



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 31 Number 5 Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to pmrhorton@aol.com

June 2008

Calendar

Saturday June 14
10:30 a.m.

Walking Tour of
Historic Quivert
Neck

Historian *Brendon*
Joyce leads a
fascinating stroll.

Meet at the *Jacob*
Sears Library
23 Center St.,
East Dennis
Rain Date *Sunday*
June 15

Saturday June 21
1:00- 4:00 p.m.

Josiah Dennis
Manse Museum
Opening Reception

New maritime
exhibit,
"Dennis Lifesavers".

Refreshments

Sunday June 22
1:00- 4:00 p.m.

A Victorian Tea
Party

Join us for tea and
refreshments and
tour *Capt. Baker's*
lovely full-Cape home
& the fabulous "*Barn*
at *Jericho*".

1801 *Jericho*
Historical Center
Old Main Street
West Dennis

Dennis Brides

It's June—the month of Dads, Grads and Beautiful Brides. We send best wishes to all the Dads, Congratulations and Good Luck to the Grads and a long fulfilling marriage to the all the brides. May all your wishes come true.

Dennis has been blessed with some remarkable brides over the years.

Quite a few 1600s brides were already expecting a child when they were married. This was accepted by the general public but the lovers were fined by the King's Court. They paid the fine and got on with life. A young man starting out in life needed to know that his partner had a strong constitution and could provide him with sons to help clear the wilderness for a homestead and fields for crops. He also needed daughters to help his wife with her many chores of growing and preserving food to last them through the year and to gather, process and weave material for making their clothes. The young bride accepted this and entered willingly into marriage with her destiny fulfilled.

In higher social circles marriages were arranged to join influential families for financial betterment to both parties, but those families were few and far between on Cape Cod.

Life improved somewhat in the 1700s. Sons began inheriting cleared and improved land and equipment. More of them were able to marry for love than for necessity. The work of providing for the upkeep of the family was still very labor intensive but every decade brought more prosperity to most households.

When a young man decided it was time for him to settle down and he decided whom he would like to marry he asked the young woman's father for permission to start courting. It seems quite possible that the girl might have previously initiated some interest in him. Flirting has been around forever. Lowered lashes and a maidenly blush were great weapons. Certain facets of human behavior haven't changed much over the centuries. The courtship took place under the watchful eyes of her parents.

Girls of more prosperous families often had more than one suitor. Dowries were still in vogue in Dennis and any young man wouldn't mind having his bride bringing a piece of property or money into the marriage.

All young women were supposed to have spun and woven material and made her trousseau, two or three sets of household linens, material for baby clothes and her shroud—in case she died in childbirth. Clothing was so labor intensive it was passed on to someone else, not put into the ground.

Courting candles were popular in some areas. The candlestick was an upward metal spiral with a moveable base to hold the candle. When the top of the candle reached the top of the candlestick it was time for the suitor to go home. If the father thought his daughter could do better the exposed part of the candle was rather short on his arrival. If he liked the young man the whole candle would be ready to burn.

Courting in the winter presented a problem. Usually the only heated room was the keeping room/kitchen. Most courtships took place in the parlor which also doubled as the master bedroom. To forestall frostbite the young couple was tucked into the feather bed with a board between them that ran the length of the bed. This was called "bundling". They could look and talk but not touch, although stories abound regarding some enterprising young men, which could be true or not.

Brides in the 1600 and 1700s could expect to have up to a dozen or more children. Infant mortality ran high and they considered themselves lucky if half grew to adulthood. More women died in childbirth than from any other cause. The second most dangerous was from fire. They cooked over an open hearth that caught their long skirts on fire. Some men had several wives over the years. Today's brides should bless their modern appliances every time they go into the kitchen.

The 1800s brought more prosperity and introduced genteel social mores to Dennis. Courting and weddings became more elaborate and costly. Well-to-do sea captains would open their purses to provide an affair for "his little girl" that would keep social tongues wagging for months and it also was meant to impress his fellow ship captains. They did try to outdo each other at home and abroad. If the bride's father was a sea captain she was "expected" to marry one.

Many Dennis brides started their honeymoon and married life with a trip to Boston to board her husband's ship for a three to four year trip around the world. By the time she returned to Dennis for a visit she had survived hurricanes or typhoons, going "around the Horn", fighting off pirates and foreign diseases, sweltering in the tropics and freezing in Arctic waters and sometimes a shipwreck. During all this she had babies at sea that were delivered by her husband or, if she was lucky, on dry land attended by a doctor or midwife. Hardy stock, these Dennis girls!

DHS has a number of wedding dresses from the early 1800s to the first quarter of the 20th century. They are on display at the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum and 1801 Jericho House and Barn Museum. They survived because they were special, made of silk, and were put away in trunks. Queen Victoria of England is reported to have worn the first white wedding gown but that custom did not reach here until the end of the Victorian Era.

In every century some of our wives have moved away because their husbands had restless feet and wanted to move on. He thought it was crowded in the 1700s when the nearest neighbor was ½ mile away so they packed up and walked to western Massachusetts, Connecticut, other New England states and New York where attacks from hostile Indians happened. In the Revolutionary War Tory sympathizers moved to Nova Scotia. A number of young Dennis men moved to the Midwest after the Civil War as opportunities for advancement were there if you were ambitious. A short time later others moved on to the Great Plains and ranching in the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming, then on to the West Coast always looking for more adventures and another way to make a living, and the Dennis Brides were there also, holding the family together.

Our Dennis wives were pioneers in every sense of the word but their roots are here in our little town. Bless them all—the ones who left and the ones who stayed because it's such a wonderful place to live.

Last month's article about the 211th Coast Artillery and WW II produced a response and a surprise. Paul Prue, Dennis Water Commissioner, Retired Deputy Fire Chief and DHS member is our Guest Correspondent. Thanks, Paul, it's always great to have a follow up to one of our stories!

--- Phyllis Horton

Guns Return To The Cape

After WW II the Massachusetts National Guard formed the 685th Anti Aircraft Battalion Battery "D" in Hyannis. Bob Hersey and I signed up in the early 1950's.



Our first Armory was located in the old Hyannis State Teacher's College building on Main Street. It was also used as the Massachusetts Maritime Academy and is now the Barnstable Town Hall. In 1956 a new Armory was built on South Street directly across from the old school.

Our training was performed one night per week and one Sunday per month. Two weeks in June we trained with live firing of our 90-mm. guns at Camp Wellfleet, now the site of the Cape Cod National Seashore Marconi Station. These were the same guns used by the Dennis men of WW II. In the late 1950s they were retired.

The gun positions were atop a high bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. To this day, old shell casings and other artillery debris shows up as the dunes erode. We fired at targets pulled by aircraft from Otis AFB and radio controlled aircraft targets. Sometimes ships traveling the shipping lanes off shore would have to stop, cover and run

from stray shelling.

I was assigned to the Communications Unit that handled telephone, radio and radar. Bob was a Gunnery Sgt. of our battery of guns from Hyannis. We always outgunned the other batteries from Falmouth, Plymouth and Middleboro.

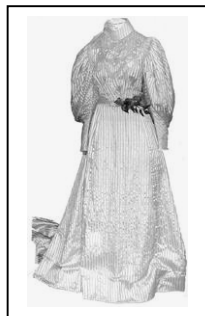
The former Camp Wellfleet site still shows the remains of the base. The water tank is still on site as well as fire hydrants hidden among the bushes where barracks and roads once stood. The sound of the heavy artillery could be heard loud and clear in Dennis.

Other Dennis members I remember belonging to the Hyannis battery were: Charlie and Bill Crowell, Peter McDowell and Jack Stacy.

Paul F. Prue & Bob Hersey

The Way We Were

Blanche Linwood (Howes) wore this dress as one of our "Beautiful Dennis Brides" when she married Seth Crowell on June 24, 1896. When Blanche was born her sea captain father, Marcus Lafayette Howes, was in Calcutta. He knew when he left Dennis that a baby was expected. Another Dennis captain told him on arrival in Calcutta that he was the father of a baby girl named Blanche. He purchased a bolt of silk for his wife to make baby clothes. However, she put it away to be saved for Blanche's wedding dress. The family called it "Pineapple Silk" because it has pineapple fibers woven into the silk which makes a lovely pattern.



--- Phyllis Horton

To Tickle Your Funny Bone

A distraught senior citizen phoned her doctor's office to ask, "Is it true that the medication you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?" He told her, "Yes, that's true." After a moment of silence she asked, "Then I am wondering, just how serious is my condition? This prescription is marked, "No Refills".
--- Phyllis Horton

Census Capsules

This is the third installment of *Census Capsules*, bits of information drawn from the United States Census data thankfully transcribed by Burt & Ruth Derick and his family as well as from other sources. The next available Census Data is for 1850. Wm. C. Howes, Assistant Marshal, took it 22 July to 8 August 1850.

Perhaps the most interesting national event that year was that Zachary Taylor, elected a year earlier, dropped dead, and Millard Fillmore became President. Independent of all this, California became a state. No doubt these events had little local impact. Of much greater import, however, were the "The Triple Storms of 1850". In the July 18-19 storm, all stations in New England reported southeasterly winds and gales and a great rain. There were property and crop damage reports from Connecticut, but not in eastern Massachusetts, but it devastated ocean shipping. The hurricanes of Aug. 24 & 25 and 7-8 September hammered Southern New England, with the September Hurricane became known as the "Nantucket Hurricane" due to its particularly severe effect on that island.

Not a Dennis event, but there were no life savers in April of the prior year when the British Ship Josephus wrecked during dense fog & severe easterly gale 1/2 mile from shore on the outer bar one-mile north of Highland Lighthouse. Only one of the 24 aboard was saved. *Be sure to see the new exhibit in the Manse on the Life Saving Service!*

The town had grown to 3,257 people (1,639 males, 1,618 females), a sixty percent increase from the 2,032 people listed in 1820. The census counted 896 children as being in school. Of the 913 people listed as employed, sixty-three percent were listed as mariners and twenty-three percent as farmers. If you include all of the other occupations that support these two, it is clear that the nexus of Dennis, as of all Cape towns at this time, was the sea and farming, with most else supporting those trades.

The government (federal and local) folks were more persistent in 1850 than in 1820, for the types and number of folks employed in Dennis are now given as:

Mariner	576	None	3	Sailmaker	1
Farmer	211	Gardner	3	Ship carpenter	1
Carpenter	28	Clerk	3	Peddler	1
Merchant	18	Physician	2	Miller	1
Blacksmith	12	Painter	2	Methodist minister	1
Laborer	8	Dentist	2	Mason	1
Trader	6	Cooper	2	Keeper of a House	1
Ship Wright	6	Congl Minister	2	Carriage maker	1
Shoemaker	5	Bridge Keeper	2	Baptist minister	1
Insp mc'kl	4	Trainer	1	<hr/>	
Tinman	3	Student	1	TOTAL	913
Tailor	3	Stone mason	1		

Dennis had grown to include 693 families (an increase from 383 in 1820) residing in 564 dwellings. The census lists many cases where families had taken in borders with a different last name than the head of household. Borders would have included all of the typical categories – widows, single people, others unable to afford their own dwelling or owners needing the extra income who rented out rooms.

The fourteen names having the largest number of families in town, names that you will recognize today were: (with the original census spellings)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Surname</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>
Howes	87	Chase	31
Baker	73	Wixon	26
Crowell	68	Small	18
Sears	43	Baxter	11
Nickerson	39	Rogers	11
Kelly	41	Eldrige	11
Hall	35	Chapman	6

And there was one family named Dennis in town, headed by 25-year old William, a Mariner, his 23 year-old wife Sarah and one year old daughter Martha. In the 1820 Census there were none listed! Were they missed in the census back then?

--- Pete Howes