

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 29 Number 6

June 2006

Calendar of Events

Sunday, June 4
3:00 P.M.

Cape Cod Ship Building
Author Jack Sheedy will offer a captivating presentation of the shipbuilding that formed one of the backbones of East Dennis and the Cape during its development.

Dennis Public Library
5 Hall Street
Dennis Port

Saturday, June 24
1:00-4:00 P.M.

Opening Reception at the Josiah Dennis Manse
Step back into the 1700's in the saltbox home of the Reverend Josiah Dennis for whom the town was named. Ongoing Maritime Exhibit, 1745 School House, herb gardens all shown by costumed interpreters.

Refreshments
77 Nobscusset Road
Dennis Village

Sunday, June 25
1:00-4:00 P.M.

Opening Tea at Jericho House and Barn Museum
Join us for tea and refreshments and a tour of this lovely sea captain's full-Cape home. The barn museum features a country store, antique tools, and the Driftwood Zoo.
Old Main St. W. Dennis

Author! Author!

Burt Derick had those of us who attended his talk at the West Dennis Library sympathizing with the common seamen who went "barefoot in the riggings" to sail our ships around the world. Subsisting largely on salt beef or pork, hardtack (biscuits) which could be soaked and covered with preserved fruit to create a "plum duff," these hardy boys worked four hours on and four hours off as they learned the ropes. They were plagued with bed bugs, rats and mosquitoes. Not to mention crowded conditions and quarrelsome mates. From a journal kept by Charles M. Underwood of South Dennis during a voyage as a sailor "before the mast" from Boston to India in the *South America*, Capt. Cyrus Howes, master, in 1854-5, Burt read us glimpses of their life at sea. Complaining to the Captain*they told him they had hardly time for their meals & they liked a little less cursing than they received from the Mate.*

On this particular journey Capt. Howes had his ailing wife with him. She was Hannah Hall Crowell, daughter of Nathan and Hannah Crowell of East Dennis. Their two sons were also aboard with a cousin of Mrs. Howes, Miss Achsah Hall, to care for her and the boys.

Wens 9 [Aug. 1854]

To day Mrs Howes came on deck (or rather was brought), I think for the first time. And a miserable looking creature she was. I mentioned to Albert at the time that I thought it doubtful if she ever saw Madras

Wednesday 11 [Oct 1854]

The Captains wife was called on shore this morning and it was the Physician's opinion that she was dying.it was her request to go on shore she being aware that she could not live long. We hoisted her into a boat in a bed. (also Achsah) in a chair with Barney Bub & the Skipper...

Thursday 12

Sent a coffin ashore with a barrel of alcohol which were brought from Boston (to preserve the body of Mrs Howes should she die on the passage) though she was still alive but expected to die any moment

Friday 13

The Captain also wrote that his wife had just expired....

Saturday 21

At noon to day the Capt with Miss Hall Barney & Bub & the dead body of his wife came on board took it between decks and immediately hove up and got under weigh with our colours at half mast every thing went contrary and it was dark before we got supper the crew attempted to sing at the windlass but it was useless. Things were not done with a will. some were swearing she would go ashore, others expressed a wish that she might as he had rather go ashore ...than trust himself to sea....again now there was a dead body on board

Author! Author! *Cont.*

Our second program showcasing local authors was with Oliver Duncan at the Dennis Memorial Library. What a whale of a tale he had to share with us! As co-author with John Braginton-Smith of *Cape Cod Shore Whaling America's First Whalemens* Duncan straightened us out on lots of whaling facts. First, from both his talk and the book we are reminded that shore whaling was important almost from the beginning in both the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies. The text notes (p60) the earliest whaling legislation by the Plymouth Colony On June 24, 1652: *This Court now ordereth that of every whale either cast on shore or brought of any Indian or Indians or taken on drift att Sea and brought to shore in any pte of this Jurisdiction there bee one barrel of merchantable Oyle paid to the publicke Treasury...* (from Plymouth Colony Records Laws Volume 11, p61) If WHALEMEN rowed out in the bay, they used an IRON to hold fast to the whale and a LANCE to go in for the kill. (Let's get the terms right!)

We also learned more about Ichabod Paddock *who is probably the best known Cape Cod whaler of the 17th century.The Paddocks lived in the Nobscusset area of Yarmouth, now Dennis. ...he was asked by Nantucket to come to their island in 1690 to teach them how to whale. (p192) Some authors give Paddock credit for setting up the entire whaling operation on Nantucket.—*

Ichabod Paddock soon saw that many more whales frequented the south [shore of Nantucket] than the North shore of the island, and he promptly divided the shore into four "beats", or districts, each about 3 1/2 miles long, built a hut for shelter, and erected a tall spar, with a "crows nest", at the center of each district. He assigned six men to each beat, one of whom was expected to occupy the lookout perch on the spar at all times.

Whether he returned to Yarmouth because he was disowned by the Quakers on Nantucket isn't known. (p193) "Ichabod Paddock and Latham Gardner were disowned for sailing about the harbor in a vessel where dancing was performed, and keeping company with young women 'not of our society'." (according to William Bliss in Quaint Nantucket on p105) We were told that when Ichabod was the sought-after whaler he was (of course) from Yarmouth. I guess when he returned, Dennis was allowed to claim him! Thank you, Duncan. (You can purchase a copy of Cape Cod Shore Whaling through the Yarmouth Historical Society. As a reminder, the Bangs Hallet House Museum opens for the season on June 11 at 1 P.M. with guided tours at 1, 2, and 3 P.M. We are also invited to join in on Friday, June 23 at 7:30 P.M. for "Midsummer's Eve." Call for information on admission cost and reservations— (508) 375-0124.

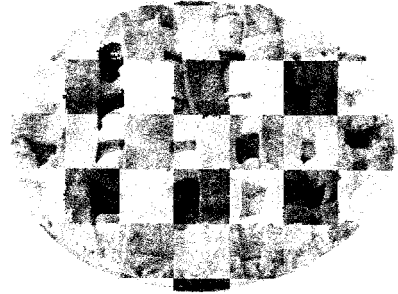
Where is that whale statue just west of Sesuit Harbor, you ask? It was set up by Dr. Fennell to commemorate the site of the Whale House on the point. You can't see it from the road, but if you're out in the bay this summer, look up as you go by "Fennell's Point."

Don't miss the third in our series of talks with local authors on June 4 at 3:00 P.M. at the Dennis Public Library, 5 Hall Street, Dennis Port. Jack Sheedy, who has written several books about Dennis and Cape Cod, will be presenting **Cape Cod Ship Building!**



Wanted: Bakers and Buyers!

The Josiah Dennis Manse Committee is looking for bakers to help with its annual old fashioned pie sale on Monday July 3 at 6:15 Dennis Village Green (prior to the band concert)



Sold by the piece or by the pie this event has become more popular every year. We can't keep up with the demand and could use your help to make this very special fund raising event the biggest success ever. Other home baked goodies are sold as well. If you can lend a hand call June Howes (508) 385-9308 or Chris Talbott (508) 385-3031. They will happily provide the pie pans and fill you in on all the details.

An Interesting Note

On March 13 we received a printed, unsigned note from Ft. Meyers, Florida which included a number of photos of a house in South Dennis on the North side of Route 6. Without further investigation the house looked to be in need of a coat of paint and perhaps some repair. The note said that the house had looked this way for a number of years and was this an oversight? Since there was no return address we are somewhat at a loss as to how to reply. First, let us remind you that, although the Dennis Historical Society has an interest in preservation, it has nothing to do with policing the appearance of people's homes. We do not have any say in deciding what color you paint your house or whether you can change its appearance in other ways. Were you thinking of the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District Town Committee? (Or perhaps the Building Inspector?) Dennis has so many historical committees and commissions that it can be hard to remember just who does what. We've passed along the note and the pictures and can only hope that is what you would have wanted.

Member News

We are happy to welcome Walley G. Francis of Syracuse, NY as a new member. He is interested in his family history and genealogy. Burt has offered to help. We understand he can trace his roots back to Yelverton Crowell. Sounds like an old Dennis name!

The Big Crash

Apologies from the editor for errors in last month's Newsletters. Where was I? I took another look and it seems I thought it was May of 2005 and that the Volume was # 28 instead of #29. If anybody cares about such things, you'd better correct the info at the top of the page. And what was that big crash? That was my computer expiring. I had most of this letter ready when I received the sad news that the (?mother board?) was extinct. You're right, I should have been backing it up. Some people learn the hard way.

An obituary

Although not a DHS member, we note that Dennis Port native, Franklyn "Doc" Estey, who worked for 37 years for the Town of Dennis, has passed away. He helped us all.

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A **hands-on education** is always the best. Here's a composite of several **letters** we received from the Ezra Baker school children after their visit **this year**.

Good Day My Good Ladies

Thank you Colonial people for showing us how people go through life in Colonial times. I really liked the spinning and weaving room because we got to make the sheep fur smoother (carding wool) and because we got to put the sheep fur between the yarn (on the loom) and then step on the opposite peddle that the other person stepped on. Then we pulled the wood part and the sheep wool attached onto the rug.....

I say good day!! I liked the bedrooms. The beds (rope) were comefy sort of—kind of—umm I liked them a lot.—Wait! I have more to tell. I also liked the school house. I never had a chance to write with a quill! Thank heavens the dunce cap and the whip is gone! In the present we don't have a dunce cap at all!

My favorite room is the Maritime Room because it had models of ships, a ship building yard, and a wheel to make salt. (Model of salt works with windmill to pump sea water.)

I liked the Keeping Room. Everyone can shake the butter so we could spread it on the bread. Yummy!

The Way We Were



Susan Kelley at the loom with Rebecca,
Sophia Chatov's granddaughter.
(Picture thanks to Sophia.)