



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 39, No 5

Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to pjhowes@verizon.net

June 2016

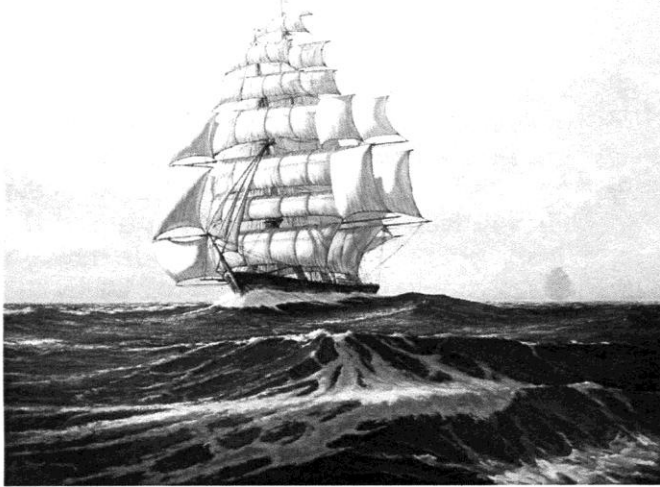
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E-Mail info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

The next Board Meeting is Tuesday, June 14 @ 2:00 P.M., The Josiah Dennis Manse, Cor. Nobscusset & Whig St. Dennis Village

Belle of the West -- Signed, Numbered Limited Edition Prints



*16 X 20 inch full color print on canvas,
foam backed, ready for framing.*

Cannot be mailed

or

*16 X 20 inch full color print on canvas
and shrink wrapped*

*These can be rolled for mailing
for your mounting and framing*

\$150.00, 10% member Discount

*Available at the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse,
1801 Jericho Historical Center, Dennis
Maritime Museum or The Rose Victorian.*

The Economy Grocery Store

Shortly after the disastrous Ginn Block fire that destroyed most of Dennis Port's commercial district on 12 October 1931 new businesses started to fill the void. One of the early arrivals was the Economy Grocery Store—the first chain grocery store to come to downtown Dennis Port.



The store's manager and the meat manager were brought "from away" to run the store. The other employees were local. During the Depression it was a wonderful thing to have a paying job and young men felt 'larger than life' if they were hired. Some of the local boys who worked there were Wilfred Ellis,

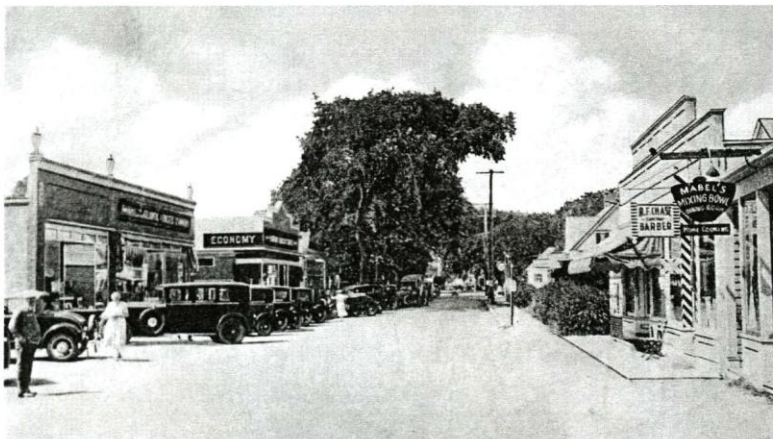
Horton, Clayton Young of Dennis Port and "Crackers" Eldredge of South Dennis. They were all required to wear a long or short sleeved shirt, depending upon the season and a bow tie year round. Courtesy was a given, but around here 80 years ago it was the norm.

Mr. Harold Wilson was the store manager. He wore a bow tie which looked just as perfect at the end of the day as when he put the key in the door to open for business. He was always smiling and seemed genuinely pleased to greet each customer.

When you entered the store there were fruits and vegetables on display. I especially remember (ca.1935) the tall stalks of bananas hanging from a hook in the ceiling. If you wanted some a clerk would cut off as many as you requested with a machete-looking knife which he would flourish in front of your face if you were a kid, but only if Mr. Wilson wasn't watching!

Floor to ceiling shelves lined the walls on the right side of the store full of all kinds of canned goods. A wooden counter stood between the customer and the shelves. When you placed your order the clerk would pick an item off the shelf with a grabber which could reach half way up. Anything higher required a sliding ladder to get to the top shelves. If

a young girl was at the counter the young men would try to impress her with their agility on the ladder. When your order was completed the clerk added up your total on a large brown paper bag



with what seemed like lightning speed then packed it in the bag. He rang up your total on a large cash register. If you could pay for everything that was fine, or you could run a tab and many people did in those hard times. Whenever the bill did get paid Mr. Wilson would give the customer a small brown paper bag with a few chocolates in it. There were always enough pieces that everyone in the household could have one. How he kept track of that number of families amazes me today.

Along part of the front of the counter were square boxes with hinged glass covers where you could see the Nabisco cookies and crackers inside. The clerk would open the cover and take out whatever amount you wanted from each box, putting each selection in a separate bag.

Mr. Rufus Foss was the meat manager. When he packaged up an order for some folks he threw in a "bone for the dog" which had some meat on it knowing full well that it would go into a soup kettle before it went to the dog. Ground beef and corned beef were the cheapest meats and their biggest sellers at 15 cents a pound.

The meat counter was on the left side and Mr. Foss was in charge. The store brought in sides of meat that were hung up in the cooler and cut up by Mr. Foss as needed.

Corned beef from away was available but local women insisted on a piece corned in a large barrel behind the counter by Rufus. Chickens were not a big item as many people still raised them at home. Fish came from Herring River when the boats came in or at Robbins' Fish Market on Depot Street.

There was very little "store bread" except in the summer when tourists were here. Most women still

made their own or, if they could afford it, went to Mercer's Bakery a few doors down on Main Street.

One of the strongest memories of that store are the aromas. The fruits smelled ripe and ready to eat, ground coffee permeated the store, the meat counter had its own smell and the pickle and molasses barrels joined the festival of aromas. Folks brought their own molasses jugs in to be filled from a spigot on the barrel. Rounding out all of that was the distinctive smell of the oiled floors that were washed and treated once a week. They were swept several times a day. Mr. Wilson had a keen eye for any debris—however small.

The Economy Store faded away about 1940 then a hardware store occupied the space for many years. It is now a delightful "pocket park" cared for by the Dennis Port Revitalization Committee, South Side Civic members, Dennis Port merchants, members of both Dennis Garden Clubs and the Town of Dennis DPW. That's a fine community effort. Stop by sometime for a coffee and 'goodie' at Buckie's Biscotti then step outside to savor it at the pocket park. You'll enjoy the moment.

Phyllis Horton

Dennis North High School

Cynthia Buscone sent us a lovely note concerning a note that she found inside of an old copy of *Old Yarmouth* by Swift, 1639-1884. "Tucked inside were five sheets of lined composition paper, neatly folded into quarters. On the paper in black ink written in script is what the writer describes as "a brief sketch of our school life in the Dennis North High School". Class of 1909. The writer does not identify him/her self.

In an interesting twist, when I went to Reid's tome, to see what else I might discover about this class, what should I find on page 501 but a small inset photo of this selfsame group, all dressed in graduation finery and named. In 1906 our author numbers the class at eight, four boys and four girls. The number still stands at eight in 1909, but now there are six young women and two young men!" "Dennis North High School Class of 1909

To relate in detail the history of our class would require volumes, so I will endeavor to give you a brief sketch of our school life in the Dennis North High School during the past three years.

On the seventh day of October in the year of 1906 we entered the high school our class

numbering eight, four girls and four boys, with Miss Chapman as our principal.

The East Dennis and Dennis scholars were strangers to each other but soon became acquainted.

The studies we took the first year were Algebra, Rhetoric, English, History, Physiology, and composition. Four of us also took Latin, and on Friday afternoons we did interest examples.

The class of '07 invited one of our members to take a part in a drama which was given at both East Dennis and Dennis with fairly good success.

At the beginning of the second term we felt very sorry to lose Miss Chapman whom we all liked and with whom we had spent a very profitable term. Mr. Riley then became our principal. The school seemed much different from the school he had been teaching, so after a weeks (sic) stay with us he left. Miss Butler took the school then until she was called away on account of her mother's sickness. Then Mr. and Mrs. Hawes were our teachers until Miss Butler was able to come back.

The second year we entered with our number eight and with Mr. Jewitt as principal. We were glad to see that two of our old friends of 1907 were back for their fourth years. Two of us who did not take Latin the first year took it the second year with the new class that entered. It was during this year that we took geometry, civil government, economics, literature, Rhetoric and United States history. We found that geometry required quite a deal of studing (sic) in order to work out some of the problems.

We were very pleasantly entertained by a member of the Senior class on an evening in May. Later the school gave a surprise party to one of our classmates. It happened to be a very pleasant evening and nearly all were present. We were entertained with music, (It then appears that the word "dancing" has been crossed out) games, and refreshment.

It was during the summer vacation that we got up a play entitled "Tommy's Wife" which we gave with good success at both East Dennis and Dennis for the benefit of our graduation.

At the beginning of the third year Mr. Rye became our principal. We have enjoyed our work with him and shall be sorry to leave him. For the many times we have taxed his patience and for all our shortcomings we trust we have his forgiveness. For all that he has done for us we are grateful.

Our teachers proposed that we do some debating this year. He had us try it three times and each time was a success.

We took a course in Chemistry extending from the last week of the winter term to the end of the school year. This course consisted of manufacturing the most common elements and learning their properties. This spring we were taken over to Hyannis to see a tuberculosis exhibit given at the hall and then after eating supper we took a pleasant walk through the village and then later attended a tuberculosis lecture given at Hyannis Normal School hall by the various Doctors of the Cape.

Considering the amount of work and study that has had to be crowded into the later half of the spring term we have concluded that it is not as sometimes thought the easiest part of the high school course.

We have had several class meetings at which we chose our class colors, blue and gold, our motto, "Carpe diem" and at which we discussed other subjects which had to be settled.

The musical talent of the class is represented by two of our members, one of whom is a famous singer and the other an expert player on the piano.

Although we have made many mistakes and perhaps not learned all our lessons as we might have done we have studied faithfully and these have been three of the happiest school years of our lives. We are glad to be able to stand here today as graduates soon to be from a school which has sent forth such intelligent men and women and we trust that we too may be an honor to the Dennis North High School.

The pleasant associations of three years have ripened into lasting friendships and with sad hearts we shall bid each other goodbye (sic).

As the future of a nation depends not only upon decisions which are made in crises but largely upon those which are made each day, so our future depends upon the course of action which we take as a result of our every day decisions.

During the past three years, yes during all our school days, we have been fitting ourselves for the future which lies out side of the school house walls, and we know that we shall be better able to meet whatever maybe in the future because of the knowledge and training we have gained during the last three years.

Our class motto carpe diem has been the watch word of many a soldier, the theme of the statesman and from this time and it is to be the watch word of the class of 1909. "

Many thanks for sending us this great piece of history!!

Dennis Historical Society
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As the 2016 DHS season begins...
Thank you for paying your membership dues.
By doing so, you support our programs
throughout the year.

If you have not paid your dues yet, please return your envelope
with a check today or use PayPal on the DHS website.

02660-0607 5002



Saturday, June 25, 1:00-4:00 P.M.

Manse Opening Reception

“Growing Up In Dennis in the
1700’s” Tour the home of Rev. Josiah
Dennis, our first settled minister for
whom our town was named,
led by costumed interpreters.
Refreshments will be served.

**1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum
77 Nobscussett Rd., Dennis Village**

Sunday, June 26, 1:00-4:00 P.M.

Opening Tea at Jericho

Learn about Dennis’ farming heritage in the
Barn Museum. Tour the traditional full cape
house built in 1801 by Theophilus Baker,
Sea Captain.

Afternoon tea will be
served in the Keeping Room.

**1801 Jericho Historical Center & Barn Museum
90 Old Main Street, West Dennis**

Dennis Maritime Museum

June 17 to September 16
Fridays, 1-4 p.m.
67 School St., West Dennis

The 1877 Rose Victorian

May 20 to Nov. 5
Wednesday – Saturday 11-5 p.m.
485 Main St., West Dennis