



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or pjhowes@verizon.net

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www.dennishistoricalsociety.org

info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

A very Merry Christmas and Seasons Greetings to all from the Dennis Historical Society! I write this in November, after we have survived three nasty storms, Sandy, the Nor'easter and the election (ads, robo-calls, talking heads and all of the other related fol-de-rol). Now with that all in our past we look forward to a new and very important New Year in the Dennis Historical Society, as it will be our *FIFTIETH* anniversary! Our programs committee, lead by the indomitable Phyllis Horton, has been planning several events to honor our Golden Anniversary. These will be highlighted in this newsletter as the year progresses. You won't want to miss them!]

As in the past, there will be no January newsletter, but a combined Jan/Feb newsletter that will be mailed in late January.

Happy Holidays

For about 100 years in the 18 and 1900s all five Dennis villages had a special evening just before Christmas when everyone assembled at their local church or hall for the presentation of the Christmas story and the village Christmas Tree. In my youth many folks walked through the crisp winter air as not everyone had a car or could afford the gas for a children's program. Most of the village turned out for this program whether they had children or not.

During the presentation of the program the older folks nodded and smiled as the youngsters played their roles remembering, dimly, when they also were an angel, shepherd, sheep or Mary.

The highlight of those events was that every kid received a present from the tree and a box of animal crackers or ribbon candy. We went home feeling loved and special.

DHS hopes you will feel loved and special at this holiday time.

Phyllis Horton

"Toilers Of The Sea And Their Religion"¹

An address, in part, by Prof. Henry C. Kittredge, delivered from notes, at East Dennis Sunday morning, Aug. 4, 1935:

¹ "Toilers Of The Sea" And Home Coming Week At East Dennis, Mass. July 28 - August 4, 1935

When in search of material concerning the Shipmasters of Cape Cod, a visit to Mr. Joseph Hedge, Mrs. Mary E. Crowell, Mrs. Minerva Wexler and others revealed a mountain of material concerning these Toilers of the Sea and Their Religion. For I regard their honorable work as honest prayer and their good deeds as an expression of their religion; broad as a result of the schooling of travel and experience; full of courage, faith and honor.

Such a man was Christopher Hall; a fine example of a Christian, cheerful in adversity, generous to his neighbors and considerate in his dealings with his captains.

His successor as owner and manager was Prince S. Crowell, whose tactful dealings are shown by a letter to Capt. Milton P. Hedge of the Shiverick built clipper Webfoot who had written of a tough passage round the Horn and to whom he wrote: "Yours at hand together with the bill of repairs, etc. If you get in a bad scrape its no use to feel so thundering bad, as that does not mend the matter. In regard to your proceedings we are satisfied."

Joshua Sears of East Dennis was trained, in part, by Capt. James B. Crocker, who considered that seamen's souls were to be cared for as well as their bodies, and that Sunday was Sunday, when he invited all hands aft to attend divine service, reading a chapter of the New Testament, interpreting it according to his own ideas, and concluding with prayers from the Seaman's Devotional Assistant. (Cont. on pp. 2)

Capt. Joshua Sears became a fast driver of ships and made record voyages; on four successive days he drove the Wild Hunter 268, 265, 280 and 272 miles, drawing 21 feet 3 inches of water and carrying 1500 tons of coal, yet he wrote "Oh for a cot down by the sea side where we could dig clams." Once amid light airs he wrote in his log: "Patience. Put your trust in God." Again: "Slow getting along. Thy ways, O Lord, are inscrutable." Later: "The Lord is my Shepherd; He'll guide me safe through."

Pete Howes

Repent Now

The Mayan Calendar has predicted the end of our world on December 21st, 2012. This may be, but I have my doubts.

In my memory, which is fading by the minute, I have survived 30 to 40 "ends of the world". There may have been many more of which I am unaware.

My first introduction to this phenomenon was at either the Modern Theater in Harwich Port or the Center Theater in Hyannis in the 1930s and 40s. Periodically the Movietone News, which ran before the main feature, would run a story of impending doom at the end of the world. The main character(s) would be marching up and down the sidewalk, most often in New York City, Miami, or anywhere in California, bearing placards announcing that the world would end on Tuesday, Friday or sometimes "tomorrow".

The sign bearers were almost always in universal dress of robes and sandals, long hair (way before Hippies made it popular) and a burning fire in their demeanor. The last line on the sign was always REPENT NOW.

I'm not sure what I have to repent for but surely there's a list somewhere. I have done it. On December 22nd I plan to board a plane at Logan bound for Florida to spend Christmas with my son and "daughter" and I don't want any Mayan saying, "I told you so!"

Phyllis Horton

Items From Collection Of Trudy James

[Found in the collection of Pauline Wixon Derick. Copied here by Burton N. Derick, July 2012.]

Lucretia Ryder^[2]

To a silent, reflecting man like my father, the periodical visits of "Bashy" Ryder a woman remarkably endowed with the gift of language, who came regularly as the geese fly over Labrador to the south and back again, and about as often – were hardly tolerable. But to us, the children, they are quite desirable on account of her son Sam, who sometimes came with her and more so on account of her daughter Lucretia, who was her more constant companion.

Every spring and fall she appeared, emerging from the East Woods, on her way from Chatham to Dennis, on a visit to her friends. She was a small woman, always dressed in black and carried a bindle, or pillow case, containing her best clothing and most valuable things.

Always arriving at noon, she rested over night and took a fresh start in the morning.

A tall, stout, prosperous man named Samuel Ryder now lives in Chatham. Was this the Sammy who trotted like a colt at his mother's side and some times carried her pack? No – that Sammy grew too big to walk by his mother on her visits. He went fishing and prospered and became Captain Sam Ryder. He retired from the sea and wrought industriously on his farm becoming a rich man. The Methodist Church in East Harwich, he supported liberally and he died, as he appeared to us, an old man. This was the happy, thoughtful boy who came shyly with his mother to our home. The Samuel Ryder now living, well known and esteemed in Harwich and Chatham is her grandson.

Many, many a year has passed since Lucretia (the daughter) died and we must now tell her story. From the story telling faculty with which she was plentifully gifted, she became a favorite with us children

² A note on the bottom of the page by Trudy James: "This is Lucretia Ryder born Chatham Sept 2, 1809 a dau. of Stephen Ryder & Basheba Nickerson. However, I have no child Samuel recorded for this family."

and almost one of the cousins. A tall and well formed girl with black eyes and flowing black hair shading her white shoulders – gypsy like forehead, with a voice as soothing and friendly as the sound of the breeze in the pine tree tops; she sat in the midst of the breathless circle around the kitchen hearth. The fire would die down from the lateness of the hour, while her mother talked to the older audience by the fire in the front room.

As entertaining as the “Thousand and One Nights” or “The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe” read in later years, were those of her rehearsals, which she had learned from the lore of the three towns which she had visited with her mother, heightened by her own active imagination and love of the marvelous, combined with natural eloquence, into such gorgeous pictures, that it seemed to us entirely probable that the place where we lived was once a land of fairies & giants; that the birds and animals once talked with one another; that ghosts and witches, strange sights and noises invested every lonely place on dark, stormy nights.

As with the lapse of years she verged toward womanhood. The time arrived when Lucretia came no more with her mother. We noticed too, that “Bashy” was not as talkative as before and that she had a great secret to reveal to our mother, who, as she told it with weeping eyes, wept with her, but could not tell her children why they wept. It was the last time that I remember seeing her, when she came in the anguish of her grief, to tell us that Lucretia was dead.

By the invidious arts of a seducer had the daughter of “Bashy” fallen.

As indelible in my memory as the statue of marble to the eye, is the figure of her agonized mother, as she sat with streaming eyes, before the same group which Lucretia had entertained in childhood and lifting up her trembling, skeleton hands, said in conclusion of her sorrowful tale “These hands, yes, these very hands untied the knot. These hands unwound the fatal cord, by which my daughter, my poor Lucretia, hung herself from the high bedpost in her own room”.

Burt Derrick

Cape Cod Dialect

If you would hear a queer speech, listen to the older Cape people. In lower Cape villages it is still possible to hear "Yumes goin' the wrong way, mister, wemes'l show you the road."

If an old seaman speaks of the "Appletree Fleet," he is referring to the old coasters which plied along the coast, for the saying was that these boats never got out of sight of the orchards along the shore.

To speak of a "barm of fish" meant that the fishing boats returned loaded. If they carried a "load of corkstopples," they had returned empty.

No other grocer but one on the Cape would know that "Porty Reek long lick" meant Porto Rico molasses; or no cook outside the Cape that "Hog's back son of a seacook" for dinner meant boiled salt codfish with pork scraps.

Other queer words and phrases were:

"Codheads" - Knee length boots.

"Tongs" - Long trousers.

"Longlegger" - Hip-length gumboot.

"Harness cask" - A stored up barrel of pork.

"Smurry" or "Yellow eyed sou'wester" - Hazy breeze from the southwest.

"A white horse tumbling in over the taffrail" - Wave coming in over the stern while ship was running before the wind.

"Feather white" - Surface of the ocean when whipped by a heavy gale.

"Puffing Pig" - Porpoise.

"Sunsqualls" - Jelly Fish. "

"Scalawag" - Sculpin. "

"Squawk" - Marsh heron.

"Housen" - plural for house.

"Portuguese Parliament" - A meeting where everyone is talking and no one listening.

Elizabeth Shoemaker: *Cape Cod Legends*

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607



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Manse Christmas Open House

Sunday, December 9, Noon - 4p.m.

Jean
Twiss



Mary
Raycraft

Seasonal Decorations and Refreshments

DHS Christmas at Jericho

Sunday, December 16, Noon - 3p.m.

Figgy
Pudding



“We Wish
You A Merry
Christmas”

Seasonal Decorations and Refreshments

Gift Ideas

For relatives, friends, neighbors

- Gift membership to the Dennis Historical Society
- Book Suggestions:

Dennis Cape Cod

*Capt. Levi Crowell, Civil War Prisoner
His Personal Biography*

*Privateers, Pirates and Beyond:
Memoirs of Lucy Lord Howes Hooper*

They Built Clipper Ships in Their Back Yard

Dennis Source Records,

Vol. 1: Church Records

Vol. 2: Annals of South Dennis

*Nickerson Family Genealogy, V5, Part 1
Nicholas Nickerson & His Descendants*

Order on-line or call
June Howes @ 508-385-9308