



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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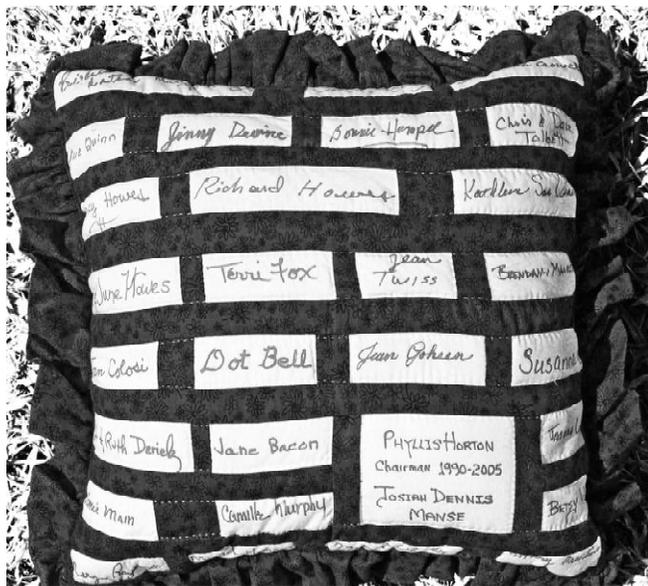
Volume 32 Number 8 Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to pmrhorton@aol.com September 2009

## *Should Old Acquaintance Be Forgot....*

In my well-remembered youth, every girl had an autograph book and vied with each other to have it signed by as many people as possible. The teachers and principal were a bonus, and we hardly ever asked anyone else, especially people, like our parents, who could write something meaningful. Sixth to eighth grade rhetoric seemed to lean heavily on love, marriage and baby carriage - well, it rhymed! I still have my book and about once a year I pull it out and reminisce about my "good old days"

I have recently become aware of the autograph book in the DHS Library of Lucilla Howes of East Dennis who received her book in 1836. This delightful little book was a gift to the Society by John Schofield. It was signed by her parents, grandparents, neighbors and important people. Many signatures in her book were the leading lights in the Town of Dennis at that time. Each one of them wrote significant and meaningful verses meant to guide young Lucille as she grew into adulthood. Lucille's beautiful verses and poetry are a far cry from the juvenile thoughts inscribed in my blue imitation leather covered book with multi-colored pages. Still, I enjoy reading the names and think back fondly on my old school mates and friends, many of them no longer with us.

DHS also has a signature quilt made for a bride-to-be who would be moving away from Dennis. Pieces of cotton material were passed out to her family, friends and neighbors who wanted to be remembered by her. Several quilting bees were held to design the quilt incorporating the signatures into a loving remembrance for the young woman who had been raised in their community and would soon be going away.



Historical societies across the country treasure signature quilts that went west with many young brides with their husbands who were following their dream. Those quilts were lovingly protected and cared for as a woman passed through the stages of her life. She remembered her old home, her loved ones and her youth. At her death it was passed down to her descendants. Eventually it often came into the hands of the caretakers of their town's history. Pieces of Dennis history are scattered from here to the West Coast. We know this because sometimes those pieces come back home again.

Recently I was presented with a beautiful red and white autographed pillow signed by all the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum members who served on the committee with me until my retirement. I understand that Terri Fox was responsible for collecting the signatures and Ruth Derick did the exquisite quilting and finished the pillow. It is truly a work of art, completely hand made with very fine stitches that would have passed muster with my grandmother and great-grandmother. This lovely gift is one I will treasure for the rest of my days when I read the names that have been so special to me for so many years.

Phyllis Horton

## *There's a Rumor Going Around . . .*

It seems someone spread a story that Miss Emma Baker, the last member of the Baker family to live in what we now call "The Jericho House," was actually married at one time, but only for just one day.

Some marriages just don't work out, but very few I've heard of have fallen apart quite that quickly. In my research into the matter, however, I've not been able to come up with any evidence of our Miss Emma ever being married – long or short. Mrs. Henry B Winship was also Emma Baker, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Colin Baker of Providence, R.I., and formerly of West Dennis. Her marriage to Col. Winship, however, spanned more than 50 years.

Emma Baker Winship also lived in Baker Town, (Baker Town straddles the line of the two villages of South Dennis and West Dennis) she and her husband moved there in 1894 and built an impressive mansion on Grand Cove. They were active leaders in the social life of the village and celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with "a grand ball" in Doric Hall, located then where the playground is today behind the West Dennis Graded School.<sup>1</sup>

Now, I know Miss Emma Baker was considered "a bit strange" by some of her South (and West) Dennis neighbors. It was said she was often observed, "talking to someone who wasn't there." Or at least to someone no one else could see. Mind you, she wouldn't have had a cell phone in those days. And she was also known to make a point of keeping close track of the business of those who lived around her in Baker Town, and if she found it necessary, telling them what they should do to keep in line.

As a teenager growing up in South Dennis, I sometimes saw Miss Emma out in her yard getting water from the pump near her back door. It was obvious that Miss Emma's house had no inside plumbing and no electricity or telephone. I wasn't sure if it was because she was very poor or she was just eccentric. She was, as they used to say, stand-offish, especially with us young folks. Or was it that we teenagers were the stand-offish ones?

If we noticed her on a Sunday in her best white dress walking to the nearby South Dennis Congregational Church, or in her every-day clothes on her way to Smith's Market in West Dennis center, we gave little regard to her and her circumstances. She was just one of a number of village fixtures.

But now, quite a few decades away from my teens, Miss Emma has come back to haunt me. I'm sure it's because as member of the Jericho Committee, I spend a lot of time in the house where she lived much of her life and where she died in 1955.

What would she think of Jericho House today? For one thing she would not know it as "Jericho." That was the name given to the house by Elizabeth Reynard who purchased the house after Miss Emma died, a time when its walls literally were tumbling down. The house today is probably much more like it was in 1801, when the young – and very successful – Captain Theophilus Baker had it built, incorporating some of the best appointments available here at that time. Jericho has seen its good days and its bad days.

Something serendipity happened during the recent "Skills Day" open house at Jericho, which included a display of old cookbooks. Among the cookbooks loaned for the display was a 1937 edition of "Our Favorite Recipes" published by the Ladies Union Circle of the South Dennis Congregational Church.

Peggy Eastman

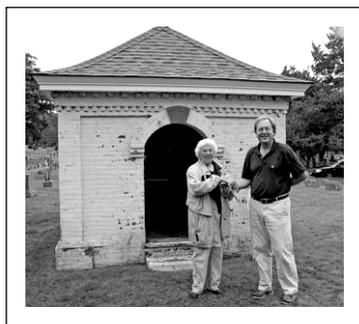
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*August has been a busy month for the Dennis Historical Society. Here are a few bits of news about these 'goin's-on' amidst the other summer fun and visitors! We hope that next month you can say "Yep- I was there". Oh, by the way, please plan to be there!*

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<sup>1</sup> Reid, Nancy Thacher, "Dennis, Cape Cod" Pp 496-497

## Receiving Tomb Transfer



On August 13, Phyllis Horton, Chairperson of the Hearse House Committee, turned over the keys of the receiving tomb in Dennis Village Cemetery to the Town of Dennis with Paul McCormick, Dennis Board of Selectmen Chairman, was representing the Town. The committee had planned to restore an historic hearse house, but it proved unsalvageable. Richard Howes recommended that the antique receiving tomb in the Dennis Village Cemetery be restored in its place, which was accomplished. The Receiving Tomb contains exhibits of Dennis cemeteries, including Civil War and Spanish American War artifacts.

## New Member Party

A party for the new members of DHS was held at the Manse on August 12<sup>th</sup>. The old building provided true Colonial air-conditioning, as the modern system had failed. Despite the summery conditions, it was an excellent gathering. (Photo by Richard S. Howes)



## DHS Fun Weekend



The Dennis Historical Society scored a tripple header on the weekend of August 15 & 16. On the 15<sup>th</sup> there was *Colonial Open House at the Manse* with Open hearth cooking with the Heaney's, Candle making, spinning, pie



making, the Colonial Militia children's games, glass blowing and chair caning. As in past years, it was a very popular event. The following day, Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup> brought two events. First was *Old Fashioned Skills Day at Jericho* with costumed guides demonstrating the varied skills needed for life in the 1800's, a special antique cookbook display and *The Barn at Jericho House*. Operating concurrently but running later to allow visitors to visit both locations was the *Open House at the West Dennis Graded School*. Both events were well attended. (Left – R. Howes photo- 8 yr old Ella Vacchi helps Artist Ron Michael cane a chair. Right – Matt Emery teaches a Junior Docent glass blowing)



## Doll House Raffle

This wonderful dollhouse is being raffled off! It was donated by Bill and Marilyn McCormick and assembled by Richard Howes. The dollhouse is approximately 29" w by 31" h by 16" deep. DHS is selling Raffle Chances at \$1 each or six for \$5. The lucky winner will be chosen at the Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> Autumn at the Manse Open House at 3:45 p.m. Buy your tickets from Manse Committee members or call Nancy at (508) 385-3528.

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## Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming DHS Programs

Saturday, September 26, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

*Autumn at the Manse*

The Josiah Dennis Manse will be open for the public  
Refreshments will be served.

1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum  
77 Nobscusset Road, Dennis Village

Sunday, September 27, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

*Autumn Celebration at Jericho*

Please join us at Jericho for our wonderful  
celebration of the harvest season of old.  
Refreshments will be served.

1801 Jericho Historical Center  
90 Old Main Street, West Dennis

*Saturday, October 17, 12:00 p.m.*

Dennis Historical Society  
Annual Meeting and Luncheon at the SeaView Restaurant  
Please see the enclosed flyer.  
Reservations & Information – 508-385-9308

### *Notable Quotes*

*“Laugh at yourself first, before anyone else can.”  
Elsa Maxwell 1883-1963*

