



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Co-Edited by Phyllis Robbins Horton and Nancy Thacher Reid

Volume 22 Number 6

June 1999

Calendar of Events:

June 5 – Lady Slipper Walk

9:30 AM

Meet at Dennis Town Hall parking lot. Reservations requested. 508-394-0017

June 9 – DHS Board Meeting

Josiah Dennis Manse
7:00 PM

Interested members are welcome.

June 12 – DHS Annual Birthday Luncheon

Celebrate the Town's birthday! Join us at Christine's Restaurant at noon. By reservation only, see details on page 3.

June 19 – Dennis Sea Captains in the China Trade

Josiah Dennis Manse
1 PM – 5 PM

June 20 – Interpretive Flower Show and Open- ing Tea

Jericho Historic Center
Noon – 4 PM

West Dennis Community Center

In the fall of 1997 the question arose concerning the fate of the West Dennis Community Building. It appeared to be in deplorable condition. The roof had numerous leaks and the former 1867 school house had a general down at the heels look. Some thought it would be sensible to demolish it and build a new community center, but a group of concerned citizens decided that the fate of this historical community asset deserved a second look. The group convinced the town selectmen that a committee should be formed to study the feasibility of preserving the building, or deciding if it really should be demolished.

Burton Derick, Phyllis Horton, Joan Martin, Edmund Nickerson, Nancy Reid, Dorothy Trapp, and Raymond Urquhart, Chairman, were appointed to serve on the committee. Numerous meetings with structural engineers convinced them that the building was basically sound. It just needed some roof work, restoration of the second floor, and overall cosmetic fixing up.

The committee applied for and received a \$100,000.00 grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Added to the funds appropriated by the town in 1998 and 1999 this means \$395,000.00 for restoration of our old schoolhouse. This grand old lady who has listened to hundreds of young voices reciting their lessons, the rap of the moderator's gavel at town meetings, community pot luck suppers, peppy square dance callers, Teen Town dances and roller skating, and social and civic organizations too numerous to tell—will go on for many more years providing the community need for a gathering place.

Work will begin on June 30. We'll keep you posted on the progress being made. The committee is working on a "wish list" of items not included in the budget, but they would make the place a little nicer for the groups who will use it. We may resort to bake sales, car washes, or who knows what other kinds of fund raisers to satisfy some of those wishes. We'll let you know how you can help and when the gala grand opening will be held. You're all invited.

This will be the first municipal building in Dennis with an elevator. What do you suppose the 1867 School Committee would say about that?

PRH



Preserving the Past

May is Historic Preservation Month. On May 25th some Dennis business or homeowners were honored by the Dennis Historical Commission for restoring five antique houses. Certificates of Appreciation were awarded at the Selectmen's Meeting to: Thomas and Mary Keith for restoring the 1825/6 Thomas Sears House at 26 & 28 South Street, East Dennis; to Junji and Sandra Tatsuno for the 1812 John Howes House at 32 New Boston Road, Dennis; Mr. and Mr. James Wordsworth for their work on the ca. 1801 Eleazer Nickerson, Jr. House at 313 Main Street, South Dennis; to Mr. and Mrs. John Monbouquette for the 1861 Capt. Luther Fisk House at 104 Fisk Street, West Dennis and to Kevin Brouillette and Jeffrey King for their extensive restoration of the 1862 Thomas Howes, Jr. House at 425 Main Street, Dennis Port.

This last house is especially meaningful as it was the home of the man who named Dennis Port (it was previously known as Crocker's Neck) and it was the first Dennis Port Post Office. This lovely old home has been badly abused by previous owners and tenants. The present owners saw the potential the house offered and restored it for their business. Saving the house contributed to the rejuvenation of Dennis Port, which we are all glad to see happening. Congratulations to you all for preserving these treasures that are so significant to the character of our town.

PRH

Recent Acquisitions

Some interesting new acquisitions have been added to the DHS collection. Carolyn Crowell of Sandwich gave us a photo album that had belonged to her father, Louis Crowell, with early Dennis photos. Louis was the son of Dr. Samuel Crowell who built the lovely home on Route 6A that is now the Four Chimneys Bed and Breakfast. Bonnie and Stanley Snow of Orleans gave us two glass plate negatives of the Nobscussett House that were taken by famed Orleans photographer, J.K. Cummings at the turn of the century. The pictures and written description are all that are left of what was the centerpiece of elegant Cape hotels at the turn of the century, when people of means came "for the season." We have received a very interesting, rather eclectic collection of items from the Joshua Crowell Estate. Josh was a DHS incorporator and our treasurer for 34 years. Two of the items were a staddle pole and a calf neck stall.

Special mention will go to the one (or ones) who correctly answer our trivia question, and who can tell us how this item was used and why. Send your answers to: DHS Newsletter, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660.

Also, we received the latest issues of the New England Historical and Genealogical Register from a generous, anonymous donor who has given many issues to our research library over the years. These are a great assistance in doing genealogical research.

Thank you, one and all!

**DHS Trivia Question:
What is a staddle pole?**

After 22 years of the same format, the May newsletter presented you with a new look. Some of our younger DHS Board members are computer whizzes (something Nancy and I decidedly are not!) and thought it would be interesting to move into modern day media presentation. I am still dazzled from watching DHS Secretary Beth Crowell Deck zip through various computer programs, formatting, scanning, etc. Her performance was truly a new art form.

We want to know how you, the members, feel about the change! Are you pleased with the change? What did you like about it, or not like? How do you think we could make it better? We'd like to hear your comments on a post card – would that it could be a penny postal as in David Wixon or Lovell Goodspeed's time! With love, Phyllis and Nancy. (see address above)

DHS School Program

Third grade students from the Ezra Baker School visit the Manse and Jericho.



**Joe Solarz, as the
Rev. Josiah Dennis**

The children from the third grade visited the Josiah Dennis Manse in May. This house was built in 1736 and was the home of the Reverend Josiah Dennis. He was the first settled minister of the East Parish of Yarmouth, which in 1793 was incorporated into a separate town and named Dennis in his honor.

The children were dressed as colonial boys and girls. Costumed guides showed them how people lived in 1736 and how the Native Americans who were first here helped the colonists learn about native wildlife, herbs to heal illnesses and how to raise and gather from the wild foods that were unfamiliar to them.

Hands-on activities included making butter, grinding corn with stones, spinning and weaving, indoor games children played, and writing with quill pens and on slates in the schoolhouse. They also learned about the maritime history of Dennis.

The children loved this field trip, and sent us wonderful letters and drawings telling us how much they enjoyed it.

Nancy Howes

Third grade students toured the Jericho Historical Center Museum in June. They were guided by costumed docents through the house of sea Captain Theophilus Baker, which was built in 1801.

They later saw the antique tools, cranberry room, nostalgia room and country store housed in the barn museum. Colonial games were played outdoors and the imagination of the children was expanded while visiting the Driftwood Zoo. "Gee, Lady, I had a great time," echoed among the children.

We invite the children and their friends and families back to the Jericho Historical Center Museum during the summer. We are open from 2-4 PM on Wednesdays and 10-12 on Friday mornings.

Please visit us soon!

Catherine McNamara



Museum Hours

1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum

77 Nobscusset Road, Dennis

Saltbox home of the first minister and man for whom the town was named. Artifacts of early Dennis life, children's room, spinning and weaving exhibit, and Dennis Maritime Wing. 1770 one-room school house on grounds. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Open June 22 – September 30

Tues. 10 AM–Noon; Thurs. 2-4 PM

Saturdays in September 2-4 PM

Admission: Free/Donations.

1801 Jericho Historical Center

Old Main Street, West Dennis

Historic house built in 1801 by Capt. Theophilus Baker. Exhibits include antiques, glassware, costumes, tools, driftwood zoo. Barn exhibits include country store, salt-works model and cranberry cultivation displays.

June 23 – September 24

Wed. 2-4 PM; Friday 10 AM-Noon

Sundays Sept. 15, 12 & 19 from 2-4 PM

Admission: Free/Donations

Dennis Historical Society

P.O. Box 607

South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

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Did you make your reservation?

Due to "certain circumstances" the new slide program we had advertised for the June Luncheon will be shown at a later date. We are pleased to announce that we will enjoy Admont Clark's presentation, "Lighthouses of the Outer Cape from Monomoy to Billingsgate." Anyone who has seen some of Admont's other programs knows that we are in for a treat. There is a great interest in Cape Cod maritime history and the lighthouses certainly played a major role in the safety of our mariners. Add into this a gathering with special friendship found among our DHS members, a nice luncheon with a keepsake menu, throw in a few nice door prizes, and what do you have but a bona fide bargain at \$13.00! Please see last month's newsletter for your reservation form or call Joan Martin at 394-9303.

*\$ 1.00 Registered Dog No 26
Dennis May 5th 1859
License to Obey B. Whelden by agreement to the
Clerk the sum of One Dollar Tax on a small
Black Dog Peter - According to an Act of the
Legislature - Approved April 6th 1859 -
Sarah Hutchinson for
Town Clerk*

We're still looking for old documents...

Burt Derick's search has turned up a few interesting items, such as this license for "man's best friend" dating from May 5, 1859. Do you think, given the rate of inflation, that it's cheaper to license your dog in 1999?

