



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 26 Number 9

September 2003

CALENDAR

DHS BOARD MEETS
Wednesday, Sept. 10
7 PM at Jericho
Interested members are
welcome.

**DHS ANNUAL
MEETING**
Saturday, September 20
Join us for lunch as we
wrap up our historical year
and recount all the
interesting things that
have happened to your
Society over the year.
Note the luncheon
reservation form for
information or call
(508) 394-0017.

Following a short business
meeting we will enjoy the
music of the Mid-Cape
Chorus.

“HAUNTED HOUSES OF CAPE COD”

Wednesday, October 29
7:30 PM

Local author, Jack Sheedy,
will tell us where the
skeletons are hidden as he
relates scary tales from our
surroundings.

CARLETON HALL
1006 Old Bass River Road
Refreshments will be
served.

DHS HONORS RAY URQUHART

By proclamation of the Governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney, August 10, 2003 was declared to be **Raymond M. Urquhart Day** in Dennis in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to honor our President for a lifetime of illustrious achievements and service.

A dedication and reception was held at the **1867 West Dennis Graded School House** where the large downstairs meeting room was named in his honor. **Phyllis Horton**, who organized the celebration attended by family and friends, presented Ray with a brass plaque denoting his contribution to the restoration of the school which will be placed in the room along with citations and proclamations from the Massachusetts Senate, the House of Representatives, and the Dennis Board of Selectmen.

Ray is serving his fourth year as President of the Dennis Historical Society and has served as Chairman of the 1867 West Dennis Graded School House Restoration Committee. He has also served on the Dennis Local Planning Committee and the Dennis Conservation Trust. The Trust honored Ray at this ceremony for his work in coordinating a joint effort between Brewster and Dennis and in securing the services of Americorps to clean up the heavily overgrown ancient stone wall at Bound Brook (See September 2002 Newsletter). They have erected a bench which has a plaque noting Ray's achievements at the Bound Brook Conservation Area.

We have Ray's leadership to thank for our new Historical brochure, an update of our bylaws, and a look to the future for the Dennis Historical Society. Thank you, Ray Urquhart!

Each and every honor is well deserved for a man who has spent his life in service to his country, his town and his fellow man, both here and abroad.



Ray Urquhart addressing the assembly at the dedication of the 1867 West Dennis Graded School House, October 1, 2000

THIS OLD HOUSE: CARLETON HALL 1828*by Phyllis Horton*

The Religious Freedom Act of 1821 allowed people with differing religious ideologies to consider something other than the staunch congregationalism that prevailed on Cape Cod. One of the new religions was Reformed Methodism which had been brought to neighboring Brewster. A number of Dennis worshippers had been attending services there and decided that they had enough members and that the time was right to bring Reformed Methodism to Dennis Village. Captain Uriah Howes reported they had built a "little praying house" sometime after February 1828 on the site of the present day Carleton Hall.

By the mid-1830s there were five churches in little Dennis Village just about within sight of each other, and each with a small number of local worshippers to support them. In 1847 the Methodists started meeting with the Trinitarians in their building to pool resources. The "little praying house" was added onto and became a private academy which educated young students until 1859 when a new graded school house was built just across the street. The building then became known as Academy Hall and was rented out for special occasions. In 1865 Captain Carleton Howes organized a group of citizens to purchase the hall and equip it for the use of the community. The group honored Captain Howes by naming it Carleton Hall. His picture hangs in the large meeting room. The first citizens who banded together to buy the hall purchased shares in it. These shares were passed down in families until 1955 when it was presented to the town.

Over the years various social clubs held their regular meetings and fund raising fairs and dinners there to raise money for worthy causes and for the upkeep of the building. The hall served as an interim library before Dennis Memorial Library was built.

One event that was always well attended was The Chicken Pie Supper put on by the Dennis Union Church. Just about every family in the village participated, religion made no difference. The ladies made the pies and desserts at home and the men did the setting up, cooked the vegetables, served the meal and cleaned up afterward. Brant Ellis always mashed the potatoes because he kept at it until they were smooth. Walter McDowell was assigned the task of bringing the bricks of pre-sliced vanilla, chocolate and strawberry Neapolitan ice cream from Hyannis. Long time Dennis Town Clerk Gerard Chapman was in charge of the kitchen. When chicken pies and desserts came in he decided where they were placed—chicken pies in the kitchen, some desserts on the long tables in the hall and certain desserts saved out to auction off afterwards. All the gravy that was delivered with the pies was poured into a five gallon milk can brought by I. Grafton Howes so that everyone's gravy tasted the same. In later years it was revealed that a couple of the chicken pies and a few desserts went on a special shelf in the kitchen, held in reserve for the men who worked on the dinner. They knew who the best cooks in the village were!

There was one chicken pie that arrived every year without fail which Gerard accepted gracefully and placed in a certain spot in the kitchen, with all the men saying, "Here comes the pie." When darkness fell Gerard would open the back door and heave that pie as far into the woods as he could. It was with tacit agreement of all the men present and it was never mentioned outside of that kitchen until the lady had gone to meet her Maker.

For 175 years Carleton Hall has served the public. It is still being used as a meeting place by dozens of civic groups. Few of them would ever guess at its history and of the good social conscience of a group of gentlemen who could keep a secret for over twenty years to save a lady's pride.

Correction, please! In last month's Newsletter on page 4 we showed "The Bachelder Sisters" working at the Manse. Actually the little girl weaving was Hannah Rose visiting from New York and the other girls were the sisters, Erin and Lauren Bachelder from New Hampshire.

Just a reminder....

Our annual meeting at Christine's restaurant in West Dennis will be a 40th anniversary party for DHS. In July 1963 a group of Dennis historians, dignitaries and leading lights gathered at Carleton Hall to form the Dennis Historical Society. Your Society is still going strong and is still firmly committed to preserving the history of the Town of Dennis.

Please join us as we thank out-going President Ray Urquhart for his four years at the helm and welcome Ginny Devine as our new President. The usual business of an annual meeting will be taken care of (we try to keep ours short and sweet) and we'll vote on some by-law changes.

Beginning at 12 noon on Saturday, September 20 enjoy a social hour and greet old friends and new. Then savor one of Christine's delicious luncheons. Following that will be our "short and sweet" meeting, and we'll end with delightful melodies from the very talented singers of the Mid-Cape Chorus. We will be among the first to hear their new program for the 2003-04 season. The last date we can accept reservations is September 17. If you think it might be too late to send your tickets by return mail, we can hold them for you at the door.

Circle your choice(s) and enclose a check for \$15.00 for each meal. Mail to DHS, PO BOX 607, SOUTH DENNIS, MA 02660. If you enclose a self-addressed envelope, we will send you your tickets. Remember luncheon includes soup, potato, fresh vegetable, rolls and butter, dessert, coffee or tea.

Number

- _____ *Baked Scrod*
 _____ *Yankee Pot Roast Jardinere*
 _____ *Chicken Marsala*

WANTED—OLD SHEETS

The DHS quilt collection was recently documented for the Mass Quilt Documentation Program. We have a marvelous collection of antique quilts made with the loving hands of our ancestors and others. We learned that to be properly stored they should be individually wrapped in white cotton sheets. Do you have any in the back of your linen closet that are not being used any more? If so, we would love to have them donated to the Society. Please call Joan Martin at (508) 394-9303 or Phyllis Horton at (508) 394-0017. Thanks!

HISTORY DETECTIVES NEEDED

While our quilt collection was being documented, the very knowledgeable ladies connected with the Lowell Textile Museum and the Mass Quilt Project discovered that Dennis had a "Mystery Quilter"! After examining a fine old quilt donated by Lu and Seth Crowell which was found in a sea chest in an upstairs room of Captain Joshua Crowell's 1840 farm house, the ladies discovered other quilts made by the same person. Beautifully hand quilted, probably mid-1800s, though with some fine imported fabric from England and France which was made much earlier, the lady stitched a consistent 7 stitches to the inch. She was wealthy enough to afford large single fabric backing for her quilts. The question is where did the other quilts in our collection come from? They were brought to the Manse and left without any documentation. The quilt from Seth's family leads to a few possibilities. Was Desire (Hall) Howes, wife of Captain Marcus Lafayette Howes, the seamstress? Could the quilts have been made by Olive Nye Hamlin, wife of Captain Joshua Crowell for her five grandchildren? Or by someone in Sophronia (Chapman) Crowell's family? Our Quilter's handiwork is so distinguishable that it shows up in quilt pieces made into a quilt by a group of different women. If you have a clue, do let us know.

Oct. 2003

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

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02660

The Way We Were

Dennis native Dan Walker is shown installing the new DHS date board on Carleton Hall. Dan and his wife, Frances, have been involved in Carleton Hall events for many years. Although counted among the faithful at the Immaculate Conception Church in Brewster, Dan worked in the kitchen for the Dennis Union Church Chicken Pie Suppers and Fran's chocolate cake was always saved for the auction (or sometimes on the "special" shelf in the kitchen!)

Dan's mother, called "Mother Mary" by nearly everyone in Dennis Village, gave Fran a word of advice when she came here as a bride. "Anything they ask you to do, you do. You'll never be sorry." The feeling was mutual. When Mary's church had a cake sale at the church in Brewster, Dennis Village Protestant ladies made cakes for them. That's part of what made Dennis a great place to live!



Photo is thanks to Carol Bell who wrote:

"I snapped this of my dad back in April, installing the sign at Carleton Hall. He loved doing it. We measured 'twenty times and drilled once.'"