



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

March 2020

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**The Next Board Meeting will be Tuesday, March 10th, 2:00 pm, 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

DHS, DHC, OKHRHDC, SDHDC & OSDVA* ***who is who and who does what?***

****Dennis Historical Society, Dennis Historical Commission, Old King's Highway Regional Historic District Committee, South Dennis Historic District Commission & Old South Dennis Village Association***

Something which is evident from reading and responding to the emails which come into the Dennis Historical Society website is the confusion which exists, even with some of our members, regarding the roles and the responsibilities of the five organizations listed above. I don't know the extent to which other organizations are asked questions pertaining to the DHS, but do I know our Society is asked questions about the suitability of a particular type of window, the status of action on a demolition permit, whether Liberty Hall can be rented on a particular date, or if a house can be painted a specific color. To help end the confusion, this month's newsletter will attempt to describe the charges/missions, responsibilities and powers, or lack thereof, for each.

DHS

The **Dennis Historical Society, Inc.** is a registered non-profit, 501 (c)(3), educational organization established to stimulate an interest in local history, promote scholarly effort, foster the continued collection and preservation of historical data and material, and to cooperate with individuals and other organizations having similar interest. Its mission is to ***preserve, protect and promote the history of Dennis, Massachusetts.***

The Society was formed in 1963 to accept gifts of Dennis-related artifacts for use in the Captain Theophilus Baker House and Barn Museum at the 1801 Jericho Historical Center. Built for sea Captain Theophilus Baker, the property was gifted to the Town of Dennis in 1962. The DHS' scope increased in 1967, when the town purchased the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse, home of the first settled minister of the town. It is for the Reverend Josiah Dennis that the Town of Dennis is named. The West School House was acquired by the Town and moved to the Manse property in 1973. The scope further increased in 2002 with the town's completion of the restoration of its 1867 West Dennis Graded School. The second floor was set aside for the Dennis Maritime Museum, the newly added Nobsussett Indian room and a replica of a graded school room. This room is established as a late 1800s school room and is available for use by today's teachers for educational children's programs by contacting the Town of Dennis.

The buildings and land are owned and maintained by the Town of Dennis. The Dennis Historical Society owns the artifacts inside, and promotes these museums. Each museum is operated by a town appointed committee, whose chairperson, or the committee's representative, is on the DHS Board of Directors, thus ensuring scheduling and activity coordination among the museums.

DHS maintains the Pauline Wixon Derick Library, home of the Dennis Historical Society Archives at the West Dennis Public Library. DHS also operates a web-accessible Digital Archive.

During the year, the Dennis Historical Society sponsors programs of historical interest for its members and for the general public. It interacts with other Cape Cod historical organizations through membership in the Cape and Islands Historical Association and various programs and interchanges.

Although the Dennis Historical Society may be asked for its opinion, it has no jurisdiction or power over the relationship between the Town of Dennis and its history, or how the two interact. The Society may be an important voice in matters relating to the Town and its history, but it has no authority for action. More information about the DHS can be found on the Society's website: <https://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/>

DHC

The Town of **Dennis Historical Commission** was established for the preservation, protection and development of the historical or archeological assets of the town. The commission conducts research for places of historic or archeological value, cooperates with the state archeologist in conducting such researches or other surveys, and seeks to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which it deems necessary for its work.

For the purpose of protecting and preserving such places, it may make such recommendations as it deems necessary to the selectmen and, subject to the approval of the selectmen, to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), that any such place be certified as an historical or archeological landmark. It shall report to the state archeologist the existence of any archeological, paleontological or historical site or object discovered.

The DHC continues to be involved in the project of inventorying the historic properties of Dennis. Begun in 1969, this ongoing project retains historical data collected for local records, and reports the information gleaned to the MHC.

The DHC oversees possible major renovation or removal of structures over 75 years old through the Demolition Delay By-law. Demolition permit applications are reviewed for structures 75 years or older by the DHC with the possibility of delaying a demolition for 12 months in order work with the owner to save, move or preserve the structure. With no power except delay, the DHC strives to promote preservation advocacy, public awareness and historical research. To encourage restoration of historic homes, the DHC votes to present Preservation Awards to owners who make significant efforts to preserve or improve their historic properties.

The DHC is a Town of Dennis Committee appointed by the selectmen and meets at 4:00 pm on the second Monday of most months at the Town Hall. Its meetings are open to the public, and all related information, including the minutes of prior meetings can be found on the town website: <https://www.town.dennis.ma.us/historical-commission>.

OKHRHDC

Although there are numerous variations of the name, even on the Town of Dennis website, such as the "Old King's Highway Committee," "Old King's Highway District," and the "Old King's Highway Historic District," the correct name is the **Old King's Highway Regional Historic District**. Established in 1973, the OKHRHD is the largest historic district in the country, stretching from Sandwich to Orleans and encompasses all the land north of the Mid-Cape Highway (Rt. 6) to Cape Cod Bay. The "C" stands for the Committee which oversees the District.

The purpose of the Act which established the *OKHRHDC* is to promote the general welfare of the inhabitants of the applicable regional member towns so included, through the promotion of the educational, cultural, economic, aesthetic and literary significance through the preservation and protection of buildings, settings and places within the boundaries of the regional district and through the development and maintenance of appropriate settings and the exterior appearance of such buildings and places, so as to preserve and maintain such regional district as a contemporary landmark compatible with the historic, cultural, literary and aesthetic tradition of Barnstable County, as it existed in the early days of Cape Cod, and through the promotion of its heritage.

In the Town of Dennis, properties within the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District and the South Dennis Historic District have a high level of protection through the Historic District Committee review process. These Committees have established standards for design within their boundaries. These design standards guide the construction of new structures in the districts to ensure compatibility with the neighborhood they are located in. The Committees also have significant power to ensure that historic structures are not altered in a fashion that might be detrimental to the historic nature of the property, and that the adding of new structures and alteration of existing ones, whether historic or not is in keeping with the nature of the District.

There is almost nothing which can be altered on a structure or property within the District which does not require Committee approval. Be it a fence, sign, color, addition, alteration, window, door, solar panels, shingle style, or texture of a sidewall or roof, trim change or finish, it must be presented before the OKHRHDC for a "Certificate of Appropriateness," or in some cases a "Exemption." The exception to the review and certification process are certain project designations, such as the MA 40B, which throw local zoning bylaws, most forms of local control and the oversight of committees such as the OKHRHDC right out the window!

The OKHRHDC is a Town of Dennis Committee. Committee members are elected by the voters of Dennis. One member, who must be an architect, or engineer is appointed by the Selectman. The Committee meets at 6:00 pm on the fourth Wednesday of most months at the Town Hall. Meetings are open to the public, and all related information, including the minutes of prior meetings can be found on the town website:

<https://www.town.dennis.ma.us/old-kings-highway-committee>.

SDHDC

The **South Dennis Historic District** was established by the Town of Dennis to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of buildings and places in a district of historic, cultural or literary significance through the development and maintenance of appropriate settings and appearance of such buildings and to preserve and maintain such district as a landmark compatible with the historic, cultural and literary tradition of the Town, and as a reminder of Old South Dennis as it existed in the early days of Cape Cod. The boundaries which define the SDHD are shown on a plan on file with the Town Clerk. The "C" stands for the Commission which oversees the District. The powers and responsibilities of the SDHDC are similar to those of the OKHRHDC.

The Commission shall pass upon: (1) The appropriateness of exterior architectural features of buildings and structures to be erected within the district. (2) The demolition or removal of any building or structure or any part thereof, within the district. The Commission may refuse a certificate for the demolition or removal of any building or structure of architectural or historic interest, the removal of which, in the opinion of the Commission, would be detrimental to the public interest. (3) The appropriateness of the erection or display of occupational, commercial or other signs and billboards within the district wherever a certificate of appropriateness for any such sign or billboard is required.

In passing upon appropriateness, the Commission shall consider, among other things, the historical value and significance of the building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features, sign or billboard involved and the relation of such factors to similar factors of buildings and structures in the immediate surroundings. The Commission shall not make any recommendations or requirements except for the purpose of preventing changes in exterior architectural features obviously incongruous to the purposes set forth in this act.

The SDHDC is a Town of Dennis Commission. Its members are appointed by the selectmen and it meets at 6:00 pm on the first Wednesday of most months at the Town Hall. Be sure to check the calendar on the website, as there are times when more than one meeting in a month is necessary. Meetings are open to the public, and all related information, including the minutes of prior meetings can be found on the town website:

<https://www.town.dennis.ma.us/south-dennis-historic-district-committee>.


OSDVA

Founded in 1981, the **Old South Dennis Village Association**, whose mission is to *preserve, protect and promote the character and the quality of life in the Village of South Dennis*, is an association developed for the betterment of the Village and the preservation and maintenance of Liberty Hall and the Liberty Hall Park, signs and lighting as well as landscaping of traffic islands and road shoulders. Special projects for other South Dennis landmarks could/would be cemetery restoration, Jericho Historical Center, the Congregation Church of South Dennis and the South Dennis Free Public Library. Like the DHS, the OSDVA may be asked for its opinion, but it has no jurisdiction or power over the relationship between the Town of Dennis and its history, or how the two interact. OSDVA can be found on the <https://www.dennischamber.com/business-directory/2368/old-south-dennis-village-association/>.

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**MARCH
21**



**GUNPOWDER,
GREASEPAINT &
GERTRUDE LAWRENCE**

Join Cape Cod Military Museum's
Joseph Yukna for a fascinating look
at Cape Cod history in 1943

**Saturday, March 21, at 2pm
at Dennis Memorial Library**

SPONSORED BY DENNIS MEMORIAL LIBRARY
& THE DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
A \$5 DONATION IS SUGGESTED



It's Membership Renewal Time!

Don't just renew your membership,
give a membership to a family
member, or friend. What a great gift!
Not only will that membership be
appreciated, it will help us grow!
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

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

Thank you!

Coming up in April, great information on the glass plate photos and "Unknown Houses" provided by Bo Durst, Henry Kelley, Steve Martin, Ray Sears and Scott Walker will be featured!