



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 7

July 2002

Calendar of Events

Monday, July 1

Old Fashioned Pie Sale

Come buy a piece or a whole pie just like Mom's. Sponsored by the Josiah Dennis Manse Museum
6:30 PM
Dennis Village Green
Route 6A
Stay for the band concert sponsored by the Village Improvement Society

Monday, July 15

Bike Tour of Historic Dennis Village

Mary Kuhrtz will narrate the tour, telling stories of the early village residents and buildings.
Meet at the Josiah Dennis Manse 9:00 AM

Celebrate Dennis Festival Days

**Colonial Open House at
the Manse, August 17
10:00 AM to 4 PM**

**Jericho Old Fashioned
Crafts Day
11:00AM to 2:00PM**

**1867 West Dennis
Graded School House
Open
1:00 to 4:00 PM**

BLUE WATER WIVES AND MOTHERS

Phyllis Horton

It was a fine day in June, 1859, when the *Webfoot* sailed out of New York harbor with a cargo of stores bound for San Francisco. It was the third California voyage for Capt. Milton Hedge aboard the largest of the Shiverick ships. She had proven herself to be a reliable investment for the Dennis citizens who owned her. Mrs. Hedge and son, John Milton, not quite two years old, accompanied Capt. Hedge on this trip. During the 60 days it took to reach the tip of South America, the young man made himself very popular with the crew, one of whom made him a canvas suit to protect him in the bad weather which was so often experienced in rounding Cape Horn. And to be sure, the *Webfoot* did encounter severe weather. As she entered the Straits, "with the wind in her teeth", she was met with snow squall, rain, and hail. Reduced to short sail, and sometimes bare poles, she beat her way for nearly a month before emerging on the west coast of Chile. During that time, young John Milton took the fierce wind, cold and storms in stride. Clad in his canvas suit, he was as much at home above decks, with a rope about his waist to secure him to the rail, as he was below decks, and it is reported that his chief concern was when the next meal would be announced. At one time snow and hail fell so heavily that shovels were needed to clear the decks. Waves broke over the decks and water damaged part of the cargo. And all during this stormy passage, whenever clouds broke and patches of sky appeared, mysterious lights were seen shooting up in streaks against the darkness. It was the Aurora Australis, a phenomenon so little understood at that time that it struck fear in the hearts of the crew. Capt. Hedge described the lights to a reporter in San Francisco and he called them the most magnificent sight he had ever seen. At times the sea would be as red as blood, reflecting on the water and turning even the foam to flame. Often the lights of green and white would streak almost to the zenith of the heavens. At other times the glow upon the horizon was as if thousands of acres of woodlands were ablaze. St. Elmo's fire flickered at the ends of masts and spars, and the flashing streaks reappeared reflected on the rolling waves. It



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BLUE WATER WIVES AND MOTHERS

must surely have been an exciting experience for young Master Hedge and his mother.

The *Webfoot* arrived in California in October. Elizabeth (Sears) Hedge and young John left the ship to return to Dennis by railroad and stage as she was six months pregnant. The trip took more than a month but they arrived with time to spare and Joseph Hedge was born on January 27th, 1860. The *Webfoot* continued on to circumnavigate the globe. But no part of the voyage could have been as impressive as the celestial fireworks witnessed while the *Webfoot* was rounding the Horn in September of 1859.

The Hedge family had other adventures together aboard *Webfoot* before she was sold to the British in 1864. On one voyage the boys were allowed to take their pet goat along, and he fared very well for the first part of the journey. But he met with misfortune as they approached Canton. Captain Hedge had ordered a general sprucing up of the vessel as they approached the busy port and the goat made the mistake of drinking a pail of white paint, and thus met his end.

Be sure to visit the Manse Maritime Room Exhibit which tells other stories about "Blue Water Wives."

Thanks from Third Graders

Every year we receive letters from the school children who visit the Manse and Jericho, and they make our job worthwhile! They also help us see what the children see, and how they translate what they hear. Mrs. Hoppen's class sent us a pop-up book with pictures and a write-up for each room. In Mrs. Evan's room the children wrote individual notes stressing what they liked best, and from "Mistress Howard's" class we received a wonderful summary of the day's experience. If there were room, we'd print them all, but for this newsletter, here's just a sampling of some of the things the children wrote.

"My favorite room was the keeping room because it has all the food." And "It was my favorite room because it smelled good." (We had bread baking in the oven.)

"My favorite room was the weaving room. Weaving was fun with a loom. When we brushed the sheep's hair, it was hard."

"My favorite room was the school house because we got to write with gull feathers, we got to learn how you would have to bow if you were a boy and curtsy if you were a girl that's what you had to do to talk. If you were bad you'd sit in a corner. The reason is because we got to learn."

From the book we read:

"Dear Mistress Howes and Mistress Wheeler,

Thank you for letting us go to the Manse. Please tell the other mistresses that we appreciated learning about the past. We enjoyed doing the activities."

(This was presented with a picture of the Manse and a pop-out drawing of a Mistress at the door greeting the children.)

"Dear Mistress Talbott,

The girls are happy they don't have to empty the chamber pots! The mattresses must have been uncomfortable. We enjoyed the button spinner, Jacob's Ladder and dominoes." (The picture was of a four-poster bed with a huge pop-out chamber pot underneath. Must have made an impression.)

"Dear Mistress Kelley,

We had fun carding sheeps' wool. The weaving was a lot more fun than doing it bare hand as we do it in school. The rugs were colorful and beautiful." (Picture of carding combs, pop-out spinning wheel and student holding up one of the rugs woven by third graders from other years.)

"Mistress Fox, we'd never sit on the dunce chair or get whipped by the switch. We loved writing with the ink and quill pen. Mrs. Hoppen is making us bow and curtsy." (Picture of the schoolhouse with fireplace, benches, teacher's desk, with pop-out slate and quill in inkwell.)

Thanks from Third Graders

“Mistress Goheen, it makes us proud that people from Dennis built ships and were the first to have the salt works. The stories about Capt. Sears were interesting. Cape Codders added a lot to our history.” (Picture of sun, sky and ocean with pop-out sailing ships.)

“Mistress SanClemente, we loved the butter we made. We’re glad we don’t use that soap. It must have been hard working in those days.” (Picture of fireplace, butter churn, toe-toaster, with pop-out table with sugar cone, corn, and bowls.)

The book came with signatures with their names for the day--Temperance, Cyrus, Hepsibah, Jerusha, etc.--along with their own. More when space permits.



Shauna Oman
“Jerusha” using the
button spinner
Photo by Nancy Howes

Apple Pie, Mother and the American Flag

July first is the kickoff for the Great American Fourth of July. What better way to celebrate it than coming to the Josiah Denis Manse Pie Sale on the Dennis Village Green, Monday evening at 6:30. There will be freshly baked pies for sale “just like Mom’s—or even better”. The Manse cooks have established a name for themselves, and some pies have already been spoken for even before they are baked. Don’t be disappointed. Come early for the best choice. Also, bring your folding chair or a blanket and stay for the concert on the green featuring Bob Hayes and the Society By The Sea. The entire event is a Norman Rockwell cover right off the old Saturday Evening Post. Don’t miss it!

Biking With Mary

Once again Mary Kuhrtz has agreed to lead the DHS annual bike ride telling about historic sites. This time she will be telling about historic Dennis Village. Our Mary is a treasure and she has some grand stories to tell. Meet her at the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum at 77 Nobscusset Road at 9:00AM on July 15. Helmets are required for children and requested for adults. The rain date is July 17.

Tales “Writ” Because of an Old Pencil

Dear Phyllis,

Priscilla is busy getting ready to head north and asked me to write you this tale.

Her lil sister,

Betty

In the April 2002 issue of the Dennis Historical Newsletter Richard Howes wrote of finding a pencil inscribed with the name of John J. McHenry, Furniture and Undertaker. Reading about the pencil, Priscilla remembered playing one day with Faye McHenry at the McHenry’s house and store in the late 1930’s. The furniture was displayed in the front of the store and displayed in the back of the store were all the caskets Mr. McHenry had for sale. Faye and Priscilla wandered to the back of the store as Faye wanted to show Priscilla the caskets. Each casket had a kneeler in front of it and Faye and Priscilla climbed up on the kneelers and peered into each casket admiring the lovely satin linings and ruffled edged satin pillows. The pillows looked so soft and inviting that Priscilla and Faye each climbed in a casket for a little rest. They did not lower the lids.

Priscilla also remembers that John McHenry’s sister-in-law was our beloved first grade teacher, Mrs. Susan McHenry, and she had a Boston bull terrier. When her much loved dog died, she laid him out in a satin-lined baby casket from her brother-in-law’s store and the neighborhood kids were invited to pass by the casket to say good by to the dog before he was buried.

Betty Dean Holmes, June 2002

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The Way We Were

**Open House at Jericho
September 2, 1965**

Shown in this photo by John Kerr are (left to right) Mrs. Charles Crombie of East Dennis, Mrs. Leon D. Perry, President of the Dennis Historical Society, and Mrs. W. Harry Heptonstall, Chairman of Hostesses.

Don't miss your chance to visit the 1801 Jericho House and Barn Museum during Dennis Festival Days. The "guys" are sure to love the collection of old tools, and kids will love the "Driftwood Zoo!"

