



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

September 2025

Volume 48, No.09

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**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 9th, 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

Plenty of Notice!

The Annual Meeting will not include a luncheon this year. When the 2025 DHS Calendar was enclosed with the April Newsletter, the date was set– Saturday, October 25th. Members and their guests will still meet on that day, but the time is 2:00 pm and the place is the Dennis Memorial Library. After a brief meeting which will include the election of officers, elected directors and appointed directors, attendees will be treated to a talk by the retired Director of the South Dennis Free Public Library and scholar Anne Speyer. Anne will present a program entitled *Women in the American Revolution*. The program is free, but \$5.00 donations will be gratefully accepted and shared between Dennis Memorial and your Society.

In Harm's Way

In September, the 2025 hurricane season enters its most critical two months for New England. There have been many times in the past when Cape Cod has born the brunt of these Atlantic storms.

It wasn't until 1953 that hurricanes were given names. Prior to that, they were mainly known by the year in which they struck and often by their place of origin or their primary landfall.

Until 1971, they were not rated in the manner with which we are familiar today. In that year, a civil engineer named Herbert Saffir and meteorologist Robert Simpson published the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale which would subsequently be used to rate or assign categories of strength to hurricanes. Henceforth, hurricanes would be know as category 1 through 5. This month we learn about a 19th century hurricane and how it affected Cape Cod in another article researched, written and contributed by Jack Sheedy.

One Storm, Two Schooners, One Sandbar, Two Fates

Hundreds and hundreds of shipwrecks have occurred in Cape Cod waters over the centuries. Most of those wrecks happened along the outer arm of the peninsula where unforgiving shoals, rips, and bars snagged ships attempting to make safe passage along that treacherous coastline. This was in the days before the Cape Cod Canal was opened. Yet, in October of 1894, two schooners attempting to ride out a storm in what one might have assumed were the more tranquil waters of Nantucket Sound became grounded on a sandbar off West Dennis. Though sharing similar circumstances, they would in the end realize drastically different fates.

The storm was actually a hurricane which first struck Florida before traveling up the Atlantic coast to make landfall at Long Island, New York and then at Connecticut. The effects were felt here along the Cape Cod shoreline as well as out at sea.

Ed. note – Known as the 1894 Florida Panhandle Hurricane, at one point in the Gulf of Mexico, its winds reached Category 3. From Wikipedia, we learn – “The hurricane weakened quickly as it moved inland, deteriorating to a tropical storm over South Carolina on October 9. However, the storm emerged into the Atlantic early on the following day and soon re-strengthened into a hurricane. At 10:00 am EST on October 10, the system made landfall near Bellport, New York, with winds of 85 mph (140 km/h), shortly before striking Connecticut and



Image of hurricane track courtesy of Wikipedia

weakened to a tropical storm. Becoming extratropical over Maine late on October 10, the storm's remnants continued northeastward into Atlantic Canada, before dissipating over Labrador on October 12.” Jack’s narrative continues -

An accounting of the storm’s impact appears upon the pages of the Yarmouth Register and Hyannis Patriot newspapers, on October 13 and 16, respectively, describing buildings swept away along Nantucket Sound, vessels wrecked (including a number working the fishing banks), and others along the coast dragging anchor and going ashore. On land, buildings were damaged, trees were blown down, fences were toppled, and at Woods Hole a windmill was upended. There was even a story about vacationing US President Grover Cleveland, while on a deer hunt, having difficulty getting back across the water from Naushon Island to Woods Hole.

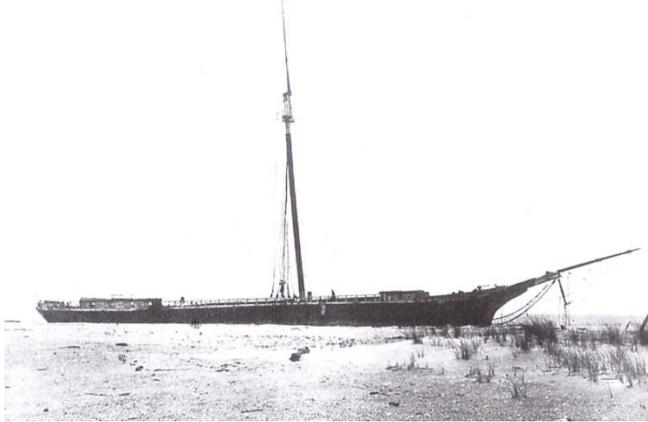


Image courtesy Wikipedia Commons

At Dennis Port, two local vessels – the Eliza West and the Helen F. Ward – were pushed by wind and wave up onto the beach. Meanwhile, off West Dennis the 148-foot, 631-ton schooner O. D. Witherell broke free of its anchors and was grounded on Kill Pond Bar near the mouth of Bass River. Built at Bath, Maine in 1874, the Witherell was owned locally by Captains William Garfield and Uriah B. Fisk. Also grounded on the same bar was the 92-foot, 147-ton schooner Light of the East of Ellsworth, Maine. No fatalities involving these incidents were mentioned in the newspaper reports.

Not to worry, though, according to the Register, for the stranded vessels all rested “on a good sandy bottom, and may be hauled off when the sea subsides.” Indeed, it appears that

both of those which were beached at Dennis Port, and one of those grounded at West Dennis did live to sail another day based on reports of their whereabouts in newspapers over the years to follow, as well as their appearances in the annual list of US merchant sailing vessels for the years 1896, 1900, and 1904.

The Patriot article explained that the O. D. Witherell, which carried a cargo of 900 tons of coal, had been anchored against the storm in the vicinity of Handkerchief Shoal when it parted its chains and drifted toward shore. It eventually struck the bar off West Dennis, where it became “hard and fast” according to the newspaper account. It was believed that nearly half of its cargo would need to be removed before it could be refloated and towed to Portland, Maine for repairs. Captain Fisk, as managing owner, hired a salvage crew to perform the work.

As for the Light of the East, the Patriot indicated that it was carrying a cargo of stone en route to Philadelphia and that the schooner “now lies full of water.”

Over the course of the month the newspapers provided updates as the cargoes were removed and as salvage operations continued. The October 23 Hyannis Patriot announced that the O. D. Witherell was floated and being towed by tug to Portland. The following week’s newspaper told that wrecking crews had removed 100 tons of granite from the Light of the East, with 125 tons still to be removed, and that they “may raise the vessel.” Unfortunately, the November 7 issue reported the schooner had been stripped of “rigging, spars, anchors and chains” and that the vessel “is all broken up by the strong gales of late and will not be saved.”

In November, both newspapers reported on Captain Garfield as he oversaw repairs to the O. D. Witherell at Portland. The repair work was successful as the shipping news column for the Port of Hyannis in the December 18 Patriot indicated it was sighted passing east, presumably now back in service. Newspaper shipping reports and the annual list of merchant vessels point to it being in service for at least another decade.

Alas, the same could not be said of the Light of the East. The front page of the December 25, 1894 issue of the Hyannis Patriot, in addition to wishing its readers a “Merry Christmas,” also informed its readership that the wreckage of the schooner which came to woe on Kill Pond Bar two and a half months earlier was now in the process of being blown up by a wrecking company.

Such was the fate of some sailing vessels which encountered violent storm and raging sea along this sandy Cape Cod coastline, even in the more tranquil waters of Nantucket Sound.

Thank you Jack!

Ed. note – According again to Wikipedia, the image of the O. D. Witherell above was actually taken in 1911. After repairs were completed, the hard-luck vessel returned to service and went aground again 3 ½ miles south of Bethany Beach on a voyage from New York City to Philadelphia.

Revealing Pictures

Both the May and July Newsletters contained images, according to the Digital Archive, of Captain Tyler iceboating on Scargo Lake. A closer examination of images #7517 and #7516 reveal two different people in what initially appeared to be the same picture with the Bleak House observatory in the background. One is Captain Tyler, the other according to #7679, is Captain Crowell. Apparently, Tyler had a mustache, and Crowell does indeed, look like a Crowell!



Captain Tyler, DHS Digital Archive



Captain Crowell, DHS Digital Archive

Who is this Capt. Tyler character? Maybe he was "from away"?

- so asked Scott Walker in the July Newsletter. Now, thanks to the amazing research skills of board member Ann Croston, we have an answer! Not unexpectedly, soon after delivery of the July Newsletter, I received an email from Ann with the following information –

Parker Tyler

BIRTH 30 SEP 1868 • Shirley, Middlesex, DEATH Unknown (After 1940)

Son of William Baldwin Tyler 1831-1906 & Elizabeth Sayward Smith 1834- 1911

Children of William B Tyler & Elizabeth Smith:

Frank Berry Tyler 1859-1938; Hattie Osgood Tyler Nason 1862-1947; Herbert Tyler 1867-1961; Parker Tyler 1868-? 1900 Parker Tyler was a clerk in Boston, age 32 with similar positions afterwards.

Several clippings report that Parker is a guest of Dr. Hart of East Dennis. 1902-1935. Parker Tyler was a few years older than Dr. Hart.

Ed. Note - It was once a common practice in the *Society Section* of newspapers, especially local ones to contain information about visitors to residents. Parker Tyler must have also been a winter visitor to East Dennis, explaining his presence on Scargo Lake.

Ann's email contained information about Doctor Henry Brown Hart which included an article from the *Register* dated August 19, 1899. In addition, the following information on the other iceboater.

Louis Austin Crowell

BIRTH 14 SEP 1878 . Dennis, Barnstable, MA DEATH 1 SEPT 1954 • East Dennis, Barnstable, MA

Son of Edwin Dillingham Crowell 1852-1897 and Catherine Martin (aka Louisa Maria Sears) 1852-1951

Married 1902: Susan Howes Hall 1876-1947.

Children: Louis Austin Crowell Jr. 1904-1969; Gertrude "Geta" Crowell 1905-2004; Lydia Hall Crowell 1907-1984.

1900 a student in Cambridge, MA, 1940 Farmer, Route 6, East Dennis, MA.

The Boston Daily Globe, Boston, Massachusetts • Thu, Sep 2, 1954, Page 28 —CROWELL—Louis A. passed away September 1st in his 75th year, husband of the late Susan (Hall) Crowell. Funeral services will be held Friday, Sept. 3, at the Doane Beal and Ames Funeral Home. Hyannis, at 2 p. m. Burial will be in the Quivet Cemetery, East Dennis. Kindly omit flowers.

And so, Captain Tyler was indeed *from away*, while Captain Crowell was very much a local man!

Thank you Ann!

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*Important, please note the change in the start time of Dr. Pregot's talk.
It will begin at 3:00 pm NOT 2:00 pm as in the DHS Calendar.
These promise to be great events, please support them all!*



AUTUMN AT THE MANSE

Saturday, September 13, from 1-4 pm

Time travel to the 18th century for a very special one-day-only event at the iconic home of the minister for whom Dennis is named

JOSIAH DENNIS MANSE
61 Whig Street in Dennis Village
FREE ADMISSION (donations gladly accepted)

SOLEMN CEREMONY

to honor three Howes family patriots who served during the American Revolution



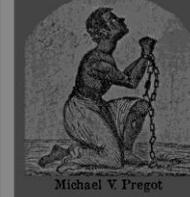
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1 PM

Howes Family Cemetery
48 Bramble Lane in Dennis Village
THE PUBLIC IS INVITED

The Dennis Historical Society Lecture Series Presents

DR. MICHAEL PREGOT

Slavery and
Abolitionism
on Cape Cod
A Massachusetts Documentary



SLAVERY AND ABOLITIONISM ON CAPE COD

Saturday, September 20, at 3pm

Dennis Memorial Library, 1020 Old Bass River Road
A \$5 donation is suggested