



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 24 Number 7

September 2001

Calendar of Events

Sunday, September 16 300 Years of Dennis Maritime History

Brief Annual Meeting followed by a narrated slide show. Phyllis Horton, Dennis historian, tells how the fortunes and misfortunes at sea impacted the lives of Dennis people. Refreshments.

West Dennis Graded School 2:00 PM

Sunday, October 14 A Walk On Crowe's Pasture

Walk on historic Crowe's Pasture with Dennis Conservation Officer Brian Malone. He will tell about the pasture land restored as part of the statewide "biodiversity initiative" program. Park at Quivet Neck Cemetery

2:00 PM

Thursday, November 8 Were Vikings in New England?

Illustrated talk by Neil Good, Viking researcher, will explore the possibilities and detail the research to determine if the Vikings were on our shores. Refreshments.

West Dennis Graded School 7:30 PM

School House Given Coveted Preservation Award By Massachusetts Historical Commission

Ray Urquhart

The 1867 West Dennis Grade School House was selected by the Massachusetts Historical Commission for a coveted 2001 preservation award. William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth, presented the award to the Town of Dennis at a ceremony in the state archives building attended by about 150 local officials and others. The Commission recognized the preservation work of 14 other projects completed by preservation groups located throughout the state.

Secretary Galvin noted that the Massachusetts Historical Commission "takes great pride in recognizing preservation efforts in Dennis by selecting the school house to receive a 2001 Commission preservation award. Through work on this project, a commitment to historical preservation has been demonstrated above and beyond what is normally expected. It is for this extra effort we have selected the School House for this distinctive honor. On behalf of the Commission, I wish to applaud you for your outstanding contribution to historic preservation."

The School House was accepted for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in August 2000. The Register is the nation's list of buildings and sites retaining their historical character and are also important to local history. In September last year, the state House of Representatives adopted a resolution praising the Town of Dennis for preserving the 19th century school house, the only one remaining of five built beginning in 1859 to replace 12 one room schools formerly located throughout the community. Representative Thomas George introduced the resolution.

The Cafeteria at the Dennis Consolidated School

Society News

Jericho Receives Recognition from the State

On June 24th the Jericho House celebrated its Bicentennial with an opening tea and reception – complete with a delicious and attractive birthday cake! The tea was very well attended. Over one hundred and fifty people came including many special guests from Jericho Committees through the years. Thanks to Ann Chalmers, who worked diligently to locate all past Committee members.

Representative Tom George was on hand for a special presentation of a citation from Governor Jane Swift and a declaration from the Massachusetts Legislature in honor of the 200th anniversary of building of the home.

If you missed the tea, plan to visit the Jericho Historical Center, Old Main Street, West Dennis on Wednesdays from 2-4 PM and on Fridays from 10–12 AM through the end of August. During Dennis Festival Days, on August 19th, there will be a presentation of *Life in the 1800's*. Please see the calendar on page 1 for more details.



The Josiah Dennis Manse remembers a friend...

In Memory of John Burton

On June 24th, the Manse Committee held a reception for John's family and friends. His wife, Alice, was presented with a plaque in John's memory, which now hangs in the Maritime Room. Phyllis Horton wrote the following, which was read by Nancy Howes.

We here at the Manse Museum have had a special connection with John. We didn't know him, or Alice, until they retired and had some extra time on their hands. We were blessed that John decided to join our efforts. There are many other places in the town and on the Cape that are constantly looking for volunteers. He could have gone anywhere and would have done a wonderful job, but I'm very glad he decided to come here. All you need to do is look around the Maritime Room. His stamp of perfection is everywhere.

There are volunteers and then there are VOLUNTEERS!!! and John most definitely was one of the latter. He was not only willing to do what was asked of him, but he came up with some wonderful ideas and then followed through with them.

Biking Historic West Dennis

An enthusiastic group of all ages met at the 1857 West Dennis Graded School on the beautiful morning of July 16th. After a tour of the newly restored school house they set off with DHS tour guide, Mary Kuhrtz, to view some antique homes in the old Crowell Neighborhood and listen to their interesting histories.

At the Community Church they learned that one of the start up costs for the new church in 1835 included 75 cents for six split boxes, and when "Aunt Lydia" Fuller retired from singing in the choir she never missed a meeting, sitting in the front row so she could "straighten out" the minister if she didn't agree with anything in his sermon.

Two other interesting stops on Perry Lane were the Capt. Elisha Crowell I House 1780, a charming little half-Cape house where Elisha and wife Sarah raised 14 children and the present day owner had problems raising two in the same space; and the Elisha Crowell II House 1812 where Dr. Clark, who taught at the West Dennis Academy, also taught night classes in astronomy from the top of Christian Hill. At the site now is a U.S. Geodetic Service marker naming that spot as the highest point on the south side of Dennis.

The tour ended back at the school with lemonade and cookies waiting for them under a shady tree. Everyone had a grand time. We're looking forward to next year's trip in Dennis Village.

Phyllis R. Horton

Dennis Historical Society

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THE WAY WE WERE...

From *Growing Up in Dennis 1920-1938* by Eldon Davidson

Life was not all school, camps or play. We were required to do some work. Back in those days we had no Unions on the Cape and no Federal laws that kept young people under the age of 16 from working. My first job was picking up the mail at the old post office for my father, Miss Ida May Howes, and Mrs. Charles Goodspeed. I was paid ten cents per week and delivered the mail Monday through Saturday. This went on until I went to high school and then didn't have the time to do it. I wonder what the postal union would say about that now?

Probably the best paying job was working for my Uncle Willie Nickerson, the contractor. At first I was hired to pick up the shingles and other trash left over from his contracts. Then, in my teens, I had Bill King join me and we contracted with Uncle Willie to dig cesspools and the connecting trenches for five dollars. We would work like mad to finish them off so we could go hunting or swimming in the afternoon.



Bill King and Eldon Davidson
1937