



THE DENNISES WHO WILL CELEBRATE WITH DENNIS

We have made an effort to locate and contact all of the other towns in the United States with the name of Dennis, or something that has Dennis in it. You know about most of them. We are still working on a small community, unincorporated, in North Carolina by that name, but progress is being made, and we plan to issue invitations to all our sister towns to send representatives to our Dennis to be present and recognized in June of '93. As the committee has no appropriated town funds, but must pay for the celebration by contributions and fund raisers, we have asked these visitors to pay for their own transportation here, but will provide them with rooms and meals for their stay. Anyone who would like to entertain one or more of our guests from other Dennises, either as overnight guests and/or for a meal or more, please contact Barbara Hart, Bicentennial Committee, P.O. Box 1793, Dennis MA 02638. Visitors have been invited from New Jersey, North Carolina, Texas, Kansas, and Missouri.

THE DENNISES WHO WILL NOT CELEBRATE WITH DENNIS

Having located all of the other towns we could find in the U.S. of A. named Dennis, the next step seemed to be to find the descendants of Josiah Dennis to be a part of our celebration.

We began with Josiah's children of which there were nine, two sons and seven daughters. Of these children, only three daughters reached maturity, and of those daughters, only one married. She was Hannah, the first child of Mr. Dennis and his first wife, Bathsheba (Mills) born October 4, 1730. In 1750 she married Isaiah Dunster the minister of the north parish of Harwich, now Brewster. We learn something about our Mr. Dennis, whose personal life is so poorly documented, by his relationship with his son-in-law. Isaiah Dunster was a very methodical, careful, and thoughtful man. He kept meticulous records of his life, his business transactions, and his family. He was, for his day, a very liberal Congregational minister, acknowledging that even the educated and very devout clergy could be mistaken in their interpretation of the gospels, and suggesting that all men take it upon themselves to study and try to understand the word of God themselves. Many ministers of the day followed more closely to the example of such as John Mather who felt that the clergy alone were fit to understand and interpret the laws of God. Although Josiah Dennis left few records of his thoughts and feelings about theology, he clearly demonstrates his love and respect for his son-in-law, and thus lets us draw some conclusions about his own beliefs and practices.

Hannah Dennis Dunster seems not to have enjoyed robust good health. The Dunsters were married for thirteen years and no children blest their home. At last, on the 7th of October, 1763, their first child, a daughter named Martha was born to them "...Friday 2 of ye clock A.M." Hannah was not to know the joy of motherhood. She died on the 22nd of May, 1766, "after about 4 months of languishment being satisfied with Life and in a Comfortable Hope of a better". So writes her husband in his family record. Hannah's father had predeceased her by almost three years, including in his will a bequest to his son-in-law, Mr. Dunster, of a rare and valued book and his book case, "as a token of my respect".

The year following Hannah Dennis Dunster's death Josiah Dennis' two surviving daughters died. Both of them remembered their sister's daughter in their wills, and Mr. Dunster made a careful account of what had come to his daughter from their aunts. He had married again very shortly after Hannah's death, Mary Smith, also a clergyman's daughter, and she bore him five daughters, none of whom married. But on the 18th of May 1783, Martha did marry. Her new husband was Dr. James Foster, of Rochester at the time, but related to the Foster family of Brewster. Josiah Dennis' only granddaughter became the mother of two sons, Josiah Dennis Foster, born February 24, 1784 and Isaiah Dunster Foster, born February 2, 1791. Martha Dunster Foster died in 1808, having lived to know of the honor bestowed upon her grandfather by the people of his parish. Her husband, much beloved by his friends and patients but devastated by the loss of his wife and helpmate, became paranoid and insane and died by his own hand in 1812. Both sons followed in their father's profession. But both died at a young age, during the War of 1812, Dr. Josiah Dennis Foster at the Great Lakes in August of 1812 and Dr. Isaiah Dunster Foster at Montagues on the river Rappahanock, Virginia in April of 1813. They were both unmarried. Thus no flesh and blood descendants can be invited to the celebration of the town which memorializes the name of Josiah Dennis. Those of you who are aware of his love of family and his parish, especially those in his flock less fortunate than others, his interest in conserving the environment, maintaining a strong sense of community, and last but by no means least, his sense of humor and joy in life, despite the many vicissitudes which he personally suffered, are left to perpetuate his memory and his values. [My thanks to "Cousin" Bob Williams for pointing me in the right direction in perfecting the Foster genealogy. NTR]

THANK YOU DEAR HOSTESSES

There will be a thank-you coffee at the Josiah Dennis Manse on October 14 at 10:30 A.M. for all the people who volunteered their time this summer at the Manse. Your contribution to the Manse is important and very much appreciated. We certainly couldn't do it without you. Our summer visitors enjoy meeting and talking with you as you tell them about our lovely old house and the history of Dennis. We hope you'll be able to come back next summer, and maybe you can talk a friend or neighbor into joining us in our Bicentennial year. We are sure to have lots of visitors as we celebrate our 200th year. Thanks again!! we'll see you on the 14th.

CALENDAR

Oct. 14 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meeting at the Manse.
Oct. 15 10:00 A.M. Cape and Islands Historical Assn. Annual Meeting at the Manse.

BICENTENNIAL BITS

Plans for our gala 200th birthday are moving right along. A most important step is completed and in the hands of the teachers at Ezra H. Baker School. It is a work of art, honestly. No stick figures and outline drawings for our kids! Lynn Nardini has created imaginative and very carefully and intricately drawn illustrations, puzzles, find-the-hidden pictures, crosswords, word finds, etc., and adorable mascots, named Dennie and Cordelia, two fish who swim along throughout the booklet, encouraging the children to take an interest in the history in the town of Dennis. The teachers, without whose help the workbook would not have been as well-planned, are very enthusiastic about this new tool for teaching local history. The Bicentennial Committee has generously provided the school with books for two years of third grade classes. The history of Dennis workbooks, entitled, "Dennis--Then and Now" will also be on sale for grandparents looking for a gift with educational and historical interest that's also fun for ages 8 to 10. Must be seen to be appreciated. It's great, Lynn, and many thanks for the many hours you have spent on perfecting this fine addition to local history.

During our Bicentennial year of 1993, events are planned for every month. Watch your Dennis Bulletin for continuing coverage of the plans as they evolve. The big weekend will be in June of '93 when the humungous parade and the anniversary luncheon will be back-to-back events. It just so happens that our big week end of celebration also corresponds with a Cape-wide Heritage week, sponsored by the Cape and Islands Historical Association and the Cape Cod Commission (of which you will hear more later). Hopefully many people will be enticed to the Cape and will learn something about what we are all about, not only now, but then.

A PERILOUS AND COLORFUL MARITIME CHAPTER

Since Revolutionary War days, and to a lesser extent prior to that time, the menfolk of Cape Cod have been engaged in an endless variety of activities, making a living from the sea. The best known careers are those of the mariners who went deep sea sailing, fighting the North Atlantic, rounding Cape Horn, sometimes becalmed in the midst of Pacific Islands inhabited by cannibals. These are the exciting tales most often remembered and written about. The fishing industry has also produced tales of adventure--less exciting perhaps, but that branch of sea adventure has produced great economic benefit to the Cape. Less known, but at times just as exciting and of great value to all maritime interests was the Lightship Service. I have found the names of quite a number of Dennis men who were engaged in that maritime activity, especially around the turn of this present century. The lightships were stationed at strategic spots in the dangerous waters of Nantucket and Vineyard Sound, to warn vessels of shoal areas and to assist the ship masters in verifying their position. The vessels were anchored, and had small kerosene engines with which they periodically made their way to port for repairs and maintenance, while the lightship Relief stood their watch. As a fourth-grader, Miss Wiggington, (later Mrs. Roland Taylor) taught us the names of these ships--Cross Rip, Handkerchief Shoal, Hedge Fence, Hens and Chickens--once I could name them all. Service on the lightships was not romantic, and seldom adventurous. But when a ship was seen in distress, the crew were ready and willing to act. There are many tales of valor and heroism, in instances when a vessel in trouble was assisted and crew rescued. But many stints of duty involved only watching and counting the number and types of vessels which sailed past. Perhaps you have seen the Nantucket Lightship baskets, which were originally made by the men stationed on Cross Rip, a point halfway from Nantucket to the Cape. I will tell you some of their adventures next time.

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

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