



196th ANNIVERSARY
INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF DENNIS
JUNE 1793-JUNE 1989

THE MAN WHO NAMED OUR TOWN

Several times in our June "Birthday Edition", I have told you a story about Josiah Dennis, the man for whom the town is named. This time I would like to tell you about Nathan Stone, the man who, tradition says, named the town. Mr. Stone was Josiah Dennis' successor as minister of the East Yarmouth Parish. He was the son of a minister, and the grandson of a minister, and all three generations were graduates of Harvard College; Grandfather Nathaniel in 1690, Father Nathan Sr. in 1727, and son Nathan Jr. in 1762. Nathaniel Stone served the First Parish of Harwich, now Brewster, as an occasional preacher, or possibly the regular preacher until the church was officially organized in 1700, then as it's first minister until his death in 1755 in his 89th year. He married Reliance, the daughter of Gov. Thomas Hinkley, and they were the parents of 12 children. Most of them remained on Cape Cod, but son Nathan Sr., after his graduation from Harvard, was called to the parish in Southboro, MA in 1730, and served there until he died in 1781. His son Nathan was born in Southboro in 1737. Having the advantage of being raised in the home of a minister, where a library of classic books was available to him, he was qualified to serve the nearby town of Westboro as schoolmaster before he attended college. While a student he continued his teaching, serving the school at Needham during college vacations. At college he proved himself to be somewhat straitlaced, a quality which he probably inherited from his grandfather. He volunteered to report to the authorities at school any of his fellow students whom he overheard using profanity. His Master's dissertation was an argument entitled "The World Will Not Be Annihilated in a Final Conflagration". After graduation he supplied the pulpit at Lynn until called to serve here in July of 1764. He was ordained in the old church which stood in the present cemetery near the Dennis Union Church, October 17, 1764. His father came from Southboro to preach the sermon on that occasion, and no doubt, his grandfather was also a proud participant in this important ceremony. Nathan boarded with Widow Pheobe Dennis in the old Manse while a new home was being built for him. The wood for that house, still standing on New Boston Road, was cut in Sandwich woods, floated down on a scow to Bass Hole and drawn by oxen to the lot, where a house raising was held. Stone family tradition says that the bricks for the foundation and chimney were made and "burned" in the yard. Nathan was engaged to Molly Cushing, a minister's daughter from Shrewsbury. At the time of his wedding he was escorted there by the Deacons of his church, and the bride and groom were warmly greeted upon their arrival home. Mrs. Stone watched the progress of the new house and set up housekeeping soon in her own home. The Stones were the parents of nine children, four of whom died young, three in the same year of 1791. When the two precincts of Yarmouth voted to become two separate towns, the question of a name for the East Precinct was much discussed. Mr. Stone's predecessor was still remembered by the town fathers. Like Nathan, he had been more than just their preacher. Both of these first two ministers were active in all aspects of the parish life. Mr. Dennis had also been a classmate of Nathan's father, and a colleague of his grandfather. So he suggested that Josiah's be perpetuated as the name of the town, and it was adopted. The town of Dennis we have been for 196 years, and shall be forever more.

FIELD TRIPS IN PROGRESS

As we go to press, our annual field trips for the school children are being set up and will begin next week. Over 450 children will learn about the town's history, when the third graders visit the Manse, the fourth graders visit Jericho and the fifth graders have a bus tour of historic points around town. Our thanks to the many, many volunteers who work to make these trips possible each year.

WE WILL CELEBRATE THE TOWN'S BIRTHDAY.....

.....with our traditional luncheon, at the Lighthouse Inn in West Dennis on Sunday, June 25. A social hour at noon will precede the meal at 1 P.M. Menu: Melon with sherbert, choice of Broiled Scrod or Chicken Pot Pie, rice or potato, Vegetable du jour, rolls, butter, beverage and Birthday Cake. Cost: \$11.50. RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE NO LATER THAN June 19th. (See coupon below.) After dinner speaker will be C. Ben Thacher, who will read us some of his poems, and discuss "What Is A REAL Cape Codder?" It should be fun! Hope you will come.

BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS JUNE 25 LIGHTHOUSE INN-WEST DENNIS
Please make reservations for _____ people. I enclose a check for \$ _____ (\$11.50 per person)
Choice of entree: _____ Chicken Pot Pie _____ Broiled Scrod
Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope and send to Mr. Joshua Crowell
Box 963, Dennis, MA 02638

CALENDAR

June 3	9 A.M. and 10:30 A.M.	Lady Slipper Walk	Indian Lands
June 4	3-5 P.M.	Jericho House	West Dennis Open House
June 6 through 16		Ezra H. Baker School	Field Trips
June 13	7:30 P.M.	Board meets with Susan and Henry Kelley	
June 25	12 noon	196th Anniversary celebration of the town's incorporation and the 350th Anniversary of our founding	Lighthouse Inn
July 9	3 P.M.	Walk the Yarmouth Historical Society Botanic Trail with Naturalist Ginger Carpenter of the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History	

MORE ABOUT SAMPLERS

The oldest sampler from Dennis in the special exhibit at the Sandwich Glass Museum this summer is from the permanent collection at Jericho House. It was worked in 1792 by a 12 year old girl named Bathsheba Nickerson. Sometimes called Barshey, or Barshua, this little girl was well acquainted with the harsh reality of life in those times when she worked her sampler stitches. She was one of eleven children of Israel Nickerson of South Dennis and his second wife Betsey Doane. Israel was a lieutenant in the south-side militia and had seen service in the Revolution. He was also a mariner, and in the fall of 1791 he became ill with a fever, perhaps contracted on a journey to the West Indies. At any rate he died, and within 16 days of his death, 5 of his children were also dead. The devastated widow nursed her remaining children back to health, then with the help of her older sons, got on with the business of life. In less than a year after her great tragedy had taken place, we find her helping her daughter Bathsheba to learn the stitches she must know to care for her own family. This nearly 200 year old sampler is certainly testimony to the strength of character of these women. Bathsheba married Elias Baker when she was 21, but her life was not filled with joy and ease. Her first-born was a girl, but the baby did not live to her first birthday. She and Elias became parents of a second child, whom they named Obed, but no other children blessed their home. Bathsheba cared for her aging mother, who kept her company when Elias, also a mariner, was away from home. Her son Obed grew to manhood and in 1832 he married Miriam Crowell and set up his own household. Their first child was a girl, whom they named Betsey Doane, in honor of Obed's grandmother, who had died the year before at the age of 88. Surely this pleased Bathsheba. The following year brought tragedy once again into Bathsheba's life, for her husband died while on a trip to Florida. She took example from her mother and supported herself as a weaver, a skill she learned as a child. Five more grandchildren were born--2 boys and 3 girls. Bathsheba went to live with Obed and Miriam to help care for this growing family. We know that she took an active part in the children's education because of the survival of another sampler--that worked by Betsey Doane Baker in 1840. It is done on homespun and handwoven linen, which we can conjecture was made by her grandmother. The style and the stitches are almost identical to Grandmother Bathsheba's, done 50 years before. I like to picture the little hands of Betsey being helped by the wrinkled work-worn hands of grandmother as she practices the cross stitch letters to put on her wedding linen. Learning these stories about real girls and women of many years ago, I hope you will enjoy looking at samplers with a new interest and appreciation.

CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS LATELY?

If so, please drop a Post Card to Isabel Flynn, Box 607, South Dennis, 02660. Isabel tells us that the Society has newsletters returned because of address changes, and would very much appreciate seasonal or permanent corrections.

CEMETERY INVENTORY UNDERWAY

A group of volunteers is already at work on the inventory of gravestones in our old cemeteries, basing the work on studies already done by the late Daniel Chase, Hannah Paddock, and especially by our own Pauline Derick. Thanks to all who have volunteered. If you have not received an assignment yet, you will soon.

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

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