

**Reservations required.
Call (508) 385-3268**

Potluck Luncheon Saturday, February 21 at Noon, West Dennis Graded School. Entertainment to follow.

Bring your favorite main dish, salad or dessert to share. Rolls and beverages provided.

Join us and chase away those winter blahs!

Letters to Phyllis...

This letter from Leslie Worden of Ludlow Falls, Ohio was written on October 8, 2003.

Dear Ms. Horton,

Sorry to be so late in sending in my subscription to the DHS Newsletter. My wife became ill this past year and has been in and out of hospitals and a nursing home.... In July she fell and broke her hip and had to have the hip ball replaced. In September we were able to bring her home after I had engaged a nurse to look after her.

Since I was house bound most of last Spring, I spent some time completing work on a book about the first Wordens in America. It turned out to be 63 pages long including pictures, drawings and maps.

Enclosed is a brief summary of what is in the book. If you would like to use it in your newsletter, please feel free to do so. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Leslie E. Worden

12th generation of Peter Worden

FIRST SETTLER IN EAST DENNIS

By Leslie E. Worden

Many persons whose surname is Worden, or who have family ties to a Worden, wonder: *who was the first Worden to come to America? when and where did he come from? and where did he settle?* My interest in researching the matter was stimulated during the 1990s after my nephew Gary Worden retired and became very active in searching the internet for items relating to Worden genealogy. He sent me around 400 copies of things he thought might interest me. His oldest daughter Ann was married to a submarine Naval Officer who in 1991 was stationed at the Submarine Base in New London, Connecticut. One day she spent some time in the New London County Library. While browsing among some old books, she came across evidence which showed that Peter Worden I had come over to Plymouth Colony as one of John Oldham's company on the *Little James* in 1623. The company of ten men stayed for about three months and then left in early November for Virginia on Robert Gorges's ship the *Swan*. Most of these men remained on board ship and then returned, I believe, to Barnstaple, a port in western England. One researcher of his Worden "roots" was Eric K. Eastwood who published a booklet in 1951 which stated that Peter Worden I came here in 1623 with a widowed daughter named Ellen (Elinor?)

Newton. (This has not been definitively proven.) After her arrival she married John Adams, who later died, and then she married Kenelm Winslow I.

From March 1624 to some time in 1636 Peter I was subject to a number of court battles. It is believed that in 1637 he decided to return to Plymouth Colony and spent several months turning some of his holdings into cash. In May or June of 1638, he, along with his son Peter II and a grandson, John Lewis Worden (nephew to Peter II), left Preston, England via the London Road, and at Birmingham took the branch which took them to Bristol. There they boarded a ship which sailed down Bristol Channel to Barnstaple. At the port they found a captured Spanish frigate being readied to set sail for New England. The ship, which had no name, was being loaded with some 80 passengers, most of whom were from western England.

Around the same time, in Ipswich, England, the ship *Dilligent* was loaded with about 100 passengers, most of whom came from Hingham in Norfolk County. This body of men, women and children apparently had boarded a river boat at Norwich and floated down the Yare River to Great Yarmouth where they took a ship to Ipswich. Once aboard the *Dilligent* they set sail for Boston Harbor in Massachusetts. The ship arrived there on August 10th in 1638. A couple of weeks later the unnamed frigate from Barnstaple also made its way into the harbor.

On the *Dilligent* was Mary Sayers. (The name, when spoken, could easily be mistaken for "Mary Sears.") It is believed that within a relatively short time after the ship dropped anchor, Peter II met Mary Sayers and the two became attracted to one another. At any rate Peter II stayed in Lynn (which is on the north side of the harbor) to be near Mary.

His father Peter I and his nephew John Lewis hired a small boat to take them to Cape Cod in Plymouth Colony. Peter I, wanting to settle in that colony and yet be by himself, apparently selected Sesuit Harbor for the ship's landing place. This put him on the eastern-most part of the yet to be incorporated town of Yarmouth, in Barnstable County, Massachusetts. The site must have suited him, for after a short journey up Sesuit Creek he came upon a nice clearing with a well-constructed Indian hut on it. Negotiating with the Indians who owned it, he was successful in buying it along with several acres of land. So it was that Peter the elder and John Lewis settled there in mid-September. They took a trip back to Lynn by boat to buy livestock, and soon the two were well equipped to begin the Worden Farm on Cape Cod, an enterprise to be carried on there for nearly sixty years.

Peter I was born in Clayton, Lancashire, England around 1575 so in 1638 he was about 62 years old. Peter II was born in Clayton in 1609 and John Lewis was born there in 1625. Mary Sayers was born in 1612 in Pulham, Norfolk County, England. Her parents were Samuel and Christiana Sayers.

It was perhaps December when Mary Sayers and Peter II decided to marry and to walk to Cape Cod to do so. Their first stop was probably Hingham so Mary could visit some of the passengers who had come on the *Dilligent* with her. In another day they could have arrived at Marshfield, where Kenelm Winslow I lived with his wife Ellen and a baby Kenelm II, born in 1636. (Ellen or Elinor was probably Peter II's half-sister born in 1598 when Peter I was about 23 years old.) A terrible storm came up on December 15th so it is likely they asked to stay with the Winslow family for a few days. They may have stayed through Christmas and up to the first of January of 1639. Desiring to have Peter I at their wedding, they again headed for Yarmouth, stopping possibly at Plymouth and at Sandwich.

Since in 1639 Stephen Hopkins had the only substantial house erected in Yarmouth, it is likely that the wedding took place there. Peter I, being in ill health, was probably taken the 6 miles from Sesuit Harbor to Yarmouth Port by grandson John in a small shallop to attend the wedding. The Reverend Marmaduke Matthews could have officiated in joining the couple in marriage, and many of the early settlers in the area were undoubtedly present for the ceremony. After the service, Peter I, having men present who could witness the making of his will, took advantage of the opportunity. So it was that both the marriage of Peter II to Mary Sayers and the drafting of Peter I's will took place on February 9, 1638/39. This will is the first in the Plymouth Colony records.

Within a few more weeks, Peter I died at Sesuit. It being the depth of winter with the ground frozen, no grave was dug, but rather a burial mound was fashioned out of dirt from the digging of a root cellar a few months earlier. With the arrival of warmer weather, Peter II and Mary moved to the Worden farm at Sesuit. During the summer of 1639 it is thought that Peter II built a house for his bride near the main west to east trail.

John Lewis probably continued to occupy the Indian hut, but he no doubt became discontented working for his Uncle Peter. In 1641, when he was 15 or 16 years old, he asked for his inheritance. With money in his pocket he boarded one of the ships sailing for England and returned home. He later came back on a ship going to Rhode Island and some time after that settled in Connecticut.

Mary became pregnant with her first child in early June 1639. The child, named Mary, was born on February 10, 1639/40. The mother had two more daughters and a son whom she named Samuel after his maternal grandfather. It was he who when he was grown inherited the Worden farm and later, around 1690, moved to Rhode Island near the Great Pond which is now known as Worden Pond. Samuel sold the Cape Cod farm to Isaac Chapman in 1696.

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of our Past President Raymond Urquhart. We remember him with fondness and gratitude for all he accomplished for the Dennis Historical Society. He was a leader and a friend. We extend our deepest sympathies to his family and loved ones.

Our thanks to all of you who renewed your membership to support the work of the Dennis Historical Society. As we look forward to a new year of programs and exhibits, we want to remind you that it is your dues which make these possible. We hope you will take advantage of your membership privileges and join us for these activities whenever you can. Just a reminder— Burt is offering his time and expertise to help members learn about our DHS library and how to use it. If you want to participate, please call (508) 385-3268 and reserve a place. Space is limited. Call today.

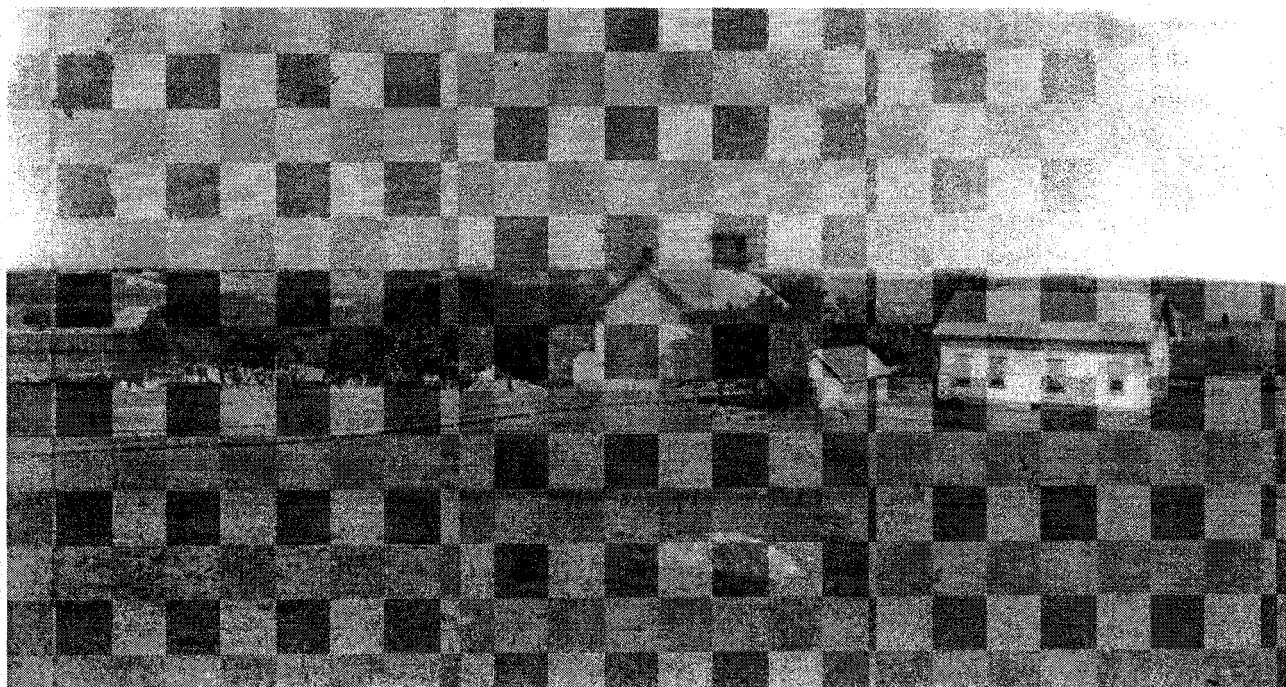
Another thank you goes to our "angel" Priscilla Perry Sprunt for her generous Christmas donation. She is one of our Charter Members who now lives in North Carolina. Her father, Leon, was the son of Darius Hall Perry of West Dennis, a sea captain who traveled to China and Japan. Her mother, Ernestine Cady Perry, was an amazing woman in her own right. Both helped to make Dennis a better place. More of their stories to come...

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 2
South Dennis, MA
02660

The Way We Were



Worden Hall and East Dennis Schoolhouse from a glass plate negative. The Hall was once a community meeting place now an art gallery, but the school is no longer in existence. The Hall is not far from Peter I's burial site.