



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter September 2020

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**The next Board Meeting will be conducted by email on Tuesday, September 15th**

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

## *Dennis Historical Society Board Update*

To the DHS Membership - The email below was sent to your Board last week. Before beginning the feature article of the September Newsletter, it is included here for you to see how the Board has made adjustments to be able to carry on the Society's business despite the restrictions placed on all of us while dealing with the coronavirus.

*"Good morning Board,*

*The coronavirus continues to take its toll on the DHS 2020 Calendar. Three more cancellation decisions were made last week on the heels of the cancellation of all the events in September. The "5th Annual Apple Pie Baking Contest" and "Anna Howard Shaw: Dennis Minister, Suffragette, Friend of Susan B. Anthony" have been cancelled. Betsy has rescheduled the later for Saturday, April 24, 2021.*

*After checking with The Sea View and finding out that its maximum capacity for indoor dining is 25 people, I have cancelled the "Dennis Historical Society Annual Meeting & Luncheon" for 2020. Not only is this number too few, but I am very concerned about the safety and well being of those who attend. Our Board and its families are a particularly vulnerable group; socializing would be extremely difficult, and masks would make it far from a happy, friendly occasion. The Sea View was extremely accommodating. I was able to rebook for Saturday, October 23, 2021, and thanks to Betsy, Jim Coogan has already signed on again to be our guest speaker.*

*Here is what the Board will do going forward. Our normally scheduled meeting would have been September 8th. I am rescheduling that meeting for the 15th because of Labor Day on the 7th. On the 8th, I will be sending out a request for reports from the Board, as was done in July and August, to have a September Email Board Meeting. There will be just one Board Meeting in October. It will be an Email Board Meeting and it will be on Tuesday, October 13th. An email request for reports will be sent on the 6th.*

*The most important business we conduct each year at our Annual Meeting/Luncheon is our elections. The slate for this is in the works, and it will accompany the request for reports on October 6th. When we meet by email on the 13th, we will vote on the slate as well as having reports and other business. The start of the September Newsletter will contain a copy of this email so that the membership will know how we're conducting the Society's business.*

*Stay well, and thank you all again for your support and cooperation in these difficult times!*

*Best,  
Dave"*

## *A History of Postal Service in Dennis Village-Part II*

Thanks to DHS Board Member, Ann Croston, here is part two of the story of the Dennis Post Office.

### **C. Lovell Goodspeed 1914-1948**

April 08, 1938; *Yarmouth Register*, Page: 8 - Mr. C. Lovell Goodspeed, who is a candidate for reappointment as postmaster of Dennis, has been connected with the service since 1898. He received his first appointment as postmaster in 1915 under the Wilson administration and has given most efficient and satisfactory service in this office.

March 19, 1948; *Yarmouth Register*, Section: Front page, Page: 1 - Goodspeed Retires As Dennis Postmaster - After a service of 33 years as village, postmaster at Dennis, the retirement of Mr. C. Lovell Goodspeed will become effective April 1. Mr. Goodspeed has been connected with the post office and the present *Goodspeed's* grocery store for over 52 years.

April 09, 1948; *Yarmouth Register*, Section: Front page, Page: 1...the most esteemed resident of New Boston, Mr. Stephen Hall....Steve said, and I agreed, that we were losing "a mighty good postmaster" in the resignation of Mr. C.

Lovell Goodspeed. This led me to expatiate—somewhat along the following lines.—If there is one peculiarly American institution, it is that of the village postmaster, and when the incumbent is a man like Mr. Goodspeed, he is a symbol of everything that is democratic and neighborly and dependable in everyday life.

The paragraphs about Mr. Goodspeed in the March 26 Yarmouth Register truly said that during his fifty years of connection with the post office "young and old have had the greatest confidence in him." He was not a man to waste words; he did not gossip, flatter or criticize. But he never failed, when circumstances called for it, to do the kind or the helpful thing. A personal reference may be forgivable for the light it throws. Last autumn the writer went into the Dennis Post Office one day. Mr. Goodspeed greeted him and then inquired about his son who 5 was then, as he is still, in Baker Memorial Hospital in Boston as the result of a severe case of "polyneuritis."

"How is his appetite?" said the postmaster. I told him it was improving. Whereupon he went to the candy section of the grocery store and, removing a pound box, said, "Here is something he may like, because it will remind him of Dennis." The candy has been eaten, but the container will always be treasured. On it is printed the name of the man who now at the age of three score and ten, to the regret of the whole community, is laying down the burden of public office. We may rejoice that he will continue as the proprietor of the general store.

February 23, 1978; *The Register*, Page: S1 - The way it sometimes was in a onetime Cape post office country store  
By Ellis Morris ... It's there for present day looking at with something approaching disbelief, one of several treasured hand-me downs from a postal system long since faded into the mists of a once simpler yesteryear. It is an envelope bearing a clearly legible cancellation mark, Dennis, Jan. 31, 1910, at 6 am, and a back-stamped arrival time of 10:30 am of the same day at its destination in Taunton, Four and a half hours! Without benefit of cancellation machine, ZIP code number, automation and plenty of manpower. Instead, a horse-and-wagon trip to the Yarmouth Port railroad station, train ride, and delivery by walking carrier. That was how it was in the days when Charles Lovell Goodspeed was one of the last of that sturdy, accommodating Cape breed which filled the dual role of postmaster and general store proprietor; before and just after the turn of the century. The hours were long for Lovell. He'd be at the store at 6, to get the outgoing mail ready for Dick Hefler to take in the wagon to the station in Yarmouth Port, then close up while he went home next door for breakfast. (Home stood where the present P.O., opened three years ago, now functions.) He was back at 7 to tend to post office and store duties and sorting the day's first mail brought in by the returning Hefler (who also brought passengers from the train.) Then it was home for lunch - by then the help had reported - back to work until supper time, and on the job again until the last incoming mail was sorted. A 12 or 13-hour day. There's another in the village who remembers the last days of the Goodspeed regime. Josh and Eleanor [Crowell], who heard many of these stories firsthand during long winter nights, remembered "Grampa" telling them that postmasters in those days were obligated to buy all necessary equipment. That's why it wasn't until the Cape Playhouse, back in the 20's, began to mail out some 10,000 promotional postcards that the postmaster was forced to invest in a hand-crank cancelling machine. Up to then it was done by hand alone. "Special delivery meant just that in his day," "It would cost 10 cents, two cents postage, but eight cents to anyone who happened to be around to deliver it. There were always youngsters around eager to make a few pennies this way." There was a side benefit for patrons who ordered grocery deliveries from the store. Any mail coming in for a customer would be delivered at the same time. In a way, another "special." The latest bit of news of gossip was also expected to be handed over. "

### **Fred Maher, David Hodsdon, Frank McCarthy, Mrs. Ruth Colby 1948-1980**

Mrs. Ruth W. Colby "officer-in-charge" for two years, has now officially been appointed the new postmaster for the Dennis Post Office. She is no newcomer to the job though for, as she says, "I've trained three postmasters." Mrs. Colby has been working for the Dennis Post Office for over 20 years, dating back to the time the office was just part of C. Lovell Goodspeed's general store. When Mr. Goodspeed retired Fred J. Maher became acting postmaster for a time. Then Mrs. Colby was acting Postmistress until Mr. Maher became the official Postmaster. In 1967, Mr. Maher left and Mrs. Colby became acting postmistress once more. Then David Hodsdon became the acting postmaster, though he was never appointed postmaster said Mrs. Colby. In 1968 Mrs. Colby was again acting postmistress and has been ever since except for a few weeks when another political appointment, Frank J. McCarthy became acting postmaster in 1968-69. Mrs. Colby's official appointment came down last Saturday from Postmaster General Winton Blount. Her appointment came under the non-political merit system established in 1970.



*Photo from the DHS Digital Archives*

February 08, 1973; *The Register*, Page: 2 - Dennis P.O. switches to new building - What we've got here is space - elbow room; what we don't have here is roof leaks." These were the inaugural words of Postmistress Ruth Colby and her staff as they happily began business for the first time last Friday morning in the new Dennis Post Office. Commercial movers had transferred equipment and records from the old P. O. next door to the big brand-new building after closing hours Thursday night. "We finished up about 2 Friday morning but despite the lateness of the hour, we were happy to start work at our new office at 7:30 am," said Mrs. Colby. "We" includes Mrs. Roxanne Sears and Mrs. Nonnie King.

Richard Brooks was the last to mail a letter on the closing night, the first to mail one the next morning. A sign made by Artist Rick Howard had told patrons of the impending move: "Next door - 02638." A tongue-in-cheek backwards "N" caused comment. Mrs. Colby and her aides were engulfed in floral tributes. The Dennis Garden Club, the Theodore Becks and the Joshua Crowells, Floral Arts and House of Flowers contributed bouquets and corsages, and there was one huge bouquet from an anonymous well-wisher.

### **Kenneth Morey 1980-1999**

February 28, 1980; *The Register*, Page: 2- Morey New Dennis Postmaster, Kenneth Morey, a post office employee for almost 19 years, began work Monday, March 25 as the postmaster at the Dennis Village Post Office on Route 6A. Morey, previously the postmaster in Hyannis Port since 1973, is replacing former Dennis Postmaster Ruth Colby, who resigned last August. A swearing-in ceremony for Morey, with state and regional post office officials present, was planned for Tuesday, Feb. 26.

April 08, 1999; *The Register*, Page: 9 - Postmaster retires - After 38 years in the mail delivery business, Dennis postmaster Kenneth Morey retired last Saturday, April 3. He spent 18 years at the post office on Route 6A in Dennis Village [1980-1999]. "My lifelong goal was to retire at 55, which I am," he said. Morey will continue running a business called Coastal Lookouts, which watches over people's homes while they're on vacation or away for the winter. He says he's "a little too young not to be busy." Morey likens his decision to retire to Michael Jordan's decision to leave basketball. "Like a sports figure, you go so long and you realize it's time to move on to something else while you're still in your prime. It's time to move on," he said. His mother was a postmaster in Lincoln, Mass, and got him started. Morey was postmaster of the Hyannisport office from 1973-81. From there, he moved to the Dennis post office. "I liked the people of Dennis and enjoyed serving them. I would say on the most part I had very good employees who made me look good all the time," he said. "I liked the area. It's one of the better parts of the Cape, and they tried to keep it that way." Morey says the town population has dramatically jumped in size since he first arrived in the early 1980s. "When I first got here they had 800 P.O. boxes and a route of 350 customers," he said. "By the time I left last week, there were over 1300 P.O. boxes and three routes."

## ***History of The Old Post Office Desk***

When Mr. Howes Chapman kept the post office, he had a cabinet made in rather rough style, but somewhat similar in arrangement to what we call a secretary. There is an inclining place, to be used for writing upon, underneath of which is a sort of locker. Above the writing space is a nest of compartments, for envelopes and blanks, these compartments being covered with two doors, shutting with the ends coming together. At one end of the 7 inclined plane surface was a slot, about an eighth of an inch wide and five inches long. This slot was used by Mr. Chapman, through which to drop money which he received in the operation of his post office. It is said that this piece of furniture came to Mr. Chapman from Nehemiah Hall, who was a postmaster before Mr. Chapman, certainly in 1831, and how much later and before cannot be said, with certainty, just now. Mr. Charles L. Goodspeed, familiarly known as "Lovell", the present accommodating and efficient postmaster at Dennis, has this piece of furniture in his possession and takes great pleasure in showing it to interested people and without there is something shown to contradict the theory. I am going to assume that whoever Lieut Jeremiah Howes recommended to keep the post office, upon its establishment, prepared this piece of furniture for use in it. That assumption will do no harm and will make the desk or secretary or whatever you choose to call it more interesting. If, as has been assumed, the Dennis post office was established in 1797, Joseph Habersham of Georgia was the third Postmaster General under the Constitution.

If there is one memento cherished by Josh and Eleanor Crowell above all others it is a high desk which served not only the postmasters listed above but also Nehemiah Hall. He preceded Howes Chapman, and the desk, in its then many coats of gray, goes back to his days around 1831. **End of Part II**      **Thank you Ann**

Ed. note - There was an email exchange between Ann and Dennis Historical Chair, Diane Rochelle with additional information about *A History of Postal Service in Dennis Village-Part I*. Guessing that there may be the same type of exchange following *Part II*. I am holding this new information until the October Newsletter.

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*Image from our Past*



*Image from the Dennis Historical Society's Digital Archives*

This incredible photo is from a 5 1/2" x 3 1/4" glass plate negative. The original was taken by Dick Howes' grandfather, Warren T. Wigginton about 1910-1915. It features, in addition to an amazing pastoral scene, the icehouse on Scargo Lake in Dennis where ice was stored after being harvested from the lake during the winter. The ice was insulated with either straw or sawdust, and would stay frozen for months, sometimes until the start of the following winter.