

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 28 Number 3

March 2005

Calendar of Events

Board meetings are open to all interested members of the DHS. Next meeting
Wednesday, March 9
7:00 PM
Josiah Dennis Manse



"The Quaker Settlement in Dennis"

Jim Gould, noted Cape historian, will talk about the Quakers who settled in Dennis starting with David O'Kelia who received a land grant here in 1660.

Wednesday, March 23
7:30 P.M.
Dennis Senior Center
1045 Rt. 134
East Dennis

Save this date:

April 27, 7:30 P.M.

Jim Perry will speak on how salt has effected our history.

"Salt of the Earth"
Dennis Senior Center

Mayfair Revisited

In her handwritten notebook Eugenia French, who lived on Mayfair Road, wrote about life in South Dennis before World War II.

Near Follins Pond Road...*on the other side of the macadam...is the old burial lot. A sign on a tree used to read "Old Friends' Burial Lot". This cemetery was old—very old—and scarcely visited except by the curious, the history seeker, or Parker (her brother) and I who used to put lilacs on the graves of those that were marked. There are quite a number of other unmarked graves here. One marker was for Cyrennius Kelley who had the brook and bay named after him. Historians used to search for any remains of a church which supposedly stood beside the burial lot. I don't recall anyone found any pieces.*

A few feet beyond on the left was the deep rutted road leading to Follins Pond. There were no houses anywhere in sight. In fact, the next house along the road was Frank Wheldon's beyond the Dennis line into Yarmouth. It was lovely and isolated.

In my earlier years I remember fishermen going down to the Pond to tend to the eel traps. One family was named Kelley. Willis Baker, who had a fish route, also went there. I can still see a mental picture of the shore with the eel pots stacked up and a few old row boats.

A few hundred yards towards the Mayfair area was "Quaker Beach" where we learned to swim.

Memories of Quakers who came to Dennis are reflected in local names and places. Nancy Reid wrote in her History (p.68) that *Massachusetts Bay historians refer to the arrival of "those people called Quakers" as an "invasion"—and the Quakers were treated accordingly. Cutting off of ears, whippings, imprisonment and even hanging were the punishments which greeted these foreigners on Puritan turf in the Bay. Plymouth Colony was also less than cordial but the measures taken against any Quaker who happened into the smaller colony were much less severe and appear to have been meant more as discouragement than punishment.*

Join us on Wednesday, **March 23** at **7:30** at the **Dennis Senior Center** when noted Cape historian **James Gould** will tell us about the Quaker Settlement in Dennis. Professor Gould holds an MA and a Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. His teaching career includes appointments at Scripps College & Claremont Men's College, and also at the University of Munich. He has published books on maritime history and a wide variety of historical topics about Cape Cod. Admission is free and refreshments will be served.

Do You Remember When...?

- 1691 First **roving schoolmaster** appointed by early settlers.
- 1721 Dennis becomes the **East Parish of Yarmouth**.
- 1745 First of 14 one-room schools built throughout Dennis.
- 1793 Dennis is incorporated as a separate town and named for **Rev. Josiah Dennis**
- 1795 Dennis is **divided into school districts**.
- 1867 **West Dennis Graded School** built by **Benjamin F. Sturgis** —cost of \$6,875. It is one of five similar two-storied graded school houses built between 1859 and 1867. This is the only graded school remaining in Dennis.
- 1922 The **West Dennis Graded School** is altered to serve as a **town meeting hall and voting place on the ground floor**.
- 1931 **West Dennis Graded School** replaced by the new **Ezra Baker School**.
- 1934 Electricity is installed.
- 1950s **Graded School House** is renamed the **West Dennis Community Center**. The first floor is used for teen dances, roller skating, religious services, and a meeting place for numerous local civic and social groups.
- 1957 **North wing added** to provide kitchen and rest room facilities.
- 1970s Extensive renovations to correct **structural deficiencies**, including six columns on the **first floor** to support a badly sagging **second floor**.
- 1997 **West Dennis Graded School House Restoration Committee** appointed by selectmen to **determine if building can be saved**. Committee proposes continued community uses for first floor and education and history museum for second floor.
- 2000 In October the restored **West Dennis Graded School House** was dedicated to the citizens of **Dennis** with **bell ringing** and the **pledge of allegiance to the flag** by **Ezra Baker students** and music by **Wixon School** students.

Note: The West Dennis Graded School House is listed in the State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

Do you have a special interest in the town of Dennis' history of education? The Oversight Committee of the 1867 West Dennis Graded School is looking for people who are interested in developing an interpretive program using the school's upstairs classroom with its authentic artifacts to provide history field trips for students and special summer or holiday presentations.

If you are interested or have some ideas for us, please call Burt Derick at 508-398-3183, Margaret Eastman at 508-398-8592, or Elinor Slade at 508-398-3053.

Shown at right is a high school class circa 1915. Photo provided by Marion Baker.



Girl Scouts to Study Dennis History

On Saturday, March 12th Girl Scouts will be working on the "Local Lore" merit badge with a town-wide bus tour of Dennis. They will meet at the Senior Center at 9 A.M. and board the bus—first stop the **West Dennis Graded School House**. They will tour the building and try to locate the "treasure" in the upstairs classroom. (A clue will be written on the chalk board.) Their next stop will be **Town Hall** where their tour will include maps and aerial views of Dennis through the years. Next, at the **Josiah Dennis Manse** the girls will learn about the early days when Dennis was part of the town of Yarmouth. They will also search for the harpoons in the Maritime Room and look for the man with the dirtiest job in the Shiverick Shipyard model. Their following destination will include a lunch break, a tour of the **Dennis Union Church and the Dennis Village Cemetery**. The bus will take them to the **Indian Burial Grounds and on to Scargo Lake and Scargo Tower**. On the road again they will stop at **Hokum Rock** and find the whale carving. They hope to fit in a service project by picking up trash and return to the Senior Center in time for their Bridging Ceremony. (*Whew, what a schedule! My Quaker Grandmother would have said, "Go at it Bet, I'll hold thy bonnet!"*)

Have you tested your "Love Knowledge" lately?

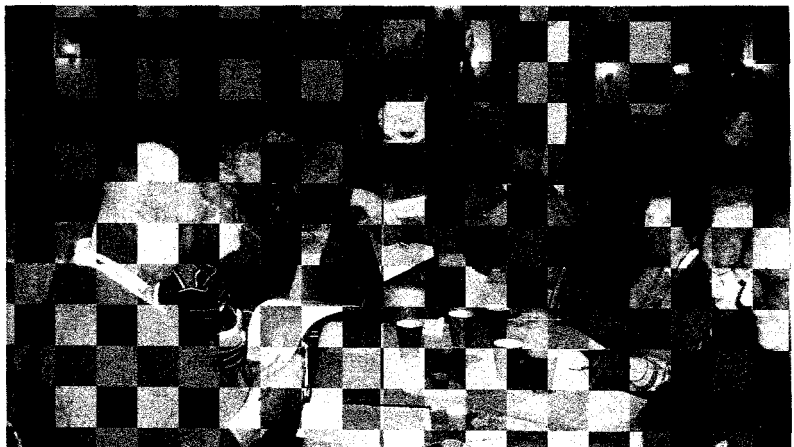
Program Chairs Pete and June Howes were responsible for a super pot-luck supper program at the West Dennis School House on February 12! We had enough food for two meals let alone one, and all of it delicious. (Did you ever wonder how we always seem to have enough salads, main courses, and desserts without specifying what anyone should bring?) We also had several interesting events: Guess the number of candy kisses and take home the jarful! Win the door prize—the beautiful plant that was the centerpiece on the table. And get the best "grade" on the Love Quiz and win a prize. (We had several winners and several prizes. June wanted to make sure everyone went home happy.) Dinner music with George Wennerberg at the piano set just the right tone for the evening.

Are you curious about the Valentine Quiz? Some of the answers were pretty obvious such as *What is the flower most often given on February 14th?* and *What is the name of the winged boy who shoots arrows?* (It is NOT Peter Pan!) and *What famous artist left his heart in San Francisco?* But some of the "historical" questions had us puzzled. *What was the original purpose of a "love seat"?* or (from the 17th century) *If the following birds flew over a woman's head on February 14th who would she marry?*

1. A robin—
2. A Sparrow—
3. A Gold Finch— ?

Right: June Howes passes out quizzes to Seth Crowell, Jean Twiss, Irma North, Herbert Johnson, and Joshua Crowell.

Love seat for hoop skirts, Robin means marry a sailor; Sparrow, a poor man; Gold Finch, a rich man!



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

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The Way We Were

Have you met the Dennis Union Church Auction **Pick-Up Crew**? Every year the church holds their auction on the Village Green in August to raise money to support capital improvements and local missions, and by the first of September the pick-up crew is already back on the road getting ready for the next year. They work all year round, bad weather notwithstanding. What keeps this crew on the job? Could it be the great coffee and donuts at Fleming's Donut Shack (which was once Warren Wigginton's house near the Dennis Public Market)? When the Shack closed (temporarily, we hope) the gang moved to the Mercantile across the street for their sustenance. Whatever keeps them going, their good work is seldom noticed until it's Auction Time once again. Thanks from all of us who look forward to this town-wide event every year!



Back row: L-R, Jesse Mendenhall, Sandy Wiper, Royal Goheen, & Seth Crowell
Front row: L-R, Don Acker, Ed Brink, Bill Wallace, Lo Smith, Dave White