



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

August 2020

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**Hopefully, the next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 11, 2:00 pm at the Dennis Memorial Library
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village**

Members Welcome

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

A History of Postal Service in Dennis Village-Part I

Again, this month's newsletter is made possible by our readers. Thanks to DHS Board Member, Ann Croston, I am able to bring you the first segment of the saga of the Dennis Post Office. The article has been somewhat condensed from the original, but you will quickly see Ann's dedication to thorough research and her knowledge of the historic houses of Dennis Village.

Request for Dennis Village to have a Post Office

Dennis had not long been a separate town when Lieutenant Jeremiah Howes (1743-1824) was already recognized as a leading citizen. He was elected Town Moderator on March 3, 1794. On the 8th of May 1797, Jeremiah wrote to Nathaniel Freeman Jr., member of Congress, a native of Sandwich and distinguished member of the Harvard College community, asking to have a post office established in Dennis.

Mr. Freeman replies: Phila., June 28, 1797

Dear Sir:

I yesterday received your letter of May 8th.

A post road is established as far as Truro.

You may have an office in Dennis if you will find and recommend some person to keep it.

I am sir,

Your friend,

Nathaniel Freeman Jun. 2

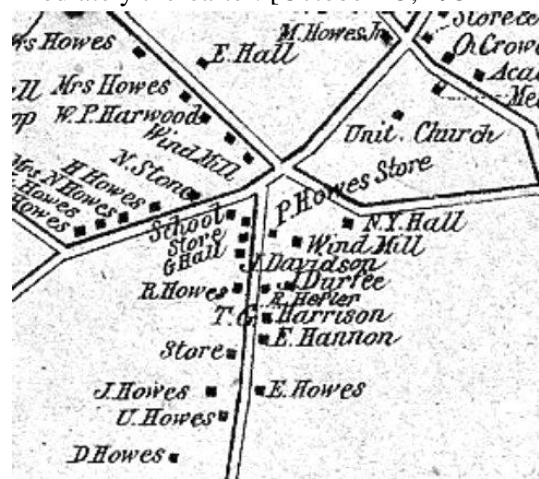
There is little doubt that Lieutenant Howes soon recommended "some person to keep it" and that the Dennis post office running now as such a model institution, was established almost immediately thereafter. [October 15, 1932 *Yarmouth Register*]

Nathan Stone 1798-1836

The first Postmaster was Nathaniel Stone, Jr., Esq. (1766 -1839), who was appointed May 4th, 1798. For many years he also held the office of Town Clerk. He kept the office in his house at 16 New Boston Road. Nathan Stone was the son of Rev Nathan F Stone, who was for forty years, minister of the church in the East Precinct of Yarmouth, now Dennis, the venerable Nathan Stone, who graduated from Harvard College in 1762, and died in 1804.

Nehemiah Y. Hall 1836-1853

August 17, 1837; *Yarmouth Register*, Page: 2 We are requested to state that N. Y. Hall was appointed Postmaster at Dennis, vice Nathan Stone, Esq. resigned, in September 1836. Letters for the Postmaster should therefore be sent to him. Nehemiah Y. Hall lived in a house at 683 Main Street (removed ca. 1972). In the walls which they needed to add insulation (after the move), they found seaweed and horsehair. The door faced south where the Old Post Road used to run through. Nehemiah Y Hall had a post office in the house from 1836-1853. His son Joseph R Hall sold the house & property to Lizzie Mitchell who married Walter Parsons.



The 1858 Map of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, & Nantucket

Howes Chapman 1853-1857

August 09, 1853; *Barnstable Patriot*, Page: 2 - We learn that Howes Chapman, Esq. has been appointed Postmaster at North Dennis in place of N. Y. Hall, Esq., removed.

August 12, 1853; *Yarmouth Register* Page: 2 – Mr. N.Y. Hall has been removed from the office of Postmaster of Dennis, and Mr. Howes Chapman, an active Free Soiler, appointed in his place. Ed. note: The *Free Soil Party* was a short-lived coalition political party in the United States active from 1848 to 1854, when it merged into the Republican Party.

In 1845, Howes Chapman moved to North Dennis, where he bought the place [773 Main - now moved to 776 Main] which had formerly been the location of the old Henry Hall Tavern. Here, he built a store in which was carried on trade for many years. In it was the post-office for the sixteen years he was postmaster, and afterwards. During this time—yes, all his life—he was prolific in plans and expedients for increasing and promoting business, not so much apparently for gains to himself, but for the sake of creating employment for others. For he never found time for idleness himself and disliked seeing it in others. Howes Chapman was the third postmaster and was appointed in 1853. Politics figured in the appointing of postmaster even in those days for we find Mr. Chapman losing the office to Obed Howes, a Democrat.

June 19, 1857; *Yarmouth Register*, Page: 2 The Guillotine in Motion! Howes Chapman has been removed from the office of Postmaster in Dennis, and Mr. Obed Howes appointed in his place, Mr. Chapman is an excellent and accommodating officer, but was guilty of voting and working for Fremont. Ed. note: John Charles Fremont, a senator from California was the first Republican nominee for President of the United States in 1856.

June 23, 1857; *Barnstable Patriot*, Page: 2 ...*The Register* undertakes to tell of what Mr. Chapman, Esq., was "guilty," but does not tell the whole. Not a word is said of the fact that after the election of Mr. Buchanan, the American Flag, which was kept at Esquire Chapman's store and Post Office, was set *Union down!* The stars and stripes were hoisted in dishonor by some person employed in that very store and post office. Is the man who hails the incoming of an administration by sanctioning or permitting such a perversion of this national flag, a fit person to hold office under that administration? No administration could present its self-respect that suffered such an individual to remain in a federal office. We care not who may come under the ban, or who may be liable to displacement by the rule, but we are not afraid to say, that if in this county or there is any other federal officer who has permitted dishonor to the flag of the Union to pass under his notice without indignant rebuke, no effort of ours shall be spared to place him beyond any participation in the business of the government, whether the Register approves that course or not.

Obed Howes 1857-1861

The Post Office, we learn, is to be kept in the store of Mr. Prince Howes, [633 Main] which is centrally located, and will give general satisfaction.

Howes Chapman 1861-1873

May 24, 1861; *Yarmouth Register*, Page: 2 - POST-OFFICE APPOINTMENTS. — Howes Chapman, Esq., has been appointed Postmaster in Dennis, in place of Obed Howes, removed.

July 16, 1872; *Barnstable Patriot* Page: 2 - Howes Chapman has sold out, the dry goods and grocery department of his business to Mr. Luther Hall. Mr. Chapman continues the corn and flour business as heretofore.

Luther Hall 1873–1885

June 14, 1873; *Yarmouth Register*, Page: 2 - Luther Hall has been appointed Postmaster at Dennis, in place of Howes Chapman, resigned.

July 21, 1874; *Barnstable Patriot* Page: 2 - Luther Hall, Esq., the popular village post-master and trader, is having a fine mansard-roof cottage erected just - east of his father Chapman's place. It is nearly completed. [now Scargo Café, 799 Main]

January 14, 1882; *Yarmouth Register* Page: 2 - Mr. Luther Hall is having some changes made in the post-office department. He has had half a dozen lock boxes put in.

January 17, 1882; *Barnstable Patriot* Page: 3 - Messrs. Luther Hall & Co. have been making improvements in the interior of their store—enlarging the post Office, &c.

E. Clarence Matthews 1885 to 1914

In 1886 Mr. Matthews then bought out Mr. Hall's general store interest and the old building that it was located in and moved it across to the opposite (North) side of Main Street [776 Main]. The firm was known as E. C. Matthews & Co. until 1914. He served as postmaster from 1885 until 1914. In 1914 he retired from the firm. **End of Part I Thank you Ann**



(Photo from the DHS Digital Archives)

Lilac Knoll, 25 Perry Street, West Dennis

As announced in the July Newsletter, thanks to member Suze Perry Peace of DeLand Florida, the "*Southside Unknown*" has been positively identified. If you remember from the May newsletter, there was a distinctive "P" on one of the chimneys. Here is some of the information in the emails we exchanged.

This is "Lilac Knoll", the home of my grandfather, Leon Darius Perry. He was raised here. It is STILL on "Perry Lane" in downtown West Dennis. The "P" is for Perry. I spent some summers here as a child. The house was surrounded by tall scented lilac bushes. Back in the 1960's, when I last stayed, I was told it was 200 years old. The formal parlor had silk covered horse hair sofas, large bell jars with shells arranged like floral bouquets, and upstairs hand painted feather beds. The house was sold out of the family. It is still there! But, oh so UGLY. The new owners cut down all the lilacs, the cedar trees, and painted the house bright yellow.



Photo provided by Suze Perry Peace

The photo shows the West Dennis Community Church and corner of what is now the West Dennis Free Public Library. At the time the picture was taken, it was the ladies clothing store, "Ruth Lee."

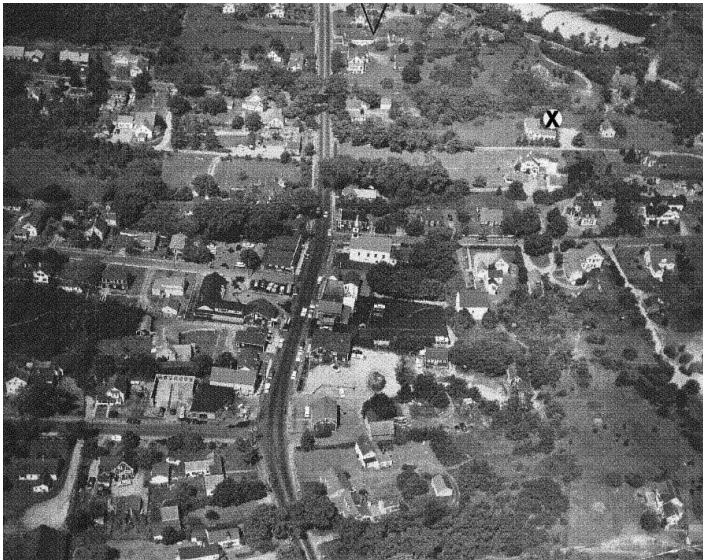


Photo provided by Suze Perry Peace



Photo provided by Suze Perry Peace

The house is now white, and the present (new?) owners have done a beautiful restoring it. A sign by the house says that it was built in 1812. The MA Historical Commission dates it as c1855. The aerial photo, looking east, shows the location of the house, marked with the X in a circle. The

West Dennis Community Church is near the center of the picture on the north side of Main Street (Rt.28)

My grandfather was a civil engineer by profession and served with the Army Corp of Engineers in WWI. Please see an old DHS newsletter celebrating Veterans Day with Leon listed under West Dennis.

A scanned image of the front page of the November 2018 Newsletter which listed all the Dennis WWI veterans was included in the email as well as his obituary. According to the copy, Leon was, among many things of note, the developer of the street numbering system for the Town of Dennis.

My grandmother was Ernestine Perry. She was one of the founding members of the library in West Dennis, where you store your archives I think.

A scanned copy of Ernestine's obituary from the *Cape Cod Times*, July 9, 1975 was also included. It read in part, "Mrs. Perry was regarded as an outstanding contributor to historical preservation in the town. She was a member of the Dennis Historical Commission for several years, and was honored by the selectmen recently with an honorary life membership on the board."

So once again, thanks to another reader willing to share family history, we have learned more about our town, its houses and the people who lived in them!

Contributions to the newsletter are greatly appreciated. ***Our Memories are our History!***

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Notes To Our Readers

In August 2020, this space would have had three of Kevin's great posters announcing the month's upcoming events. All have been cancelled. As we head into autumn, please check our website <http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/> for the status of events on our calendar. So far this summer, the cancellations have also been announced by email. If you did not receive these emails, it means we don't have your email address. Please send us your email address. You can do it right on the home page of the website-**Receive Our Emails**. Be sure to fill in your name as it appears on your newsletter. **Thank you to those who have already done so!**

Coming up in September: Part II of Ann Croston's history of the Dennis Village Post Office. Part II includes an addition to this month's article "*& A History of the Old Post Office Desk*".

As the newsletter goes to press, I am sorry to announce that the events for September have also been cancelled.

This House Not Unknown



Some of the images in "Photos from Jericho" album do contain their identity. This wonderful photo has the following information with it. "Given to the Dennis Historical Society in 1973 by Marguerite Rogers Ellis of So. Dennis and Melrose. Copied from postal card by Boston Blue Print Co. The old Peter Baker house now moved from Main St. in 1937 back on the hill facing the cove - house of the Carol Murdocks (ELH). House built by Judah Baker for his son Peter in 1793. Charles Swift's milk wagon."