



### LUNCHEON PLANS NEAR COMPLETION

The Board has met to finalize the plans for our ever popular annual luncheon in honor of the town's birthday. The management of the Lighthouse Inn has always been very helpful and we look forward to a good crowd and a fun afternoon. Following the meal and the Birthday Cake we will be entertained by Mary Jane Fragano of the Chatham Chorale with a selection of show tunes. We will also have door prizes and a Dennis trivia contest. So get your reservations to Josh ASAP and join the fun.

### PAINTINGS TO BE UNVEILED

At our June luncheon we will be privileged to have on display two paintings commissioned by Paul Prue and painted by artist William R. Davis. One is of the old fire station in South Dennis as it appeared in 1937 and the second is of the north fire station about 1954. Both of these stations were converted school houses, both are no longer part of our scenery here in town. The difficulty which Mr. Prue had in finding photographs of these two buildings is evidence of the importance of the two paintings, a guarantee that the likeness of these old buildings will be preserved. Our thanks, Paul, for your interest in adding to the pictorial records of our town's past.

### DON'T TAKE YOUR FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR GRANTED

In these times of economic tightness in our Massachusetts towns and cities, many municipal services are threatened or are being funded by user fees. But Mayor Flynn of Boston has recently declared that fire and police services will be regarded as absolute necessities and these departments will not be forced to reduce their budgets, at least not in his city. Probably most of us would agree that fire and police protection are essential to our health and safety. It was not always so on Cape Cod. Listen to this quote from a traveller on the Cape in 1890.

"It is a strange fact that in most of these Cape Cod towns there is no fire engine and often only a poor apology for a hook and ladder truck, with its many hand buckets hanging down.....the Cape farmers will argue that "It ain't no use havin' a fire engine, we don't have a fire very often." and that ends all discussion on the subject."  
(From the New York Tribune, Oct. 1890)

Perhaps you would enjoy a trivia quiz about fire protection and its history in our town.

1. In what year was the Dennis Fire Department established?
2. Which of the Cape towns had the first fire department?
3. The burning of what public building was the catalyst which convinced the townspeople that a fire department was needed?
4. Who was the first Dennis Fire Chief?

Write your answers down and bring them with you to the luncheon at Lighthouse Inn on June 24th. You may be the lucky winner!

### FRIENDS OF JERICHO BARN

The Board of D.H.S. has discussed forming a committee of interested members to be D.H.S.'s Friends of Jericho Barn Museum. Unlike the Manse, which has a large working committee to do the many chores involved in running an historical museum, Jericho, by the provisions of the deed to the town, has a committee of only 5 people. These five devoted appointees are more than capable of seeing that the house is in good condition, making decisions about opening and closing, and special events. But five pairs of hands are not enough to do the multitude of jobs which should be done to keep the Barn Museum in tip top shape. Will you volunteer to be a Jericho Barn Friend? Chores which need to be done include a good general housecleaning each spring, arranging special exhibits, as well as refreshing the permanent exhibits from time to time. Whether you have a little time or a lot, it will be appreciated. Call President Nancy Howes if you wish to help--385-3528.

### SOMETHING NEW AT THE OLD MANSE

Please note that both of the town's Historic Centers will be open during July and August, Jericho on Monday and Wednesday and the Manse on Tuesday and Thursday. The houses are very different and both are worthwhile visiting. At the Jericho Barn we will have a special exhibit which we call "Keeping Cool in the 1800's". You may find it puts a different perspective to your 'people watching' at the beach! And this year the Old Manse, once the home of the man for whom our town was named, has a new look. The research library has been moved into the north wing, and the east upstairs chamber has been set up as a children's room. There are toys and games, clothing and other reminders of a long ago childhood, as well as a trundle bed and children's furniture. It is a delightful place for today's children to learn about the past and a room that will prove nostalgic to some of us oldsters. Another change has been made in the permanent exhibit downstairs, where the room which formerly held the children's things has been set up for its original use--as a "borning room". In the 17th and 18th century house, this tiny room near the home's largest hearth was the place where babies were born and the sick and elderly tenderly cared for. Devoid of anything but that which would be helpful in caring for the occupant, this tiny room tells us much about a way of life before nursing homes, clinics, and hospitals. And a third exciting thing is taking place on the first floor of the north wing. We have space for a maritime exhibit where many of our acquisitions which tell the story of the many maritime industries of this town can be exhibited together. An Open House is planned for July 1st from 3-5 P.M. Please do come and see our new Old Manse!

### CALENDAR

June 6 7:00 P.M. Board meets with Nancy Howes.  
June 24 12 noon--Social Hour, 1 P.M.--**ANNUAL BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON FOR THE TOWN OF DENNIS--**  
**197 years young. RESERVATIONS ARE NECESSARY.** See last month's  
newsletter for reservation information or call 385-3689 or 385-3528.  
July 1 3-5 P.M. Open House at Josiah Dennis Manse. Come see our town's lovely  
treasure. Refreshments will be served.  
COMING IN AUGUST Dennis Festival Days will be from August 19th through August 26th.  
D.H.S. will sponsor a number of events. Keep in touch.

### TOWN BIRTHDAY TIME

This June marks the 197th anniversary of the signing of the Act of Incorporation of the Town of Dennis. I always try to tell you something about the founders of the town in our anniversary month. This year's story is about Elisha Bassett, the town's first clerk. Elisha was descended from William Bassett who arrived in Plymouth in the ship Fortune in 1621. The family was well known in the Cape town of Sandwich in the next three generations, but Elisha's father, Elisha Sr. had moved to Nobscusset soon after his marriage to Ruhannah Jennings. His family of seven children are recorded in the records of Old Yarmouth. The family had long been prominent in public affairs, having produced many men of military importance as well as Judges and local officials who served Yarmouth, Taunton, Bridgewater and Sandwich in several generations. Elisha Senior was equally prominent, being appointed by several successive Royal governors to act as Captain of the King's militia. But as the British became less and less responsive to the needs and rights of their colonists in New England, Elisha Bassett became disenchanted with serving the British crown. Before hostilities broke out, Elisha had the courage to speak out against continued loyalty to England. He resigned his commission, and became a leading Whig. As the mood of the country swung toward independence, Elisha Bassett was elected to serve in the Provincial Congress for three years, spending many lonely days in Salem and Boston as a leader for Independence. Young Elisha apparently caught his father's fervor for freedom, and he in turn became a leader in the organization of a new town, as the time for our own independence drew near. Young Elisha had been a member of the town's militia, but not under Royal commission. He was a strong supporter of the East Parish church, and was married by the Rev. Nathan Stone to Susannah Howes, in 1772. He and Susannah were the parents of five children. When the first town meeting was called in March of 1794, Elisha Junior was elected to serve as town Clerk and Treasurer. His careful recording of the doings of this and subsequent meetings are among the treasures in Dennis' archives. His service to the new town was not limited to his clerical work, however. Joined by Capt. Isaiah Hall, he was delegated to deal with Yarmouth in the delicate task of dividing the treasury, and the job was completed to the satisfaction of the people of both towns. But the Bassett family was not to remain as one of the town's prominent families for many more years. The family of Susannah Howes Bassett was one of those interested in farming. The soil of Dennis was not productive enough to make this vocation profitable. The Howes men were considering emigrating to other areas of New England where a farmer could make a better life for his family. Squire Bassett was a party to these discussions of his brothers-in-law and when the decision was made to remove to Ashfield Ma, Elisha and Susannah were among those who left their native town. His brother Lot and several members of the Howes family were already there, and well established as sheep farmers, raising the newly introduced Merino sheep on rich pasture land, whose only disadvantage was its distance from home.

You may never have been to Ashfield, in the county of Franklin, but the name may strike a bell in your memory. That is because the Howes family reunion will be held there this month. The town was an award town, granted to the veterans of King Williams War in recompense for their service. It was a classic example of too little and too late for most of those who had served and it was left to their descendants to benefit. Many of the adventurous young families of the Cape took advantage of the cheap prices at which the lots were offered to remove to the new frontier--so many that a street of that town is still called Cape Street. And so many of the prolific Howes family of our town transplanted to Franklin County, that today it is an appropriate site for the reunion of the family, long known, and properly so, as one of the Cape's prominent clan. Some D.H.S. members will attend this reunion, and will report to us on their return.

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

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