



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to pjhowes@verizon.net

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The next Board Meeting: is Tuesday, November 10 @ 2:00 P.M., Dennis Memorial Library, Bass River Road, Dennis Village.

Un-Pasteurized Cape Cod

I miss the Cape when the percentage of genuine "Characters" amongst the population was much higher. People who thought little about the norm, wore their individuality with not a hint of self-consciousness, and walked their own path... Thoph (Theophilus Smith) was for many years the custodian of the town disposal area; the dump keeper.



When he was keeper of the dump, he kept about two dozen cats there, which probably kept the pest population under control, and perhaps kept the mice and rats from migrating into the village when cold weather cut down the food supply. Thoph felt the mostly feral cats

needed a jag of good wholesome milk with their wild dinners, and took several two quart cans of milk up with him each day. His trip to the dump, less than a mile from his barn was slow. Thoph never got onto autos, and bicycled both ways, winter and summer.

No one could ride a "Wheel", as Thoph and my Father called them, more slowly than Thoph. We kids used to follow along with him sometimes as he creaked through the village, stopping to walk over the railroad track, and then remounting with sighs and cusses. He rode so slowly you couldn't believe he could keep his balance. In order to stay and talk with him, we had to walk slowly BACKWARDS, and then stop and wait.

"Look out there G** damn it, boy, you'll upset this G** damn wheel."

Some older boys got into the dump enclosure one night, and set a fire which caused quite a bit of damage to the surrounding woodland. Thoph was called as a witness in the case, before Judge Hall, a well known local jurist (called "Judgie" by the girls who worked in his Harwich office). As testimony and motions, and court procedure went along, Thoph's obvious discomfort disturbed the proceedings. He sighed, mumbled beneath his breath, and squirmed until the judge directed his attention directly to him.

"Mr. Smith, is there something wrong with you?"

"No, But G** damn it, Judge, I got to get back to that G** damn dump!"

Every one laughed except Thoph. And the Judge.

"Very well, Mr. Smith, you may proceed." Thoph thanked him, and went outside to where a police car waited to whisk him back to his official place of duty; the Dennis dump.

Thacher, Ben, *Whose Boy Be You?* 2007 pp43-45

Who Was Emma Dunham Kelley??

In August, DHS was contacted by Erica Dyson in Claremont, CA. Turns out that she has a number of wills, deeds, letters and pictures of Dennis and Harwich folks that have been handed down and is willing to send us digitized copies for our Digital Archive as her work progresses. These include letters from Capt. Hersey Crowell written to his wife Charlotte Temple Chase Crowell while he was sailing supplies up and down the eastern seaboard for the Union Army during the Civil War.

Then things got even *more* interesting

Erica has a lot of information related to Emma Dunham Kelley, her great-great aunt, and is in the midst of writing a book about her and other aspects of the family history. Now, while our more informed readers might know who this lady was and her connection to Dennis, I certainly did not and find her story fascinating.

Briefly, Emma was an acclaimed late 19th century author of girls religious fiction, publishing two books in her late 20's. While her fame as an author endures, what made her history so notable was that some twenty years after her death, based solely on a poor picture of her, she was declared as being black and therefore widely revered by many at that time as a famous colored author. That has since been thoroughly debunked as thoroughly explores in the source document from which the following is excerpted.

But who was this lady and what was her Dennis connection? The following, from the referenced article, also provides a quite lucid view of life in those times.

Emma Kelley's Story

"Emma Dunham Kelley, born 11 November 1863 in Dennis, Massachusetts, was the second daughter of Isaac Dunham Kelley and Gabrelia Chase, who married there in 1859. In 1860 the young couple lived with Isaac's father.

Dennis was an ancient, but never wealthy, seafaring town where men have gone down to the sea in ships to support their families for generations. On 26 March 1863 Emma's father and young uncle, Johial Chase, left Boston for Alexandria, Virginia, with a load of ice on the 118 ton schooner *Roxbury* under Captain Hersey Crowell, another uncle of Emma's. Early in the voyage a strong gale blew up that apparently sank the ship. Never seen again after 1 April, they were recorded as dying "at sea" on 4 April 1863. Isaac left twenty-two-year-old Gabrelia with a three-year-old daughter, Alice, and pregnant with Emma. This catastrophe devastated the Chase family both emotionally and financially. Gabrelia's sea-captain father had died in 1854; now the family had no male breadwinners.

Amid the "terrible day" Kelley would later write about, Gabrelia and her babies apparently lived with her widowed mother and several unmarried Siblings. A garbled census entry places them in the maternal household in Dennis as late as 1865, but they soon relocated to New Bedford, home to Gabrelia's older sister Emily (nee Chase) Bryant and her tailor husband. Gabrelia did not long remain a widow. On 5 June 1867 she married William S. Quincy, a carpenter, and the next year had a son, Herbert S. Quincy. The marriage would conceal Emma in the census until her own marriage.

Immediately thereafter the family moved to

Rhode Island, where the rapidly expanding textile industry supplied ample employment in villages along the Blackstone River. Tragedy struck again when William died of consumption in July 1868 leaving twenty-seven-year old Gabrelia twice widowed with three children under ten. Gabrelia went to work in the cotton mills. Her widowed mother and unmarried siblings had also moved to Cumberland, Rhode Island, by 1870.

By 1875, fifteen-year-old Alice also had to work in the Lonsdale mills while Emma and Herbert attended public schools. Living next door in company-owned row-houses were Kelley's grandmother Chase, Aunt Lavina, and Uncle Warren. The 1880 census shows Emma still in school while Gabrelia and Alice worked in the mills. Close by were Emma's maternal aunts and uncles: Charlotte Crowell, widow of the drowned Captain Hersey Crowell, and unmarried Chase siblings, Warren, Abbie, and Lavina. As Emma's grandmother Chase lay dying, she made Charlotte (Aunt Lottie) promise to take care of the family. Another Chase sibling, Patience (nee Chase) Matthews, had also moved to nearby Lincoln.

Emma became a schoolteacher by 1885. She aspired to publish a novel for young women with strong religious and moral lessons. At age twenty-eight she published *Megda*. Nearing thirty, Emma married the childless widower Benjamin Amon Hawkins, a second-generation civil engineer, eleven years her senior. Family lore says this was not a love match but one of practicality. Their 1892 wedding notice in a local newspaper mentioned Emma's fame as the author of *Megda*.

Emma brought to the marriage significant revenues from her first novel. Those financial resources were considerably enhanced by the publication, this time under her own copyright, of *Four Girls at Cottage City*, possibly written between the births of her children, Gala in 1894 and Megda in 1897. A sequel to *Megda* survived in manuscript form until 1984 when it was discarded in the processing of Megda Hawkins's estate.

Unfortunately, Emma saw the money squandered as her husband worked on several unsuccessful inventions such as a more efficient stove, the Hawkins Heater. Despite Emma's employment as a librarian at the Davis Circulating Library in Pawtucket, the family quickly lost their first home to foreclosure and moved from one rented house to another--each cheaper than the last." Concerned for the future of her two

unmarried daughters if Benjamin survived her, Emma specified in her April 1929 will that in no event was he to receive a penny from her estate.

Gabrelia died 6 September 1924 and was buried in South Dennis¹ next to her mother. Just over five year later, on 22 November 1929, Benjamin Hawkins died of heart disease. Money was tight during the Depression for widowed Emma and her single daughters, although Megda and Gala held good jobs as secretaries, until frugal Lavina Chase, the sole surviving sibling of Emma's mother, died unmarried in 1933, willing most of her estate to Emma. In the twilight of her life Emma had financial security and owned her own home. She died of heart disease in Rumford on 22 October 1938, and is buried beside her husband and daughters in Moshassuck Cemetery in Central Falls, Rhode Island. The novels, particularly the subplot of "Charlotte Hood" in *Four Girls at Cottage City*, are heavily autobiographical."

Flynn, Katherine E., Ph.D., CG "A Case of Mistaken Racial Identity: Finding Emma Dunham (nee Kelley) Hawkins National Genealogical Society Quarterly, Volume 94, No. I, March 2006, pp9-13

The Princess And The Gentle Giant

Long ago a princess fell in love with a young warrior who was poor, the son of a common Indian. The father of the princess, a wealthy chief, told the brave that he could not wed the princess until he owned a whole island. The young brave, who owned less than an arrow's flight of land, not to mention an island, despaired of ever being able to bring the princess to his wigwam. Once when they met alone he told her of the demands of the chief, her father, and how he must abandon his wooing because he was without hope. The chief's daughter took him by the hand and led him to a high hill. There, at twilight, before the first star, Giant Maushop came striding along, stepping high to keep his feet clear of the soggy marshes. The princess and her lover told Maushop their story, and the Gentle Giant promised to help them, if they would return to their tribesmen.

The brave and the chief's daughter went their separate ways. Maushop filled his pipe with a mixture of tobacco and pokeweed, lighted it with a flash of lightning, and sat down to smoke. Fog

covered the Long Land and the waters to the south of it. When he had done with the smoking, Maushop waded into the sea. He dumped out the ashes from his pipe. As the embers fell, thunder roared; a hissing noise like fire on water was heard in the Place of Bays. Fog cleared. Far to the south the people of the tribes beheld an island which they named Natocket, the "Far Away Land" (Nantucket).

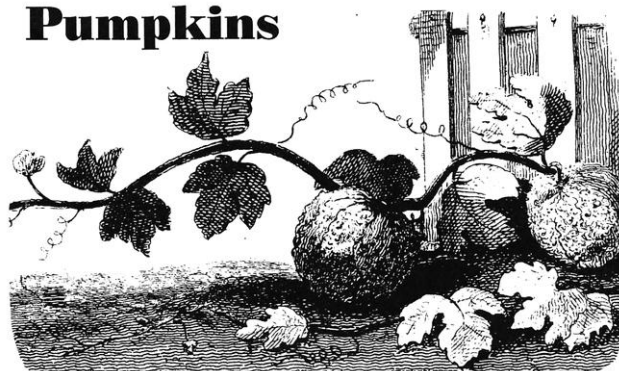
Maushop returned to the shores of the Cape, lifted the young brave to his shoulder, placed the princess in the crook of his arm, and carried them both to Far Away Island. He left them there, went back to the tribes, picked up the princess's father who did not desire to be carried, and placed the old chief on the island, where the first man-beings that he encountered were his daughter and the young brave. But when he learned that the whole island belonged to that common warrior, he rejoiced, and willingly consented that the princess should become the warrior's wife. The young brave and his squaw lived all their lives on Na-tocket, and so did their children and their grand-children who are still grateful to the Giant Maushop although he visits them no more.

Reynard, Elizabeth, *The Narrow Land*, Chatham, MA, Chatham Historical Society, 1978, pp 26,27

Fall Recipe????

This old article was found reprinted in "The Old Farmer's Almanac's, Colonial Cookbook", 1982 edition. Although it has not been 'tested' in this editor's own kitchen by his New England wife, it sounds, shall we say, *interesting*.

Pumpkins



New England Housewives slice ripe Pumpkins, dice them, and fill a pot to 2 or 3 gallons and stew gently a whole day. As they sink, they refill the pot. Stewed enough they look like bak'd Apples; this they Dish, add Butter, Vinegar, and Spices, and serve to be eaten with Fish or Flesh. It provokes Urin extreamly and is very windy.

¹ South Dennis Congregational Church Cemetery, lot 109 *Derick, Burton, Cemetery Inscriptions of Dennis, Massachusetts*, Heritage Books, 2012

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NOVEMBER & DECEMBER DHS EVENTS

Dennis Historical Society's
1877 Rose Victorian
Is closed for the Season!

BUT

We will be open on:
"Small Business Saturday"

November 28, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Members: 20% discount for this event
Hope to see you the 28th of November!

*Regular hours of operation will
resume on May 20, 2016*

-OR-

"Whenever the Open Flag is flying"



Sunday, December 13, Noon to 3:30 P.M.

***Dennis Historical Society
Christmas Open House***

*Costumed docents will greet you
throughout the festively decorated
historic home of Rev. Josiah*

*Dennis. Enjoy holiday
refreshments with us*

*1736 Josiah Dennis Manse
Museum*

*77 Nobscussett Road
Dennis Village*