



HONORING OUR CHARTER MEMBERS

On June 16th DHS will honor our Charter Members at the annual Birthday Luncheon. The Society was begun in July 1963, and we still have quite a number of original members with us. Margaret Barker, Edith Wood, Lilla Smith, and Joshua Crowell will tell us about the early years when we were first getting our sea legs. They certainly charted a good course for us because we are now a thriving organization looking forward to and planning for 1993 when we will celebrate Dennis' Bicentennial. Come to the Lighthouse Inn and help us honor our Charter Members, and all you Charter members be sure to be there--we'd love to say THANKS!! Reservations by the 10th, please.

SOCIAL HALLS OF YESTERDAY--PART V WORDEN HALL

The last in this series of old time social centers of our five villages deals with a hall still very much a part of our town's life. Worden Hall was built to be a social center by subscription of the residents of East Dennis in 1866. One of its first community parties was a Christmas tree in the winter of that year, and it was the site for the traditional social functions of the time, such as meetings of the Good Templars, (a temperance organization), and a singing school. It also became the home of a village public library in 1870, when Nathaniel Myrick gave the magnificent sum of \$500 to the East Dennis Library Association which had been established by Captain William Frederick Howes. It was frequently used by the East Dennis Lecture Association, a group of liberal thinkers, who often sponsored lectures on Sundays, which it would seem indicated a difference of opinion with the Methodist Episcopal orientation of the village church. The Lecture Association was not known only for its intellectual interests however. Annually, they sponsored a turkey dinner in February, which from contemporary reports was the social highlight of the winter season. An enthusiastic diner writes in the Yarmouth Register of February 1896 that 14 new members were welcomed at the dinner that year. "It is free thought and good turkey dinners that do it every time. There is no better thing on earth to belong to than this association." Succeeded by the East Dennis Social Club, the turkey suppers continued until the 1940's, uninterrupted except on one or two "Hard years", when baked beans were served instead. I'm sure many of you charter members of DHS recall these gatherings with joy. Another important chapter in the history of Worden Hall deals with a fraternal organization called the Quivet Tribe, Improved Order of the Redmen. At one time they were the owners of the Hall and I will tell you in some detail, at another time, about the origins and purposes of this group. Social groups of all kinds fell upon very hard times in the era of World War II. The Redmen appear to have been among them. The Hall was sold, rented occasionally for such affairs as a dance with Ernie Baker's Band but eventually ceased to function as a village social center. Today it is the home of Don DaVita and family and an Art Gallery where many of the Cape's fine original paintings can be seen. Please let us hear from any of you who have recollections about affairs at any of these halls. We will be especially pleased to have programs and souvenirs. And hasn't anyone out there any information about that Anti-Fat and Ant-Lean Society which held affairs at Doric Hall?

TO FRIENDS OF ANCIENT GRAVESTONES

The Dennis Historical Commission will hold a workshop for those interested in helping them clean and preserve the ancient gravestones in our town's burial grounds on SATURDAY, JUNE 8 at the Dennis Village Cemetery at 9 AM. They will meet near the Dennis Union Church, at the corner, near Route 6A. If you have household cleaning buckets and soft bristled scrub brushes, (no metal bristles, please), it would be helpful if you would bring them along. Identify them with a nametag of some sort, please, as all household cleaning buckets tend to look alike. You may also wish to have a pair of household gloves. They will be using very mild solutions of ammonia and/or bleach in some cases. There will be a supply of all necessary equipment available.

If you are interested in helping but cannot attend on that morning, please call Nancy Reid, 398-8842, and leave your name and phone number on the machine. They will have someone who has attended contact you and make arrangements to share what they have learned with you.

They hope to have a good turn out on Saturday the 8th. The techniques are not difficult and you will learn quickly what to do and more importantly what should not be done, in the best interest of the preservation of these important and historic monuments.

BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS

JUNE 16

LIGHTHOUSE INN--WEST DENNIS

Please make reservations for _____ people. I enclose a check for \$ _____ (\$12.50 per person)
Tax and gratuity included.

Choice of entree: _____ Broiled fresh scrod _____ Chicken Bianco (white wine & mushroom sauce)

Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope and send to Mr. Joshua Crowell
Box 963
Dennis, MA 02638

Reservations by June 10th, please.

CALENDAR

June 12 7:00 PM Board meets with Nancy Howes.
June 16 12 noon DHS celebrates Dennis' 198th Birthday at the Lighthouse Inn, West Dennis. Social hour--12 noon, luncheon--1:00.
June 16 Happy Father's Day!

MADAM DENNIS

"Behind every successful man is a good woman." There's a sexist maxim, if I ever wrote one. Probably that old saw has been thrown out with the ironing board and the dishpan. Today, every one, man or woman, seems to want to be a success in their own right. But in the days when Josiah Dennis served the East Parish of Yarmouth as its first settled minister, the woman behind their man was an important ingredient in his success, especially if he was a Parish minister. Josiah came here as a bachelor, and set the feminine hearts aflutter. To be the wife of a minister was to be the first lady of the town. Besides, Josiah was witty, compassionate, and well-educated. No doubt every young woman in the congregation dreamed romantic dreams about their new young minister. His heart was captured, so it is said, by one Thankful Howes, and her family sent her to Boston to be "finished" in a manner suitable to her prospective station in life. But, so the story goes, while there she was taken ill and died. Josiah, it is said, was stricken with grief, and ever after when in Boston, he visited her grave. The only problem with the story is that I have yet to locate a Thankful Howes in town who was the proper age to have been the love of his life. Never mind. We do know that eventually Josiah Dennis married. His first wife was Bathsheba Mills, a girl from the north shore. She presided over the Dennis home for 16 years, bearing seven children, 3 of whom died in infancy, plus four daughters who survived her. When she died, after suitable mourning, Josiah married again, in 1746, a woman from Brewster, then Harwich, who had been married twice before, both husbands named Bangs. Phoebe Hopkins was the daughter of Stephen Hopkins and his wife Sarah Howes, a sister of Lt. Jonathan and Thomas Howes, both very prominent men in Mr. Dennis' parish. She brought to the marriage household furnishings, silver spoons, and a knowledge of the apothecary arts, learned perhaps from her second husband, Dr. Jonathan Bangs. She also brought into the Dennis family a son Allan Bangs, 12 years of age, who was raised as an only son, along with the four daughters of Bathsheba. Two daughters were born to Phoebe, one dying in infancy, and the other who was named Bathsheba, dying at the age of 13 in June of 1761, apparently of a contagious disease which also claimed the life of her half-sister Sarah that same month. It is plain to see why Josiah Dennis is remembered as being compassionate, for he himself had suffered many losses. Still, he pressed on in his work of visiting, comforting, and preaching to his people, until called to eternal rest in August 1763, at the age of 69. Phoebe survived him, and continued to be a loving mother to her stepdaughters and son. When Nathan Stone was called to fill the pulpit left vacant by the death of her husband, in September of 1764, Widow Dennis lodged him in her house. There he brought his new bride in October of 1765, and Mrs. Dennis offered hospitality to the family of the bride for a week, while they visited the newlyweds. She took Mrs. Stone to call on the wives of the Deacons and seems to have done all she could to make the way smooth for the young couple. They continued to live with her until the new house was built for them, and Mary Stone gave birth to her first born in the Manse burning room. The high regard in which Nathan Stone held Phoebe is reflected in his diaries, in which he often refers to her, and invariably calls her Madam Dennis. In July of 1776 the Stone family moved into their new home, still standing on New Boston Road in Dennis. Very soon after their move, Madam Dennis was their first dinner guest. She outlived all of her stepdaughters, passing away in 1773, and is buried with Josiah and his children at the Dennis Cemetery. There can be little doubt that Phoebe was a good help-mate to her husband in his work, a kind friend to his successor and a worthy member of the village where she lived out her last years.

Dennis Historical Society
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