



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter November 2019

## Volume 42, No11

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The Next Board Meeting, Tuesday, November 12th, 2:00 pm, WDGS/Dennis Maritime Museum, 67 School St., West Dennis  
**Members Welcome!**

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

## *Sears & Howes Family Medals*

In addition to providing great copy for our newsletter, what else does a retired Professional Engineer do for amusement? The following was an email which came into the DHS Website on August 21, 2019 from long time member L. Ray Sears, III. Read on!

*Hi Dave,*

*Here is a story if you think it could be of use for the Historical Society Newsletter. If not, you could keep the story with the two medals I have placed in the mail to you. Not sure if the Society has any way to display the medals, but it's been so much fun making them that I plan to do more Dennis families. Edit and use any way you see fit.*

*Regards,*

In 1854, the Honorable David Sears (1787-1871) - son of David Sears and Ann Winthrop of Chatham (and based on tax records "the richest man in Boston") - created 80 "Sears Medals" for members of the Sears Family... "proving descent from Knyvet, Paul or Silas." In January 1872, at a board meeting of New England Historic Genealogical Society, a sealed box was presented to the society's president with the inscription, "to the President and Officers of the NEHGS, Boston 1854." It was left in the custody of the society with directions that it be opened after David's death. (NEHGS Register Apr 1872- p.182-3). In addition to the 80 medals for general descendants, there were seven packages "To be delivered to the eldest lineal male descendant of David Sears and Ann Winthrop Sears in 1954." I applied for a medal in 1980, but they had long since been given away. The original medal had some errors based on the Horatio Gates Somerby hoax in which he claims Richard Sears of the East Precinct of Yarmouth, (now Dennis) was descended from Sears/Sayers, Van Egmond and Bouchier families in Colchester England.



**Obverse**



**Reverse**

The reverse of all the medals (above) is similar - A blank field in the center surrounded by a beaded circle with the inscription "DESCENDED FROM RICHARD SEARS THE PILGRIM \* PLYMOUTH ROCK 1630.\*"



But David had more than one design for the Obverse. One design for the general descendant of Richard Sears and another for his immediate family. The obverse of the eighty medals "is a monument surmounted by a crest, whose main feature is an open helmet with the hilt of a dagger on its right. On the left stands an American Indian, with his right hand resting on the monument, with a bow in his left hand, a tomahawk slung at his side, and several arrows on his back, the ends visible above the left shoulder. On the right is a figure in mail, with the left hand resting on the monument, a sword at his side, holding a shield in his right hand charged with armorial bearings (the Sears Coat of Arms). On the monument is the inscription: SCEARSTAN SAYER SEARS COLCHESTER Over the whole is a scroll on which is inscribed, ST PETERS CHURCH. In the exergue is H. DE LONGUEIL (the medal designer?)."

The special family medals have replaced the monument with a number of different obverses. Here we see David's personal medal with a coat of arms that he devised- "The shield on this coat of arms is "parted quarterly" Upper left is 1st quarter, lower right is 4th quarter. Those are both the Sears coat of arms, 2nd quarter (upper right) is Bouchier coat of arms- Argent, a cross engrailed gules between four water bougets sable [A silver or white shield with a rugged edged cross between four black water-bougets - (a pair of water bags on a yoke, drawn in a highly stylized heraldic form. It is one of the most ancient of charges) and third quarter Van Egmonde- Or. four chevronels, gules. [A gold shield with four red chevronels (narrow chevrons)].

What David would never know is that in the 1880s researcher Samuel P. May traced the bogus accounts of the parents of Richard the Pilgrim back to Horatio Gates Somerby, a legendary perpetrator of genealogical frauds, who cited now-"lost" documents provided by the Hon. David Sears of Boston. It is worthy of note that by inventing "Knyvet" and transforming Paul's youngest son Daniel into "Knyvet's eldest", the entire "Chatham branch" of the American Sears family (from which David descended) became elevated to first place in the line of primogeniture—heirs to significant imaginary fortunes and invented noble titles.

Since I was too late to receive one of David's medals I decided to design my own vintage re-strike. With the wonders of modern Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) we have produced a new Sears Medal.



**Obverse**

### *Sears Medal*



**Reverse**

You can see we have replaced the blank field with a Sears Coat of Arms modeled after a painting by our cousin Joshua Mayo Sears (1888-1982) of East Dennis. Gu. a chev. ar. betw. three eaglets ppr. on a chief erm. an escallop betw. two mullets of the first - (a Red shield with a white/silver chevron between three eaglets proper on a chief of ermine fur with a scallop between two stars ). This description is from The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales by Sir Bernard Burke.

The original medal date 1630 was changed to 1633 and Plymouth Rock was changed to Plymouth Col. because "The name of Richard Seer is first found upon the records of Plymouth Colony, in the tax-list of March 25, 1633, when he was one of forty-four, in a list of eighty-six persons, who were assessed nine shillings in corn, at six shillings per bushel, upon one poll."

On the obverse I removed the references to Sayers, Scearstan, Colchester, and St Peters Church. Oddly enough, if you were to visit St Peters today you would still find the bronze plaque which David had placed there in the 1850s permanently preserving the errors created by H G Somerby.

It was such a treat to see the finished Sears Medal that I decided to create a medal to honor the Descendants of Thomas Howes. With the family re-union in Dennis in 2019, and the fact that I potentially have more Howes DNA than Sears (I am descended from all three of Thomas's sons, but only two of Richard's children) here is the result.

This medal honors the progenitor of so many of us from Dennis. In 1639 the Plymouth Colony court awarded land grants in Yarmouth to John Crowe, Thomas Howes (~1600-1665) [MD 6:157-65, 230-35], and Anthony Thacher. Sir Thomas Bernard Burke's General Armory of 1884, p.513 "Howes, or Howse (Morningthorpe, co. Norfolk). Ar. a chev. cotised betw. three griffins' heads erased and a bordure indented sa. Crest- Three ostrich feathers or., there from issuant a unicorn gu. collared, armed and crined or. (A white shield with a sable (black) chevron-w/ racing stripes (cotised), three griffin's heads erased (ripped off) and a wide sable border (bordure). Crest: a gold collared red unicorn -w/ gold hooves & horn (armed) and gold mane (crined) issuing from three gold ostrich feathers) Motto Stat Fortuna Domus. (Good fortune go with you).



**Obverse**

### *Howes Medal*



**Reverse**

On the reverse is seen the Thomas Howes Memorial sitting on a mill stone, Howes Cemetery, in Dennis, Cape Cod, Mass. with the Howes motto. Now that I know the process, if there is any interest I have also considered medals for our other Cape forebears, Crowe, Eldred, Nickerson, Snow, Ryder, Bray, Berry, Baker. Maybe you have a particular favorite?

Find the Sears & Howes medals at: <https://www.bonanza.com/booths/LRSears>

In the December 2016 Newsletter, Pete Howes proudly announced that Vol. 39, No.11 was the one hundredth published with him as editor. Well, folks, Pete is still contributing. From time to time, as June sorts through his papers and notes, she makes a delivery to me of things she thinks will be of interest. The following article had a post-em note attached from June saying, "I don't know if Pete ever published this!"

Editor's note: I have looked through many back issues, and I am quite sure that he didn't. I am pleased to share it now.

## *A World War II Tale*

*This story comes from the waning days of WWII, when my grandparents had retired to the family home in Dennis Port. My grandmother was a dedicated bridge player. Saving up her gas rationing coupons, she regularly drove across the Cape to Brewster to join others who enjoyed playing bridge. In addition to enjoying a "good game," the gatherings provided a perfect opportunity to catch up on the latest news! Sometimes the news was local, sometimes about the war. On one occasion, it combined both.*

*As the story goes, at a time when US Navy ships regularly transited the Cape Cod Canal, and debris from torpedoed merchant vessels washed up on the Cape's beaches, there was a shopkeeper who ran a small general store on the Atlantic side in the Wellfleet/Truro area. The store was located just inland in an area south of where the high cliffs at the beach would bar easy access from the ocean.*

*One dark night, this lonesome and unwary shopkeeper was in the process of closing up, when suddenly a German naval officer and several seamen entered his store. The officer, speaking in perfect American-English, apologized for the intrusion, but stated that he and his crew were desperately in need of supplies. When the shopkeeper recovered enough of his wits to speak, he asked the German officer how he had come to speak the language so well. The response was that he had graduated from Harvard in 1938. The seaman then proceeded to take everything they wanted and departed. The officer, the last to leave the store, apologized again, left some money, and told the flabbergasted shopkeeper that his men had cut the phone line and punctured the tires on his bicycle. By the time the shopkeeper had walked to the nearest year round residence to contact the authorities, the Germans were long gone. Perhaps, so that residents of the sparsely lower Cape would not be needlessly terrified, no newspaper account of this incident was ever published. Is this a legend of the times, a far-fetched story, or did it really happen?*



(AP Photo/U.S. Navy)

This April 16, 1944 photo, posted on a U.S. Coast Guard website, shows crewmen of the German submarine, U-550 abandoning ship in the Atlantic Ocean after being depth charged by the USS Joyce, a destroyer in an Allied convoy that the submarine had attacked. A team of explorers found the U-550 on Monday, July 23, 2012, on the floor of the Atlantic about 70 miles south of Nantucket. Editor's question...did the executive officer on the U-550 speak fluent English?

### *"This Unknown House"*

This image is from the Digital Archives is from a glass plate photo from **Album 03\36-2001-07-17, Richard Howes\Warren Whigginton\ Photo 12**. Nothing is know about this picture except that the house is/was probably in Dennis and there is a house in the background under construction which appears to be of 1960s, or 70s construction techniques. If anyone can identify the house, or provide any other information about this picture, please email me at: [info@dennishistoricalsociety](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety).

**As we go to press, there is no positive ID on last month's mystery house, but Carole Bell and Ann Croston are hot on the trail and pursuing all leads! Here's hoping for a December issue answer!**



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***Happy  
Thanksgiving  
The Board of the  
Dennis Historical Society  
wishes everyone a  
truly wonderful day!***



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## ***Coming in December***



***Coverage of our Annual Meeting; Your New Officers and Directors***

***Kevin's Posters of our December Events:***

***Christmas at the Manse, December 8th, Noon to 3:30 pm***

***Dennis Maritime Museum Christmas Open House, December 14th, 11am - 4 pm***

***DHS Christmas Open House at the Captain Baker House & Barn, December 14th, 1-4 pm***

***And another special article by one of our members!***