



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 3

March 2002

Calendar of Events

March 9

Board Meets

Josiah Dennis Manse

10:00 AM

Interested Members Welcome

Thursday, March 21

7:30 P.M.

**Women Who Went
Whaling**

Kathleen San Clemente relates poignant stories from the diaries of wives who went to sea with whaling captains.

Carleton Hall

1006 Old Bass River Road

Dennis

Refreshments

Thursday, April 18

**Cape Cod in the Early
1900s**

Carleton Hall

7:30 P.M.

Native Eastham son, Don Sparrow, tells about Cape life in the "good old days."

Saturday, May 18

**Blue Water Wives &
Mothers**

Josiah Dennis Manse

1:00-4:00 PM

Opening exhibit in the
Maritime Wing.

The Mail Does Get Through

If it seems we're always playing catch up with the mail (and your dues checks), you should know our mail goes to the central Box 607 in Dennis from which it is picked up and distributed to the proper Board Members. If you would like something to appear in a Newsletter, we need to receive it at least a month in advance in the mail. Our Newsletters can take up to a week at the printer, and sometimes up to two weeks more for bulk mail delivery. We apologize if some of your letters and communications miss the next Newsletter. Especially when it's a letter as important as this one:

January 16, 2002

Dear Burt,

First let me tell you how much Dad and I both enjoy the D.H.S. Newsletter. He looks for and asks if it has come in the mail.

He enjoyed the write up about Marion Watkins Collins. He and Marion were born across the street from each other—her on January 21st and Dad February 12.

They grew up and played together and have stayed in touch. Since Marion has not been able to go to the Cape for the past few years, she and Dad have called each other on their birthdays. They both have such wonderful and funny memories, I just love to hear them. It's great they both have such good minds and still enjoy the things they used to do.

With Marion being the oldest member, I guess Dad is the next oldest.

We will have a party for him at the nursing home where he has been since October. He loves to get mail and if the folks that remember him would like to send a card, please send it to this address. Thanks to you all.

*Love,
Ann Hill (daughter)*

*Mr. Edward Chase
1220 Turner Rd.
Winter Park, FL 32789*



The mail *does* get through, but sometimes a bit late. Happy Birthday, Ed! An amazing 102!!!

ANOTHER LETTER TO BURT, THIS TIME VIA E-MAIL

You've probably been reading in the *The Register* and in *The Times* about the Sears family and the land donated to the Dennis Conservation Trust. Here's a communication to Burt from L. Ray Sears for the Newsletter.

Sears Family Donates Land to Dennis Conservation Trust

East Dennis, MA 15 Dec 2001

Trustees of the "Leslie R. Sears, Jr. Living Trust" recently donated their interests in a five acre parcel of land on Scargo Hill to the Dennis Conservation Trust in Memory of Major General Les Sears (USA-Ret.). This project started back in 1982 with an examination of old deeds owned by the family. It was discovered that in 1820, Elkanah Sears (1758-1836) of East Dennis purchased 5 acres of cleared land and woodland on Scargo Hill called the "Old Field." This land was divided by Elkanah's three sons in 1863 and Capt. William Sears (1808-1896) of East Dennis never sold his share. The trustees are working with the other heirs of William to deed the remaining portion of the parcel to the Dennis Conservation Trust.

Les Sears was a devoted Cape Codder, charter member of the East Dennis Yacht Club, sailed the Beetle Cat, "Redwing," and retired to Cape Cod after serving thirty years in the U S Army. He was an avid fisherman and clammer. He started this project and had the parcel surveyed but was not able to finish it before his death. This donation is the culmination of years of research and work and was made possible by the time and efforts of Attorney Thomas E. Murphy of South Dennis and by Leticia and Frank Forker of Peter McDowell Realtors of Dennis.

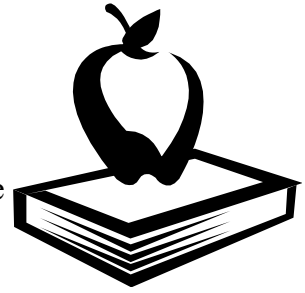
The Sears Family Association is dedicated to preserving the history of the descendants of Richard Sears who settled in the East Precinct of Yarmouth (now Dennis) in 1639. They are continuing to re-search other deeds to see if there is land still owned by the family which can be preserved. These old deeds are very interesting as some of them are from the period before the Barnstable County Courthouse burned in 1827. Ninety-four volumes of deed records were lost in that fire and a major effort had to be undertaken to re-record those deeds. In the process, many deeds were not recorded. In some cases, selectmen went door to door to get property records back on the books.

I MISSED IT! AND IT SOUNDS LIKE SUCH A GOOD TIME!!

Were you at the DHS **potluck luncheon** on Saturday the 9th? Stuck at home with a fever and cold, I missed what has been reported to me as the *most fabulous food!!!* It was a cozy group of 26 or so who attended the luncheon and stayed to show the objects they'd brought and tell the stories surrounding them. Alex and Pauline Kennedy brought things from all around the world where they had lived, including foreign number plates and a piece worn by a Saudi woman around her neck which contained daily instruction from the Koran. Terri Fox had old deeds and letters from her Sparrow ancestors from down cape. Mary Kuhrtz brought objects she found in her old Isaac Sears house on School Street in E. Dennis, including a "concealment shoe" found in the rafters, which had been hidden there for good luck, probably when the house was built. Susan Kelley showed a quilt given her when Laura was born by Marguerite Ickes, benefactor of the Senior Center and the Manse, each panel with a story to tell. Peggy Eastman brought an unusual book. But the best show and tell of the afternoon was the introduction of 6- month-old Colby Nathaniel Derick, Ruth and Burt's grandson. I hear Burt won the door prize, a lovely small rose bush. If you weren't there, you missed an old-fashioned good time. L.
C.

WANTED: OLD SCHOOL DESKS!!!

Burt Derick



The DHS is seeking old-fashioned desks for the 1867 Schoolhouse. These ideally would be authentic Cape Cod desks, but we know that is probably impossible. Vintage would be 1850-1920. Some desks of that time were combined, with the chair of the front desk attached to the desk in the rear. Others were single units, chairs and desks separate. Still others were combinations of chair and desk fastened together on a metal frame. If authentic desks are not available, we would accept reproductions, and we also seek a source of such reproductions. Can you help?

We hope to recreate a school classroom of the late 1800s in the south classroom of the 1867 West Dennis Graded School House, in which we could actually hold classes for the children of the Dennis (and other towns) school system. Any other artifacts (slates, pictures, books, school supplies) which would help furnish the school house would also be gratefully accepted. Contact Burt Derick, telephone (508) 398-3183, e-mail bderick@cape.com, or regular mail, PO Box 291, S. Dennis, MA 02660.

DON'T MISS THIS ONE!

On Thursday, March 21, come and hear our own Kathleen San Clemente talk about *WOMEN WHO WENT WHALING*, ordinary women who were trying to lead ordinary lives in extraordinary circumstances. From their own words, recorded in their diaries, we learn what it was like to be the wife of a whaling captain. The time is 7:30 P.M., the place Carleton Hall, 1006 Old Bass River Road in Dennis. All this and refreshments, too. Be there!

BOARD OF SELECTMEN ACCEPTS SOCIETY GIFT OF \$9,809!

The Dennis Historical Society, after consultations with Stephen T. Estey (Dennis public buildings) approved funding to enable the installation of air conditioning systems in the Josiah Dennis Manse and the Jericho Historical Center and a new furnace in Jericho. South Shore Heating & Cooling, Inc. completed the work at the Manse at a cost of \$3,104. Electrical work added another \$425. E. F. Winslow Plumbing & Heating installed the furnace and air conditioning at Jericho for \$6,280.

The work at both historic, town-owned properties was needed to better safeguard the many, including a number that are priceless, artifacts contained in the Manse and Jericho. The Dennis Historical Society is pleased to support the preservation of these town treasures, and asked that the Board of Selectmen accept the Society's gift of \$9,809 provided for the purpose of completing the work described above.

Because the Town owns both of the buildings, the Society cannot "own" the actual systems installed. But we benefit greatly from the preservation of our Society's holdings. We are most grateful to all of you who sent in your donations to defray the cost of this project.

Dennis Historical Society

P.O. Box 607

South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

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THE WAY WE WERE

From "Fun in Dennisport in the 1930's by Betty Dean Holmes of Swampscott, MA
School Days Remembered (The best part!)"

At the Dennis Consolidated Elementary School we played house at recess. In the pine grove, pine needles blanketed the ground. Under the pine needles was gray, very sandy soil. We built long narrow outlines of houses with piles of pine needles. The cleared sandy soil became our house floors. Some of the houses we constructed were big enough so we could walk through the doorways. We constructed as many rooms as we wanted. We played in these "houses" until the wind scattered the pine needles. Even then we only had to repair, not completely rebuild our play houses. With a fifteen minute recess at ten a.m. and two p.m., and a longer recess after lunch, most of the girls hurried outside to play house as long as possible. The boys did not play this game. They played separately on the swing sets. Older boys played on the lower playground's merry-go-round, swing-around, and baseball field. After the 1944 hurricane the entire pine grove died, probably because of salt spray. Our fondly remembered playground pine grove disappeared.



Dennis Consolidated School
Edmond Rhodes Nickerson Collection