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Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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

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A Civil War Letter

Based on content this letter is about 1863; a letter of 2 sheets, the first sheet has the top cut away so the date and addressee is not known; also, page numbering has been better arranged so that it makes more sense. A small portion of the second sheet is torn away and lost:]

"I was somewhat surprised at receiving a letter from you a few days ago, but nevertheless very glad to hear from you a very dear friend of my Brother Murray's^[1] I presume, and you are no stranger to me for I have often heard your name spoken of by Murray when we were together, and we used often to talk of our friends far away from us in the north but ever present in our minds and your[sic] were included in the number of our very near and dear friends, we (Murray & Myself) were together a long time at the Balize and also made a voyage to Grance together we were ever the best of friends and he seems almost like a Brother to me. I believe we used to pass as such sometimes [over page]

...been home since I have been in [2-3 words cut off] two and a half years, I found a great change had taken place there since I left but all of my friends were the same and almost beside themselves with joy at seeing me back with them again alive and well after being separated from the so long and through so many dangers also a siege at Richamond in prision which is enough to kill any one except a Yankee we Yanks, as the Rebe's call us, are queer specimens of human nature and are almost proof against their wicked and horioble treatment to the poor prisoners that have had the misfortune to fall into their hands. I thank God that I escaped from them alive and I have great reason to be thankfull for I feel confident that I could not have lived but [next page] a short time longer in that horrid place Belle Island. I found my folks all well at home and very glad indeed to see. I have one of the best and happiest home's in the world my Parents are both liveing & I have two Sisters and two Brothers. I am the oldest of the family and have a great circle of friends and many very dear ones (one in particular) but I think I am getting from my subject, you spoke of me and my Lady's visiting you when the war is over. well I should be most happy to pay you and Murray a visit but as for the Lady I am so very fortunate as not to have any one that I can call mine. I was shure in my mind that you had become Mrs J M. Stone long before this, untill I recd your kind letter, but I presume it will be changed as soon as John returns then I shall claim you as a Sister for Murray I hold as a Brother I shall be most happy to hear of your marriage also to receive your card and to know that you are happy I hope I shall [torn] [torn]or of making your acquaintance be[torn] [torn] [torn]ile [over page] my term of service will expire in the fall and then I shall take a good visit home and shall try to see all of my friends before I go into the Army again. I expect to stay in the Army till the end of the War if it is five years longer, let me thank you for your good wishes in my behalf also for the good oppinion you expressed of me and my Comrad's in Arms against this Cruell Rebellion and I hope that I may always be able to do my duty to my God my Country Myself & my friends, I should be most happy to receive your Photographs and will let you have mine in return and perhaps a certain Miss Lizzie's also as soon as I have an opportunity which will be some time hence I expect. you say that you expect I will think this a bold move in you and hope I will pardon you (as Murray will) let me say that I am very glad that you took it upon yourself to write and inform me of Murray for I was thinking of writing to him again I am a Paroled Prisoner yet and dont know as I will ever be exchanged but hope to be soon for I am tired of this and want to get back with my Regt.. again very much, this will be a very por letter but I hope you will excuse it as it is from a Soldier and I am a

¹ John Murray Stone, b. 30 Sep 1839, s/o John Stone (1809-1843) & Isabella N. Thomas. He married, in South Dennis, 12 Jan 1865, Cynthia C. Crowell (1843-1925; d/o Aaron & Fear), with whom they had 2 children. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage 9 Dec 1925, and is buried with his wife on Lot 178, Dennis Village Cem.

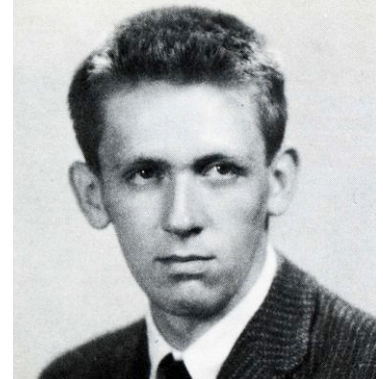
poor hand at writing letters at best, I shall have to bring this to a close hoping to hear from you again soon I will close with all the best wishes imaginable to you and Murra[torn] [torn]"

[torn] true Friend A. R. Devereux
Burt Derick

The Dennis Historical Society Library



On April 8, our renowned Librarian and Historian Burt Derick presented *Your DHS Library And Its Resources* to a large crowd of 30+ folks who gathered at the DHS Library on the second floor of the West Dennis Library. He introduced the resources available and how to use them; the photographs & family collections, including diaries and ship journals. Our library holds a magnificent collection of material concerning Dennis and the



people who have been part of her growth throughout history.

However, somewhere along the line Burt's photo from his High School Yearbook mysteriously showed up, and

Decoration Day

When I was growing up in the early to mid 1900s Decoration Day was an event of great importance. May 30th, no matter which day it fell on, was a day of somber remembrance.

The American Legion Post in West Harwich, whose members were Harwich and Dennis veterans, organized a parade every year that started on Depot Road in West Harwich and ended at the veteran's monument on Main Street in Dennis Port. The veterans were primarily from World War I. Leroy Mason and Michael Crotty, both veterans of the Spanish-American War were driven in an automobile with a hand-lettered placard on the side of the car. Immediately after that was an open convertible carrying Edwin Tripp of Dennis Port, the last surviving Dennis veteran of the Civil War. His last parade was in 1940. He died in 1941 at the age of ninety-six.

The Ladies Auxiliary marched behind the veterans. The Boy Scouts, Sea Scouts, and 4-H Club were represented. The Harwich Town Band played tunes associated with the Civil and Great World Wars and I seem to remember a Gold Star mother being driven in a car.

Rep. Harry Albro of Harwich delivered the address in ringing tones, which didn't change much from year to year. The rifle squad fired their guns, someone played taps on the bugle with an answering echo from Eliza Lane's driveway on Sea Street, and that part of the day was over.

After lunch my grandmother, mother and aunts went to Swan Lake Cemetery with armloads of lilacs and whatever else was in bloom to decorate the graves of all the veterans. They each shared what they knew about every man's valor or sacrifice.

The Community Club, a woman's group, worked zealously to have this monument erected. Dennis Town Meeting of March 1920 voted \$500.00 for the memorial. It was dedicated on August 21st. The speakers were Capt. Jonathan P. Edwards, Rev. Mr. Vandegriffe and Congressman Joseph Walsh. The site was given by Alton L. Robbins (my grandfather).

The monument also has the names of the ten Dennis men who died in World War II.

The Decoration Day name was changed to Memorial Day after World War II and in 1971 the date was set on the last Monday in May as part of a three-day weekend.

Phyllis Horton

Mrs. Lora L. Nowotne sent us memoirs of her Dennis family from her Maryland home in 2009. She also noted that she lived on board a ship in Newport harbor with her grandparents 'at an early age'. These will be a part of our history of Dennis and eventually Internet accessible on the DHS Digital Archive once that becomes available later this year. Thankfully, Lora is still doing well, according to her son Steve Churchill. Below are two more excerpts from her memoirs - and some of you might well recognize a name or two.

“HERBERT CLINTON CHASE, our grandfather..... some of this may be repeat for I have so many notes to work with....this red headed son was the youngest child of Theophilus and Sarah. (How could you miss "Red"? both of your grandfathers had red hair, also your great grandfather!) His mother's hair was dark, and dark brown eyes. Capt. Theophilus had envisioned his son Clinton in the role of a successful merchant. In fact great grandfather had made all arrangements with his cousin Caleb Chase, owner of Chase and Sanborn Tea and Coffee Firm (absorbed by Maxwell Coffee), to teach him the business. They were to send Clinton to Java and South American Coffee Plantations to learn the business and to furnish his education at their headquarters on Commercial Street in Boston, MA.

Being an extrovert by nature and having the sea in his blood, he had no intention of conforming with his fathers wishes and plans for his future. Saving money from odd jobs until he had enough for his fare to Boston, plus board and room for two weeks, he slipped in the early morning hours of a morning and embarked on his long marine career. After long and discouraging waits in shipping offices, he finally secured a birth before the mast on the Rebecca Tall Lane with a stern, demanding captain. Captain John Megathlin. It was not an easy life for one so young and the meals were horrible. Meal after meal was nothing but hardtack, however he completed his hitch on the sailing vessel and after pursuing other trips on other vessels, applying what he had learned from his own father he then felt he was ready to take a hitch on steamers that were beginning to take the place of sailing ships.... It would be difficult perhaps for him, if he were alive today, to even envision some of modern ships of the 1990's.”

and

“Great-grandfather (Captain Theophilus Chase) always had confidence in his ship, and although Grandmother Sarah had faith and confidence in his expertise as a Master Mariner, whenever they were riding out a storm at sea, Great-Grandmother was frightened. She was a devout Christian (a member of the South Yarmouth Methodist Church) she was generally found during a storm below decks praying. To comfort her, Capt. Theophilus would stand on deck in front of the companion way and shout "There's good weather ahead Sally" as he called her, even though the storm raged on. No sooner that the words would leave his mouth and she would counter with, "Only think Thoup, there is only a plank between us and Eternity" Again a reply from him would assure her, "I know Sally, but it is a damn thick plank, and been there a damn long time." "Besides, think how much more safety there is here aboard the Bradley than if you were up on Washington Street in Boston on one of those horse cars!"

Lora Nowtone

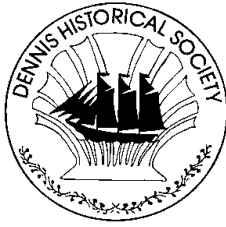
Facebook

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 May 18 at the 1801 Jericho Historical Center, 90 Old Main Street, West Dennis.

Dennis Historical Society
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Maritime Days Open House

Phyllis Horton's

The Bounty of the Seas



Saturday, May 21

Sunday, May 22

Noon – 4p.m.

West Dennis Graded School
67 School St., West Dennis



Refreshment



www.dennishistsoc.org

Be a “Manse Ambassador” For a Day!

Join the Manse Team for the Grand Re-Opening Celebration of the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum on June 25th.

We have opportunities in many areas requiring no special talent except your love of Dennis and a willingness to donate a few hours of your time for this special event. The basic plans are done and *much* has been accomplished. Now we are reaching out to those we know care about history to help.

You will be in good company if you volunteer: e.g.: DY Band, Dennis Fire Dept., Legislators, U.S. Postal Service, Militia & other Colonials, Dennis Selectmen and others too numerous to mention.

The U.S. Postal Service will be setting up a temporary station to cancel your mail (or other commemorative) with the Manse Pictorial Postmark on June 25th! Artist Howard Bonington will also be present for signing.

To volunteer, please call:

Diane @508-394-7311; Nancy @508-385-3528
or Terri @508-760-0433.

**Be a part of Dennis living history as a
“Manse Ambassador” For a Day.**

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