



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

dennishs@cape.com

www.dennishistsoc.org

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A Captain's Duty

On August 18, 1889 Frazier Louis Sears entered the world in the quiet little village of East Dennis with no one aware of the sad legacy he would fulfill.

"Loui" grew up in the usual way for Cape Cod boys--doing his lessons in school, attending to his chores at home, spending a little leisure time at the beach and Sesuit Harbor with his friends, and listening to the stories of glory days of Dennis sea captains on the great oceans of the world.

At sixteen he made the decision to follow the sea. He was accepted as a cadet on the Brig Enterprise, the United States Nautical Training Ship. He graduated two years later and chose to gain experience on the old sailing ships. He found a berth on the 3500 ton ship Wm. P. Fry of Bath, Maine and headed for the Pacific by way of Cape Horn. He rose from seaman to first mate in a very short time and then advanced to captain in the Merchant Marine.



Frazier Louis Sears

By 1917, at age 18, he was recognized as a highly rated master mariner. However, the United States was being pulled into World War I and young Loui felt it was his duty to serve his country despite the wishes and warnings of family and friends who thought he had made a foolish choice.

Pvt. Frazier L. Sears was assigned to Co. C., 39th Infantry in the United States Army and sailed for France in a troop transport, which, in different times, he might have been the Commander.

Once on the continent he fought in the trenches, fields and woods at Aisne Marne, Toulon, Saint Mihiel, Meuse Argonne and with the American Expeditionary Force. He was wounded in one of the battles, recovered, and returned to duty.

At war's end Loui returned home, was honorably discharged and then returned to his life at sea in command of new, big oil tankers. His last ship was the Petrol owned by the Cities Service Transportation Co. of New York.

Early on the morning of July 14, 1933 the Petrol was off the coast of North Carolina on course to New York when a big explosion occurred between decks near tanks Nos. 8 and 9. Flames shot up over the smokestack and part of the after deck, all the hatches and flying bridge were carried away in the blast. The wireless antenna was destroyed leaving Capt. Sears unable to call for assistance. Two of his crewmen were killed in the explosion.

He fought his way aft where the stern was ablaze, bandaging his men, assisting them to life boats and directing the lowering of the boats, thus saving thirty-four of his crew.

The Petrol burned all day while the life boats stood off pleading with the captain to abandon ship and join them, but he refused. The S. S. Gulfgem and the Trimountain came to the aid of the burning ship and could not coax the captain to leave.

As the Petrol slipped stern first into the sea, all ablaze except for the forequarter where Captain Frazier Louis Sears of East Dennis stood at attention in the bow, his only move was to flash his light in farewell.

The crewmen, newspapers and countless others could not understand why he would not save himself. Old time Cape Codders knew the answer. Loui followed the mariner's time-honored tradition of going with his dead crewmen and doomed ship. It was his duty as captain.

Phyllis Horton

The Manse Project Is Underway

At the Special Town Meeting on October 27, the \$2.6 million Manse Repair & Restoration project was approved by a 98+% vote. The project will be funded fully from Community Preservation Funding. We expect the project to start in November and take approximately eighteen months. Meanwhile, preparations have been underway almost continuously at the Manse. Phyllis Horton, shown here with Dawn Dellner, has spent months identifying, cataloguing and marking thousands of artifacts that comprise the Manse collection. Note that they are in the East Bedroom- now with the bed disassembled! Burt Derick has packed well over 75 boxes designated for the West Dennis Library and the West Dennis School. Nancy Howes and her Manse Committee have accomplished those innumerable tasks of preparing for the emptying of the Manse in early November. As



of the publication of this newsletter, we are awaiting the award of the contract to the successful bidder.

Pete Howes

Who was this author?

Amidst the treasures unearthed by Burt Derrick during the book inventory and packing is a little red loose-leaf binder of neatly typed, delightful, wistful and often whimsical poetry. There is no author, no name at all in this volume. The gentleman was very elderly, lived in Dennis. Here is an example, written between September 2 and 11, 1955:

“What could more fitting be
Than the love of poetry –
For an old man of ninety-three
Who cannot hear well, nor can see.”

This book starts at Christmas 1954, and goes through the end of October 1955. Someone transcribed it –probably his nurse – no indication. A slip of paper loosely contained inside merely states “Contents of green notebook – duplication eliminated”. He mentions a Mr. & Mrs. Fitzhugh, Suzanne English, grandson ‘little Bobby’, Marguerite (his daughter?), a Mrs. Marshall, Elaine Volkens, a Mary-Jo, being bedbound Easter 1955 and moving back and forth to New York in about six-month segments. These are but clues to his identity.

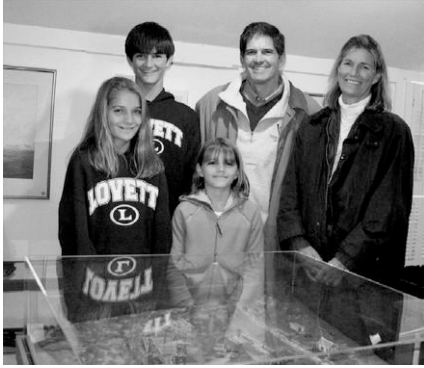
And one verse to leave you with:

We wish for you the very best
May you have your needed rest,
And when your busy life is oer
May heaven open wide its door.

Please, can any of you identify this person? The author and his work should not pass unidentified into the distant future. If you know who he is, please let me know, and we all will benefit.

Pete Howes

A Shiverick Family Visitor



In October, Brendan Joyce received a call from Bill Shiverick of Atlanta, GA who planned to visit Dennis with his family to explore their heritage, especially for the benefit of their children. Bill hails from the Asa Shiverick III line and his wife Ruth Tobey.

We were pleased to host Bill, his wife Carolyn and children James Tobey, Alden Irene and Elizabeth Graham (Gray) at the Manse where they are shown next to the diorama of the Shiverick Shipyard. These folks have become Patrons of the Dennis Historical Society, and we wish them a fond welcome!

A Dennis Denizen of the Deep?

I came across this little gem and have no idea if this was in the spirit of Halloween or just caused by the spirits consumed on Halloween. And I have no idea what is Mrs. De Lacy's ship! Historians, help???

For the Barnstable Patriot

Very Like a Whale!!

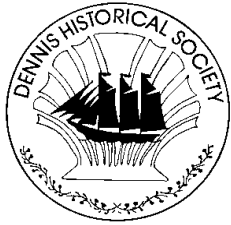
Mr. Editor. - There is a large pond situated in North Dennis, usually known by the name of Flax Pond. Considerable excitement, of late, has existed among the good people residing near this pond by the appearance of a large fish, which frequently makes its appearance on the surface of the water, but whether like Mrs. De Lacy's ship, or like a sinuous serpent pursuing its shining wake, I have not been able to ascertain. From the information has been obtained from those who have seen this monster, he is thought to be about 20 feet long his motion is very slow, and his appearance resembles a fin-back, but in what way or manner he came in this pond, the most knowing among us are unable to tell.

Dennis, Dec. 4, 1830

DUES

If you have not yet sent in your MEMBERSHIP DUES, (Individual Membership \$15 Family membership \$25), please, please send them to the address at the top of this Newsletter to make our membership chairman Mary Kuhrtz smile – and keep your newsletter comming!

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



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- Come to the “**Empty House Party**” on November 21 or 22 from 2-4 p.m. and while viewing all of the nooks and crannies, purchase Giclee prints of the Manse, as well as note cards. Can't attend the party? Call June at 508-385-9308 or Nancy at 508-385-3528 to place an order.
- Artist Lin Schenkelberger Webber grew up in Dennis before settling in Pennsylvania as an adult. She spends summers in Dennis as well as visiting frequently during the quiet months. The paintings of the “Josiah Dennis Manse” and the “Manse Door” were inspired by time spent helping with the Manse Christmas decorations each December.
- All tax-deductible proceeds from the sale of the artwork go directly to the Manse Repair Fund.



“A historian is a prophet in reverse.” Feidrich Von Schlegel, German diplomat & writer. (1772-1829)