



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or pmrhorton@aol.com
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The Schr. *Uriah B. Fisk*

The painting of the *Uriah B. Fisk* came back to Dennis in November, ending a thirty year journey at an auction house in New York state. She was built in 1872 at Bath, ME for the Fisk Brothers of West Dennis.

Capt. Nathan Fisk (1803) was a fisherman sailing out of Swan Pond River, a ship owner, and a packet ship master sailing from West Dennis to Providence, RI. He built the first bridge over lower Swan Pond River and owned an interest in the wharf which ran from the river one hundred fifty feet out into Nantucket Sound. With his wife Polly (Baker) Fisk (1801-1884) they lived in South Village near Swan Pond River and had nine children. One son died young and son Nathan Edwin was lost during the Great Yankee Gale of 1851 in the Bay of Chaleur at the age of eighteen. The remaining four sons, Uriah, Luther, David and Henry became successful mariners and held positions of honor and trust in the Town of Dennis.

Uriah Bendit Fisk (1828-1911) was the oldest and first to go to sea at age eleven learning the trade well and teaching his brothers what they needed to know to succeed as masters. Uriah became master at age twenty-two. From 1849 to 1865 he commanded ten different vessels and owned an interest in each one. Many of his commands were in service to the Union during the Civil War.

On a December night in 1857 off Montauk, NY a Philadelphia steamer struck his schooner bows-on, sinking her in a very few minutes. Capt. Selick Matthews of Yarmouth was in command of the steamer and did all he could to rescue the crew. Uriah was below when the vessels struck. He rushed on deck and one glance told him the terrible story. He seized a rope to swing over to the steamer but as he left his ship the two vessels collided, crushing Uriah between them. When the vessels separated he fell into the churning water and drifted fifteen to twenty fathoms astern still holding the rope. He was pulled back to the steamer by his brother, Luther, who had left the schooner before Uriah. Uriah went to his death at age eighty-three still suffering from those injuries.

The four brothers owned numerous vessels over the years owning as many as twenty at one time. Five of them were named for Fisk family members. Interestingly, Uriah B. Fisk was the Master of the first three masted schooner (1868) built at Bath or West Bath. She made many prosperous trips for almost nine years.

On January 27, 1881 Abby Crowell was on board the Schr. *Uriah B. Fisk* in Boston Harbor waiting to cast off for Charleston, SC. Her husband, Capt. William Long Crowell, was in command of the vessel. At 9:00 A.M. conditions were good and she left the harbor with fair winds and favorable weather to round the Cape. At 10:00 P.M. she anchored off Chatham waiting for the tide to come up over Nantucket Shoals. By midnight the weather had deteriorated. Strong gales came up showering the vessel with spray which instantly turned to ice on the running parts of the vessel. The captain turned out all hands to try to beat the ice from the ship.

The weak morning sun provided enough heat for the crew to haul up the anchor and move southeast away from the dangerous Handkerchief Shoals. Anchoring again to ride out the second night the crew watched helplessly as the strong winds and spray once more covered the ship in solid ice. The schooner was pushed by a moving ice field into the strong current. Despite heroic efforts by the crew she drifted helplessly onto the shore and struck bottom off Great Point, Nantucket. The Captain used every means at his disposal to work his ship off the shoal but to no avail. After sixteen hours of continuous effort it was discovered that she was taking on water and would have to be abandoned.

The lifeboat was very difficult to maneuver through the ice field and all hands would have perished but the lighthouse keeper had been watching the drama unfold and he alerted some local men. The men gathered on shore, threw a line to the boat, but could not pull it in. Finally in desperation they leaped from ice cake to ice cake, reached the lifeboat and carried the nearly frozen crew, the captain and Abby back across the ice cakes to the solid ground of Great Point.

The Schr. *Uriah B. Fisk* was a total loss and it was the last voyage for William and Abby. He entered into business on shore, possibly influenced by his dear wife Abby, who had had all the adventure at sea that she wanted. What a sad end for a noble ship but without a loss of life and with thanks to the courageous men of Nantucket.

Phyllis Horton

DHS Thanks The Eldreds!

For the past forty-eight years your DHS has had a special relationship with the Robert C. Eldred Auction Co. beginning with Bob, Sr. He became a charter member of DHS and started our archive collection with a lovely portrait of Capt. William Frederick Howes, one of five East Dennis brothers who all became blue water captains that followed (or chased) each other around the world for years. When Bob passed on to his reward, the Maritime Fund of DHS was established with donations in his memory. That fund has purchased a number of artifacts that tell the story of Dennis' maritime history. At his passing, son Bob, Jr. followed in his dad's footsteps. He called every time something relevant to Dennis history was available, and we have added a number of items we might have missed without someone else being in our corner.

Recently we were made aware of a painting of the Schr. *Uriah B. Fisk* of West Dennis being offered by an auction house in Hudson, NY. Third generation Josh Eldred went online, checked out the painting, conferred with their people, then went on-line and bid for DHS. He obtained the painting at below the estimated cost. The *Uriah B. Fisk* sailed into Dennis Port (my kitchen) on November 4th and we were just blown away with its beauty. What an addition to our collection!

We sincerely appreciate our relationship with everyone at Eldred's---may it continue for another forty-eight years!

Phyllis Horton

Are We Cousins? First Cousins Or Second Cousins Once Removed?

If your families can trace its roots to the early settlers of Cape Cod, you may find you share one or more common ancestors. You are indeed cousins. Genealogies have been done of famous and not so famous people. To find out how closely related you may be to them or to keep track of the more closely related various branches of your family, a May 1985 article in GOOD HOUSEKEEPING of "Who's Who in Your Family" may help to explain the connections.

"Who's Who in Your Family"

Your first cousin is your parent's brother's (or sister's) child. However, the first cousin's child is not your second cousin, as is sometimes thought to be the case, but your first cousin once removed. The child of the first cousin once removed is your first cousin twice removed, and his child your first cousin three times removed,

Your second cousin is your grandparent's brother's (or sister's) grandchild. That second cousin's child is your second cousin once removed, his child your second cousin twice removed, and so on.

And your third cousin? It's your great-grandparent's brother's (or sister's) great-grandchild. The third cousin's child is your third cousin once removed, his child your third cousin twice removed.

Some other occasionally misunderstood terms:

Siblings--have parents in common. Brothers and sisters are siblings.

Grandnephew (or grandniece)--the grandchild of your brother or sister,

Great-aunt (or great-uncle)--the sister (or brother) of your grandparent.

Great-grandaunt (or great-granduncle)--the sister or brother of your great-grandparents.

Stepfather (or stepmother)--the husband of your mother (or the wife of your father) by a subsequent marriage,

Stepchild--the child of your husband or wife by a former marriage,

Stepsister (or stepbrother)--the child of your stepfather or stepmother,

Half sister (or half brother)--the child of your mother and stepfather, or of your father and stepmother, or of either parent by a former marriage,

Lineal relations--those in the "direct" line of ascent or descent, such as a grandfather or granddaughter.

Collateral relations--those relatives who are "linked" by a common ancestor, such as aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Ruth Derick

SCARGO OBSERVATORY PART IV: THE TOWER OF STONE

At the time of the fire which destroyed the second wooden tower atop Scargo Hill in 1900, the property was no longer owned by the Observatory Association which had been organized in 1874. It had been sold to the Tobey family in 1890 and was a part of the elaborate complex which made up the Nobscusset House Summer Resort. The Nobscusset House itself stood at the end of what is now Nobscusset Road. Four and one-half stories high, it was surrounded by outbuildings - a stable, billiard room, bowling alley, entertainment hall, pavilion and two twelve-room cottages. Later a nine-hole golf course was added. To this resort came wealthy families, mostly from the Chicago area, where some members of the Dennis Tobey family now lived and were prominent in business circles. To this extensive plant had been added the modest tower at Scargo, with its spectacular view. Now, the village awaited Mr. Tobey's decision to rebuild. And in the interim there appears in Dennis an

interesting and somewhat mysterious character. He is called "Mr. Murphy" and he boards at the home of Fred Gage. Early in the year he is mentioned in the local newspaper column, decorating the Nobscusset Social Club. He seems to be a regular member of the group which meets around the stove at the Post Office waiting for the mail. Then in April it is announced that Mr. Murphy has the contract to build the new tower of stone. The cobblestones to be used will be furnished by H. Edmond Sears. Work began on the 7th of May and Mr. Murphy had two masons and their helpers to assist him in constructing the 30-foot tower, with "windows and look-outs at proper places." The work must have been completed before August, for during that month Mr. Murphy is reported to be building a stone well around the Bleak House property and later the same month, in front of Fred Gage's house (now Johnson's, at the end of Corporation Road, on Route 6A). He remained in town for a while, repairing chimneys and fireplaces, then no more record of him have I found. I certainly would like to know more about the mysterious Mr. Murphy, who seems to have disappeared from Dennis leaving his artistic stone work as his only memorial, especially the "unique and pretty building" on Scargo Hill.

*Quotes are from the Yarmouth Register, 1900.

Nancy Thacher Reid, Feb. 1983

~Dennis Historical Society Book Signings~

Capt. Levi Crowell, Civil War Prisoner His Personal Biography

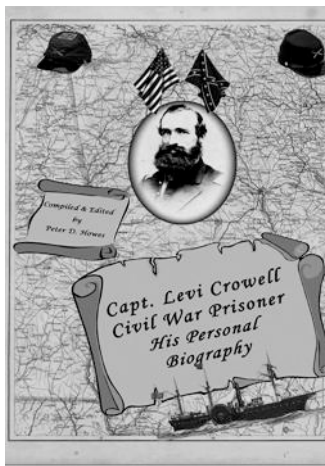
Compiled & Edited by Peter D. Howes

WHEN: Sunday, Nov. 27 from Noon - 3 p.m.

WHERE: The West Dennis Public Library, Route 28, West Dennis, MA. on the second floor. The library is handicapped accessible.

Capt. Crowell's great-grandson, William Smith Ryder, to whom the book is dedicated, will be in attendance and sign books. Refreshments.

Capt. Levi Crowell was born on Church St., West Dennis. His home is occupied today by his Great Grandson Bill Ryder and his Great Great Granddaughter.



Dennis Cape Cod

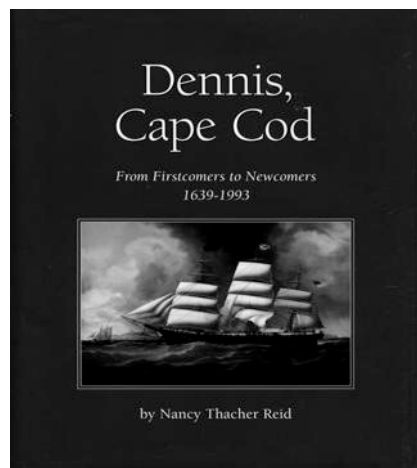
by Nancy Thacher Reid

WHEN: Sunday, Dec. 11 from Noon – 4 p.m.

WHERE: Josiah Dennis Manse Museum, Cor. Nobscusset & Whig St. Dennis Village

AND: The Dennis Historical Society
Christmas Open House

This is the *third printing* of this valuable history of Dennis, MA. Best of all are the wonderful stories about Indians and whaling, wars and revolution, ship building and trading, industry and inventors, storms and survival, and not the least the roles of women and children.



NEXT BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, December 13 **at 2 pm** at the Jericho Historical Center, 90 Old Main St., West Dennis.

December 13 – St. Lucy's Day ----- According to a 1627 London almanac she was invoked to cure eye problems made worse by "Drunkeness, Lechery, Dust, Smoke and reading presently after dinner".

Phyllis Horton

Next Month: "Eels for Breakfast"; "Tales of a Cape Cod Pantry"; and more!

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~ Best Bet Events ~



Sunday, December 11, Noon-4 p.m.
Christmas at The Manse
With a Festival of Trees
Unique, One-Of-A-Kind
decorated tabletop tree Sale
All Proceeds benefit the Caleb Chase Fund
for the elderly needy in Dennis.

