

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 27 Number 7

July 2004

Calendar of Events

Manse Pie Sale
Monday, July 5
6:00 P.M.

Come buy a piece or a whole homemade pie from the Manse Bakers at their 6th annual pie sale on the Dennis Village Green. Bring a chair or blanket and stay to hear the first concert of the season with the "Moonlighters' Band".

**Walking Tour of
Historic Quivet Neck**
Saturday, July 17
11:00 A.M.

Brendan Joyce will lead the group and explain the history of this special area. Meet at the Jacob Sears Library, Center Street, East Dennis. Refreshments following the walk.

**Rain date: Sunday at
1:30 P. M.**

(Some parking may be available at the church.)

Jericho Open
Wednesdays 2-4 P.M.
Fridays 10 A.M.- Noon

Manse Open
Tuesdays 10 A.M.-Noon
Thursdays 2-4 P.M.

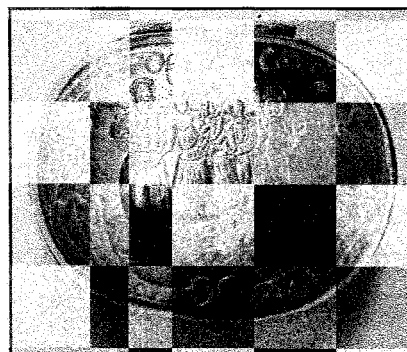
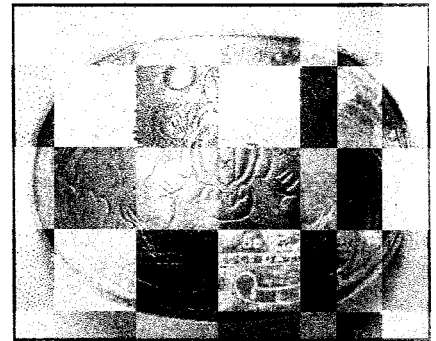
DHS History Detectives Solve the Mystery of the Metal Box!

By June Howes (Pictures by Richard Howes)

Recently my husband Peter and I were on vacation "across the pond"—as the Atlantic Ocean is so lovingly referred to by our English friends. One of the countries we planned to visit was Holland to see Keukenhof Gardens and experience the tulips on their home ground. The gardens were as beautiful as we hoped and the roadside acres of blooming tulips, daffodils and hyacinths took our breath away.

However, the tulip was not to be our only quest on this trip. Our friend and "cousin", Dick Howes, requested we search out the origin and purpose of a Dutch object which sits on a desk in the East Parlor of the Josiah Dennis Manse Museum. He said he'd supply us with photos to help in our search. Of course we said we'd try.

On Sunday May 2nd we were at Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem—a fine old city west of Amsterdam. As we were about to leave we brought forth the photos and inquired if anyone was available who could help us identify the object. To our great pleasure we were able to speak to Dr. Pieter Biesboer, Curator Old Masters of the museum who kindly shared his knowledge in helping another museum identify an artifact. He explained that he seldom comes into the museum on Sundays. We felt very fortunate to have chosen that particular Sunday to visit.



This metal container is a personal tobacco leaf holder. It was the custom in those days to have one made to commemorate a special occasion. The engravings would always tell a story. The gentleman, in the case of the Manse object, was from Amstelle Dam which later became known as Amsterdam—the city by the Amstel River Dam. The year was 1760. The seal of the city of Amsterdam was engraved on the lid. On the bottom of the container were men ice skating holding on to a long pole. The lower portion of the box held the tobacco leaves, the inside of

the lid has a hook that would hold a small spoon or cutting tool. The tobacco leaves were chopped, sometime flavored, and then chewed. The tobacco box was formed with rounded sides, top and bottom, to allow easier access in and out of pockets.

The Curator explained that in all probability the group had skated the width of the Zuiderzee and it was the gentleman in the lead who had the container made. In the 1930s the Zuiderzee was turned into a large fresh water lake named IJsselmeer by the creation of a massive dike because the sea was always threatening to flood the city of Amsterdam.

Our thanks to Dr. Biesboer for his help and to all the ladies of the Manse who have taken care of this fine old Dutch object.

June Howes

Where Have All the Flowers Gone?

On June 5th many of our members met Shannon Goheen at the Town Hall parking lot to join the annual walk in the conservation lands and view the lady slipper orchids which have grown there year after year. Much to our dismay we were greeted with the news that for some reason there were few of these native flowers to be found in their usual habitat. About a dozen people joined Shannon to walk and to search the Indian Lands. Shannon has promised to look into the matter of this disappearing wild flower and if possible to let us know why, for the first time in all these many years, they were not in bloom.



Wanted: Members with ideas!

For some time the West Dennis School House Committee has been asking for help to determine the best use for the upstairs rooms. As you know, one old school room has been restored to be used as an 1860-style classroom. We encourage our school children and their teachers to spend a school day (or part of one) to see what the early graded schoolrooms were like.

There have been various proposals made for the other large room which at present holds several display cases. If you would like to influence the way(s) in which this space might be used, if you have ideas for exhibits or displays, or if you would like to become a member of the Committee, please call DHS representative Marilyn McCormick at (508) 398-5289 or drop us a line at DHS, Box 607, S. Dennis, MA 02660.

About Dennis Artifacts——

It has come to our attention that many old artifacts which are really a part of Dennis history are being sold at yard sales and auctions. If you hear of old pictures, paintings, period clothing, household goods, books and other items that might be of interest to the Historical Society, please call our President, Virginia Devine at (508) 385-4441 or Phyllis Horton at (508) 394-0017. While we're always happy to receive donations of such items (which are tax-deductible), we also have a budget for appropriate acquisitions which owners might need to sell. Sometimes we hear about these things too late to save a valuable piece of Dennis history. Spread the word—and call us first!!

“It’s In The Cards” or rather “In The Books”!

In the near future the DHS is planning, as an on-going program, a Book Club with a focus on history. Several ideas have been mentioned, but we are open to suggestions from those who are interested in participating.

Perhaps we will study books relating to a particular era in the history of our town or country, or books by different authors about an important historical figure. There might be books of fiction or books of history written from different viewpoints. We might learn more about our Founding Fathers or the importance of our Founding Mothers! Club members will determine the direction of the group.

This could be lots of fun! Let’s learn through our readings and discussions about how this great country was founded, about the men and women involved in its creation, and about how it has survived into the 21st century. We might even have to admit that history is happening right now and that we need to decide which stories are worth keeping for the future. There will be more information about this new DHS program in the ensuing months.

Do You Remember? *(more about S. Dennis from the notebook of Eugenia French)*

....Where Mayfair Road begins was another little sandy road making the area a crossroad. Several sand roads from other directions went to the same spot. There in a big open area, surrounded by vegetable gardens, arose a huge wooden structure: the Almshouse. I can’t remember much about it before the time of the big auction held there. Maybe the fact that I got separated from my mother in the crowd and the auctioneer put me up to be claimed helped make a lifelong impression.

Most memories are about the place after it was vacated. There were many little rooms. Mostly the sheds outside captivated me. One carriage shed had old sleighs stored there. A Mr. and Mrs. Baker had charge of the place and later on I remember only Mrs. Baker. We fondly called her “Bakie”. After the Almshouse closed she moved to South Yarmouth but often drove back to visit us in the Model T Ford.

Several times a huge moon coming up to the east of us at the Old Homestead made an orange glow through the trees and we were sure the Almshouse was burning. It finally met the fate of being torn down, but for years afterwards there was a clearing in the woods with the remains of the gardens. This became another good wild strawberry patch. These patches were precious secrets then, but now I can talk freely of them.

Most of what I have spoken of has gone forever. The old has been replaced with the new. Some call it progress, the advance of civilization.

To me it was a period of time which greatly influenced my life. The many quaint scenes duplicated nowhere else in the world, the pine woods where groups of us built pine needle huts, the bog with its many frogs and spotted turtles, the little brook with its foot-bridge and mint patch and with a small clam flat at its mouth, the many wild growing things from berries and flowers on the ground to the crows and gulls overhead, the walks from here to fresh water ponds nestled away in the woods—all played a roll.

I’m certain that without this nature background on walks to and from the Mayfair area I would not have had a burning desire to have a whimsical nature display museum in south central Pennsylvania nearly 500 miles away.

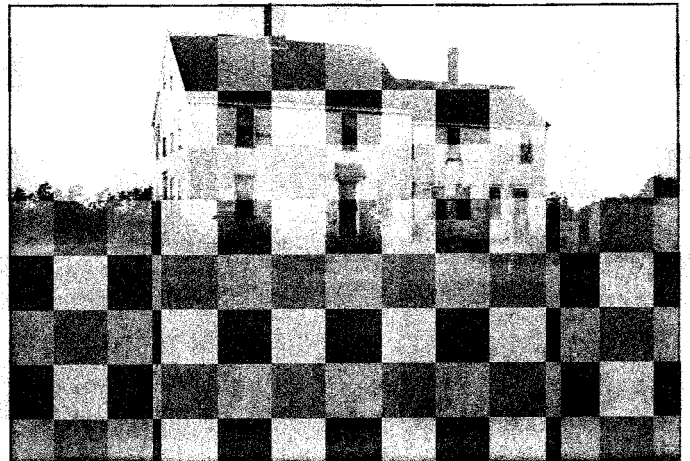
Dennis Historical Society
PO Box 607
S. Dennis, MA 02660-0607

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 2
South Dennis, MA
02660

The Way We Were

In Nancy Thacher Reid's *Dennis, Cape Cod* we read that: In 1927 it was voted to sell the almshouse and the land surrounding it. Leander C. Baker was the last keeper of the Town Home. When an auction of the contents of the old building was announced in August of 1927, Mr. and Mrs. Baker were deluged with visitors, many from the city, who were anxious to buy the contents of the home. Most of the furnishings had been brought to the home by the "inmates" over the nearly one hundred years it had served the town. The Boston Globe reported on the sale and local folks were amazed at the height of interest and prices paid for the furniture and dishes that had been used in the care of the town's poor, now elevated to the rank of antiques. Most had better things tucked away in their own attics or even used for "everyday" in their own homes. Lands sakes! There's no accountin' for some people's taste!



The Almshouse