



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter February 2018

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**Board Meeting, February 13, 2 pm, Dennis Memorial Library, 1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis
Members Welcome!**

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

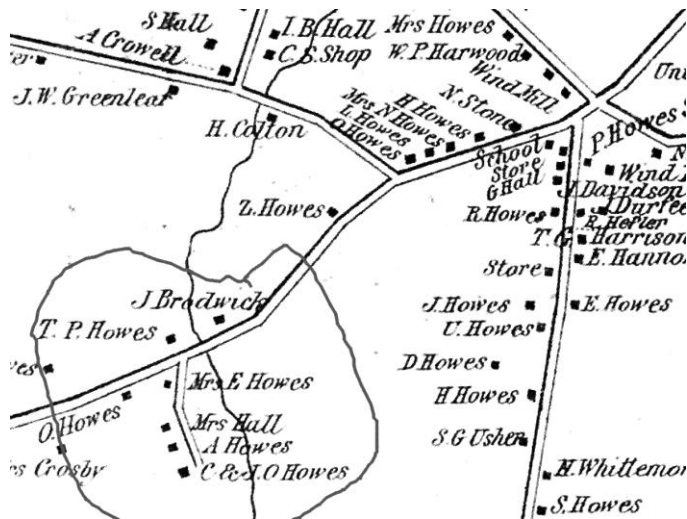
The Hall House on Hall Street, Dennis, Massachusetts

Thanks to the contributions of our members and readers, the story of what happened and when to the *Hall House on Hall Street* can continue!

According to an article which appeared in the *Register*, January 24, 1958, the Hall House at 15 Hall Street was constructed in 1698, by Jeremiah Howes for his son and daughter-in-law who were married that year. The son was Prence (Prince) Howes. According to Robert A. Howes' work, the *Howes Genealogy, 1637-2004*, Prince was the third son of Jeremiah and Sarah Prence and was born in 1669. Nancy Thacher Reid, in her definitive volume of Dennis history, *Dennis, Cape Cod*, identifies the house as the "Prince Howes" house. According to the archives of the *Boston Historical Commission*, Prince Howes was also the architect/builder. It appears that Jeremiah may have just footed the bills, Prince did everything else! He was architect, builder and first owner!

The following is copied directly from the *Boston Historical Commission* archives, which list no source for the information.

Jeremiah Howes, 3rd son of Thomas Howes & Mary Burr, came from England to Salem in 1637 and settled here in 1639 as part of Yarmouth Plantation Land Grant. Jeremiah was born on voyage over. The will of Thomas Howes "bequeath unto Jeremiah my youngest son all the upland from the old bars beyond the barne on the southwest side the said old fence Downe to the nine acres Creeke or little brooke before mentioned and all the meddow that lyeth & is between his meddow now in his possession & the aforesaid Reedy Creeke together with the waies & easements to the said lands & every pte & parcell of them as now they are".



The description of the property which Jeremiah inherited includes the creek which appears both in the map from *The 1858 Map of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, & Nantucket* and the *Google Earth* photo which appear above. It is within the circle labeled *Mrs. Hall*, that Prince built his house.

As mentioned in the December Newsletter, the map was which appeared in the original *Hall House* article was incorrect. In my haste to find a *Hall* on the 1858 map, the wrong part of the map was selected. The location circled on this map is correct. Of particular interest on the 1858 map is the labeling of the property "*Mrs. Hall*". Thanks again to *Dennis, Cape Cod*, she is surely *Desire (Howes) Hall* (1808-1889), the widow of *Freeman Hall* (1808-1841). In a very moving account of the October Gale of 1841, pages (324-329) NTR describes the onset of the storm from *Desire's* perspective. Her husband was lost along with "at least twenty men from the town of Dennis in this one devastating storm". The *Hall* name continued to be the family name of the owner of the house right up to its end. So what happened to the Hall House on Hall Street?

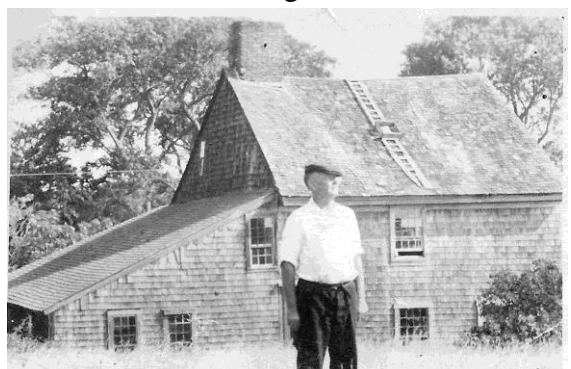
Depending on the source, the end of the Hall House occurred in either 1958, or 1959. The *Register*, January 24, 1958, says that the "Howes' Homestead, enfeebled by age, will be demolished in the next few days by the Robert S. Hayden Building and Wrecking Company." Recollections of John Howe, whose family owns both the empty lot at 15 Hall Street and the property which appears south of the circle in the *Google Earth* picture above says, "the story as we learned it is that the old house simply collapsed around 1959, and its ruins were removed shortly before our family came on the scene." Our own Josh Crowell confirmed that the demolition by the wrecking company was, in fact, carried out. These pictures from the *Boston Historical Commission* archives certainly show that the end was near! It lists the year 1958, as "demolished".



Craig Studio of Photography, East Dennis c1957, shortly before demolition, documented by Historic New England

The final owner/resident of the house was Stephen Hall who appears in the photograph below, which was provided by John Howe. The photograph was given to John's father by the Romig Family of NYC who acquired #15 as an empty lot in the late 1950s, after Stephen Hall's death. According to John Howe,

"there were still remnants of Stevie Hall on the site for a long time - he apparently enjoyed his drink, and my father used to go down to the house site and pick out old blue bottles from the extensive trash heap behind the house site. We still have that collection of Stevie Hall glass in the Howe house." Retired Deputy Call Fire Chief, Paul Prue, remembers responding to more than one chimney fire at #15. His recollections seem to confirm the contents of the "extensive trash heap." The death of Stephen S. Hall appears in the *Town of Dennis, Annual Report, 1955* as December 8.



Undated photo courtesy of John Howe

Here are some of Josh Crowell's poignant recollections.

"I remember Steve Hall well. He died in 1955 at 82. The house, built circ. 1700, was in tough shape, though today it would probably be restored. It was torn down in 1958, or 59. I went over one Sunday when home from college to see the house with its roof off. The chestnut beams were so hard my jackknife would not penetrate. Steve was one of 12 children of Freeman and Mary Hall. I believe he eked out a living with a garden, chickens, a cow plus some fishing and a few small cranberry bogs plus picking for others. He never married. I have a picture in my mind of the room, SW corner of the house where he essentially lived. The sills were rotted, so the floor joists and floor boards sagged from the center to all four corners and the sides

of the room. There was a secretary with enclosed book shelves on it. The front legs were on the floor, the rear legs each had at least three books under to shim them roughly level. There was an overstuffed chair in front of the fireplace. The walls and ceiling were blackened with smoke because Steve burned lengths of telephone and power poles, 4-5 foot long. His method of stoking was to put some kerosene on, light it, then sit in the chair with one foot pushing the pole in as it burned down. That system finally did him in, as he got badly burned at home a few months later, while sleeping in the chair (he wasn't too careful with the kerosene!) Steve died in a Bass River nursing home".

The final two images are both by local artists. Even though both depict the Hall House on Hall Street near the end of its life, they both reflect the structure described in the quotation from an unknown author, below.

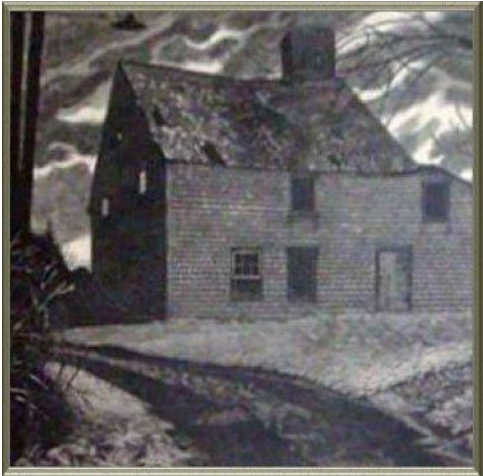
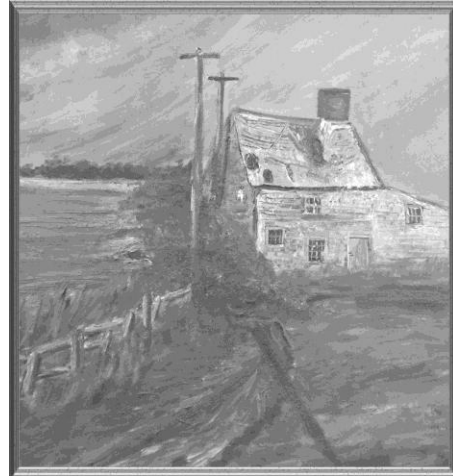


Photo of a print by famous local artist, David Grose



B&W photo of a painting at the Dennis Memorial Library

"it seems to stand on tiptoe as if cognizant of its graceful lines and wishing to radiate the warm glow of the weather-grayed shingles as far as it can to the world passing by on wheels".

It appears that Prince the architect/builder did his work well!

What was at one time recognized as the oldest house in Dennis met its demise by demolition.

This should not have happened! May we all be true to our mission statement:

To Preserve, Promote & Present the history of Dennis, Massachusetts

Thank you to those who provided the information which made this follow up article about the Hall House in Dennis possible. In particular, I wish to thank Josh Crowell, Diane Rochelle, John Howe, Paul Prue, Jan Ward, Peter Howe, Peter Berrien and Carole Bell. It was Carole who provided the contact with John and Peter Howe.

A final note and question:



The Hall House has been replicated somewhere in Dennis! Does anyone know where?

Please email your answer to: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

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Mark your Calendar

Saturday, March 10, 2:00 pm
History of the Cape Playhouse

*Join Managing Director, Brett Bernardini,
for an engaging talk about the Playhouse's
history & the upcoming season.*

Co-sponsored by the Dennis Memorial Library
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis

Donation: \$5.00

Experience in Archival Studies Needed!

*The Dennis Historical Society is seeking a part
time volunteer who has experience in archival
studies. Your Society is continuing on its digital
archive project in collaboration with the Digital
Commonwealth of MA and the Boston Public
Library and needs and welcomes help with its
collections. If interested, or know of someone who
might be, please contact Bob Poskitt at BobPoskitt
@comcast.net, or 508-394-0310. Thank you!*

Give the Gift of History

When your membership renewal arrives
in the mail this spring, don't just renew your
own membership, start a new membership for
a family member, or friend with a connection
to the Town of Dennis.

Not only will your gift be appreciated, it will
help grow your Society!

Please include a note with the name and
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