



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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E-Mail info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

The next Board Meeting: is Tuesday, February 10 @ 2:00 P.M., 2nd floor, Dennis Memorial Library, Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village

“Workmen Installing Gas Main Discover Well”¹

“DENNIS – An old well, believed to be the community well of Dennis some 100 years ago, was discovered three feet below the earth’s surface last week, by workmen digging a ditch for installation of a gas main.



“Staff Photo by John Kerr

Two old schoolmates look at the old well that served the community of Dennis some 100 years ago. Both Anson H. Howes, left, and Thomas T. Kelly, remember carrying water from the well to an old schoolhouse some 70 years ago. The well was discovered three feet below the ground level at the side of the Village Green, Dennis, when a ditch was being dug for the installation of gas mains.”

Two oldtimers, Thomas T. Kelley and Anson H. Howes, went down into the ditch to view the well. Both said they remember carrying water from the well to a nearby school, just up Scargo Lake Road, some 70 years ago.

The well, in good condition, has evidently been covered with earth for some sixty years as that was when a hand pump well was driven at the edge of the Village Green in Dennis, Mr. Kelley said.

The old well was a draw-well, one in which a bucket was let down at the end of a crank and when

filled with water was raised to the top. It is some 20 feet deep, 35 inches in diameter and has two feet of water at the bottom. The top has been covered by stones to keep the dirt out.

The well is constructed of bricks which are themselves antiques. They are curved to make the circular shape of the well and were made in England. The bricks themselves are in demand by collectors of early Cape Cod.

The find was made by Thomas E. Kelley, nephew of Thomas T. Kelley, and a consulting engineer of the gas company who had let the contract to install the gas main in Dennis.

When the ditch digger hit the well, workmen hand dug to find what was there, then backed the digger off and made a detour around the old well. They also had to bend the gas pipe to go around the well in order to save it should the town wish to preserve it for historical purposes.

Tom Kelley found a cement cesspool top that just fitted the top of the well and will protect it from being filled as the earth is pushed back into the ditch.”

Carole Bell²

Old Glory Flies Again at Wixon School

The antique 10' x 15' thirteen star American flag is back on the wall in the Wixon Innovation School auditorium after being restored.

The flag was given to the Dennis Historical Society in 1970 by the descendants of Sea Captain Bernard O'Neil of West Dennis. For about five years it was nailed up on the wall in the 1801 Jericho Barn Museum. The Dennis 1976 Bicentennial Commission commissioned 1,000 tiles commemorating "Sleepy" John Sears'

¹ Cape Cod Standard Times, Friday, October 27, 1967

² Material Provided by Faith Lee, Falmouth Public Library Reference Librarian

saltworks at \$1.50 each to be sold at \$3.00 to finance the restoration of the flag. When the Commission discovered that the flag was worth about \$5,000 "in its present condition" it was removed from the barn wall and placed for safekeeping in the Dennis Police Station.

The Bicentennial Commission, after consultation with the Smithsonian Institution, donated \$500.00 from their funds with a matching grant from the MA Historic Commission, plus the proceeds from the saltworks tiles and had the flag cleaned, mended, mounted on a suitable background and encased in a protective frame with a Plexiglas cover in Boston at the cost of \$2,000. It was then installed in the Wixon Middle School. There were very few other options in Dennis to hold a flag that size at the time.

Ten years later it was noticed that threads were separating due to the weight of the flag. The December 1986 Special Town Meeting voted \$3,067 to have the Andover Conservation Center restore the flag and prepare it for display. It was returned to Wixon School as a "memorial to the family but also a reminder of the many mariners who contributed to the economy and reputation of the young United States".

Fast forward twenty-seven years to 2013 when our venerable relic was again 'showing its age'. The Dennis Historical Commission had the flag inspected by specialists, applied to the Community Preservation Committee for funds to restore the flag and was granted \$45,000.

The flag was rededicated at the October 28th Special Town Meeting with members of the O'Neil family present. The state-of-the-art preservation measures used should keep our historic treasure safe for seventy-five to one hundred years. If all goes as planned our great-great- grandchildren will have to decide what to do next.

On Sunday, February 22nd, 2015 Peter Cipkowski, a great-grandson of Capt. O'Neil will present a DHS program: "The O'Neils, the Family and the Flag" at 2:00 PM at the West Dennis Library, 2nd floor. It is handicapped accessible.

Come and bring friends for an interesting winter event.

Phyllis Horton

"Take in Sail, Captain"³

"With her long arm reaching out and beckoning the sea into her quiet blue bays and harbors, is it any wonder that Cape Cod has, in turn, sent her ships out across the moving miles to every corner of the globe. She could safely trust her reputation to these clear-eyed sons whose skill and daring won them fame the world over.

It is hard for us, today, to realize how completely the sea and seafaring men dominated her life in earlier days. A little village that now seems to us quiet and scattered had, in the "sailing" years, no less than two hundred vessels captained by its citizens, one captain having several vessels in turn, over the period of years. It was not unusual for some sixty or seventy captains at one time to claim one small village as home-port. Every family who has its roots on the Cape has its annals full of yarns and anecdotes of the adventures of fathers and grandfathers on far seas and in distant harbors.

In 1875 my grandfather sailed his three-masted schooner in ballast from Genoa, Italy, to Messina, Sicily, to load a cargo of oranges and lemons for New York. The ballast consisted of rock sulphur since Grandfather had learned by experience that the crates of fruit, piled on top of the sulphur, would keep fresh and sound and reach New York without danger of spoilage.

As was required, he took aboard a pilot off the harbor of Messina, and sailed for the entrance with fair wind and all lower sails set. When the pilot arrived on the quarter deck he explained to Grandfather that there was only one fruit-loading quay and that, owing to the briskness of business, the vessels had to anchor stern to the quay.

Upon hearing this Grandfather called the mate to the quarter deck and ordered him to have

³ Cape Cod Remembrances, pp 67,68

the halyards overhauled and coiled for quick action.

As they passed through the harbor entrance and the busy port opened out before them, the pilot fidgeted uneasily over the vessel's speed and said urgently, "Take in sail now, Captain."

"You leave that to me," was Grandfather's reply, his steady eyes on the stretch of water ahead and his quiet voice giving orders to the man at the wheel.

On surged the vessel through the crowded shipping with a now thoroughly agitated pilot on her quarter deck. "TAKE IN SAIL, Captain!" he shouted, waving his arms in excitement.

"I'll take in sail when it's necessary," was the calm answer.

The vessel skimmed along. The quay loomed ahead. The pilot jumped up and down on the deck, shouting and gesticulating wildly.

Grandfather raised his hand in signal to the alert first officer, "Let go the fore-sail, Mr. Mason." Down came the sail on the run. The seamen dropped the fore halyards and rushed for the main-mast where they took their stations.

"Let go the main-sail, Mr. Mason." With a rush the huge "main" sank to a mass of billowing canvas and the vessel perceptibly slackened her pace. Again feet thudded on the deck and the men stood ready at the mizzen-mast.

"Let go the mizzen-sail, Mr. Mason." The last great spread of canvas ran down on the instant.

"Let go the small anchor, Mr. Mason." A seaman, poised in readiness, struck the anchor ring from the cathead and the chain roared out through the horse-hole as the anchor plunged downward,

"Let go the sheet anchor, Mr. Mason." The second anchor splashed into the blue waters of the harbor. The vessel lost way, paused a moment and then slowly swung around to head into the wind. Her stern was a few feet from the quay!

Grandfather stood smiling quietly at the pilot who, white and shaken, mopped his brow

with a huge red bandana and gazed about him in incredulous amazement.

The crowd on the quay had been watching the vessel's flying approach with their hearts in their mouths. As she fetched up in her appointed berth, they burst into a spontaneous cheer."

Marion Crowell Ryder

Is it Fool or Flummery?

I can't help but wonder – were the following two Colonial Era desserts concocted with two of our favorite February dignitaries in mind? I am referring to that happy, always carrying an arrow, "Cupid" and to our first president: George Washington.

"KISS PUDDING"

Beat yolks of 3 eggs with ½ cup of sugar until light. Add 1 ½ tablespoons cornstarch. Stir in 1 pint boiling milk. Stir on stove until thick. Pour into pudding dish. Beat 3 egg whites with ½ cup sugar; spread over top and brown in oven under broiler. Serves 4.



"CHERRY SLUMP"

2 cups cherries
1 cup flour, sifted
2/3 cup sugar
2 tsp baking powder
½ cup water
¼ tsp salt
1 tsp cinnamon
½ cup milk

Remove stems & pits from cherries & combine them with sugar, water & cinnamon. Bring to a boil. Mix & sift flour, baking powder, & salt, and add the milk gradually. Drop this dough by spoonfuls into the boiling fruit mixture. Cover & cook for 25 minutes. Remove the cover & cook 10 minutes longer. Serve with cream. Serves 4.



June Howes

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PLEASE SAVE
YOUR ENCLOSED
2015 DHS
EVENT CALENDAR

Upcoming Dennis Historical Society Events

Sunday, February 22, 2:00 P.M.

“The O’Neils: Family and Flag”

Peter Cikowski will present the story of the recently restored fifteen-star flag that hangs in the Wixon School and of the family that owned it.

West Dennis Library, second floor
260 Main Street (Rt. 28), West Dennis

Saturday, April 11, 2:00 P.M.

“Old Houses of Dennis”

An illustrated lecture on our old houses, both still standing and long gone will be creatively presented by *Phyllis Horton*.

This core part of our history displays the wide variety of styles employed through the years

\$5.00 Donation

Dennis Public Library
5 Hall St., Dennis Port