



dennishs@cape.com

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

www.dennishistsoc.org

Volume 34 No. 5

Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or pmrhorton@aol.com
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June 2011

A Faithless Husband

[17xx Essay; in a fine hand, but paper is torn, bad foxing, ink faded:]

A Pathetic Elegant Letter, from a Deserted Wife to a Faithless Husband, written in England a few years since.

“My dear Husband,

“I who expected your return from America with painful anxiety, who had counted the slow hours which parted you from me — Think how I was shocked at learning you would return no more, & that you had settled with a mistress in a distant state? it was for your sake that I lamented. You went against my earnest entreaties, but as it was with a desire which I thought sincere to provide a genteel maintainance for our little ones, whom you said you could not bear to see brought up in the evils of poverty. I might now lament the disappointment in not sharing the riches which I hear you have amassed but I scorn it. What are riches compared to the delight of sincere affection? I deplore the loss of your love, I deplore the frailty which has involved you in error & will [torn]am sure, as such mistaken conduct must terminate in misery.

“But I mean not to remonstrate— It is, alas, too late. I only write to acquaint you with the health, & some other circumstances of myself & those little ones whom you once loved.

“The house you left me in, could not be supported without an expence, which the small sum you left me could [over page] not well supply. I have relinquished it, & have retired to a neat little cottage, thirty miles from Town. We make no pretensions No elegance, but live in great neatness, & by strict economy, supply your moderate wants, with as much comfort as our desolate situation will allow. Your presence, my love, would make the little cottage a palace.

“Poor Emily, who has grown a fine girl, & has been working a pair of ruffles for you, & as she sits by my side often repeats with a sigh, “when will my dear pappas return?” the others are constantly asking me the same question; & little Henry, as soon as he began to talk, learned to lisp the first syllable he uttered was, “when will pappas come home?” Sweet fellow! he is sitting on his stool by my side, & as he sees me drop a tear, asks me why I weep, for pappas will come home soon. He & his two brothers are frequently riding on your walking cane, & take particular delight in it because it is pappas’s.

“I do assure you, I never open my lips to them on the cause of your absence, but I cannot prevail upon myself to bid them ease to ask when you will return, though the question frequently exhorts a tear, (which I hide in a smile) & wrings my soul, which I suffer in silence.

“I have taught them to mention you in their morning & evening prayers, with their greatest ardor of affection & they always add of themselves, a petition of your speedy return.

“I spend my time in giving them the little instruction I am able. I cannot afford to place them at any eminent school, & do not choose to place they should acquire meanness vulgarity at a low one. As to English they read alternately, three hours every morning. The rest celebrated poets & prose writers, & they can write though not an elegant yet a very plain & legible hand. [There were probably other pages that went with this, now lost.]

poor hand at writing letters at best, I shall have to bring this to a close hoping to hear from you again soon I will close with all the best wishes imaginable to you and Murra[torn] [torn]”

[torn] true Friend A. R. Devereux

Burt Derick

School Days Memories

Way back in the 1930's, when Dad's alarm went off at seven a.m., he'd get right up, for there was no "snooze" alarm. He take his turn in our one bathroom. Mom would get up and take her turn in the bathroom. They'd both get dressed and then Dad would open the door to the kids bedroom. He'd poke his head in and say, "Get up, get up, you lazy critters! We need the sheets to set the table." We four kids would scramble out of bed, take our turn in the bathroom, wash up, get dressed, and head for the kitchen.

Mom was already in the pantry finishing up making sandwiches and putting four lunches together with cookies and fruit. As soon as she finished, she'd lean against the kitchen sink and brush and braid our hair. Our brother needed no help with his hair. He had a whiffle. Mother was leaning because the developing muscular dystrophy began making her lame. While she braided our hair, Dad was busy in the pantry squeezing a dozen oranges with his new juicer. We enjoyed the fresh juice of two oranges each morning.

Every other day the Hood milkman left eight quarts of milk in a large metal can on our porch. Dad poured off the cream into a pitcher, and poured a pitcher of the skimmed milk for our cereal. After Mom tied the last ribbon on our braids, she filled our bowls with hot cereal and bowls for she and Daddy, too. We had Wheatena, or Quaker oatmeal, and sometimes Cream of Wheat, which we didn't like as well. The cereal cooked all night in the double boiler on the back of the stove. Sometimes in warm weather we'd have cold cereal, Corn Flakes, Rice Krispies, or Grape Nuts with bananas. We sat at the wooden kitchen table on stools to eat our breakfast.

After breakfast, it was tooth-brushing time. We each had a little chart on the wall to check off our tooth brushing. The charts were given to us by our dentist uncle. We were supposed to brush three times a day, but mostly it was twice a day, after breakfast and at bedtime. Finally, we were ready for school. We put on our coats or jackets and grabbed the brown paper bag with our lunches and by eight-fifteen, we headed out the door to walk the quarter mile to the bus stop. Our first grade teacher and the special needs teacher both lived in Dennisport. The two teachers rode the bus to school with us and kept the kids from becoming too unruly.

Mom and Dad would give us each a kiss and see us out the door. As soon as we crossed Main Street, and walked down the sidewalk, they'd get ready to leave for work. The radio and record store was nine miles away and it opened at nine a.m. They had just time to get there to open up the store on time.

The housekeeper arrived as they left for work. She'd clean up the kitchen, make the beds, clean the bathroom, and do housework. Laundry took up much of her time. The new Easy Washing machine had a spin dry feature. No more feeding dripping clothes through the wringer. Our back yard was criss-crossed with clotheslines. She would hang out the laundry with clothespins. The clothes were all cotton, no wash and wear, no fabric softener. The dried clothes were sprinkled with water, rolled up to sit overnight, ready for the next day's ironing. The ironing board was in a shallow cupboard on the kitchen wall. She moved the kitchen table and dropped down the ironing board. It took hours of ironing for our family of six.

School closed at three fifteen and we got off the bus and walked home about quarter of four. In winter it was dark way too early for us to play outside for very long in the neighborhood. We were required to head home as soon as the streetlights came on. I do not recall any homework in those elementary school days, although we certainly played school often.

The radio and record store in Hyannis didn't close until six and our parents didn't get home till six-thirty. Supper, prepared by the housekeeper, was ready when they walked in the door. The housekeeper would then go home. We all ate together and after supper, we girls did the dishes. We three girls took turns with one doing the washing, one the drying, one putting away the dishes for one week. We all liked putting away week best.

Dad read the paper and Mom darned socks. Darning socks was a never-ending job. There was always a basketful of holey socks beside Mom's chair. She used a wooden darning egg, which fit inside the sock and her toe and heel darns were smooth and even. As we got older, we helped to prepare the vegetables and to help darn socks. When I first began darning socks, even using the darning egg, my sisters complained loudly that my darns were lumpy. But I soon learned. In those days, the cotton socks had no nylon re-inforcement of heels and toes. The addition of nylon would later cut way down on the necessity for darning.

Right after supper, we got into our pyjamas and listened to the children's radio programs. "Jack Armstrong, All American Boy," and "Tom Mix" were our favorites. We also enjoyed "Mr. Keene, Tracer of Lost Persons." Just before bedtime, Daddy would read us a nature story from the New Bedford Times newspaper. These stories were Thornton Burgess' tales of animals. He also read us nature tales from the Cape Cod Times. Many years later, I learned that the early ecology writer, Thornton Burgess, was actually a distant cousin of Dad's.

After we were safely tucked in our double bunks, and kissed goodnight, Mom and Dad could listen to their favorite radio programs. They enjoyed both the music programs and the comedians. Tuesday nights were the best with comedians Fibber McGee and Molly, and Jack Benny. Later they also listened to Red Skelton.

Those were busy and happy grammar school days in Dennisport, Massachusetts.

Betty Dean Holmes

Dennis

"The people of Dennis, and in fact the whole community in that section, are to be congratulated upon the fact that an ocean pier will certainly be built next spring from the beach near the Nobscusset House. Mr. Charles Tobey, of Chicago, who erected the Nobscusset House and has purchased considerable real estate in the vicinity, informed a representative of the Item last week that the pier was virtually an accomplished fact – that the contract for its construction has been signed and that the piles were already upon the grounds. The pier will be seven hundred and fifty feet in length, which will reach a depth of about seven and a half feet of water at lowest tide. The pier will be something in the form of a T at the sea end, which will give extra accommodation to steamers and vessels. It has been already arranged that the Boston and Provincetown Steamer will touch regularly, and will make the unrivaled Dennis beach a great place for excursionists by steamers and yachts. It will also be of advantage to the general community in the matter of freight with Boston. Mr. Tobey's Chicago business is more exacting on this time than ever before for the present, but he seems determined to carry out his plans concerning his Nobscusset House and Denis beach property. – Item"

Barnstable Patriot; Sept. 4, 1888

(My – how the times have changed! Just think of the regulatory & public opinion hurdles today!)

Facebook

First we had e-mail, then we had a web page, and now in 2011 the Dennis Historical Society has a Facebook page. Terri Fox has volunteered to be its administrator. Please check it out and "friend" it. Thanks, Terri!

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEETING

Note: All members are invited to attend monthly DHS Board Meetings. The next meeting is at 3 pm on Thursday, June 9 at the 1801 Jericho Historical Center, 90 Old Main Street, West Dennis. We have moved to meeting on the second Thursday of each month.

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607



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~ COMING ATTRACTIONS ~

June 11, Saturday, 10:30 a.m.

Quivet Neck Walkabout with Brendan Joyce
Meet at Jacob Sears Library, 23 Center St., East Dennis
Rain Date – Sunday June 12, 10:30 a.m.

June 25, Saturday 1-4 p.m.

Grand Re-Opening of the Manse
Festivities begin with music at 12:30 by members of the DY Band.
Ceremony and ribbon cutting at 1 p.m.
Nobscusset Rd., corner of Whig St.
Refreshments

June 26, Sunday 1-4 p.m.

“Victorian Opening Reception” at Jericho
Special exhibit: Victorian purses, parasols and handkerchiefs. Tea and treats. Barn also open.
90 Old Main St., corner Trotting Pk. Rd., West Dennis

July 4th Monday 6:00 p.m.

Pie Sale On The Green
13th annual sale by the Manse Bakers and Friends
Music by “Stage Door Canteen”