



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter December 2023

Volume 46, No.12

Dennis Historical Society – copyright 2023 Internet: www.dennishistoricalsociety.org - E-mail: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org
**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 12th, 2:00 pm at the Jacob Sears Memorial Library
23 Center Street, East Dennis
Members Welcome**

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

Dennis Historical Society's 2023 Annual Meeting/Luncheon

On Saturday, October 28th, the Dennis Historical Society held its 2023 Annual Meeting/Luncheon, and over forty members and guests gathered at *The Sea View* in Dennis Port.

With arrival scheduled to begin about 11:30, President Phil Catchings welcomed everyone just after 12, and following the *Pledge of Allegiance*, the first course was served. Everyone enjoyed a delicious three course luncheon expertly prepared and presented by the staff at The Sea View...*thank you to all the staff!* Two more *thank yous* are very much in order. The first was conceived and orchestrated by our Transitioning President Betsy Harrison. Recognizing the need for centerpieces, Betsy assembled and brought items of historical interest to grace the tables. The second was Bob Poskitt who spoke to honor longtime Society member and artist extraordinaire Howard Bonington. Howard, who has made incredible contributions to preserving the history of Dennis with his pen and ink drawings, was unable to attend this year's meeting. Of particular note were four renderings which Howard did as part of his ongoing *Imagining the Past* series which were the centerpiece of this year's theme at our maritime museum – *Piering into the Past, the Lost Wharves of Dennis*. Bob brought numerous copies of Howard's prints which were available for attendees to take home. **Thank you - Betsy, Bob and Howard!** Ed. note - There will be an additional tribute to Howard later in this newsletter.

Dennis Historical Society Nominating Committee Report

*The Nominating Committee is recommending approval of the following
Candidates for Board of Directors:*

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT.....Phil Catchings
TRANSITIONING PRESIDENT.....Betsy Harrison
VICE PRESIDENTS.....Terri Fox, Dave Talbott
TREASURER.....Diane Rochelle
ASSISTANT TREASURER.....Larry Symington
RECORDING SECRETARY.....Bonnie Hempel
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.....Ruth Derick

ELECTED DIRECTORS

Bill Collins, *Dee Collins*, Pat Corcoran, *Ann Croston*, Dawn Dellner
Bo Durst, June Howes, *Kevin Keegan*, Karen Ketchum, Mary Kuhrtz,
Bob Poskitt, John Schofield, Maureen Sullivan, Jan Ward
(Candidates for re-election are italicized)

APPOINTED DIRECTORS

HISTORICAL COMMISSION.....Bob Poskitt
JERICHO HISTORICAL CENTER.....Dawn Dellner
JOSIAH DENNIS MANSE MUSEUM.....Terri Fox
WDGS, MARITIME MUSEUM.....Pat Corcoran
CURATOR/ARCHIVIST.....Dawn Dellner
LIBRARIAN.....Ruth Derick
ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN.....Maureen Sullivan
MEMBERSHIP.....Jan Ward
PROGRAMS.....Betsy Harrison, Dave Talbott
PUBLICITY.....Kevin Keegan
TECHNOLOGY.....Jan Ward
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR.....Dee Collins
RECEIVING TOMB.....Terri Fox, Bill Collins

During dessert, it was time to get down to business, and Phil called the meeting to order just after 1:00 pm. Noting that it was both an incredibly beautiful autumn day and that we had such a knowledgeable and engaging speaker, Phil announced that since all the reports were in the *2023 Annual Meeting/Luncheon Booklet*, the only one required to be read and voted on was that of the Nominating Committee.

Dave Talbott went to the podium for the election of the officers and elected and appointed Directors, for the upcoming year. To the left is the slate as presented. The vote was unanimous, and all terms will begin in January 2024. After the vote, Phil both recognized and thanked Patti Sakellis for her service on the board. Patti has decided to leave the board and concentrate her time and efforts serving on the West Dennis Graded School Committee. **Thank you Patti!**

After lunch, it was time for our guest speaker Duncan Oliver from the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth. Bob Poskitt introduced him as a Cape Cod historian, author, lecturer and a major contributor and motivator to the upcoming book (2025) on the American Revolutionary War being compiled by the *Yarmouth & Dennis Revolutionary War Recognition Committee*.

Speaking without notes in his relaxed yet authoritative style – that's what former high school history teachers do - Duncan provided his audience with a peek at the amazing finds that the efforts to document the participation of citizens of Yarmouth in the American Revolutionary War have uncovered. Yarmouth, then included Dennis, which was the East Precinct of Yarmouth at the time.

Starting with the Boston Tea Party, the 250th anniversary which we will celebrate on December 16th of this year, Duncan kept his audience entranced with anecdotes and vignettes about how Yarmouth residents participated in the war and did so all out of proportion to their numbers!

After a question and answer period, Duncan received a well deserved resounding round of applause.

Thank you Duncan and thank you Bob for arranging to have him speak!

When Phil asked for a motion to adjourn, it was obvious to everyone that a wonderful time was shared by all!

Another Tribute to Howard

In early September, the Dennis Historical Society received a check honoring Howard Bonington accompanied by the following note - *a longtime family friend, father of one of my first sixth graders in the Chappaqua schools, and a gentleman and artist of myriad talents. I was delighted to learn of the recent exhibition of his Nautical Artwork at the Society and regret only that I could not come and view it in person.*

When I emailed Howard that he had been honored with a contribution from Kenneth White, I asked Howard if he would provide me with an email address for Kenneth. He responded with - *Ken White. A very good man to know, active in the New Castle NY historical society, I'm sure you would get on well,* and provided me with the address. The following is our email exchange: to Ken I wrote -

When I emailed Howard to tell him that you had honored him with a donation to the Dennis Historical Society, I asked him if he would send me your email address so that I could send you digital copies of our newsletter which were either about Howard, or to which he contributed articles. Although the first directs one to our website for additional newsletters, I have attached them. On behalf of the Board and Membership of the Society, thank you for your generous donation!

This is Kenneth White's response, printed with his permission -

Thanks so much for the newsletters. The March 2019 Newsletter article, Dazzled by Dennis, comes as no surprise. Howard seems to have this deep appreciation of all that surrounds him, and the capacity to capture it so magnificently. Much like the collection of drawings of Dennis, I have put together for the New Castle Historical Society here in Chappaqua two substantial loose leaf binders with copies of his drawings from Chappaqua, Millwood, and the historic Sparta district of Ossining. And I've been treated to some of his sketches from his travels around the world . . . so much rendered so beautifully. On a recent visit, from a photo I'd sent him as a birthday greeting, he even did a drawing of my dog . . . His "Imaginings" are just spectacular, and in addition to creating an image where none is to be found, seem to stimulate further discussion and research . . . what more could one hope for? And, while he's shared with me some of his 250th Anniversary drawings, I cannot tell you how eager I am to see the completed collection.

He is indeed an amazing gentleman--artist, architect, woodworker (I only learned that a year or so ago), sailor, chronicler of not only local histories but of his own as well, and a caring soul who, along with Maribeth, patiently endured the immaturities of a young teacher and helped me to grow up (at least a little). Once again my thanks, I'm pleased to be able to contribute in a small way to the Society.

The Dennis Historical Society is incredibly gifted to have a member who is not only blessed with an extraordinary talent, but by one whose keen, inquiring mind is imbued with a love of history, especially Dennis history.

Thank you Ken and thank you Howard from all of us!

A Dennis Connection to Tisbury

The January 2021 Newsletter featured an article entitled *The Graded Schools of Dennis*. In 1931, the last of the Graded Schools was closed, and all were replaced by *The Dennis Consolidated School*.

In August, DHS received the following query -

I write a semi-regular historical column for the Martha's Vineyard Times. I recently ran across a trove of beautiful, professional photos taken of the Tisbury School in Vineyard Haven, clearly shot shortly after the building was built and opened in 1930. The Tisbury School was built in 1929-30 by the Lundberg Construction Co. of St. Louis, and the architects were Haynes & Mason. I am interested to learn what other schools they built at the same time, and their status today! I notice one of the schools that Haynes & Mason designed circa 1930 was "the new grade school building at Dennis, Mass." Which school in Dennis was this? Does it still stand today? And are there any early-ish photos of it so I can compare the design to the Tisbury School? Thanks for any tips!

Ed, note: The email was accompanied by this clipping,



Pen & Ink by Howard Bonington

Pen & Ink by Howard Bonington

The school architects engaged, Haynes & Mason, with whom a contract has been made, have had long and large experience in this kind of work, and have a national reputation as architects for school buildings. They were the architects for the new High and Junior High School building in Springfield, Vermont, and several new school buildings recently erected, viz: Tisbury School at Vineyard Haven, Mass.; the Robert E. Fitch High School at Groton, Conn.; the new High School building at Hyannis, Mass.; and the new grade school building at Dennis, Mass. These architects designed and supervised the construction of eleven school buildings last year.

The design of the building is along Georgian lines; the dignified simplicity is in keeping with the site; two stories in height, with the gymnasium en-

I sent the following response - *The school is now named the Ezra H. Baker Innovation School. At the time of its completion in 1931, it was called the Dennis Consolidated School.*

Added to many times, it is still in existence and still in use as an elementary school. It was designed by the same architects, and even built by the same construction company as the one in Tisbury. The attached photo is at about the time of its completion. To my email, I received this interesting reply – Thanks so much, Dave!

That's extremely helpful. I didn't know that the two schools used the same builders as well! There was a tragedy involved in the construction of the Tisbury School, when the Lundberg supervisor's 21 year old younger brother, Herbert Cottrell, fell to his death in 1929 while on the job site. The kids and teachers to this day talk about his "ghost" - spawning many tall tales since. The school in your photo looks a whole lot like the red brick Tisbury School! I don't know if it was the trend for municipal school buildings at the time, or whether it was a look unique to this architect.

Thanks again!

Ed. note – this is a photo of the school in Tisbury which was attached to the final email. An online search for information using the search phrase – *the ghost of the Tisbury School* – yields more about the death of Herbert Cottrell from the *Martha's Vineyard Times*. **Thank you Chris Baer and the Martha's Vineyard Times**



The Dennis Consolidated School, DHS Digital Archive



Tisbury School in Vineyard Haven, MV Times

It's been three years since this last appeared in our newsletter. It captures the spirit of the holidays so well that I am pleased to publish it again! It was wonderful that Phyllis and her daughters Lynne and Carol were able to attend the Annual Meeting/Luncheon. Thank you Carol for making it possible!

Bayberry Candles on New Year's Day

There is a tradition in my family, and perhaps in other old time Cape families, to burn a bayberry candle on New Year's Day.

When I was a senior at Yarmouth's John Simpkins School (Dennis had no high school in those years), I caught the West Yarmouth bus to the Barnstable town line, then walked to the Colonial Candle Co., opposite Bradford's Hardware in Hyannis, to Mrs. Walter (Mabel) Baker's home. She was the founder of Colonial Candle Co.

A senior at Barnstable High School joined me. We sat across from each other at Mrs. Baker's kitchen table with a tray of hot wax between us and painted Christmas trees on the side of column candles with the hot wax.

Directly across from me on her kitchen wall was an embroidered sampler with the verse: "On New Year's Day, Bayberry candles burned to the socket, Bring health to the home and money to the pocket." Every box of her bayberry candles had a paper inside with that same verse on it. A company that purchased Colonial Candles now promotes them at Christmas time with a different verse.

My great grandmother, Phebe Chase Murray, said the same verse when she burned hers on New Year's Day. She also went out of her front door leaving it open, then ran around to the back door coming in rapidly and closing it with a bang. She then hurried to close the front door. The idea being that she took all her troubles with her and got to the back door before they did. I always thought it was somewhat strange, but didn't want to question my great grandmother. However, in recent years I have learned of other old Cape Codders who did the same thing, some banging pots and pans while going around the house. I have also learned there were many other superstitions that was part of their daily lives. Perhaps that was their diversion where we now have TV or the Internet.

I have Grandma Phebe's hog scraper candlesticks that she used and every New Year's Day I burn bayberry candles to the socket in them no matter where I am on that day—just to be on the safe side and to honor Gram's tradition.



Thank you again Phyllis!



Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

Non-profit Org.
US POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 24
South Yarmouth, MA
02664

A Special Invitation for DHS Members

*There will be a Meet & Greet
hosted by the Manse Committee*

***Josiah Dennis Manse Museum
Saturday, December 9th, 5-7 pm
61 Whig Street, Dennis Village***

*Please bring a small plate of shareable
hor d'oeuvres; beverages will be provided.
See the Manse decorated for the holidays,
and enjoy a special time with friends!*



COLONIAL CHRISTMAS *at Josiah Dennis Manse during the Dennis Village Stroll*



Join our costumed docents December 10
from noon to 3 pm for jolly good cheer
and refreshments at this year's
Josiah Dennis Manse Holiday Open House

2023 DHS Annual Appeal

*Soon, members will receive their
Society's 2023 Annual Appeal letter
asking for support for wish list items
for each of our three museums and the
Pauline Wixon Derick Library.*

*Please give generously! Your
contribution will greatly assist our
dedicated volunteers in fulfilling our
Mission Statement.*

***To Preserve, Protect & Promote the
History of Dennis, Massachusetts***

(For some, it may still be tax deductible)



Wishing everyone a Joyous Holiday Season!

