



Compiled and edited by Phyllis Robbins Horton
(Guest editor for this issue is N.T.R.)

A WORD OF TRIBUTE

We have all been saddened the recent death of our good friend Pauline Frances (Wixon) Derick. She was a dedicated student of this town's history and the genealogy of its people. The work which she did to collect, organize and publish the Nickerson family genealogy stands as a major achievement. She was an important member of the team which transcribed and prepared the Dennis Vital Records for publication, and a valuable contributor to the South Side Study Committee, which has gathered so much valuable information about the villages of Dennis Port and West Dennis. But those of us who knew her are very much aware that she was more than just a careful historian. She was a devoted daughter of Dennis, active and knowledgeable about the town and the problems we face. In her quiet modest manner she was an inspiration and an example for all who were fortunate enough to work with her. And while she is now removed from our midst, she remains with us in spirit and her good works will last forever.

WANTED-- A PROGRAM CHAIRPERSON

Can you give some time to DHS by helping to organize our schedule of programs? You should be forewarned, that if you take on the position you will have big shoes to fill as this job has been done by such sterling people as Gertrude Lailey and the late Jean Taylor. The Board has also functioned as "program chair" collectively, coming up with ideas, meeting places and refreshments. But we believe that DHS deserves the very best--and so we are searching for a person or persons to organize our meetings. Phyllis has prepared a "how-to" booklet which will henceforth go with the job. It describes in detail what our annual schedule of meetings and luncheons has been in the past and should make getting the job done a whole lot easier. So don't be afraid to volunteer. We are an equal opportunity employer and do not discriminate on the basis of sex, age or race, and a benefit package can be discussed!

WHAT'S THE OLDEST THING IN TOWN?

Anyone who guessed the collective age of the Board of DHS is automatically disqualified. And no, it is not the "Mayflower Chest" brought to New England by the Howes family in 1637. No, in this town which is rich in antiquities, the designation "oldest thing" appears to be no contest at all. It is Hokum Rock.

The Dennis Historical Commission has recently asked DHS member Sandy Wiper, a retired science teacher, to provide some information about the rock pile on Hokum Rock Road and this is what he told them. The rock was pushed or carried here by one of the glaciers which formed Cape Cod and was left behind as the glacier melted perhaps 20,000 years ago. It was probably picked up by the moving ice in an area north and west of Boston, where much similar rock is found today. The rock is igneous, called diorite. It consists of hornblende, biotite (mica), plagioclase (feldspar) and some opaque minerals, probably magnetite and ilmenite. This igneous rock was formed sometime between the Pre-Cambrian and mid-Paleozoic era or something between 300,000,000 and 600,000,000 years ago. How's that for old?

Luke Dignan, a pupil at Ezra H. Baker school, did a report on Hokum Rock last year, which has since been on exhibit at Dennis Memorial Library. Luke and his dad photographed and measured the rock and found it to be 98 feet in circumference at the base and 14.5 feet above ground at the northeast face. If you have never seen the rock, do take the time to do so. It's a great place to take children and grandchildren for an "expotion." The land upon which the rock sits is owned by the town, so feel free to drive in and get out and explore. You can read about how the rock got its name in Dennis, Cape Cod. And perhaps some one of you will be impressed enough with this ancient relic to become "Friends of Hokum Rock" and help to keep the area clean and free of litter.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Annual Birthday Luncheon, June 8, 1997 Lighthouse Inn!
We will be honoring many of our volunteers.

CALENDAR

March 12 Board meets at Jericho
March 19 St. Joseph's Day (the swallows return to Capistrano)
March 30 Happy Easter

MID-WINTER FESTIVITY

We had our usual good meal and excellent company as we gathered on February 18th at Christine's for our annual mid-winter luncheon. Following dinner, Nancy (who is one of the few people in town who has read the whole book,) gave us a brief insight into the joys and woes of writing a book and getting it into print, a talk which she called "Life's Little Lessons." The menu featured a photograph of our handsome dustcover, taken by Dick Howes. Next time we "meet and eat" it will be summer and we will be enjoying the view of Nantucket Sound from Lighthouse Inn.

THE SOUTH DENNIS DEPOT

The illustrations contained in Dennis, Cape Cod are for many the most interesting part of the book. And why not? For it is hard for us to create in words the Dennis of years gone by. The pictures do it for us, and we thank those who allowed us to include their photos in our history. We must also add another word of thanks to Jim Carr for his relentless pursuit of photos we wanted to include. One of the pictures which has raised questions is that of the South Dennis railroad station and the question usually is, "Where did it stand?" The answer, right beside the tracks in what is now the north end of the parking lot at our town office building. You might be interested in the thoughts of the South Dennis reporter in the June 13, 1874 edition of the Yarmouth Register. "The centre of the Dennises has no occasion to be dissatisfied with the location of the Railroad and the original projectors of that enterprise knew their business when they split the Cape through the middle, giving the villages north and south an equal advantage. Of course we are not responsible that our ancestors laid out a village here in the heart of the County, but now we have a railroad in our lap, we call them blessed. The consequences are, a great increase in trade, a larger influx of summer visitors and a general stirring up and flourishing all around. City drummers, or rather commercial travellers, make this their headquarters, visiting by team the suburban villages and returning here before going down the road." I suspect that reporter would have loved our new commercial center on Route 134!

THE DENNIS PORT WHARVES

One of the new acquisitions reported on last month was a wood block print entitled "Dennis Port Wharves," which was another of the illustrations in our history book. The artist's name was Raymond Perry, born in 1883, who lived and taught art in Providence, but summered in West Dennis. He called his home "Spindrift." Can anyone help us determine where he lived and whether or not his summer home still stands? I have a feeling that his wood block is an artist's impression of the old wharves, but until a photograph of that old port is found, it's the best we can do.

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