



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 39, No 1

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

Jan.-Feb. 2016

Internet: www.dennishistsoc.org

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The next Board Meeting is Tuesday, February 9 @ 2:00 P.M., 2nd floor, Dennis Memorial Library, Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village

A Mariner's Christmas - Concluded

The following completes these edited letters between Obed Weldon and his wife.

Trinidad. Cuba Jan'y 27th 1866

My Dear Wife

Ere this reaches you you may have herd of my disaster of the Loss of my vessel on Key Britton reef about Sixty miles from this place we ran on this reef about one half past Eleven O.C on the night of the eleventh full of expectation of Being to our port of Destination the next day but that was not to be so the Vessel has done her worke here and is a complete wreck had I been where I could have got help, I should have saved her but did not get help Soon enough and have wrecked the Vessel and have arrived here. yesterday we had an auction and all we Saved from the Vessel and cargo amounted to about two thousand Dollars and I have to pay forty five per on the net proceeds for Saveing the property the expences are high and it will take about all. we had a gale of wind about all the passage out and Just as we got here to loose our Vessel it Seemed to much to bear we made our passage out almost all the way under a two reefed mainsail and Jib Vessel being light I thought She would pitch pole. we arrived here Last Saturday night and have been verry Busy ever since and to tell the truth I have not felt like writing So completely disappointed but I hope to get out of this place Some time During Next week I may come on to Philadelphia in some vessel here the weather is verry warm here and I hear you are having a verry cold winter at home and can only say I wish I had Stopped at home and not seen this Vessel at all but however I cannot help it now and Shall have to make the Best of it I had about planed out to make out here one more voyage and then carry Coal. Man can plan and not also azs[?] acomplish. there will be a great many

questions asked how it happened I can only say not by being drunk nor for any neglect on my own part but the reef not being laid down on my Chart not the right Lattitude and Longitude given of the reef. it is Some Six Miles out of the way and all the captains here Say So to had it been day time I Should not have not been here but cannot help it now What is done is done and I cannot help it I expect to get settled up the first of the week and then Shall be ready to Leave the first Chance I will write you again before I leave give my love to all and hope that Asa has my part of the Vessel Insured if not we have gone to pot and if permitted to get Home Shall have to go to the head of the pond to Live please write to philadelphia hoping I may be there by the Last of February

Yours

Obed

Trinidad Cuba Feby 8th 1866

My Dear Wife

I finished up my Business here last night and I am sure I am not log for of all the troubles that I ever experienced this is the beater of the lazy mean Spaniards are the worst People of all the world and there cannot be any worse thieves they will steel before your eyes and you cannot help yourself ... there has been one complete anxiety for Something all the time and I am about all used up tired care worn and half Sick but hope to recover I shall be glad to once more get in a civilized country again the weather here is warm and pleasant but the people make it Seem unpleasant about all Smoke men women and Little Boys and Girls not bigger than Sarah and the Sabbath are Spent in playing Billiards Drinking and cock fighting all are Catholick have tried hard to save all that I could from the Vessel but it has about all gone to expences and if I had Set fire to the Vessel and Burnt her I Should have been about as well off as now but I hope once more to see the end off all this and arrive home in ...hoping I may once more be permitted to see you and our Little ones

Yours

Obed

South Dennis, Feb. 18, '66

My Dear Husband,

Thinking you would like to hear from your home as soon as your arrival at Philadelphia, I will pen a few lines to you this pleasant Sabbath eve. all nature is quiet, and why should the hearts be disturbed and troubled, it is not the hour of disappointment and suffering is past. never once in my life and that when our dear child was taken from us, have I felt so keenly the unrelenting hand of Destiny pressing me down to the earth, as when I heard of your great loss. I know that all you letters to me, were of all of some peaceful fore boding of ill, but I did not think you would have to pass thro' such a great trial, before I saw you again, you did not write me all the particulars, but I know that your mental suffering has been great, and all I can say my dear Husband is "God Bless you."

You are strong and vigorous, just in the prime of life, and must not be discouraged. it is not the first good vessel that was ever lost.

perhaps you will think to find me very sad about it. true at first I felt very unhappy about so great a disappointment to you, but when I heard that you were safe and well, I did not feel that I could murmur at all. The men all seemed to feel very sorry for you. Asa came in to see me he seemed to feel very sorry for you. He got your part of the vessel insured and has the policy.

.... A few more years at the most and then we shall lay our cares our sorrows our burdens down, and let us not be sad but hope on hope ever. I want to see you very much. Obed felt very bad when told at the office that his father has lost his vessel, but the first shock has past over, and we are trying to be happy and cheerful again. I think you would like to have us happy. Obed and Grace got to school, and I think are doing well you cant think what a toll boy calls you father. Grace & Sarah are good girls and send love to you please except this with the strongest and best love of

Sarah

please write me all about yourself and try to be cheerful and happy

Good night , thine

Sarah B. Whelden

Derick Burton Nathaniel. "Dennis Source Records Volume 2: Obed Whelden Collection", pp301 et seq.

Winston Churchill's Wisdom

I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle. -

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older, it will avoid you.

Captain Daniel Robbins of Dennis¹

(Conclusion from December)

"Very much here is the Captain. One glance at his straight, vigorous figure, with the lively blue eyes twinkling in the ruddy face of him, assures you of that. Those blue eyes of his seem to go with the business of being a sea captain, on the Cape at any rate. All the deep-sea men I have met so far—and that is several!—have them—sea-blue eyes with the sparkle of sunlight and the keenness of a nor'east breeze. There is a question that I've never had answered—do those wise blue optics come from much sea-faring, and reflecting for years on end the color of deep water, or is it that men who are born with those eyes just naturally have to go to sea? There is bound to be some connection. Mind you,



THE CAPTAIN'S HOME IN NORTH DENNIS
Kept as Shipshape as a Vessel.

I'm not talking about in-shore, shoal-water men. I mean your true deep-water sailors, the ones who've been off years at a time, beyond "where the blue begins."

The Captain was forty-four when he came ashore to live. He had worked up on smaller vessels to be master. When he told about the gales he'd been out in, I asked if he wasn't ever afraid.

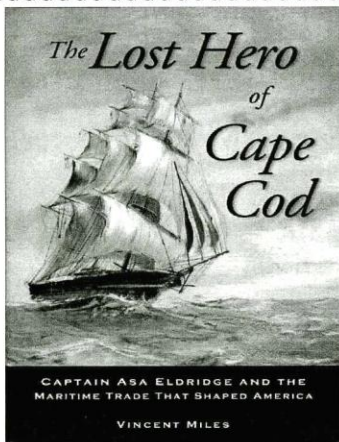
"Afraid!" He was scandalized at the idea. "Why, t' wouldn't do for a captain to be afraid! If he thinks there is danger, then is the time he puts on all his nerve. He has to. There was one gale, I didn't expect we'd last more'n two hours. Too much wind to carry sail, and we were being blown straight on shore. Water coming in, for we'd sprung a leak. Pumped all night. Took up a trap in the cabin floor, and baled. A Dennis man was with me, and his two boys. He wouldn't have minded, if he hadn't had his boys along. We laid to the best we could, and

¹ Crosby, Katharine, Cape Cod Magazine, March 15, 1927

towards morning the wind moderated a mite, and we made sail enough to keep us off the coast. When we got to port, the Dennis man said he was going ashore, and take his boys. I didn't blame him a mite, and I told him so. But t'wouldn't do for a captain to get scared."

Born in 1837, Captain Robbins had his ninetieth birthday about six weeks ago. For the last half-century, or nearly so, he has been a farmer. This year, for the first time, he sold his cranberries on the vine—and I guess from what I hear he was about the only man on the Cape to make much on his crop this season. Up to this he has been out on the bog bossing his gang of men and taking active charge of the long process of getting the berries ready for shipping. He has a large farm besides, and if it is all like his homestead lot there isn't one blade of grass out of place any- where. His stone walls are straight and upstanding, his fields thrifty, his trees well pruned, his buildings in immaculate condition. His whole establishment, indoors and out, is, in one word, shipshape. He can stand in his door and see the broad acres he has brought under cultivation and the homes he has built in the neighborhood.

Jolly as a cricket is the Captain, full of fun as a boy. When he went out to have his picture taken he told his daughter he'd got to do something to get rid of this girl—she would make him talk! And I think he was the only victim my kodak ever had who did NOT make any remark about breaking it with his beauty. Which shows both originality and a modest spirit."



This book by, Vincent Miles, is one of the best recountings of maritime history that I have had the pleasure to read. Yarmouth Captain Asa Eldridge (famous Captain of the clipper ship *Red Jacket*) is the connecting thread of this tale of the rapidly changing and challenging growth in the Maritime trade. However, his exploits are almost overshadowed by this excellently researched recounting of the transition from simple packets to complex steamers, from single

Captains to complex corporations. If you have any interest in maritime history and/or want a good read as well, this book is a must.

Published by the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth, it is available for \$14.95 at the HSOY Cobbler Shop (Rt. 6A) on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or at the Parnassus bookstore. It's also available from Amazon and there is an electronic version for \$9.99.

Pete Howes

Miserable Weather Faced Dennis Founders²

Dennis was first settled in 1639, by John Crowe (later Crowell), Antony Thacher and Thomas Howes. These are the conditions that they faced that first settlement year-----

“1638-39

On June 15 1638 a magnitude 6.5 to 7.0 earthquake struck central New England and was the first major earthquake after the start of European colonization. Its epicenter was somewhere near central New Hampshire. It was felt on Cape Cod.

October. About this time was very much rain and snow, in six weeks together; scarce two days without rain or snow. This was observed by some as an effect of the earthquake.

Dec. 25. The wind at N.E. - there was so great a tempest of wind and snow all the night and the next day, as had not been since our time. Five men and youths perished between Mattapan and Dorchester, and a man and a woman between Boston and Roxbury. Anthony Dick, in a bark of thirty tons, cast away upon the head of Cape Cod. Three were starved to death with the cold; the other two got some fire and so lived there, by such food as they saved, seven weeks, till an Indian found them, etc. Two vessels bound for Quiniapiack³ were cast away at Aquiday⁴, but the people saved. Much other harm was done in staving of boats, etc. and by the great tides, which exceeded all before.

March 26. There was so violent a wind at S.S.E. and S. as the like was not since we came into this land. It began in the evening, and increased to midnight. It overturned some new, strong houses; but the Lord miraculously preserved old, weak cottages. It tare down fences, people ran out of their houses in the night, etc. There came such a rain withal, as raised the waters at Connecticut twenty feet above their meadows, etc.”

² Ludlum, David McWilliams, Early American Winters, 1604-1820

³ The 1500-1600 AD Quiripi/Renapi/Quinnipiac confederacies included all of what is now Connecticut, eastern New York, northern New Jersey, and half of Long Island (prior to the immigration of the Pequot/Mohegan peoples into eastern CT).

⁴ Aquidneck Island

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*****MEMBERSHIP REMINDER*****

DUES renewals will be mailed to you in MARCH, just in case you wondered if you missed it in the Christmas mail.

DHS fiscal year changed to January 1 to December 31, and the dues renewals have been adjusted accordingly. In addition to paying by check (preferred), you will now be able to pay through PayPal on the DHS Website.

Thursday, March 31, 7:00 P.M.

“Meet Mehetable”

Mehtable will give a talk about the Puritans, specifically, how the Puritans dressed, what they found when they arrived, their biggest challenges, how they interacted and the impact of religion on their lives.

Featuring **Alice Plouchard Stelzer** whose book *Female Adventurers: The Women Who Helped Colonize Massachusetts and Connecticut* will be available for purchase.

Co-sponsored with the Dennis Memorial Library
\$5.00 Donation

Dennis Memorial Library,
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village

Nantucket Sleigh Ride | Lexicon



Whalers coined the term Nantucket sleigh ride between 1750 and 1840, when Nantucket was then known as one of the world’s whaling capitals. After the harpooners struck the whale, it often took off on the surface of the water, dragging behind it five or six men in the whaleboat. For miles, they bumped over the swells until the whale tired and gave up. Fishermen and sailors still use this term when the ocean takes them on a ride they can’t quite control.