



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 35 No. 2 Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or [pjhowes@verizon.net](mailto:pjhowes@verizon.net)  
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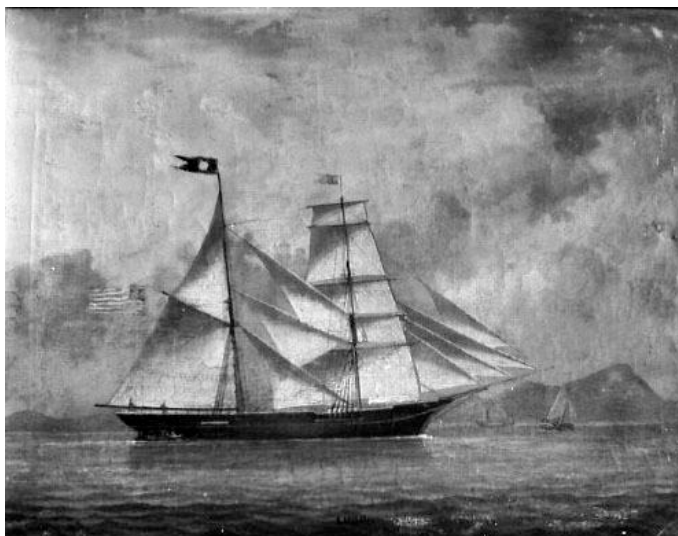
March 2012

**Please visit our all-new website!!  
And we have a new e-mail address**

**[www.dennishistoricalsociety.org](http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org)  
[info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org)**

## AN EXTRAORDINARY SAGA

Christmas came early for DHS in 2011. In November we were able to purchase the painting of the Schooner Uriah B. Fisk (see the December 2011 newsletter), then two weeks later a painting of the Brig Lubra was offered to us from Federal House Antiques in Hudson, Ohio. Owner Stephen Morse has Dennis connections through his Aunt Helen Pond, half of the Herb Senn/Helen Pond stage designers at the Cape Playhouse for many years.



**Brig Lubra**

The Lubra was owned and captained by Capt. Benjamin Perkins Howes of Dennis in the latter part of his life.

Ben Howes was born in Dennis in 1835, son of Nathan and Lydia Howes. He grew up as most Dennis boys did with one eye to his lessons at school and the other looking out to sea. He also listened to the Old Salts telling their stories of life before (and after) the mast, so young Ben went to sea with a sense of what would be expected of him as he worked himself up to command position.

We do not know when Ben first went to sea but in 1854 he sailed from Boston to San Francisco in the Clipper Ship Southern Cross under the command of Captain Thomas Prince Howes, another Dennis captain of note.

The Southern Cross was one of the most beautiful ships built by E. & H.O. Briggs of East Boston launched 19 March 1851 at 950 tons. She was reported to be as beautiful as the Southern Constellation for which she was named. DHS has a lovely print of her.

In 1859 Capt. Thomas P. Howes left the Southern Cross to take command of the Alarm and Capt. Benjamin P. Howes assumed command of the Cross at age twenty-four.

The next year Ben married his twenty-year-old neighbor, Lucy Lord. They had a three-week honeymoon and Ben went back to sea, returning nineteen months later. After that long separation Lucy accompanied Ben on his voyages.

In February 1863 they left San Francisco, picked up a load of dye woods (used to dye Union soldier's uniforms) at Buena Vista, Mexico and sailed around Cape Horn headed for New York. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, just below the equator, they were apprehended by the Confederate privateer Florida. A boarding party placed Ben, Lucy and the crew under arrest, allowed them to pack a few things, put them on board the Florida and at 9 P.M., off the coast of Brazil, set fire to the beautiful Southern Cross.

Six days later they were transferred to the French Ship Fleur de Paca then put ashore some days later at Ceara. A few weeks later they were sent to Pernambuco where they had a better chance of finding a ship heading to New York or Boston.

Back home in Dennis Ben decided against going to sea until the Civil War was over. While waiting they became the proud parents of Carrie Bertha and Ben ordered a 308-ton brigantine built in Danvers, MA naming her Lubra when launched. She was designed for trading in the East Indies and along the China Coast.

Spring of 1866 found the Howes family once more on the high seas and life was good. While in San Francisco Ben hired a nurse for Lucy and on May 3<sup>rd</sup> Miss Jennie Howes arrived three days out of Honolulu. In her father's words she "looks well and bids fair to be a healthy child".

Making several stops along the way they arrive in Hong Kong on June 22. Benjamin secured a new cargo and sailed for Saigon, then was back in Hong Kong a month later.

Near the end of September they were bound for Yokohama but making little headway because of light winds. Ben became alarmed when a Chinese junk came alongside and asked if they needed a pilot, but kept on coming after Ben said, "No!!" They were Chinese pirates who swarmed up the side and on deck before the crew were able to get guns from below. Some crew members escaped into the rigging and were shot by the pirates, others jumped over board and were drowned. Benjamin, Lucy and Carrie were locked in the cabin while the ship was ransacked. Eventually a pirate opened the door, shot and killed Ben and another one threw a log at Lucy which knocked her over on Carrie. On deck the pirates poured trails of gunpowder, lit it afire and left the brig.

Lucy waited what seemed a long time then pushed her dead husband over so she and Carrie could get off the sofa. She opened the door cautiously and was alarmed to see someone creeping about the deck. She then realized it was the First Mate Mr. Hall. They discovered Mr. Chase and two deck hands, located Baby Jennie where the Amah had left her forward of the capstan on the topgallant forecandle.

The men put out the fire only a few minutes before they would have been blown to pieces. Mr. Hall put about and returned to Hong Kong.

Lucy buried Benjamin in a cemetery called "Happy Valley" and helped the Chinese government identify the pirates who had been caught and they were promptly hung. Baby Jennie grew weak and died and was buried beside her father. With a heavy heart Lucy brought Carrie home on the British ship Portland.

Lucy lived on to age 84 and had quite a difficult life. Both she and Carrie were ill fairly often but that was true of many people. Sanitation practices were minimal, diseases were prevalent and patent medicines were mostly alcohol with a few herbs or bitters to make each one taste differently.

Lucy was born in Maine before her family moved to Dennis. She returned there to visit relatives, met and married Sylvester Hooper in 1868. They had three children and Sylvester abandoned them, showing up occasionally then disappearing again. Lucy supported her family by nursing others. Possibly, having to work so hard after Sylvester left made her stronger as she nursed through several diphtheria epidemics and survived it.

For most of her life Lucy kept journals, still in the care of her descendants. Great-granddaughter, Gerry Watters, using those journals, wrote "Privateers, Pirates and Beyond" published by DHS and available for sale.

The Southern Cross and Lubra will be displayed this summer at the Maritime Museum at the 1867 West Dennis Graded School.

Phyllis Horton

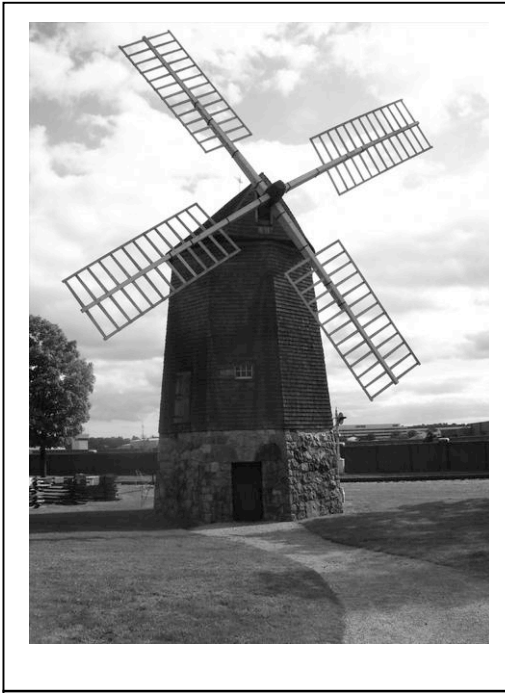
## DETROIT TRIP

I cannot believe how weary I am. That long trip home from Detroit was surprising. My flights always seem to include an adventure. The flight delay was because the door seal on the plane was broken. I suspect it's hard to pressurize the cabin with a leak. We had to wait till they fixed it. They talked of bringing another plane but that did not happen. Once the seal was fixed, several hours later, and the plane could be pressurized, 148 weary passengers happily got on board. It was gorgeous flying at that hour. I'd never watched sunset happen in flight before. By the time we were beginning to descend, it looked like Christmas on the ground with all the colored lights. As I waited for a wheelchair in Boston, the attendants on the plane spoke of hearing the "sssssss" with the broken door seal when they were coming in to Detroit from Florida. Yoiks!

The toddler great-granddaughter waved and threw kisses to me as I got out of the car with my suitcase. And we all did well, nobody wept when we parted. I was very proud of us.

I did get to go on the electric tram that goes around way up under the top of the building, for our departure gate was as far as you could go. Gate 75 is at the very end of the building. I bet it took 15 minutes to get there, in and out of elevators, on the tram and it got to be so long, I asked the gal pushing the wheel chair if

she planned on pushing me all the way to Boston. She was concerned and immediately asked, "What time is your flight?" Little did we know it was going to be hours away.



Greenfield Mill built on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, USA, now at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. A "Tower" windmill from West Yarmouth, Massachusetts on Cape Cod. The windmill was originally constructed in the 1600s and then moved to Greenfield Village in 1936 by Henry Ford. It is purportedly the oldest surviving windmill in the United States.

Next day, after my arrival, after baby napped, we were off to Henry Ford's Greenfield Village. Mama pushed the toddler in her stroller and Grandson pushed me in a wheel chair. It was a wonderful, magical afternoon. It was a bit like being in a time warp seeing all the Model T's and Model A's and 1920 and 1930 beach wagons chugging around the roads. The big antique carousel played 1930's music. The little one was most intrigued by the horses pulling wagon loads of kids. She also enjoyed the chipmunks, the baby ducks, and we even saw a great blue heron. As the afternoon progressed, we realized the baby was feverish, but not complaining. We had heard her playmate wasn't well, so it was not a complete surprise.

Grandson went into a lot of the historic buildings, but I only got out of the wheelchair to go into the bicycle shop of the Wright Brothers, right next to their home. In the back room of their bike shop is an airplane wing under construction. The docent told us their plane had never been assembled until they got to Kitty Hawk, N. C. It was shipped there in sections. Once it was assembled, everything fit together perfectly. Their first flight in 1903 was only twelve seconds and 126 feet. I was able to tell the docent about the Swampscott early airman, Harry Atwood, who in 1911, flew a Wright Brothers built plane onto the White House lawn, where he was to receive an award. And that there is a wonderful picture of him coming in over the White House. He could find it online, as I did. He said it was a new tale to him and he would certainly look it up.

Doug and Duncan Maitland had seen the 1911 picture in a "History of the White House" and alerted me to search for it.

We kept looking around the buildings in Greenfield Village and in late afternoon, I spied in the distance a bit of the blades of a windmill! Could it possibly be the one I remembered, that Henry Ford bought about 1938? That Cape Cod windmill used to be on Route 28 in West Yarmouth, near Mr. Stacy's house. Mr. Stacy was Superintendent of our school. We'd passed that windmill when I was a kid every day we drove to my Dad's radio store.

When we got there, I was delighted to find it was indeed the windmill I remembered from my childhood.

By then it was getting near closing time and we were ready to head for the car. But as we rounded a corner, we stopped again, for there were the great big horses, having just had their harnesses removed, rolling in the dirt, happy to finally have the harnesses off, and they could scratch themselves. Our toddler was fascinated. She calls the horses, "Nay-nays". She also enjoyed the lovely Josephine Ford fountain we saw on the way out.

I later "Googled" Cape Cod Windmill, MI, to find my memory was in error by two years. Ford actually bought the windmill in 1936. I was eight years old, but my memory of it is very clear.

I was very pleased to see the windmill. I have carried that memory for a long, long time. Greenfield Village was a delight for this history buff.

Betty Dean Holmes

## **DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEETING**


*Note:* All members are invited to attend all monthly DHS Board Meetings. The next meeting is at 2 pm on Tuesday, March 13 at the Jericho Historical Center, 90 Old Main St., West Dennis.

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# A Chat with Burt & Phyllis




2005 Photo by Nicole Muller

**Saturday March 24, 12:30 p.m.**

Dennis Public Library  
5 Hall St., Dennis Port

Join our two Dennis Historians,  
*Burt Derick & Phyllis Horton*, as they  
reminisce about local "characters".

[www.dennishistoricalsociety.org](http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org)  [info@DennisHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@DennisHistoricalSociety.org)

Information - 508-760-0433

## Coming April 29<sup>th</sup> to Dennis Memorial Library!

Do you remember Camp Dennis, a boy's camp located at the end of Nobscussett Rd. from the late 1930s until 1955?

**Kevin Morley** will share the history of the camp with stories and photos including when his family lived at the camp while his father was director from 1947-1955.

It's another piece of Dennis history we can learn about together. Please bring *your* stories and photos to share.



Walter Morley (L) & Joseph Pare, owner, standing in front of 72 Luscombe Lane. Dennis .