



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 38 No. 6

Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to [pjhowes@verizon.net](mailto:pjhowes@verizon.net)

July 2015

Internet: [www.dennishistoricalsociety.org](http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org)

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E-Mail [info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org)

The next Board Meeting: is Tuesday, July 14 @ 2:00 P.M., The Dennis Memorial Library, Dennis Village

## Priscilla Stanton Waters Scholarship

The Josiah Dennis Manse Committee elected to use all donations in honor of longtime Docent and retired teacher Priscilla Waters by establishing a scholarship fund for Dennis students.



Diane Rochelle, Emma Sanderson, Betsy Harrison

On Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at DYRHS Gym, Diane Rochelle, with Priscilla's daughter and DHS President Betsy Harrison, presented the first 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum Priscilla Stanton Waters Scholarship to graduating senior Emma Sanderson. Her parents and sister were in attendance. A Dennis resident, Emma received \$500. She will attend Cape Cod Community College to major in education and hopes to be an art teacher.

Also a teacher, Betsy's mom taught children of coal miners in the hills of Pennsylvania and was a "life-long learner", studying until her 80's at Yale and later at the 4 C's. She was not a native, but loved Cape Cod and was a long time dedicated Manse docent.

*Diane Rochelle*

## The Old School House

Eva (Evelyn) Powers, the author, was the youngest daughter of Captain Prince Sears & Polly Dillingham Foster Crowell. She was born March 9, 1854. This story was written in 1934 when she was 80 years old. It is from her memory



Evelyn (Eva) Crowell

of the time she was 5, about 1859.

She married Samuel L. Powers, Esq., from Newton, MA. Samuel later became a State Representative.

"My recollections of the little old school house date back to my fifth year. It was located just below the house of Captain Milton Hedge on the opposite side of the road. (Hedge lived on Center St. at the corner of School. The school was on School St. at the NW corner of School & J. H. Sears Rd.) The building consisted of one small room with a raised platform in front for the teachers desk, and at the opposite end of the room double desks for the pupils with two persons at each desk and a seating capacity of about 24. A stove occupied the center of the room leaving a

small space in front near the platform for classes in recitation.

It would seem that in so small a room a stove would give out sufficient heat but such was not the case as pupils in the back seats were forever asking permission to sit or stand near the stove to get warm.

The teacher was Miss Lydia Sears who taught previous to my entrance and from then on for five or six years until the new school building was erected, near Worden Hall (1862). We were all very fond of her but never called her by any name save teacher. It was teacher can I do this or teacher can I do that.

I recollect one of the girl pupils coming to school with whooping cough. We were all most envious and could think of nothing more desirable than to whoop the way she did. So we all gathered around as close to her as possible. The result was what might be expected. One after another came down with the disease. In those days a cough was no excuse for staying away from school so we sat and whooped to our hearts delight.

There were rewards of merit given out for excellence in class work and 1 for good conduct, consisting mostly of colored pictures on card board. The New England primer was also given out for the same purpose and some of the terse sentences come to my mind such as "In Adams fall we sinned all", "The eagles flight is made by might", "My book and heart shall never part". Bad behavior was punished by slaps on the hand with a wooden ruler, kept in the teachers desk and what close attention was given to school lessons when the desk was opened and the dreaded stick appeared. Another task for unruly pupils was the untying of knots in a string twisted up for that purpose into a bunch of hard knots. Not being an expert myself in the task of *lossening* knots I remember well sitting on the edge of the platform and knowing the idle boys and girls had their eyes on me in a furtive watch out. I would occasionally give a loud whoop (being then a whooping cough victim) which in some mysterious way saved me the embarrassment of being looked at.

During the civil war the school made bags of pink and white calico filled with thread, buttons, needles and bandages for the soldiers. There was also a good deal of work on samplers putting in the letters of the alphabet.

It is a long road traveling back from 80 years to 5 but I have endeavored to tell only what is remembered without drawing on my imagination so that while the story is very simple it is I believe correct in outline.

Eva Powers, 1934"  
*Bo Durst*

## Manse Costumes Support School

Ginger Treadwell, daughter of Jonathan Treadwell, Media Specialist for the Town of Dennis Information Systems Department, portrayed Betsy Ross in Mrs. Meagher's kindergarten class performance "All About America" on June 9th at the Barnstable



Ginger Treadwell as Betsy Ross

Community Horace Mann Charter Public School in Hyannis. Her costume is part of the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum's costume collection.

*Diane Rochelle*

## Rose Victorian Update

**Karen North Wells**, artist and owner of the Underground Art Gallery in Brewster, has joined our "RV Team". Items on display include original watercolors, small prints, tiles, note cards and newly designed, cassette sized, desk calendars for 2016.

**Summer Story Hour** in the "Teeney Tiny Library" will begin Wednesday, July 8<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m. They will continue weekly until August 26<sup>th</sup>. Once again, we are happy to have our Dennis

Libraries participate in this program for youngsters 4 – 8 years old.

**Gift Shop Hours** for July and August will be: Tuesday- Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

*June Howes*

## MOONCUSSIN'

The Moon Curser is generally taken for any Link-Boy; but particularly he is one that waits at some Corner of Lincolns-Inn-Fields with a Link in his hand, who under the pretence of Lighting you over the Fields, being late and few stirring, shall Light you into a Pack of Rogues that wait for the comming of this Setter, and so they will all joyne in the Robbery.

Richard Head's *Canting Academy*, 1673, p. 101.

At haggard sea corners of old Cape Cod men held lanthorns high in the black nights of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They swung the discs in a wide arc as though directing pilotless ships over Nauset Sea. Many a hemp-and-salt shipmaster mistook these swaying signals for mastlights of other craft, turned to follow them, and ran on hidden bars. Such misfortune only occurred when no moon whitened the dunes that loom along that waterline, when no decisive starlight sharpened the shadow between tall Clay Pounds to the northward and the foam-spreckled edges of the sea. "Mooncussers" was the name bestowed on these human harpies, who fed on the spoils of such moonless disaster, who filched a lucrative plunder from the unchartable, shifting shoals of Race Point, Nauset, and Monomoy.

A few wise inhabitants put their hands into their pockets to contribute toward "Government Beacons," whereupon certain God-fearing puritans advanced sharp arguments against the "policy of beaconing," a device designed to "injure the wrecking business." Yet these same puritans risked their lives again and again to rescue sailors as well as cargoes and ribbed hulls and wreck-iron from fishing sloops, snows, pinks, Bermudas boats, broad-winged East Indiamen, deeply laden yawls and ketches that were "poundin' up" on the offshore bars. After initial salvage had been completed and flotsam had been gathered from spume-wet beaches, the goodmen buried drowned sailorboys while churchbells rang and prayerbooks lay open and salt tears glazed the eyes.

In up-Cape towns such as Sandwich and Barnstable, whose harbors face Baywater, freemen expressed disgust at the "dirty doings"

down Nauset way, to which the wreckmasters of Monomoy and Nauset replied by mentioning "green grape cankers itchin' the tongues" of envious "up-Capers."

With the growing trade of a young nation, so many ships perished along that "White Graveyard of the Atlantic" that link-boys were not necessary to lure unwary wanderers into a pack of rogues. The term *mooncursing* gradually lost its older connotation. With no implication of false lights it was used, in the nineteenth century, to indicate all those who practiced beachcombing or salvage. But in 1717 the old derisive, condemnatory aspect of the word still clung to it, though without the precise implication of "luring lights." So a hostile Cape took pleasure in bestowing the title "King of the Mooncursers" on Captain Cyprian Southack, brave mariner, skilled mapmaker, when he came at the behest of the Royal Governor to court "fickell salvedge," after word had reached Boston of the Black Bellamy's death.

*Elizabeth Reynard*<sup>1</sup>

## Olde Cape Cod Whale Stew

*Preparation time:* 4 to 5 weeks depending on size.

*Cooking time:* 12 to 15 days, depending on size.

*Serves:* Population of Truro (1,500).

Ingredients:

One whale, large.

One-ton Truckload of potatoes, chopped.

Small pick-up Truckload carrots, diced.

Two wheelbarrow loads of onions, thinly sliced.

Peel skin from whale, and cut into one-inch pieces. This should take less than a month.

Place all ingredients in a 700 gallon pot. Simmer for two weeks or until potatoes are done. Add Sea Salt and Pepper, garnish with Seaweed.

Drain whale blubber and serve hot at the beach.

Note: A microwave oven may be used if one large enough is available.

Cooking time may be reduced to two weeks if cooked at high.

Chef May Bangs Twite, Oak Bluffs, MA

*Nancy Howes*

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<sup>1</sup> Reynard, Elizabeth, *The Narrow Land*, Chatham, MA, Chatham Historical Society, 1978, pp 245-246

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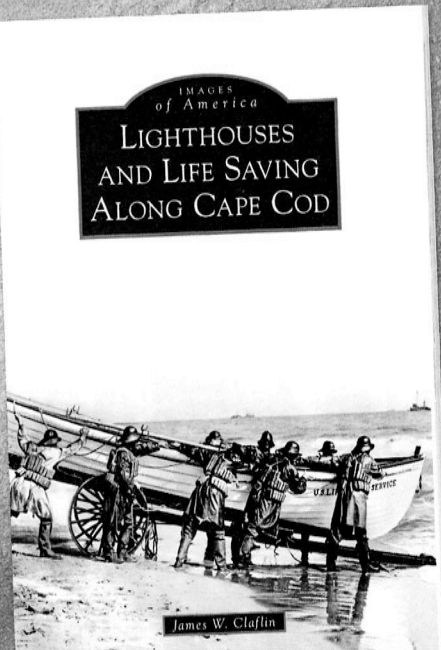
## Growing Up In Dennis In The 1900's



Maritime Exhibits ~ 19th Century School Room

Friday, July 3, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

West Dennis Graded School  
Second Floor  
67 School St., West Dennis



JOIN US FOR  
A BOOK SIGNING!

Wednesday, July 15, 2015  
7:30pm

Dennis Memorial Library  
1020 Old Bass River Rd  
Dennis, MA 02638  
508-385-2255

## Ancient West Dennis Cemetery

Formerly Ye Olde  
Crowell Family Burying Ground  
Friday, July 24, 2015, 10 a.m.

meet at  
West Dennis Cemetery  
Corner Fisk & Pond Streets, West Dennis

Terri Fox will guide you through  
this historic cemetery



Dennis Historical Society

[www.dennishistsoc.org](http://www.dennishistsoc.org)

508-760-0433

Rain Date Sunday, July 26, 2:00 p.m.