



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

August 2018

Volume 41, No8

Dennis Historical Society – copyright 2018 Internet: www.dennishistoricalsociety.org E-mail: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

**The Next DHS Board Meeting will be held on Monday, August 13th, 1:00 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

Third Graders Time Travel

After visiting the Manse, the third graders from the Ezra Baker school travel 100 years forward in time to spend the morning at Captain Baker's Farm, just around the corner from their school. They walk along Trotting Park Road and assemble on the lawn to begin. Here, they are encouraged to imagine a quieter time, with no paved roads, no power lines, no cars, fewer houses, and hardest of all, no electronic devices!

The classes are divided into 4 groups and invited to discover some of the changes that have happened in Cape Cod life from the time Reverend Dennis lived at the corner of Whig Street and Nobscusset Road, to the time Theophilus Baker built his house at the curve of the road on Old Main Street.



Phyllis Horton Welcomes the Children (Photo by Dawn Dellner)

In a tour of the house, the children learn about the chores that might have been expected of them when living with no electricity, no running water, and no central heating. In the front parlor, they observe trinkets, furniture and gifts brought home by West Dennis sea captains from their world voyages. In the attic, with its open rafters and unfinished walls, they see where the children would have slept. Now, this space is especially exciting, as it displays clothing and toys from the 1800s.

It is a real surprise for the children to see a portrait of Ezra H. Baker hanging on the wall. A Boston banker and descendant of Theophilus Baker, Ezra donated the land for the school which the third graders attend, and which bears his name.

While making lavender sachets, the 3rd graders learn about the importance of herbs in household cooking, cleaning, and making remedies. They are delighted to be able to take the sachets home, some to put under their pillows, some to give to their moms.

To use up any excess energy, as well as teach about the practice of ice farming in the 1800s, the children are asked to help crank our "old fashioned" ice cream maker. They crank, add ice, add rock salt, and crank some more. Most can guess what ingredients go into the container: milk, eggs, cream. All but sugar would have been available on the farm.

In the barn, the children first encounter a racing wagon owned by the grandniece of Theophilus Baker. It once raced at Riverside Trotting Park. It is a surprise to most that Trotting Park Road has a history. It was named for the race track that has become Trotter's Lane, a neighborhood with houses built all along the mile-long oval. Built in the 1890s, in what was then called South Village, by a group of retired West Dennis sea captains, headed by David Fisk, the race track provided excitement and entertainment. There was a grandstand for 200 spectators, a windmill with a 1,200 gallon water tank, plus stables and horse stalls. They enjoyed racing and no doubt betting on their horses until the turn of the century.

The collection of tools and machines (with cranks) in the barn are examples of what was used to build houses, and furniture, and to farm the land. Exhibits of the Saltworks and Cranberry industries, which both began as the brainchild of Dennis men, teach about two important ways people made a living on Cape Cod in the 1800s.



Ruth Derick in the General Store (Photo by Dawn Dellner)

Then, the children learn about shopping in the General Store; where people brought their own containers to carry home a quart of molasses, or a pound of flour; where tea cost 50 cents per pound, and sugar cost 10 cents per pound.

On the lawn, the children have a chance to play games, no batteries required! They compete in a bean bag toss and potato races. In addition, there are hoops, which are a bit tricky to master, but trying is half the fun.

By the time the third graders are ready to walk back to school, the ice cream is ready! As they taste the treat they have worked so hard to make, we hope they will reflect on what they have seen during their visit and perhaps consider why the house and barn, with their contents, have been valued and preserved. We hope their lives have been enriched by learning a little about the history of their town, and how the people here before them lived. **Article by Dawn Dellner**

Inventions, Medicines, and Labor-Saving Devices

A new exhibit at the Captain Theophilus Baker House and Barn Museum at the Jericho Historical Center showcases inventions that people used in the past to save time. It is called “Inventions, Medicines, and Labor-Saving Devices,” and was opened on June 30th. These inventions show real Yankee ingenuity! Even if today, some are a little puzzling, back then, they represented a significant breakthrough in saving time.

Labor saving tools are displayed in the barn where many of them were routinely used. Included are corn shellers, fodder cutters for preparing corn stalks for feed, harness makers, hole borers and grinding wheels for sharpening tools. They all need power to work and that power is either hand cranking, or pedal power. The use of the hand crank, or pedal was a breakthrough in technology in colonial times. Visitors also enjoy seeing and learning about a 1910 Royal vacuum cleaner, and a circa 1847 agitator washing machine, both of which are also hand powered.



Corn Sheller



Fodder Cutter
(Photos by Bob Poskitt)



Hole Borer

In the barn visitors learn about inventors such as Luther Crowell of West Dennis, a champion labor saver, who acquired close to 300 patents throughout his life. Crowell greatly improved the design of the helicopter, the printing press and machines to label bottles and make flat bottomed paper bags.

The barn also showcases a time in the 1800s, when Cape Cod and Dennis was involved in a variety of farming ventures, from ice and salt production, to cranberry growing. Visitors are often surprised to learn that ‘solar evaporation’ was a term used in the 1800s to produce salt from salt water. Some remnants of the salt works, pioneered by a local sea captain and salt works inventor John Sears, are on display along with a scale model of the salt works

from the 1800s. Dennis was once a large salt producer, as hundreds of salt works lined the rivers and shorelines. The cultivated cranberry industry was also started in Dennis in 1816, with Captain Henry Hall's discovery that *sand* is a valuable component in its cultivation. An exhibit in the barn highlights that discovery, and the evolution of that finding into a major industry today.

Visitors also spend time in the General Store where they see and learn about old-fashioned medicines and remedies, all kept in bottles and tins behind the actual counter from a former Dennis general store. The oils, medicines, and soaps on display are advertised to cure everything from headaches and bad breath to cramps and arthritis. If the visitors look closely they can even see some residual medicines still left in the bottles.

After touring the barn, visitors make their way into the Baker House where devices like spinning wheels and foot operated fireplace toasters recall what daily life was like in Dennis a couple hundred years ago. The chamber pot by the bed in the first floor bedroom is a stark reminder how colonials handled their personal needs at night, as opposed to trying to find the outhouse in the dark. Also, in the bedroom, is an early, but surprisingly effective, handheld hearing aid that fits perfectly in one's hand. Visitors are cautioned not to miss the unique hand-made mouse trap that sits on the fireplace hearth. Ah, modern technology at work in the 1800s!

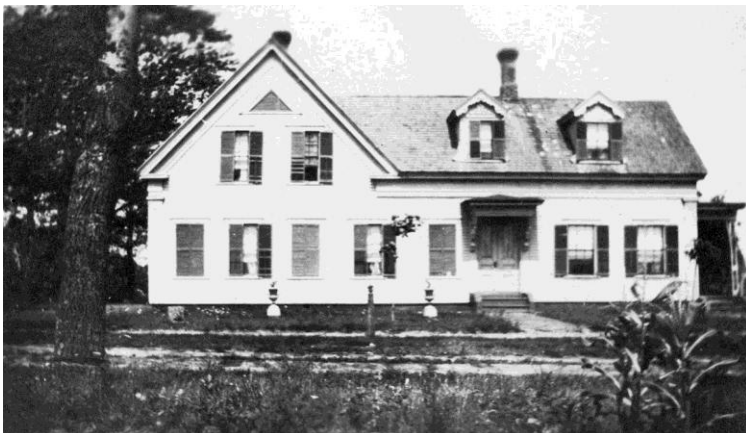
Dawn Dellner and the volunteers at Jericho encourage you, your family and friends to come visit this summer from 1 to 4 on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. You will be amazed at the "Inventions, Medicines, and Life Saving Devices" you will see that helped change the everyday life of the Dennis citizens in earlier times. Admission is free, but donations are always welcome!

Article by Bob Poskitt

Editor's Note:

Thank you to both Dawn and Bob for providing the interesting and informative articles for the August Newsletter! There is such a wealth of information contained in the notes, diaries and especially in the memory banks of our readers that I encourage all of you to share it with the membership. Such sharing preserves the present and brings the past back to life! Please email me at info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

'This Unknown House'

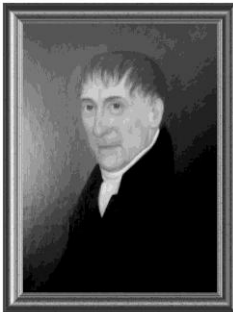


This month's "Unknown House" pictures are from Album 11 of the "Betty Mullan Images" in the DHS Digital Archives. They are merely labeled "1A" and "1B" (likely in West Dennis). The porch appears to match on the right side of each photo. The barn may be the best clue! If anyone can identify it, or provide any information, please email Dave Talbott at info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

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

AUGUST
3 10AM



DENNIS VILLAGE CEMETERY WALK

**FREE TOUR THROUGH
EARLY DENNIS HISTORY
Friday, August 3, at 10am**

Meet guide Terri Fox at the Receiving Tomb
RAIN DATE: Sunday, August 5, at 2pm



CRIME AND PUNISHMENT COLONIAL STYLE

A SPECIAL ONE-DAY-ONLY EXHIBIT
SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1-4PM
JOSIAH DENNIS MANSE, 61 WHIG STREET
FREE ADMISSION
(DONATIONS GLADLY ACCEPTED)



Colonial Day August 18 at Josiah Dennis Manse



**FREE ADMISSION TO THE
SENSATION OF THE SUMMER ON
SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 10am-4pm**

Step back into the 18th century as costumed interpreters demonstrate crafts and trades from the 1700s. See the Yarmouth Minutemen in action and buy something special at the Pie, Bake and Book Sale. Donations are gratefully accepted.

Wow, August is a busy month!

DHS Upcoming Events, Mark your Calendars & Enjoy!