



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

March 2019

Volume 42, No3

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**The March Board Meeting will be held March 12, 2:00 pm at Jericho, 90 Old Main Street, West Dennis
Members Welcome**

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

DAZZLED BY DENNIS

**For local artist Howard Bonington, the town
provides the backdrop for endless inspiration**



Howard Bonington has an eye ... for elegance.

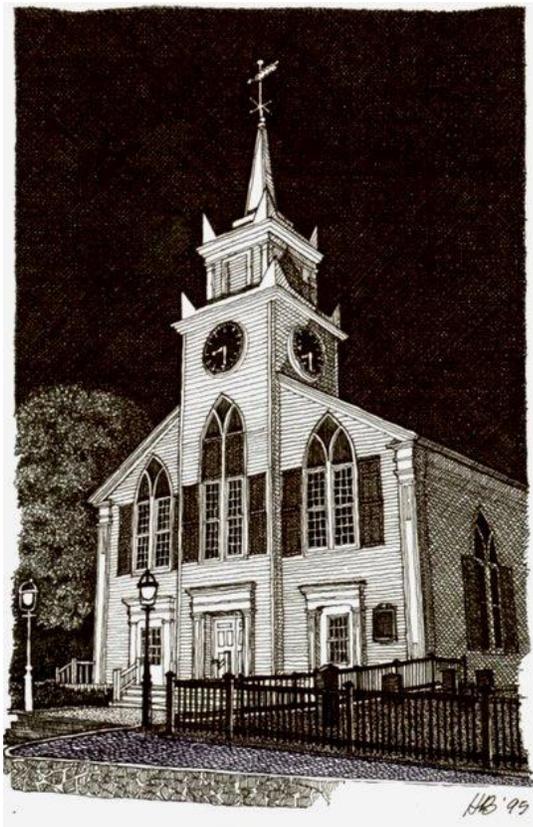
And for decades now, he has masterfully combined his professional architectural training with his private artistic soul to capture in precise pen-and-ink drawings the beauty he finds around him in the rich historic fabric of Dennis, as seen in its prominent 18th and 19th century homes, its storied public buildings, and its important local landmarks.

His work is remarkable: Bonington sees a structure that captures his imagination, and then over the course of a week or so he creates a spectacular illustration—of darkness and light, of architectural elements and landscape—that captures the very essence of still-standing Dennis history. He uses a variety of subtle but effective techniques to create definition and contrast, including crosshatching, repeating dots, shading, solid black, solid white, short strokes, thicker lines, and softer lines. He does all of his work freehand—no rulers or arcing edges, and certainly no digital design via software — and at times as he works he literally has to hold his breath ... lest his heartbeat show up minutely in the lines he is drawing.

A 1947 graduate of the prestigious Brooklyn Technical High School, Bonington attended nearby Pratt Institute, where he graduated in 1951 with honors and a Bachelor of Architecture degree, as well as with a love of building history and design. He practiced as an architect in New York City for most of his career, then worked in interior design, and finally joined a company that specialized in feasibility studies for airport terminals. For 40 years, he lived in Westchester County north of New York City—and even designed and oversaw the building of the home he and his wife Maribeth owned for years in the town of New Castle. He moved to South Dennis in 1996 ... and has been drawing his artistic visions of noteworthy nearby buildings and landmarks ever since.

How does Bonington choose the perspective for his building portraits? First and foremost, he searches for a sightline that provides him with a shaded side and a light side, thus allowing him to bring out the three-dimensional aspects of such beautiful structures. Above all, his art is about juxtaposing light and dark—something he first became fascinated with in movie theaters over 70 years ago while watching the old black-and-white Westerns directed by John Huston. For Bonington, pen-and-ink art is rooted in texture and contrast.

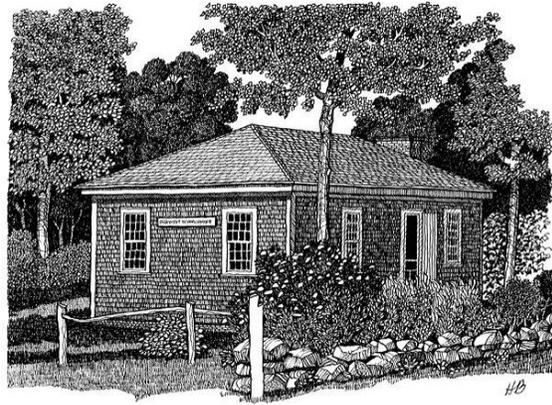
His breathtaking images of local public venues include the Josiah Dennis Manse and its adjacent schoolhouse, the Cape Playhouse, the Jacob Sears Library, Carlton Hall, Dennis Memorial Library, Liberty Hall, South Dennis Library, the Receiving Tomb at Dennis Village Cemetery, and Scargo Tower. He has also created original drawings of many of Dennis's best known private residences along some of the town's earliest roads: the Old King's Highway, Sea Street, Old Bass River Road, Old Main Street, Highbank Road, and so many more.



Congregational Church of South Dennis



Jacob Sears Memorial Library



The West Schoolhouse

(Images courtesy of Howard Bonington)

When he composes on commission one of his pen and ink drawings for the owner of a local historic private residence, Bonington first visits the site and takes color photographs from various angles. He also asks the owner what he or she would like included in the final image: should he add in plantings, for example, or highlight a stone wall? He then sets himself up in the artist studio in his home—adjacent to the South Dennis Congregational Church Cemetery and overlooking Fresh Pond—and begins his meticulous inking in of the home itself and its surrounding landscape. He pays particular attention to window panes and rooflines, clapboards and shingles, and eaves and shadows as he artistically renders the structure against the backdrop of its natural surroundings. The finished house portrait, very much suitable for framing, is usually 9” x 12” on medium-stock paper.

His technique of using photographs as the basis for his artwork is an evolution of the drawing strategies Bonington used in his earlier years in upstate New York. Back then, he would position himself in front of a house or public building—often structures with a Quaker history found in and around his home town—and then have to deal with the heat, the winds, the sudden rains, and the mosquitoes. Working from photos turned out to be a prudent and more practical artistic strategy.

Some of Bonington’s favorite drawings include Hokum Rock, the Cape Playhouse Ticket Office, the South Dennis Congregational Church, various and memorable early sea captains’ houses on Highbank Road and Old Bass River Road, and the barn—erected in 1728 and likely the oldest outbuilding in Dennis—across from Worden Hall.

Bonington’s captivating 11” x 14” unframed prints of Josiah Dennis Manse, Scargo Tower, and the Cape Playhouse will be for sale this summer at our museums for \$10 each. His 2016 book, *Aviation on Cape Cod*, which includes his meticulously-drawn images of and commentary on historic aircraft that once flew Cape skies, will also be available for \$16. Dennis Historical Society members who wish to arrange a private commission original drawing of their local residence may contact Bonington at howmarb@comcast.net.

A mega-thank you to Board Member and Publicity Director Kevin Keegan, both for his collaboration with Howard to make the prints available, and for writing this terrific article!

New Information about the Fate of the Kit Carson

At odds with *They Built Clipper Ships in Their Back Yard*, referenced in last month's newsletter, is an account about the fate of the *Kit Carson* in Glen A. Knoblock's book entitled *The American Clipper Ship, 1845-1920*. According to the author, "Said to have been sunk off Rio de Janeiro as a block ship during the War of the Triple Alliance fought between Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina sometime between 1865 and 1870, but this is either incorrect, or she was raised and repaired as shipping registers indicate the ship was sold to Captain J. W. Spencer in 1874 without a name change, homeport Port Gamble, Washington, likely here involved in the coal or lumber trade; out of American registry after 1882."
This may be how the story actually ended!

Unknown No More!

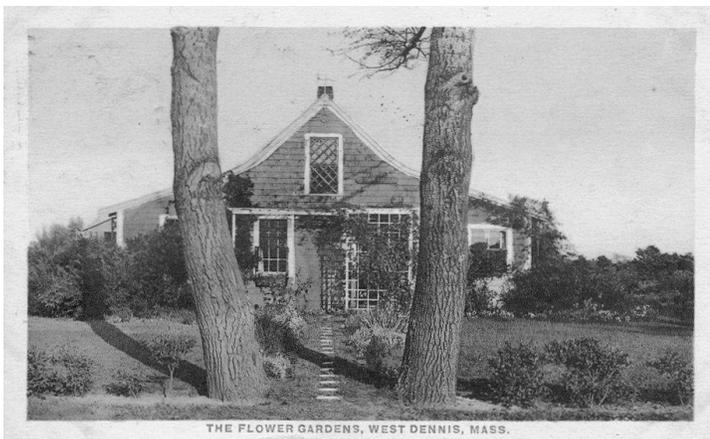
The response to February's "Unknown House" was terrific! Mary Kuhrtz was the first with the correct identification. As we go to press, she was followed in order by Bob Poskitt, Bo Durst, Bob Kelley, Leslie Ray Sears, III, Pam DiFilippo and Scott Walker. Here is a bit of a compilation of some of the information provided by these readers: with special thanks to all of them!

The house is located at 27 North Street (Quivet Neck), East Dennis. You can see the house in a user controlled panorama by entering the address "27 North Street, East Dennis" in the *Google* search box. An historic marker on the house shows *John Sears, c.1760*. Deacon John Sears (1712-1791) was 4th generation of the Sears Families on the Neck. One of Deacon John's sons was Captain John Sears (1744-1817), know as Sleepy John, who is credited with inventing the saltworks that produced large quantities of salt in the late 18th and well into the 19th century. He was recognized for this achievement with a citation from the U.S. Congress. Bob Poskitt, Bob Kelley and Scott Walker, all pointed out that if you zoom in and look closely at the image in our Digital Archives, you can see part of the saltworks in the background on the left side of the picture. The works were dismantled in the 1890s.

At the time last month's picture was taken, the house was the home Captain Enos Sears (1816-1864), who sailed the schooner *David Porter*. Enos was the grandson of Captain Sleepy John Sears. The women in the picture is Enos' wife Thankful (Hall) Sears (1815-1887). The couple had six children.

Here is a fun, twentieth century snippet about the house provided by Henry Kelley. "The late Henry Homer Sears told me it once was the home of Heman Rogers who was the driver for country gentleman Henry Homer Sears. The latter purchased annually, for 26 consecutive years, a Buick car as soon as the new models were available at the dealership in Hyannis. But, he never learned to drive."

Thank you to all who responded! As I replied to Scott Walker, "*the number of people who were kind enough to respond and indicate that not only do they read their newsletter, but that they know and care about their history!*"



(Postcard from the Dennis Historical Society's Digital Archives)

"This Unknown House"

isn't really unknown, it's "The Flower Gardens, West Dennis, Mass." That said, all that is known about it is that it is a postcard accessioned to the DHS Digital Archives on June 6, 2013, and that it was printed by the E. D. West Co., South Yarmouth. If anyone can provide any information about this house, please email me at info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

With last month's house (27 North Street, East Dennis) successfully identified, readers are now batting .583!

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*Sponsored by the Dennis Historical Society
and Dennis Memorial Library*

CREATING THE CULTIVATED CRANBERRY



**Saturday,
March 16,
at 2pm**

*Join Dennis
Historical
Society's
Bob Poskitt
for a
captivating
look at the rich
and storied
legacy of the
cranberry
industry*

**Dennis Memorial Library, 2nd Floor
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village**

A \$5.00 donation is requested

Coming this month, don't miss it!

Give the Gift of History

When your membership renewal arrives in the mail this spring, don't just renew your own membership, start a new membership for a family member, or friend with a connection to the Town of Dennis.

Not only will your gift be appreciated, it will help grow your Society!

Please include a note with the name and mailing address of the gift recipient along with your payment.

You can do so online using PayPal at
[http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/
Get Involved/Membership](http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/GetInvolved/Membership)

After making your payment, email us at
info@dennishistoricalsociety.org
with the name and mailing address of the recipient.

Thank you!

***DHS Library schedule for the months of:
March, April and May: Tues. 10 am-3 pm***