

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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WOMEN WHO WENT TO SEA

There are two women who went to sea under very different circumstances in this tale - two women who were born and raised half a world apart, but whose lives became forever entwined. The first is a Cape Cod girl, born here and raised to be the wife of a shipmaster. She was Mrs. Alpheus Baker, of South Dennis, and when her husband, who was at one time master of the Bark C. C. Leary, suggested that she join him for a journey which included ports in the Orient, she willingly assented. Many of her friends and neighbors had visited these foreign ports and had brought back examples of the fine arts of China and Japan, and stories of an exotic society. The vessel made a fairly routine passage, and eventually put in at Hong Kong, where Capt. Baker went about the business of buying and selling cargo. It was while at this exciting international port that Mrs. Baker gave birth to a son. It was customary for Captain's wives in foreign ports to have a nursemaid to assist with their young ones, so Mrs. Baker found a Chinese "Amah" to care for her new baby. Apparently she was very fortunate in her choice, a young Chinese woman who spoke little English, but who loved and cared tenderly for the young son. So attached did the two women become that, when the cargo was loaded, Mrs. Baker convinced the young Amah to sail with them to the United States. Thus the Chinese girl became the second woman who went to sea with Capt. Baker.

After an uneventful passage home from Hong Kong, Sarah Baker, her children and their Chinese Amah arrived safely back home in South Dennis. Mrs. Baker was welcomed by a loving family and neighbors anxious to see the new baby and to hear of her adventures abroad. But it was very different for the Chinese woman. There could be no greater contrast than that between her native city and this rural village. As the baby grew and needed her attention less and less, she began to pine for home. Strange food, the harsh climate and her loneliness took their toll, and soon it became apparent that she was truly ill. Capt. Baker promised to have her taken back to her native city as soon as he could arrange it, but before the time had arrived, the gentle woman died. She was sorrowfully buried in the South Dennis cemetery, next to the Baker's family lot. Years later, when the son performed the filial duty of erecting monuments as memorials for his deceased parents, he remembered his childhood nurse. But unfortunately, no one still lived who remembered her name, for she had always been called simply "Amah". So Mr. Baker erected a stone without a name, to honor the memory of his Chinese friend, the helper of his mother, who came to South Dennis from far away Hong Kong. Today the adjacent graves of the two women who went to sea with Capt. Alpheus Baker can be seen, as marked by the son they both loved. "Sarah B. Baker, died Nov. 28, 1925 ages 87 yrs., 11 months" and "Chinese Woman, Brought from Hong Cong (sic) by Capt. Alpheus Baker, Jr. ages 31 years, 5 April, 1872."

Nancy Thacher Reid – March & April 1983 DHS

Newsletters

Ezra Baker Third Grades Visit Jericho, June 7 & 8, 2012

Eighty-five children from the four third grades of the Ezra Baker School over a two-day period toured the house and barn at Jericho Historical Center. Third grade teachers introduce their students to Dennis history and how our town's history is related to the wider history of our country.

Veteran docent Kitty McNamara related the story of Elizabeth Reynard who fell in love with the sadly deteriorating 1801 home of Captain Theophilus Baker, and with her cousin Virginia Gildersleeve, set out to restore it. When only partly renovated, Miss Reynard died and left it to her cousin. Fifty years ago (1962) Jericho was accepted as a gift by the Town and the restoration completed by the enthusiastic efforts of Dennis and interested summer residents.

How much the youngsters understood of the significance of the story is hard to measure, but they were full of questions about the lives of people in the 1800s and how different it was in most ways from their 21st century lives. There were loud gasps and groans when reminded that the children of the 1800s had heavy household chores and no cell phones, iPads, computers or television. During the two-hour visits, the children toured the house and the two large rooms of the ground floor of the barn. They also had time to play several outdoor games that were familiar to children of the 1800s, including a potato relay race and running with the large hoops. There was also a timeout for lemonade and ginger cookies.

What drew the greatest attention? Also hard to measure. The young girls seemed drawn to the costumes and dolls in the house and the so-called household “conveniences” in the barn. The young boys were keen about the story of the sinking of the Portland and the spar on display that washed up on Dennis’ north shore from that tragic storm. In the Fairbank’s room, the young boys were excited about the sword from the Revolutionary War and the bayoneted rifle from the Civil War.

Both boys and girls showed great interest in the display in the barn of examples from the Sherman Woodward Driftwood Zoo, in the barn’s large display case. From some baskets of common driftwood the children could handle and use their imaginations as to what it might be possible to create from the flotsam and jetsam of the sea.

Next year, the school visits at Jericho will be June 6 and 7. The Jericho committee and friends are already thinking about plans for it. But, before then, it’s the major summer “open houses.” Come see us for these events!

Peggy Eastman



More Tales From Our Past

The Historical Societies of Dennis and Yarmouth have joined together again to put on a presentation for your enjoyment! BUT this home-spun group of “vagabonds” needs about 15 more volunteers. Many non-speaking parts ~ no experience necessary. PLEASE consider joining us.



Contact Terri Fox @508-760-0433 OR Pete Howes @ 508-385-9308.

WHEN: Saturday October 13 at 7:00p.m. & Sunday October 14 at 2.p.m.at Carleton Hall

COST: \$15.00 or \$12.00 for members of DHS and HSOY.

SPACE IS LIMITED. Last time we had to turn people away!

TICKET SALES START AUG. 1ST. – Call Nancy @ 508-385-3528 – **RESERVE EARLY**

June Howes

Dennis Realtors Partner with the Dennis Historical Society

Late last year the Dennis Historical Society issued a third printing of the very popular book, *Dennis, Cape Cod*, by Nancy Thacher Reid. As part of a new initiative to promote the book, DHS

approached area realtors and asked them to purchase copies and give the book to new Dennis homeowners as a welcoming gift. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. DHS would like to thank the following realtors for supporting this new project:

Bayside Realty Consultants	Lomenzo Properties
Hester Real Estate	McDowell Associates
Home Land Realty	Steele Associates
Sullivan Associates	

Betsy Harrison

Junior Docents Win Prizes at 2012 Barnstable County Fair



Our Junior Docent Jackie May won first prize at the Barnstable County Fair for her rug woven on the Josiah Dennis Manse ca. 1700 loom. Another rug woven by the Manse junior docents won a second prize. Jackie earned a first prize for a six-sided poster showing the requirements needed to enter animals for judging and sisters Miriam and Annalee also won ribbons for their posters. They all won second prizes for clay items made in art classes and entered hens and pigs they had raised and additionally won several first and second prizes for other entries. These very talented girls have served as junior docents at the Manse for several years. The Josiah Dennis Manse Museum is very proud of the May Girls.

Nancy Howes

Summer Recipes

Tomatoes will soon be in – and you need dessert! Cooking was different 168 years ago, but there are lots of interesting items that may be helpful today. Here’s a couple that may be useful (but not always healthy!). I may insert some more next time, but I’ll skip the recipe for Pressed Pig’s Head!

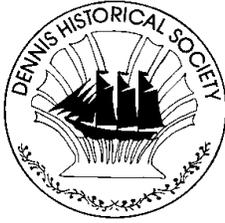
Tomato Soy

“Take ripe tomatos, and prick them with a fork - lay them in a deep dish, and to each layer put a layer of salt. Let them remain in it four or five days, then take them out of the salt, and put them in vinegar and water for one night. Drain off the vinegar, and to each peck of tomatos put half a pint of mustard seed, half an ounce of cloves, and the same quantity of pepper. The tomatos should be put in a jar, with a layer of sliced onions to Each layer of the tomatos, and the spices sprinkled over each layer. In ten days, they will be in good eating order.”

Measure Cake

“Stir to a cream a tea-cup of butter, two of sugar, then stir in four eggs beaten to a froth, a grated nutmeg, and a pint of flour. Stir it until just before it is baked. It is good either baked in cups or pans.”

From: The Kitchen Directory and American Housewife 1844
Transcribed by Burt Derick



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AUGUST EVENTS

Saturday, August 18, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Josiah Dennis Manse
"Colonial Open House"
Special Guest: Tom Kelleher,
Cooper From Sturbridge Village
"Barrels & buckets – *Oh My!*"

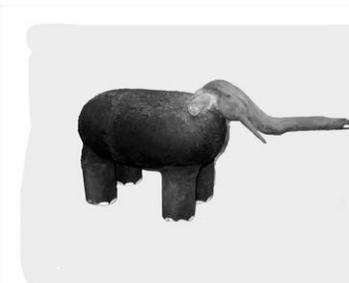


Sunday, August 19, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Jericho Historical Center
"Fun Day at Jericho"
Children's games; Driftwood Zoo

Sunday, August 19, Noon – 3:00 p.m.

West Dennis Graded School House
"Open House"
Exhibits & 19th C. School Room



Friday, August 24, 10:00 a.m.
Dennis Village Cemetery Walk
Guide Terri Fox will share tales
of the long departed.
Rain date: August 26, 2:00 p.m.

