



DHS SALUTES NANCY THACHER REID

We did it! 450 people kept a secret and we surprised Nancy with a Special Day. It was a lovely party. Nancy's 'other half', Dick, gave an especially meaningful blessing, Peggy Eastman reminisced about their 'growing up' days in South Dennis, brother Ben read a poem he "writ" just for the occasion, and Nancy Howes Emceed the festivities.

The lucky winners of the door prizes were: Paul Prue and Tom Periera--each with gift certificates for Christine's Restaurant, Barbara Eastman--a bottle of wine from Swan River Liquors, Pat Swain--the Dennis calendar designed by Dave Powers, Marian Low--a desk set from Cape Cod Country Crafts, Carol Horton--a woolen scarf and ornament from Andean World, and Dorothy Maloney--\$25.00 gift certificate from Chase House of Flowers. Congratulations--all!

Nancy did give her talk on 'Looking Back' and it was very interesting--just a hint of what her book will be.

We have had numerous requests for Ben's poem, so here it is:

I'll speak a bit of Nancy's youth,
Because, you see, there are,
But mighty few, who can, in truth,
Remember back that far.

We know her store of Cape Cod lore,
Is now an institution,
And when she says, "Before the war",
She means the Revolution.

But lest you falsely judge her years,
I'll testify in church,
Her tales of Dennis pioneers,
Aren't memories, but research.

To tell her age, I will resist,
'Twould be an indiscretion,
Suffice to say she only missed
One year of the Depression.

"I do myself!" was Nancy's shout,
The first words that she said,
Which led to dresses inside out,
And bloomers worn on head.

She liked to do things on her own,
Of pioneers descendent,
A hog on ice, was never known,
To be more independent.

Her independence she retains,
It's central to her life,
She brought it into her domains
As mother, nurse, and wife.

In her research of history,
Great care and time she took,
To clear up every mystery,
E'er she began her book.

Now, stories, vast, that she's amassed,
Will soon be on the shelf,
We'll know, as always in the past,
She "dood" it all herself.

Dear Nancy--Even though you maligned our veracity (especially your family's!), we still love you. It was a fitting tribute to a lovely lady.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Through the generosity of Mrs. Frank Eastman we were allowed to copy the estate inventory of Capt. Prince S. Crowell and the log of the Ship Eben Preble kept by Joshua Sears of East Dennis. His penmanship is beautiful, especially considering that it was written on the high seas. Ives Printing did the work at cost, donating their profit to DHS. What nice friends we have! Mrs. Eastman and her brother, Robert Taylor, also gave us a portrait of Capt. Prince. S. Crowell. It will hang in the Manse.

Mr. John Anderson of the Village Peddler Antiques and Clock Repair has given us two Bibles of the Baxter Family of West Dennis. They are ca. 1820's Bibles and contain genealogical information from the late 1700's to the late 1800's. They came from the old Enoch Walker Homestead in East Dennis. It would be very interesting to know how and when they moved from West Dennis to East Dennis.

DHS HOUSE DATE MARKER PLAQUES

The Society's highly-coveted House Date Marker Plaques are available for those wishing to replace older markers or who have been able to authenticate the year in which their house was built. The requirements are simple: (1) The house must be 100 years old or older; (2) Written application, citing the research authenticating the date must be filed with the DHS Date Marker Committee for verification/approval; and (3) A modest donation to cover the cost of plaque production in the \$30-range to DHS. Applications available by writing to: Mr. Edmund R. Nickerson, P.O. Box 52, South Dennis, MA 02660. Because DHS does not provide a "house dating" service, applicants must provide their own research or that of a hired researcher with the application. A guide detailing suggested research methods accompanies each application. If you are unable to research the date yourself, a lawyer, title examiner, conveyancer, or surveyor are likely available for hire to perform such services. For application and materials, please include a stamped-self-addressed #10 envelope. Thanks! E.R.N.

CALENDAR

March 13 7:00 PM Board meets with President Nancy Howes.
April 28 2:30 PM **MEMORY DAYS.** This popular program is being repeated again.
Come tell us--and hear--about 'the good old days' in Dennis.
It will be in the Nobscusset Room at Eagle Pond Nursing Home.

DEAR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF D.H.S.....

You rascals! I would not have believed that so many of you could be in on a secret and not one of you so much as gave me one hint to raise suspicion as to what you were about. Thank you for a thrilling day--AND for my Life Membership--and for the lovely flowers, and the book of Harwich history which I wanted--and for the charming print, located, I understand, by Henry Kelley and tastefully framed by the Board, which I can look at today even as I type. But thanks mostly for the memory of a wonderful day, and for your "vote of confidence" which spurs me on. Be assured, I am working hard to make our history as interesting and accurate as I can. And, by the way, Phyllis and Peggy, I don't mind the least little bit that you have informed THE WHOLE WORLD JUST HOW OLD I AM! My only hope is that all of you will be in as good health as I am when you reach my age. N.T.R.

THE SOCIAL HALLS OF YESTERYEARS--PART II Liberty Hall

The South Dennis Historic District has been called the pristine example of an nineteenth century Cape village. And this may very well be. But it did not emerge new-born in the nineteenth century. Take a stroll along the winding way that is Main Street and you will see that the village has in fact evolved into what it is today. Here and there you will see the sturdy, simple, double Cape Cottages, which were the homes of the original settlers. The many-paned windows are placed close against the eaves on the front and many face south in the old tradition. These were the farm houses of the first generation. They stretched at some distance apart along the way with the land surrounding them, originally fields of corn. Following generations built their homes on family land, still following the Cape style of cottage, but these squared to the street. As the land became less fertile and the economy turned to the sea, houses of different styles were built in the Greek Revival, Queen Anne, and "Carpenter Gothic" schools of architecture. The village has seen many changes since it was a community of widely scattered farm houses. Perhaps the greatest change was in the building of the bridge across Bass River at High Bank. It's hard to imagine Bass River without it's bridges. The English had lived here for 179 years before a bridge was built. But following the War of 1812, the pace of life in the new nation began to accelerate, and the Cape was not far behind the times. In 1833 a corporation was formed to build a bridge over Bass River at South Dennis. With its advent, South Dennis became, literally a crossroads for land travel up and down the Cape, both north and south from Bay to Sound and west to east from the ports of Yarmouth and Barnstable to the growing villages of the mid and lower Cape. It is a fact that crossroads usually became commercial centers. And so it was with South Dennis. Soon a commercial building was to be found at The Four Corners, a center for shopping, stage stop, post office. In the course of years a doctor's office, milliners, ice cream store, a hotel, and a furniture store came and went. But one thing has remained. When the store owned by Andrew Whelden was improved and a social hall opened to the public on the second floor in 1865, Liberty Hall took on the position of the village's social center. It has remained this through lean years and good years, from private ownership to ownership by purchase of stock, to ownership by the village, when Mrs. Ella Stephenson Totten bought all the stock and presented the Hall as a gift to her native village. The usual types of entertainment were held here in the early days. It was home to the Henry Wilson Chapter of the Good Templars. It was the site of lecture series, debates, and balls. Today, Liberty Hall has been renovated--I might say restored, except that the lower hall far surpasses in attractiveness anything it has known before. The Trustees have preserved for the people of South Dennis a bit of their past which is irreplaceable. The walls of the downstairs room, named the Totten Room in honor of the donor, are hung with pictures of the village in the days when the old hall was new, and memorabilia of years past. The Hall provides a meeting place for the Old South Dennis Village Association, which sponsors such activities as the annual Lawn Party and Jazz Concert, Pot Luck Suppers, and Stew and Story evenings. It is also available to the public for rental for meetings and other social occasions. If you have an opportunity to see the good work done at Liberty Hall, please do. It will give you an idea of the look and feel of a social hall of yesteryear.

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660

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