



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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www.dennishistsoc.org

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*Fall of the possum, fall of the 'coon,
And the lop-eared hound-dog baying the moon.
Fall that is neither bitter or swift
but a brown girl bearing an idle gift,
A brown seed-kernel that splits apart
And shows Summer yet in its heart,
A smokiness so vague in the air
You feel it rather than see it there,
A brief, white rime on the red clay road
And slow mules creaking a lazy load
Through the endless acres of afternoon,
A pine-cone fire and a banjo-tune,
And a julep stirred with a silver spoon.*

*Your noons are hot, your nights deep-starred,
There is honeysuckle still in the yard,
Fall of the quail and the firefly-glow
And a pot-pourri of the rambler-rose,
Fall that brings no promise of snows...*

*Stephen Vincent Benét
"John Brown's Body"*

It's November---

The insert on the left has two reasons for appearing in this issue. First, "*John Brown's Body*", Benét's classic account of the Civil War, is quite appropriate in this anniversary year, and it really is fall! This has been one of my favorite books since high school, probably due to his almost lyrical descriptive powers.

With fall, the rustle of leaves replaces the bustle of tourists, and we can settle back to our more normal routine, whatever that is. My wife & I were amused to note that now with three of the grandkids in College they have had to leave tweeting and twittering to the birds (where some think it really should never left!) and even text messages have decreased due to the pressures of academia (or so we hope!).

Our annual meeting has come and gone, and the list of Board members is included in this Newsletter with the reports presented at the meeting. Seems as you'll have to put up with me for another year as President and Newsletter creator – but I'll gladly relinquish either or both to whoever calls first! Seriously, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to remain in this position, as we have so many exciting activities underway.

Pete Howes

The End of a Grand Heritage

David Crowell Sears of Quivet Neck, East Dennis recently passed on to his reward. David was the last native-born male direct descendant of first settler, Richard Sears, living on Quivet Neck.

Richard Sears was supposedly with the Pilgrims in Leyden, then his name was on the 1633 tax list in Plymouth but has not been found on the passenger list of any ship to arrive here. He seems not to have stayed long at Plymouth but moved on to Marblehead where his brother-in-law Anthony Thacher was settled in 1635.

A Plymouth Colony grant was given to Anthony Thacher, John Crowe, Thomas Howes and others on January 7, 1638/9. Although Richard is not listed in that group his daughter, Deborah, was born in Yarmouth (now Dennis) in September 1639. He settled in the East Dennis section next to the Brewster line.

David's ancestors included a number of farmers, mariners, a cabinet maker and a store keeper.

One of the notable grandfathers was Capt. Edmund (4) Sears, mariner and trader. He happened to be unloading his schooner in Boston Harbor when the Boston Tea Party was getting organized. Family tradition says that he joined that group and helped toss bales of tea into the harbor. He came home the next day all charged up and threw all their supply of tea out the pantry window. He then proclaimed that he and his family would drink no English tea nor wear any English clothing from then on!

It seems fairly certain that his wife and four daughters would have been dismayed as they would have to prepare the yarn, spin, weave, and sew it into garments for their family of eleven—and a nice cup of hot tea would have helped when the chores were done.

Joshua Crowell (DHS long time Treasurer) used to tell a story about David. In the 1930s to 50s the East Dennis Social Club gathered regularly at Worden Hall for a communal dinner and entertainment. They purchased what supplies they needed from D. H. Sears store on School Street. However, Josh realized they needed an item D.H. didn't carry. He looked around the hall and spotted David, about 17, sitting at a table.

He called him over, passed him some money and the keys to his car with orders to go to Dennis Public Market and bring back the necessary goods.

Josh was the Dennis Deputy Fire Chief. In those days even the Fire Chief Clarence Bayles used his own vehicle. Josh's car was outfitted with lights and a siren.

When David returned Josh asked him, "How'd it sound?" David looked at him warily and said, "How'd you know?" Josh looked over his glasses with a smile and said, "I know boys."

David stayed close to his heritage as he loved to hunt, fish and sail—all good Cape Cod traits. Rest well, David.

Phyllis R. Horton

Scargo Hill Observatory Part III

May 15, 1900; It was a balmy day for May, with a sultry southwest wind following the Gulf Stream from the tropics, and blowing across the still cool land of Cape Cod - what the old-timers called a "Weather breeder". The day's work had begun early at Southworth Nye's slaughterhouse near the present location of Grose Galleries on Route 6A in Dennis. Mr. Nye employed several helpers and they were working in early afternoon, butchering the steers and pigs grown by neighbors, when someone noticed a small fire in the thatch near the barn. He tried to stomp it out, but without success. Others helped, but in moments the wind had fanned the sparks to flames which soon engulfed the barn and slaughterhouse. Soon embers flew across the street, destroying another barn of Mr. Nye's before moving up the hill and along the ridge. By this time help had been summoned from other villages, by the frantic ringing of the church and school bells. Now the fire-fighters concentrated on saving the village and, as the fire progressed rapidly along the ridge, the village of East Dennis as well. At last the efforts were successful and the fire was contained, just short of Patia Nickerson's house on Scargo Hill Road, without the loss of any homes. The fire had burned a large area of woodland along Rocky Ridge and Scargo Hill Road. A victim of the fire was the wooden tower atop Scargo Hill. True to the prediction, the tower had withstood wind and weather for nearly 24 years, but not the threat of the flames.

The old-timers were right about the weather. Late in the day, a thunderstorm struck, so severe that it kindled a second fire at the home of Widow Robinson. Exhausted neighbors saved the occupants and some furniture, but the house was destroyed. In spite of these calamitous events, Cape humor prevailed. The reporter calls this day "the hottest 15th of May in Dennis for a great many years," and ends his report, "From another such day, Good Lord deliver us." To which I say, Amen. Next month: A Tower of Stone

Nancy Thacher Reid, Jan. 1983

Dennis History Archive (<http://archive.dennishistsoc.org/>)

The web site above is the location of the Dennis Historical Societies substantial effort to create an internet-searchable archive of Dennis History. This web site is being made public for the first time. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Burt Derick in scanning and transcribing historical material, we have approximately 43,000 digital records in the DHS archive, the main categories include pictures, ship log books, Town Reports, diaries, letters and transcriptions. DHS, with Community Preservation Funding, is very pleased to make this archive available to the public. Roger Sullivan and I make up the rest of the project team. Our Internet site data preparation and entry effort, the heart of the project, is ably led by Mitzi Kruger whose background and experience are ideally matched to our task. She is responsible, with her supporters, to turn our digital archive into the searchable database.

This is a very substantial, multi-year task due to the volume of accrued data that must be addressed. These data come from such diverse sources as Town of Dennis historical records, Dennis Historical Society Archives, records donated or lent by the citizens of Dennis and other towns (often boxes full delivered to Burt!) plus items acquired by gift or purchase. It is truly a vital yet very extensive body of material. These historical records entwine past Dennis people and events into a historical spider web that extends through numerous documents from many sources, documents that have been up to now but scattered digital and paper files.

Please note that our History Archive site is a 'work in progress'. We currently have about 2,000 entries and more are being added constantly. If you can identify a picture that has no title or find a big goof, please send us an e-mail at dennishs@cape.com. Each entry, by the way, contains more than one of the digital records.

Upon completion, this will be by far the most comprehensive searchable archive of information by any historical society on Cape Cod. Many historical societies have some archives available on-line, but they can only be viewed, and not searched for a name, ship name or any other historical fact, let alone the actual contents of a document. Our system provides the greatest flexibility for the casual user and researcher alike.

Please check it out and give us your opinion.

Peter Howes

DHS Annual Meeting - Board Elections & Reports

Elected Officers - Annual

President: Peter Howes

Vice Presidents: David Talbott, Terri Fox

Treasurer: Robert Hunter

Assistant Treasurer: Mary Kuhrtz

Recording Secretary: Bonnie Hempel

Corresponding Secretary: Ruth Derick

Elected Directors

Until 2014: Virginia Devine, Nancy Howes

Until 2013: Betsy Harrison

Until 2012: Dawn Dellner, Roger Sullivan

Appointed Directors

Dennis Historical Commission: Joshua Crowell

Jericho Historical Center: Peggy Eastman

Josiah Dennis Manse: Terri Fox

West Dennis Graded Schoolhouse: Roger Sullivan

Curator/Archivist: Phyllis Horton

Audio/Visual: Brendan Joyce

Photographer: Richard Howes

Secretary's Report

Welcome to the 48th DHS annual meeting. Following are some of our pursuits during the past year.

The Dennis Historical Society is publishing two books, *Captain Levi Crowell, Civil War Prisoner* authored by Peter Howes, and a reprint of *Dennis Cape Cod* authored by Nancy Reid. Future Book signings are scheduled.

DHS and Howard Bonington will be collaborating on a book or series of books containing Mr. Bonington's sketches of historic Dennis places with narrative provided by DHS members.

Peter Howes and his committee have a Digital Archiving project in progress that will provide fully searchable web access to thousands of items of Dennis history, including pictures, log books, diaries and other material.

The newly restored Josiah Dennis Manse reopened on June 25, 2011. The D-Y High School Band played; the Dennis Fire Department performed a flag salute; the Yarmouth Minute Men participated; several State Congress people spoke; there were tours and refreshments. It was a lovely day and a joyous occasion...the Manse has expanded its hours, and continues to provide 1700s Dennis historic information to the public.

DHS is in the process of working with a website designer and will soon implement a newly designed website.

DHS is fortunate by its collaboration with The Historical Society of Old Yarmouth and the Woods Hole Historical Museum. We are planning future events with HSOY, and will continue to benefit from historical documentation shared by Woods Hole.

A New Disaster Planning Committee, chaired by Joan Martin, has been established. This committee is pursuing appropriate methods for DHS museums to avoid damage in the event of a disaster.

DHS received several donations and “thank you” in appreciation for inquiry responses and help in obtaining information. Also, donations were received from requests for financial help for special projects.

Some interesting acquisitions: A framed oil painting of Schooner James B. Pace lost off of Montauk Point, Long Island when it collided with Schooner Howard H. Hanscom during the Portland Gale in 1898. Captain John Garfield of West Dennis and crew were lost.

- A log from the ship, *Kit Carson*.

- Ephemera of James Spiers of West Dennis during his time in the U.S. Navy and his “ditty box”; Mr. Speirs was instrumental in forming the Dennis Water District and served as one of the first Commissioners.

Submitted by Bonnie Hempel, Recording Secretary

1736 Josiah Dennis Manse 2011 Report

Over 450 people came to the June 25 reopening of the Manse and were very impressed with the care that had been taken in repairing this lovely old house museum. In excess of 1800 visitors have toured the Manse this summer and children from three private schools have enjoyed our school program. Brownie and Junior girl scouts and the Yankee Peddlers Questers will visit soon. Plans are being made for the December 11 Christmas open house.

Ezra H. Baker school third graders will once again attend our school program in the spring. The 2012 schedule is in place. More gardens are being planned. Our hope is to find more docents to guide our visitors through the Manse and more garden helpers.

Submitted by Nancy S. Howes, Chair

1801 Jericho Museum Report

In some ways, Jericho enjoyed a better season in 2011 than in recent years, especially from more participation by DHS members. While attendance during the weekly open days (Sunday from 2 to 4) was disappointing with some days having no visitors, there was an increase in requests for private tours. Among several requests, in two instances, tours for 15 to 20 people were requested by members of the Baker and Kelley families that were holding family reunions on the Cape this summer.

Our special events, including the opening tea in June, were very well attended. To our surprise and great joy, the final summer event on October 2nd brought our largest attendance of the season. Many people commented that they were following the itinerary for the Fall for the Arts events in Dennis. So many came we actually ran over our listed closing time in order to complete our tours. Those who came were both from out-of-town and from the villages of Dennis. The improved signage and wider advertising definitely made a big difference at this year's events.

Our plans for next summer include a restoration project for the barn: the artifacts on the main floor and the Driftwood Zoo displays.

Submitted by Peggy Eastman

1867 West Dennis Graded School Report

- Phyllis Horton and Ruth Derrick created a comprehensive exhibit of Dennis Aquaculture for the 2011 season. This exhibit highlights the diverse interdependency of Dennis and the sea over the years. Special emphasis was given to the marine mollusk industry on Cape Cod. Elements of this exhibit came

from the Dennis Aquaculture Research Corporation and from John Lowell of East Dennis Oyster Farm (www.DennisOysters.com). We are grateful to them for their very instructive displays.

- Our various open house hours resulted in over one hundred visitors to the WDGS throughout this season. The vast majority of these visitors came during days where there were joint events with Jericho and the Manse.
- For the second summer, the WDGS has been opened on a regular basis. Those few who attended were interested and pleased to hear our history & view the displays. Unfortunately the traffic was not as high as we would have liked.
- We have made progress in getting the exterior painting done. While not scheduled as yet, we are working closely with the Town toward this goal.
- We were able to resume the hosting of the Dennis school children. The Dennis Selectmen were very instrumental in ensuring that transportation funding was secured for this important activity.
- We look forward to 2011 with more special events.

Submitted by Roger Sullivan, Chair

DHS Library Report

Activities in the library included answering queries, adding more materials to the physical collections that are located on the Second Floor of the West Dennis Library, digitizing and transcribing records, and researching historical items.

It is difficult to give a magnitude of the activities. Since most of what we do involves the computer, we can give numbers that may be related to the amount of data we have handled this year.

The total collections of DHS in the library are in excess of 163 GB (gigabytes). A gigabyte is 1 billion pieces of information. To give one perspective, 1 gigabyte represents about 2,000 photographs, or about 1,000 manuscripts. This means that our library holds the equivalent of 325,000 photos, or 100,000 manuscripts. This does not include the many bound volumes in the library.

In the preceding year we have added 7.4 GB of information – the equivalent of 15,000 photos or 7,500 manuscripts. Much of this is in maps, documents, transcriptions, town records, as well as other family data and collections. We still have about 24 GB that is in process, awaiting completion.

Submitted by Burton Derick, Librarian

Receiving Tomb

The Receiving Tomb opened for the season on May 22, 2011 with Nauset Newcomers group who had arranged a guided tour of our Dennis Village Cemetery. From that date until today, October 12, we have had 157 visitors sign our guestbook. They were from 13 states (the farthest away being Anchorage, Alaska) and 2 foreign countries (Ireland and Ontario, Canada).

Submitted by Terri Fox

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEETING

Note: All members are invited to attend all monthly DHS Board Meetings. The next meeting is at 3 pm on Tuesday, November 8 at the Jericho Historical Center, 90 Old Main St., West Dennis.

The following menu was prepared for the Thanksgiving dinner of President Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th President, and his guests on November 29, 1906:

DINNER

Oysters on Half Shell
Cream of Chicken Soup
Fried Smelts Sauce Tartare
Roast Turkey Cranberry Sauce
Mashed Potatoes Baked Squash
Boiled Onions Parsnip Fritters
Olives Chicken Salad
Venison Pastry
Pumpkin Pie Mince Pie
Charlotte Russe Almond Ice-cream
Lemon Jelly Hickory Nut Cake
Cheese Fruits
Coffee

Thanksgiving Menu from “*The White House Cook Book*” 1906 edition.

June Howes

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~ December Coming Attractions ~

Bring your children or grandchildren
and a favorite teddy bear to our



FREE

Victorian Teddy Bear Tea

When: Sunday, December 4
2:00 - 4:00 PM

Where: 1801 Jericho House Museum
90 Old Main Street
West Dennis



Sunday, December 11, Noon-4 p.m.
A Christmas Open House &
Festival of Trees

First time event: Sale of decorated tabletop
trees to benefit the Caleb Chase Fund for the
elderly needy in Dennis.

Lovely decorations & treats
at the

Josiah Dennis Manse
77 Nobscusset Road
Dennis Village

