

Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 28, number 6

June 2005

Calendar of Events

**Saturday June 4
10:00 AM**

**Lady Slipper Walk
over Indian Lands
Conservation Area**
Meet at Town Hall parking lot. Walk may be cancelled due to scarcity of flowers. Call 508 385-2232 for update after May 28.

**Saturday, June 25
1:00-4:00 PM**

**Josiah Dennis Manse
Reception**

Step into the 1700s in the saltbox home of Rev. Josiah Dennis for whom the town was named. Ongoing maritime exhibit, 1745 school house, herb gardens. Refreshments.

**Sunday, June 26
1:00-4:00PM**

**Jericho House &
Barn Museum Open-
ing Tea**

Join the Jericho Committee and Friends for refreshments and a tour of this lovely sea captain's full-Cape house. The barn museum features a country store, antique tools and Driftwood Zoo.

Summer Schedule for Museums begins with June Open House Events

The weekend of June 25 and 26 ushers in the summer season for our Historical Museums with open houses and refreshments to encourage visitors to come and return again with summer guests and friends. If you haven't yet been to our two outstanding historical houses, there's no time like the present. Located at 77 Nobscussett Road in Dennis Village, the Josiah Dennis Manse interpreters greet visitors in costume and bring them back to the 1700s. Following the reception on **June 25 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM the Manse opens on June 28 from 10:00 to noon every Tuesday until September 13, and on June 30 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM and every Thursday until September 15.**

The 1801 Jericho House is located at the corner of Old Main Street and Trotting Park Road in West Dennis. This historic house was built by Captain Theophilus Baker and housed the family until 1955 when Miss Emma Baker died. Purchased and restored by Elizabeth Reynard, it was donated to the Town of Dennis by her cousin Virginia Gildersleeve to be an Historical Center open to summer visitors. **Jericho is open from June 29 to August 31 on Wednesdays from 2 to 4 PM and Fridays from 10 AM to noon.**

A friend of Dean Gildersleeve, Ernestine Cady Perry, was already on the scene at the time Jericho House came to the town's attention. Having retired with her husband Leon Perry (son of Captain Darius Hall Perry) to West Dennis, this amazing woman found new interests to pursue. Her daughter, Priscilla Perry Sprunt, reminds us that she had been secretary to Calvin Coolidge while he was Lt. Governor of Massachusetts. She wrote for the Springfield Union Newspaper, and was a representative from the USA to the Paris Women for Peace conference following World War II. Years later she helped with plans for the Cape Cod National Seashore, became a charter member of the Dennis Historical Society and was instrumental in seeing that Jericho became more than a library—the period museum it is today. We may credit her with being a “Founding Mother” of Jericho. Be sure to visit Jericho this summer!

Maritime Disasters Topic of Manse Exhibit

The Great October Gale of 1841 is only one of the disasters to affect Dennis mariners. This article is from *Dennis Days Gone By* by Miriam Howes Crowell Westwood.

The following account was copied from a letter written by Jacob Stone Howes to one of the Cape papers. The letter was inspired by the removal of the church, built in 1838, now the Cape Playhouse (see *February 2005 Newsletter*), and is chiefly concerned with the church history of Dennis from 1720.

The first ministerial occupant of the present church (or what was a church until converted into a stable) was Rev. Robert F. Wallcut, a man true to his convictions as the needle to the pole....

*It was during his pastorate that the great gale of October 3rd and 4th occurred; and this reminds me of many incidents which may be connected with our subject. In that fearful play of the elements, which desolated so many houses in our village, the schooner *Bride*, Capt. Noah H. Crowell, was wrecked near Race Point, and all hands perished. With one exception, Capt. Kimball Howes, the crew were found in the cabin of the schooner.*

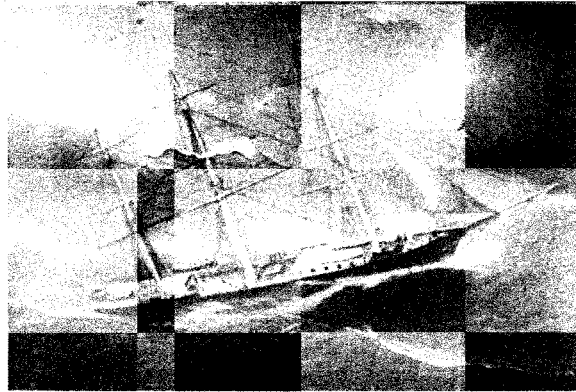
*When the news of this disaster reached Provincetown, Capt. William Crowell, brother of the captain of the wrecked vessel, who himself but just reached the shelter of the harbor as the gale burst in all its fury, immediately took measures to convey the remains of the ship-wrecked crew to Dennis. He had them put on board the schooner *Village*, Capt. Eben Howes (his own vessel having been driven on shore in the gale), and brought home.*

*We vividly remember that dreary October afternoon, when the gale had so far abated as to allow the *Village* to enter our harbor, of meeting Mr. Aaron Crowell, father of Capt. Noah H., hastening to the shore to look after his dead.*

*From him we learned of the arrival of the *Village*, by him we were requested to inform Capt. *Uriah Howes* of the sad event, he having a son also (*Uriah, Jr.*) among the dead at the harbor. We hastened with the afflictive message, and broke the tidings to the father, whom we found at work outdoors, as gently as possible, and were hastening away to elude the mother, but the vigilant eye of affection, ever watchful, detected forebodings of evil in our presence and bearing, and our steps were arrested with "Tell me what has happened. Tell me what has happened!"*

We replied, "You will learn from your husband in a moment", but no evasion would suffice, and we were compelled to repeat the sad intelligence to her. We shall never forget the look she gave us, or the piercing scream of anguish that escaped her lips, as the cruel arrow of affliction pierced her mother's heart. She was doomed to another bereavement, her other and only remaining son having been lost in the same gale.

*Two days after, the almost entire people of our village were gathered at the Congregationalist Church to pay the last sad tribute of respect to six of the ill fated crew of the *Bride*, whose remains were placed side by side in front of the pulpit. The service was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Wallcut, assisted by Mr. Harris, the Methodist clergyman. This, indeed, was a sad occasion, not only to those who mourned the loss of friends with certainty, but to those having friends absent, and exposed to the fury of the gale, yet unheard of, those alternating between*



hope and fear, a most distressing frame of mind, for no one knew whose loved ones were to be numbered with the missing. Time at length made up the record, and nineteen names of men and youth, of the flower of our village, comprised the list of the lost. Time also has soothed the sorrows of that dread hour, but the material interests of this neighborhood then received a blow from which it never recovered.

Member News

We are grateful to **Leslie E. Worden** for sending us a copy of his book *The First Wordens in America* for the DHS Library. (See "The First Settlers in East Dennis" in January 2004 Newsletter and correction in February 2004 Newsletter) Thank you, Mr. Worden!

We were sad to learn of the passing of two of our long-time members. Our February 2005 Newsletter was returned from **Lexington** and it wasn't until later that we learned Life Member **Marjorie Milano** would not return to her summer home on **Center Street** in **E. Dennis**.

More recently we read of the death of **Pauline Nickerson Kennedy** who was also a Life Member of DHS. She taught for many years at **Ezra Baker School** and later at **Wixon School**. She will be remembered by many for her enthusiasm in leading school bus tours of **Dennis** for the fifth graders and her willingness to share the history of the town with adults and children alike.

Letter Recalls School Days in West Dennis

from Lora L. Nowotne of Chestertown, MD, April 4, 2003

Children from these families (*Wrinkle Point*) attended their first grade in West Dennis, MA in what is presently called **West Dennis Graded School House**. In 1929 I climbed the stairs to the second level on the left of the building. There were two rooms upstairs. On that level at the head of the stairs was a "coat" room and we all left our coats, boots, lunches, etc. until needed. There was a long, low bench for us to sit on when pulling on boots and coats. Inside, a pot belly stove burped, crackled, and grew red from inside out in its effort to furnish much needed heat for the high ceiling room. There were two grades in each room. My little brother soon followed in my footsteps, as I followed my older brother in his. Downstairs on the right side of the building grades three and four kept warm with the same heating method as those rooms above. In winter when storms came, we were dismissed early and we WALKED home, a distance of over three miles. It didn't hurt any of us. When the "Pond" froze over, we skated until we wanted to drop, and then went back for more in the early evening hours. Long after I was married I recall my little brother coming home to me on leave from the Navy, and even though I was pregnant with my first son, we both went skating! Attached papers will mention attending Town Meetings in the old school, and how much we enjoyed attending. One took an interest in politics at an early age. Money being exchanged didn't enter into politics at that time. As soon as **Ezra Baker School** was built, my class and those of other Dennis schools were the very first to attend.

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The Way We Were

We are always thrilled to add a special picture to our collection. This one was sent to us by Nancy Lundgren of W. Yarmouth and shows her grandmother's class at the (South Dennis?) Graded School. Her grandmother was Inez T. Eldridge who was born in South Dennis on August 17, 1892. She was the daughter of Augustus Eldridge born in 1871 and Annie Cahoon Eldridge born in 1873. It is believed that Annie's parents were Crosby Cahoon born in 1846 and Aurretter Cahoon born in 1853. Nancy had thought that Inez's middle name of Thatcher was spelled with a "t", but the family grave-site is surrounded by the graves of Thachers without the "t".



Inez T. Eldridge is 5th from the left in the front row. Can you identify any others in this class picture?