



# Dennis Historical Society

## Newsletter

### August 2021

#### Volume 44, No.08

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**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org)

## *The Kathleen E. Roche Memorial Internship*

Earlier this year, the Board of Directors approved the creation of the *Kathleen E. Roche Memorial Internship* in memory of Kathy's bequest to the Dennis Historical Society in 2013. In gifting her home, the Rose Victorian located on Route 28 in West Dennis, her business, a gift and antiques shop in the carriage barn on the property and her personal assets, Kathleen indicated, "It is my wish that the Society make it a productive part of the fulfillment of its goals and purposes...for many years to come." Sale of the building provided a substantial portion of the funds the Board has designated as "endowment," enabling it to fulfill her wish. In recognition and appreciation of Kathy and her gift, a portion of the endowment will be used to fund the internship program as an ongoing and lasting memorial.

In consultation with the New England Museum Association, DHS created a board committee and designed the internship program, with the goal of awarding an internship annually to graduate students who are pursuing advanced museum studies and/or history degrees. Fortunately, for this first year, we did not have to look far to find the perfect candidate for our internship. The recipient was Allison Smith.

So that the Cape Cod Community would learn of the creation, implementation and first intern of the program, DHS Publicity Director Kevin Keegan was asked to write a press release for the local papers. You are getting to read it first!



Allison Smith

***Allison Smith, a 2016 graduate of Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School and a 2020 graduate of Smith College, was selected earlier this year as the first-ever Kathleen E. Roche Memorial Intern for the Dennis Historical Society.***

***The position—named for the longtime Barnstable Middle School math educator, one time owner of the Rose Victorian in West Dennis, and generous benefactor of the Society—was created in Roche's memory as a paid internship to help foster local projects central to Dennis history.***

***Smith's love of history began in high school first in her 10th grade honors American history course and later in her AP American history class. As an undergraduate at Smith, she focused on women and gender history studies with a concentration in 19th century New England. During three college summers, Smith volunteered at the 1801 Theophilus Baker House and Barn at Jericho Historical Center, where she gave tours of the property, helped accession new objects to the collection, archived clothing, and curated exhibits on children's toys and women's clothing.***

***As this year's Kathleen E. Roche intern, Smith is overseeing a room-by-room and object-by-object computer-based inventory of the Captain Baker House, creating a new collections policy, preparing an exhibit on children in the 19th century, and devising self-guided tours for the house, barn, and grounds.***

***In addition to her work for DHS this spring and summer, Smith was also named a Summer Fellow at Historic Deerfield, where she has been living, studying, and tour guiding from June through early August. In September, she will begin her second and final year of a Master of Arts program in Public History at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.***

***The Kathleen E. Roche Memorial Internship application for summer 2022 will be posted on the New England Museum Association website next spring.***

Excited about the success of the first Kathy Roche Intern and wanting to learn more about the recipient, I asked Allison if she would provide not only more information about herself, but also what she did during her internship and her views about preserving and presenting history. Here is Allison in her own words –

## ***Allison on Allison***

***During my senior year at Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School, I first met Betsy Harrison when she generously granted me the Priscilla Stanton Waters Memorial Scholarship. Back then, all they knew about me was that I am from South Dennis and that I like history. All I knew was that having had the opportunity to learn from innovative teachers, I wanted to keep learning history. Shortly after meeting Betsy, I started school at Smith College in Northampton, MA. My goal in 2016 was to study American history and become a secondary school teacher.***

Editor interrupts the narrative – having had the privilege of working on the *Priscilla Stanton Waters Memorial Scholarship*, founded by Betsy Harrison and her daughter Courtney to honor their mother/grandmother, a Josiah Dennis Manse Museum committee member emeritus, Dennis resident, educator and lover of history, I saved the application essay which Allison wrote in 2016. It is presented here to show the continuing pursuit of her dream.

“It has been a privilege to be able to call myself a Dolphin, and as we say on my cross country and track teams, a Lady Dolphin. I am so proud to be a Dolphin, I am proud to have been a runner the past four years while balancing community service activities with Interact and NHS, I am also proud to say that throughout many long days I managed to maintain a respectable grade point average and stay in the top five percent of my class.

One of the most rewarding opportunities I have had at DY was being a member of the Work Based Learning Program, and being allowed to intern with two different history teachers at DY. I had for a long time thought I wanted to teach secondary level history, but after this internship, I knew. Teaching is exactly what I want to do, witnessing someone comprehend and then enjoy what you are teaching is just an amazing feeling and I am so thankful I was able to experience that before I went to college.

In the fall I will be attending Smith College; I will pursue a major in United States History and a minor in secondary education. I hope to complete the five year Master's program and leave Smith a better woman, and a hopeful teacher, with the help of this generous scholarship I can achieve these goals.”

Allison continues -

***I went to Smith hoping to fill my brain with more history, similar to what I learned in high school. One of the many advantages of Smith included the varied and unique course offerings. I took courses on women's history in the U.S. and Europe, learning about stories left out of the high school curriculum. After my first year, I moved back home to Dennis to work a summer retail job to help pay my tuition. But I wanted to gain experience in history also. Cleverly, my mom advised me to email the Dennis Historical Society about volunteering on my days off from my summer job.***

***They luckily remembered that I had received Betsy's scholarship the year before and welcomed me with open arms. On my first day of volunteering at the Jericho Historical Center, we cleaned the property for opening day. I told Betsy I planned to be a teacher, not a museum professional. She assured me that my mind would change. Of course, she was right. I volunteered with DHS three summers during my undergraduate education. After my first year of graduate school, I was the first Kathleen E. Roche Memorial Intern for the Dennis Historical Society.***

***Halfway through my second year at Smith College, I changed my subject focus from American history to Women and Gender history; and I changed my career path from education to public history. After volunteering with DHS, I realized that I could best learn and share women's history in museums. Volunteering with DHS each summer exposed me to various museum tasks that contributed to my skill building. When I started volunteering, I wanted to work with historic clothing. I learned from Dawn and Phyllis how to measure, identify, and archive historic clothing. They also instructed me how to tour visitors around the property. Phyllis even allowed me the opportunity to curate the attic with two exhibits entitled “Mother's Wardrobe and Accessories” and “Cape Cod Children's Toys.” These first-hand experiences instilled a desire to keep working in historic houses. I looked forward to DHS each summer. Volunteering at Jericho also confirmed my desire to share women's history. The home's last resident was Emma Baker, whose story offers a glimpse of Cape Cod womanhood in the twentieth century. Jericho also tells the story of women in historic preservation, with Elizabeth Reynard and Virginia Gildersleeve restoring the home***

*and donating it to the Town of Dennis. The history of Cape Cod needs these stories of female ingenuity and the objects inside Theophilus Baker's home to illuminate their stories.*

*Upon receiving my bachelor's degree from Smith College, I knew that I needed to learn more about highlighting women's history in museums. I also wanted to know how to make historic houses relevant to their communities. In 2020 I started a master's program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I am in two certificate programs: Public History and Arts Management. My research focuses are the history of New England, Public History, and Comparative Women's History. During my first year, I learned about becoming a professional in the museum field, and I was excited to share that new knowledge with DHS. As an official intern, I have had the fortunate opportunity to learn about how the historical society functions behind the scenes and offer my input into fundraising efforts, collections management, and future internships. I interned during the spring, taking a two-month hiatus in June and July when I was a summer fellow at Historic Deerfield. I completed the internship in August. Under the supervision of Betsy Harrison and Dawn Dellner, I wrote a new DHS collections policy, three self-guided tour booklets for Jericho, created an exhibition proposal on Cape Cod Childhood, offered numerous public program proposals, and other recommendations that I included in a final report.*

*I hope that the work I did for the Dennis Historical Society will help make Jericho visible to the community, standardize collecting practices, and encourage other interns to learn about Dennis history. This year I will be completing my master's program at UMass Amherst and applying for positions in museum public programming, visitor experience, and curating. I am pursuing a career in museums, a path made visible thanks to the Dennis Historical Society.*

**On behalf of all of us, thank you Allison for the wonderful work you have done!**

## ***Learning Our History Unexpectedly***

What we learn and how we learn it never ceases to amaze me! In the update provided by Ann Croston for the July Newsletter about what happened to Fred Gage and his property in Dennis Village, was a reminiscence about Fred which appeared in the *Yarmouth Register*. It was written by Dennis resident Eldon Earle Davidson (1920 – 1963). Soon after the newsletter hit the street, I received the following in an email from long time DHS member Joel Crowell.

*As always read the newsletter with interest. The reference to Eldon Davidson seemed to indicate he died in 1963. I believe this is not correct.. He lived in South Carolina where he ran an airport. I know he lived longer.*

Intrigued by Joel's email, I Googled "Eldon Earle Davidson" and found the following fascinating information about another son of Dennis making good -

*Eldon Earle Davidson (1920 – 2007) was born in Dennis, Massachusetts on 2 May, 1920. He attended public schools in Dennis and graduated from Yarmouth High School in 1938. He then entered Norwich University, a military college in Vermont, and graduated in 1942 with a B.S. in biology. After college, Davidson refused a commission in the U.S. Army and instead became a naval aviation cadet. He graduated from the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida on 1 April 1943 and was selected for a commission in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served as a pilot from 1943 until he retired in 1963.*

*While serving in the Marines, Davidson attended and graduated from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School with a M.S. in meteorology in 1949 and graduated from the U.S. Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School in 1954. He also served in two combat tours during World War II (1939-1945) beginning in the South Pacific and ending in North China and later served in the Korean War (1950-1953). Prior to his retirement from the Marines, Davidson served a tour with the aviation support group for President Dwight D. Eisenhower's trips to Europe and South America.*

*After his retirement from military service, Davidson became the Assistant Manager at the Raleigh-Durham Airport in North Carolina from 1963 to 1964. He was later hired as the Executive Director of the Savannah International Airport in Georgia in December 1964 and worked there until December 1991. While in Savannah, he was a member of various boards and organizations including the following: Airport Operator's Council International, American Association of Airport Executives, Southeastern Airport Manager's Association, Savannah Chamber of Commerce, Savannah Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Salvation Army, Atlantic Bank and Trust Company, Bank South, Leadership Savannah, Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club of Savannah, and the Navy League of Savannah.*

*Davidson was married to Mary Jeannette Cocreham of Corpus Christi, Texas and the couple had three children. Eldon Earle Davidson died on 14 May 2007 at the age of eighty seven in Savannah, Georgia.*

Thank you Joel; and thank you Eldon Earle Davidson for your service!

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### COLONIAL DAY IS BACK!

Saturday, August 21: 10am - 3pm at Josiah Dennis Manse



**FREE ADMISSION AND FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY AT THIS SPECTACULAR SUMMER EVENT**

Join costumed interpreters from the 1700s as they make local history at the restored 18th century home of the town's namesake minister. Awards for historic preservation will be presented at 1 pm.

61 WHIG STREET IN DENNIS VILLAGE

### Renew Your Membership

Come on folks, do it today!  
If you have lost your paperwork, print out the form found on our website and mail it with your check to:

Dennis Historical Society  
P.O. Box 607  
South Dennis, MA 02660

You can do it all online using  
PayPal at

[www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/](http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/)

*Get Involved/Membership*

If it's a gift or a new membership, after making your payment, email us at

[info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org)  
to send the name and mailing address.

*Thank you!*

## BLUE WATER WIVES AND MOTHERS



Dennis women who went to sea

### EXHIBITION OPENING

Saturday, August 28, from 1 - 4pm

DENNIS MARITIME MUSEUM  
at the West Dennis Graded School House  
67 School Street/ Second Floor

FREE ADMISSION/ WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE