



# Dennis Historical Society

## Newsletter

### January 2019

#### Volume 42, No1

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**There will not be a Board Meeting this month**

Please send information & stories for the newsletter to Dave Talbott at the DHS Website email address: [info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org)

### ***MILDRED CROWELL'S GIRLHOOD***

*The excerpts which make up this wonderful and fascinating article were submitted by our own Bo Durst.*

Mildred Crowell (1891-1990) was my great aunt. She was the granddaughter of Prince Sears Crowell (1813-1881) and Polly Dillingham Foster (1811-1897) as well as Capt. Joshua Sears (of the Shiverick ship, Wild Hunter) and Minerva Handren. She was the youngest of the 5 children of Edwin Dillingham Crowell (1851-1897) and Louisa Maria (pron. Mariah) Sears (1852-1951). This was written c. 1950's for the family when she was in her 60's.

"I was born Sept. 30, 1891, in the parsonage, which at that time was next to the church. [the Wesleyan Methodist Church on Center Street on Quivet Neck in East Dennis, MA] It has since been moved to the corner of Pleasant and Sea Streets. In the corner of the lot was what we called the wood shed. It had an upstairs room which my sister Gertrude [9 years older] had as a play room where she had her dolls and other treasures. At times I was allowed to climb the rickety stairs and sit there, but not to disturb anything.

"My sister Minerva [14 years older], Min or Minny as we called her, was at Smith College. One day Grandma Sears [Mrs. Joshua Sears] who lived at the top of Cold Storage Road, which was known as Shore Road then, came over to our house to help Mama make sandwiches to send her. These were wrapped and tied with blue baby ribbons. I was allowed to eat the crumbs left after cutting the sandwiches. They were delicious and I licked the jelly off my fingers afterward.

"Papa died when I was only five years old, but I can remember little things of him, as how he would give me pennies for my piggy bank etc. Even then, I was fond of baked beans, and once after I had been sick and on a cereal & milk diet, I begged him "Please papa can't I have just one bean." He put one bean in the middle of a big white ironstone plate, passed it to me, and I said "thank you Papa". In those days we were taught to say "Thank you" even though it was for only one bean.

"I was only spanked once in my lifetime that I remember. Mama couldn't bring herself to do it, but Gertrude did it for her. I had poured a lot of water on the floor in Gertrude's room so I could sail my new boat on it, and it leaked through the cracks into the sitting room below.

"One day Mama sent me over to Grandma Sears with a pair of scissors to have my hair cut. I began to scratch the end of my tongue and nipped it. It bled profusely. Lou [13 years older] had read somewhere that a cobweb would stop bleeding. He was very upset because he couldn't find any cobwebs in mother's house. He wouldn't have had any trouble finding plenty in her daughter Mildred's house.

"I used to love going over to see Grandma Sears because she was always busy making cookies and other good things to eat. . . Ladies went calling on their friends a lot then, and Grandma often took me along too. I always carried my little bag along with me. Everywhere we went, cookies were passed around, and I came home with my cookie bag full. Grandma would hitch up Dolly the horse, and away we would go.

"When Mama had to be away, Ed [5 years older] and I stayed with Grandma. She had no furnace then, and I would undress by the fireplace down stairs, then dash upstairs and jump into the feather bed which had been pre-heated with a hot brick. The bathroom wasn't put in until later, so we had to dash out through the cold wood room to the three holer in the back of the barn.

"There was no electricity or phones on the lower Cape, or no hospital. Mama had to have an operation for gall stones. She was put on a cot and taken to the depot in a baggage wagon and then on to the early train in the baggage car to Boston where she was met and taken to a hospital on Beacon Hill. There was no Mass. General Hospital. No ambulances on the Cape either. Survival from a serious operation in those days was questionable, but she pulled through OK with the help of a nurse whom she kept for some time. When Min was born Granma & Grampa helped to deliver her-----[she was the oldest and the only one to be born in Joshua & Minerva's house.]

"My Grandma Crowell when I knew her was an invalid and never left her room which was over the sitting room. I was sent over to see her every so often, and when she thought I had been there long enough she would give me a peppermint from a little white box

with flowers on the cover and say good-by. . . .Grandma belonged to the Temperance Union but she took gin under doctor's advice, and she saw to it that she had it on time. "Alice" [Saint], she would say, "it's time foe my gin."

"I have heard stories of the 5 Hall boys who lived next door, and the 5 Crowell boys who lived here. If there was any mischief going on in the village, it was layed to either the Hall or Crowell boys and sometimes both. Grandpa [Prince S. Crowell] had to fix things up, as he was also guardian for the Hall boys whose parents had died. . . .

"There was a store at the corner of School and South Street. It had a room on the west called the D. H. Ice Cream Parlor. It also had a soda fountain there. The east side had food and a candy counter where we could buy licorice sticks, also a raft of other things. There was a big box full of unwrapped loaves of bread. You pawed around regardless of how dirty your hands were to find the loaf you wanted. Sometimes it was put in a bag, but more often, you took it as is. It burned down and another store was built on the corner of Center and School Streets called H.H.'s where they also sold dry goods, etc. . . .

"There was a Cooper shop back and to the north of Edmund's [Sears – last house on left of School St. before J. H. Sear Rd.] where they made cranberry barrels. We played there and were sometimes given one of the imperfect hoops which we rolled down the street with the help of a stick. . . .

"When the hurdy gurdy man came around with his monkey, someone got him to go to Warden Hall & play for a dance there. At intermission ice cream was served on paper plates. Then someone would go around with an old bucket and collect the plates. We danced the two-dip waltz, schottische and square dances, such as quadrille, minuet, etc. It was all started with a grand march around the room. The big event of the year was the Feb. 22 dance. We had new dresses for that occasion. Mine was dark blue with narrow white stripes in it. Quite often, there would be baked beans and pie suppers at Worden Hall. The pies were mouth-watering. Lemon pie was my favorite. The beans were also delicious to me.

"We went sea clamming in the baggage wagon and horse so we wouldn't have to walk back with a bucket of clams. There was no law on how many you could get. The steam clams were harder to get without breaking their shells digging them out of the muck. The dietitians and doctors today would be amazed at all the salt we consumed drinking clam water.

"I went to Sunday School because my friends did – all except Madeline, who was a Catholic and went to another church, where they had to go early and eat a lot of fish. I preferred beans. In Sunday School, we were told that God saw everything we did. I didn't like being snooped on, so I had two Gods. One who was snoopy and was the church God, and one who loved and took care of us and gave us all the good things we had.

"My great-grandparents at one time were Quakers and went to serve at one of the Dillingham houses in Brewster. They later changed to the Methodist Church called the Red Top which was on the hill and later was moved to Pleasant Street where it became a hat shop I am told, then a screening house for cranberries, then a restaurant and now a home. It is an old house. [It has been torn down and replaced with a modern house.]

"The school house was opposite the Chapman house [on 6A behind & to the west of Warden Hall]. Downstairs was the Primary School and upstairs was the Grammar School. The entry was small. The stairs up to the Grammar School were there. There was a space to hang our coats there and on rainy days, when our not-to-clean coats were wet, it was a very smelly place. There was a stove at the front of the room. The teacher built and tended the fire. If you sat at the front of the room it was too hot, while the back of the room, it was too cold. There was an organ, but I don't remember it ever being played. Miss Elland, who lived on South St., taught the Primary School, and Miss Snow from Brewster taught the Grammar School. She had to walk to and from Brewster every day regardless of the bitter cold and snowy days. She was quite strict we thought. Outdoors on the East side was a pump and dipper which was used to drink out of and to catch the pump. This was done by pouring water in it and then pumping. The water closets were out back, the boys to the east and the girls to the west.

"There was a big slanting rock in back that we ran up and down on. There was a big playground back of the school. At the back of it was another big stone. We sat in back of that to eat our lunch, although I usually came home or to Madeline's for mine. . . .

"On Friday afternoons, we spoke pieces. We went to the back of the room by the chimney, where after bowing and curtsying and with many gestures, we proceeded to elocute. It was usually a poem from Whittier or Longfellow. Sometimes we had to draw a picture of something in the poem. I chose Nakomis from Hiawatha, but I couldn't make her sit down in the doorway. Her legs went out straight like wings. . . .In the spring, we filled cigar boxes with sand, planted bean seeds in them and put them on the window sills at school. They grew, but I don't remember them producing any beans. When Gertrude was small, she and Seleck [Sears – grandson of Capt. David Seabury Sears of the Shiverick ship, Revenue], planted peanuts, but after waiting a week or so and nothing happened. They dug them up and ate them. . . .Once I got green grass on my dress, so I took the scissors and cut it out so no one would see it.

"On the corner of School and South Streets, where the Hodsons live, was what we called the little store. It had everything under the sun in it from licorice sticks to garden tools, ice cream, groceries, kerosene and what have you and a settee filled with men smoking and chewing. The candy intrigues me the most. Besides the licorice sticks, there were colored peppermint sticks and sugar animals, mostly pigs.

"I wore heavy black stockings and black shoes buttoned or laced which came over my ankles. The buttons were always popping off. Shoes were buttoned by putting a button hook through the hole, grabbing the button with it and drawing it out. There were two kinds of hooks. . . .

"I went to Quincy Mansion. From Quincy Mansion I went to Adelphi College which at the time was in Brooklyn, NY. I graduated from there as a kindergarten teacher and substituted there . . . I enjoyed working in the settlements. The mothers of some of the children couldn't speak English. The fathers could, so they took charge of things. Some of the families were Armenian. The children's clothes were sewed on to them for the winter. They were not too clean, either the children or the clothes, but some had hand-made lace on their dress sleeves. . . Enough of my early years. Amen"

**Editor's Note:**

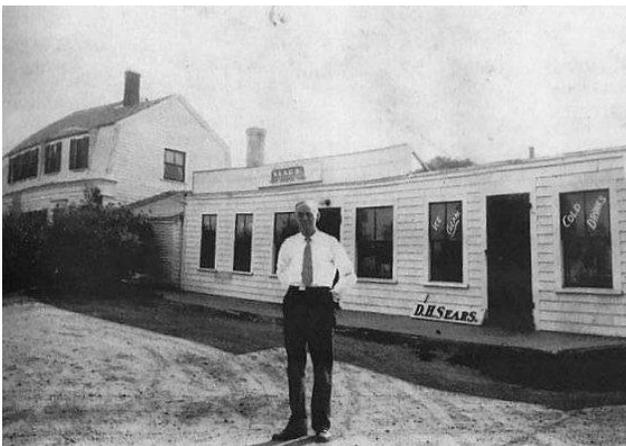
Along with her article, Bo also provided these period, labeled photos from her family's albums to accompany the story.



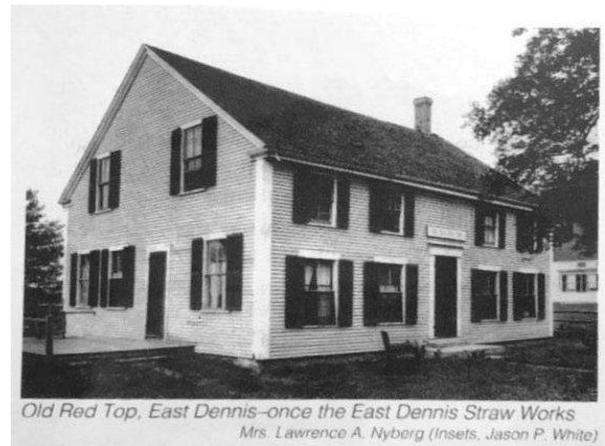
(Aunt Mil c. 1897-8) at the Parsonage)



(Capt. Joshua Sears home, corner of Pleasant and Cold Storage)



(D. H. Sears, Ice Cream)



*Old Red Top, East Dennis—once the East Dennis Straw Works  
Mrs. Lawrence A. Nyberg (Insets, Jason P. White)*

(Old Red Top)



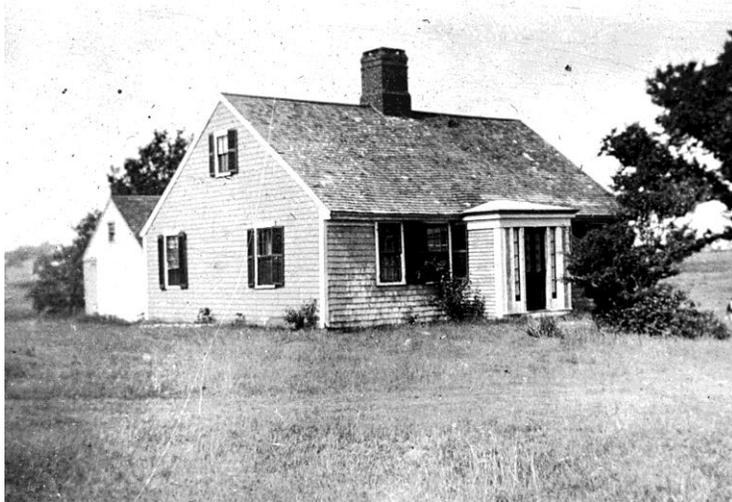
(The East Dennis School with Warden hall in the background)



(The slanting rock way out back where she ate lunch)

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*(Photo from the Dennis Historical Society's Digital Archives)*

### *"This Unknown House"*

The things which make this picture distinctive and may help with its identification are the enclosed outer entry, the stepped masonry of the chimney and what appears to be a cranberry bog behind. It is identified as "Full Cape House with front portico" in our Digital Archives. Other pictures in the album "appear to be an excursion to Washington DC by a number of people, ca. 1905."

This month's "Unknown House" picture is from the **Florrie Hall Collection\Album3\ Images**, DHS Digital Archives. No other information available, except what appears next to the picture above. If anyone can identify it, the person, or provide any information about the picture, please email Dave Talbott at: [info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org). With last month's house still unidentified, readers have dropped a bit and are now batting .600!

*Wishing everyone a Happy, Healthy 2019!*