



THE EXHIBITS

The Maritime Disasters exhibit at Josiah Dennis Manse was well received during Cape Cod Maritime Week in May. The good number of people who attended were surprised at the impact several great storms have had on the people of Dennis over the years. The severe losses suffered by some families and villages are just as impossible to comprehend now as it must have been at the time it happened. All the 'lost at sea' and 'drowned' inscriptions on Dennis gravestones bespeak a multitude of broken and grieving hearts. This display will also be featured during Cape Cod Heritage Week which runs from June 17 to 25 with the Manse being open 2-4:00 P.M. on June 17 and 18, 24 and 25, and it will remain in place during the summer. Try to work this exhibit into your schedule. It will give you a better perspective on what has given Dennis the character and fortitude that made it into the community we are today. As Captain Anthony W. Gage would say-- "It gave folks some backbone!"

Also during Cape Cod Heritage Week Jericho will host an open house featuring "Ladies' Fashions in the 1800s", an exhibit of 19th Century antique gowns and handbags. Jericho will be open on June 21 and 23, 2-4:00 P.M. This will be an interesting exhibit as they have a large collection of period clothing. A visit there will also give you a chance to see the new fence. Our 1801 house and grounds are being spruced up and will be as much of an exhibit this summer as the special exhibit. Look for a Heritage flier and take advantage of some of the excellent programs being offered during that week from Woods Hole to Provincetown. It also lists interesting things to do throughout the year.

JUNE 9TH IS GETTING NEAR

Time is running short to make your reservations for Dennis' 202nd Birthday Dinner at Lighthouse Inn on June 9th with Social Hour at 5:00 and Dinner at 6:00 P.M. We've had a good response but have not heard from some of our regulars--and Josh is waiting to hear from you. If you have lost your reservation form call Josh Crowell at 385-3689 and he can take your selection over the phone. He'll give you instructions on where to send the money. Your two choices are Seafood Newburg in a Patty Shell or Chicken Bianco with White Wine and Mushroom Sauce at \$15.00 each which includes the tax and tip. Our get togethers are always special, and we're looking forward to seeing you all there.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

There are two fairly new Dennis publications that will be on sale this summer at Josiah Dennis Manse, in addition to the other books DHS has for sale. The "Dennis Vital Records", published by the Mayflower Society, are available in a three volume set. This covers our town's vital records--births, marriages, and deaths from 1793 until 1900. This 17 year labor-of-love was the work of Roberta Gilbert Bratti, Pauline Wixon Derick, and Natalie Ross. They laboriously hand copied our town records, making sense out of all kinds of previous town clerks misspellings, errors, and omissions. These ladies were inspired by Miriam Eddy, a premier genealogist, who initiated the copying of these records. If you have any Dennis background at all these books will be an invaluable tool in researching your roots. You might even discover who mother's Aunt Esther and father's Aunt Miriam looked so much alike. As Josh Crowell says--"Sometimes the courting range wasn't very wide!" Ah, well. It's a good thing some of our ancestors brought home a bride from away occasionally to improve the bloodlines.

The other book is equally helpful to anyone looking up their family history. It is "Cemetery Inscriptions of Dennis, Massachusetts". This is a record of all the older cemeteries in Dennis--excepting Oak Ridge in South Dennis. Pauline Wixon Derick started transcribing the Dennis cemeteries in the 1950's, and now--40 years later many of those stones she copied are illegible due to acid rain. Pauline's son, Burton, transferred her records into a computer, and from there to publication was just a 'short trip'. Anyone interested in Dennis genealogy would be well served by these two publications. The Cemetery Inscriptions will also be available at Jericho.

SCHOOL DAYS AT THE MANSE

The seven classes of third grade students at Ezra Baker School had their annual field trip to Josiah Dennis Manse in May. This long running program has remained successful because the teachers prepare the students with Dennis history during the year and a dedicated group of volunteers work hard to make the visit entertaining and educational. Nancy Howes, director of the program, would like to thank Olive Thacher Wiper, Maureen Joyce, Betsy Wilcox, Dorothy Harriman Bell, Mary Ann Gelsthorpe, Nancy Thacher Reid, Beverly Thacher, Joanne Crowell, Bonnie Main, Sheila Duker, Peggy Daniels, Susan Kelley, Denise Atwood, Beth Crowell Deck, Kitty McNamara, Jean Twiss, Rosemary Rathburn, (a retired third grade teacher who brought her class to the Manse for years--and now comes back as a volunteer!), Shirley Webster, Margaret Walker Maher, Esther McCarthy and Joseph Solarz--who portrays Rev. Josiah Dennis.

These same students will also visit the 1801 Jericho Historical Center on June 7 to learn a little of how life changed from the 1700s to the 1800s.

CALENDAR

June	4	9:00 A.M.	Annual Lady Slipper Walk led by Dr. Norton Nickerson on the Indian Lands. Reservations required. 394-8300 ext. 23.
June	9	5:00 P.M.	Annual Birthday Dinner at Lighthouse Inn, West Dennis. See other side.
June	11	2:00 P.M.	Meet at the Manse to vote on a by-law change. See below.
June	17-25		Cape Cod Heritage celebration. See "Exhibits" article for dates at Jericho and the Manse.

MEMORIAL DAY

This month's newsletter wasn't planned to dwell on the subject of cemeteries-- it just sort of evolved that way. I used the Dennis Vital Records and Cemetery Inscriptions when doing research for the Maritime Disaster exhibit. They were so helpful I thought I should spread the word about them. And then the holiday weekend came along and brought back old memories, so here we are--back in the cemetery.

I grew up knowing this as Decoration Day, and could not quite understand my grandmother Nora Snow Murray's preoccupation with 'going to the cemetery'. She always was quite dressed up and took lots of lilacs, iris, lily of the valley, empty tin cans, water, etc., etc. to go to Swan Lake Cemetery and decorate the graves. I once asked her why it was such a big ceremony, and she said, "I'm going to visit all my dear, old friends." At age 13 that didn't have too big an impact on me. I probably thought there were a lot of other better ways to spend a nice afternoon. Now at 67+ it has an entirely different meaning. There are seven generations of my family up on that hill overlooking Swan Pond and it is somewhat comforting to know that I have a place amongst kinfolk. Actually, it's the only waterfront property I'll ever own. It's on top of the hill, overlooking the pond, and a great place to watch the sun set.

My sisters and I now make a yearly pilgrimage with lilac, lilies of the valley, etc. It's sort of nice to know that 'history repeats itself'. We always meet a number of old time friends, there for the same purpose, and catch up on their family news. When everyone has finished it is an impressive sight. Alton Robbins has the grass neatly manicured, geraniums and other flowers are in profusion, and small American flags are snapping in the breeze over Civil to Vietnam veteran's graves. Decoration Day was started by two southern ladies who took it upon themselves to decorate the graves of soldiers lost in the Great Conflict of the Civil War, paying honor to both Union and Confederate men. This gradually grew to include men from all the terrible wars we have endured.

In my youth the Harwich/Dennis Post of Veterans of Foreign Wars marched from West Harwich to the War Memorial in Dennis Port accompanied by Campfire Girls, Boy Scouts, the 4-H Club, VFW Auxiliary, Dennis Selectmen, and anyone else who was either running for office or patriotically inclined. A wreath was placed at the monument and the troops snapped to attention in salute to their fallen comrades. The Hon. Harry Albro launched into an oration, sometimes lengthy depending on the weather and the size of his audience, after which the troops fired a salute which usually made one or two children cry, and someone played Taps which was answered by another veteran standing on the hill in front of John Lane's barn. All the women dabbed at their eyes with lace-edged handkerchiefs and the men inhaled and blinked a lot--just like people of my generation do now. Because we lived near the monument our family had "charge of the flag", which meant we had to put it up and take it down on special occasions. To this day we can all hear mother saying, "Remember, don't let the flag touch the ground!" She never detailed exactly what dire circumstances would take place if that happened, but our imaginations were in full swing--and the flag never touched the ground!

It is satisfying to know that Dennis is again observing Memorial Day with a parade and appropriate ceremonies.

WE NEED TO CHANGE THE BY-LAWS

The recent rate change in postal rates necessitates a raise in DHS dues. Our biggest yearly expenditure is for printing and mailing the newsletter. Third class postage (our category) had a large increase. There will be a special meeting at the Josiah Dennis Manse at 2:00 P.M. on June 11 to vote on a by-law change. After much discussion your board decided the dues must be changed as follows: Family \$15.00 and Individual \$10.00. The Student rate of \$2.00 and Individual Life at \$100.00 will remain the same. Please come out on the 11th and support your board's decision. It should only take a few minutes.

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