



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 38 No. 2

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

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The next Board Meeting: is Tuesday, March 10 @ 2:00 P.M., 2nd floor, Dennis Memorial Library, Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village

Another Dennis Icon is Gone

The face of old Dennis is continuously changing—one building at a time. The most recent one was for many years a neighborhood grocery store. In 1895 there were twenty-five stores that sold groceries and meat along with many other items.

Isaac Warsaw Peterson, retired sea captain of Dennis Port, carried on a lively grocery store with other non-grocery items. His ad in the 1895 Dennis Directory reads: "I. W. Peterson.. ...Wholesale and Retail Dealer in...Doors and Windows, Hardware, Glassware, Tinware...Paints, Oils, Ship Chandlery...Kitchen Furnishings, Farm, Garden and...Mechanics Tools, Wire Fencing, Poultry Wire, &...Also Groceries, Provisions and...General Family Supplies...Depot Street, Dennis Port, Mass." For a few years he was also the Post Master.

Sometime between 1900 and 1917 Isaac purchased the Shingle Shed and Office from the Capron Lumber Co. on Center Street and moved it to his property on Depot Street to replace his earlier store. Moving buildings around in the early years was a common occurrence.

Isaac and his wife, Sabrina, took in Thomas Frank Young who was orphaned at age ten, and raised him. Their only son had died young. Frank worked in the store from an early age and took over ownership at Isaac's death in 1924. Frank built his own house next to the store in 1910 and married Zella Hall of Harwich. They had no family but worked together at the store. Zella was noted for being meticulous in her job—even breaking a bean in half to make the exact weight. They carried only grocery items, not the wide variety of Isaac's store.

Frank had a delivery wagon, later truck, that he drove door-to-door taking and delivering grocery orders. His customers had a card in their windows—one side said "Come in for an order", the other said, "Drive On!".

The front porch, for both owners, was a gathering spot for retired men in clement weather who sat on the benches smoking their pipes,

swapping yarns and gossip until it was time to go home for dinner. Back then the big meal was at noon. Frank's store was attractive to young people who might have a few cents burning a hole in their pocket because he had a wonderful selection of penny candy behind the large curved glass case. The school bus stop was across the street at Wilbur Kelley's and the kids with no money were quite envious of ones who did. Sometimes they shared.

World War II rationing proved to be Frank's undoing. He had difficulty complying with all the rules and regulations issued from Washington in regards to ration stamps and tokens, visits from inspectors, making reports to D. C., etc., so one day he walked out of the store, locked the door and never looked back. Even though he lived next door he never opened for a customer again. Knowing Zella it's probably safe to say that not much went to waste. For years there was a display of paper towels and toilet paper behind the large plate glass windows where the printing on packages eventually faded to pure white.

In later years it became famous as the Depot Street Jelly Station, then Positively Depot Flowers, a gift shop and then a residence

This ca. 115 year old landmark was demolished at the end of 2014 to be replaced with a new residence and a piece of our history is...history.

Phyllis Horton

A Dennis Legend Named Murphy

No one seems to be able to tell me exactly when or why Joseph Murphy came to live in Dennis, or how long he remained. It was around the turn of the century when Mr. Murphy appeared on the scene and he probably came on a commission to practice his art as a stone mason. He is described as a colorful character who wore white overalls and a black derby hat, an excellent workman, and by his works he is remembered.

Mr. Murphy did not build dry stone walls as did our ancestors, walls which seem almost fluid and soft in their gentle heaps. Mr. Murphy's walls

were plumb and solid, rigidly cemented together. A fine example exists today around the Bleak House property off Sea Street in Dennis. Most of the stones for this wall were ferried across from Sandy Neck on barges and by hours of labor. Joseph created from them a wall of lasting beauty. Another of Joseph's walls is a retaining wall on the Charles Johnson property, right at the Main Street end of Corporation Road, built, it is said, to pay for his room and board.

But his crowning effort while here was the graceful stone tower on Scargo Hill. Esther Howes has a picture of Mr. Murphy in overalls and derby at work at its building, raising stones with a lift to their place atop the growing structure. It was the third tower on the crest of Scargo, the first of wood destroyed by a great gale, the second also of wood burned to the ground by a forest fire. But Mr. Murphy's tower has withstood both gale and threat of fire and is today a popular spot for viewing the Cape from tip to shoulder. So on this St. Patrick's Day, an Irish blessing on Mr. Joseph Murphy--"May the Lord hold you in the hollow of his hand, and may you somehow know that new generations of nature lovers (and other lovers!) still watch the sun set over the Bay from the top of Scargo Tower."

Nancy Thacher Reid,
DHS Newsletter, March 1979

A Battle with Savages

"I used to listen to the stories told to each other by Captains Zenas Marston, Frederick Lovell and my Great Uncle Captain Sylvanus Simmons, as they were seated in our kitchen at Hyannisport. One of these I remember clearly.

It seems that Captain Sylvanus Simmons had sailed homeward bound from some Australian port. Near one of the South Sea Islands his ship was becalmed. This was bad, but in a short time they noticed boats setting out from the shore filled with natives. Captain Simmons watched them closely and soon saw that they showed strong evidence of hostile intentions.

He immediately ordered as much water to be heated as could be secured. As the savages arrived at the ship, pails of boiling water were poured down on them from the side of the ship.

The savages were really ferocious and the battle was hard fought, but after several hours a wind sprang up and aided by this, the ship finally escaped them."

Cape Cod Legends¹

It's Time To Think Spring!

A few suggestions from the "Montgomery Ward Catalog 1934". There is only one draw back Ladies, the order form firmly states: "If customer is married and order totals more than \$100, both husband and wife must sign; otherwise one signature only is required.

A Cool Value in LINEN

Shorts and Slacks
The Season's Newest

- Cotton Plique Blouse** 77c
White with light blue small floral embroidery on pocket. SIZES: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40-in. bust. State size. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. 6 oz. 914 K 9010.....77c
- Cotton Gabardine Twill Shorts** 84c
White with red, gold blue and green stripes. SIZES: 14, 16, 18, 20, 22-in. waist. State size and color. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. 1 lb. 914 K 9011.....84c
- 4-piece Play Suit** \$198
Flaid Gingham 12. Mexican (bright) red. Includes: Blouse, blouse, skirt and shorts. SIZES: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40-in. bust. State size. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. 1 lb. 914 K 4602.....\$1.98
- Get Into This Summer Sports Picture**
- 3-pieces to this Twin Sweater Suit** \$298
Gayly patterned alpaca, black color jacket with matching knit collar. Cotton knit. COLORED: black, blue or coral. SIZES: 14, 16, 18, 20, 22-in. bust. State size and color. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. 1 lb. 914 K 4610.....\$2.98
- Striped Basque Shirt** 69c
Smart with skirt. High crew neck. White sleeves. Cotton. SIZES: 14, 16, 18, 20, 22-in. bust. State size and color. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. 8 oz. 914 K 4602.....69c
- Cotton Twill Slacks** 98c
Worn like in Hollywood, now the rage for smart and all-around. White Cotton Twill with a light blue star on each pocket for national appeal. SIZES: 14, 16, 18, 20 yrs. (to 24 in. waist). State size. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. 1 lb. 914 K 9018.....98c

12 MONTGOMERY WARD CASH

Fashion NEWS! Value NEWS!

"Stride-along" → **New Kiltie Type**
This good looking "walking" shoe is smart Mer-cha. (Covered grain) leather with decorative perforations. Fringe of smooth calf grain. 1 1/2 in. covered heels. Leather soles. SIZES: 7 1/2 to 8 Med. State size. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. per pair 1 lb. 8 oz. 2 1/4 K 529 - White, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 2 1/4 K 530 - White, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 2 1/4 K 531 - White, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 2 1/4 K 532 - Black, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. Pair \$1.98

White or Black

Cut-out! Perforated! Hand Laced!
Ideal for summer because they're light, cool, and give your feet the most perfect ventilation. A Ward Kiltie Oxford. Special Value! SIZES: 7 1/2 to 8 Med. State size. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. per pair 1 lb. 8 oz. 2 1/4 K 529 - White, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 2 1/4 K 530 - White, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 2 1/4 K 531 - White, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 2 1/4 K 532 - Black, 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. Pair \$1.98

Imagine! Goodyear Welts at this Low Price \$198 pair
New Cork Color or White "Ruff-Bac" Leather
Cork Color or White Mercha (New) Grained

Punched! Rough Suede-Like Kiltie Oxford
"Ruff-Bac" is that rough-but-soft suede-like leather--an sporting for summer. This swagger Kiltie Oxford with fringed fringe is punched all the way through for coolness. Sports SIZES: 7 1/2 to 8 Med. State size and width. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. per pair 1 lb. 8 oz. 2 1/4 K 326B - White. Pair \$1.98

Sporty Oxfords with Fringed Lace-Stays
Its punched design goes all the way through to make it cooler. 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. 1 1/2 in. covered Louis heel. Mailed direct from Chicago. Ship. wt. per pair 1 lb. 8 oz. 2 1/4 K 326B - White. Pair \$1.98

Here Are 5 Winner \$198 pair Your Choice of The 5 Style

June Howes

¹ Boston, The Berkley Press, 1935

A Cornucopia of Useful Products²

Over several centuries, black walnut has proven to be one of the most widely utilized and highly prized of trees. From American colonial times to the present, its wood, fleshy fruit, furrowed hulls, tasty nuts, and bark have been used in a variety of ways. Here are just a few:

- Furniture
- Piano cases and coffins.
- Cabinets, woodenware and novelties.
- Paneling
- Gun Stocks
- Airplane propellers.
- Nuts for food.
- Fence posts, railroad ties and firewood.
- A dye for wood or cloth, or a cap of hulls once worn to restore dark hair when gray crept in.
- Oil from nuts to relieve toothaches.
- Bark once used to staunch the flow of blood from Civil War soldiers.
- Shells as a filtering agent in smokestack scrubbers, an additive in oil well drilling mud and a component of polish for chrome and auto parts.
- In pioneer clays, inner bark served as a laxative, husks treated ulcers and syphilis, a juice from the fruit was drunk for tapeworm ailments or gargled for treating diphtheria, and husks were used for poisoning fish.
- Thrown at newlyweds by the early Romans, like a forerunner of rice.

Ruth Derick

Cold

When the temperature dropped to zero, I thought about what it was like in our house in Dennisport, on Cape Cod, way back in the 1930's. The farm house we lived in was built about 1840, with a tiny Cape Cod cellar, no insulation, and no central heat or no running water. The walls were clapboards over rough boards and the inside walls were lath and plaster. The dead air space between the walls did not do much to keep out the cold. We packed leaves around the foundation tightly for the winter. The floors were still cold.

In winter we kept only two rooms warm. The kitchen had a small oil burner on one side of the electric range, and the living room had a big square oil burner stove, about the size of a small refrigerator. Dad kept a big barrel of kerosene in the garage, which was a separate building. When more fuel was needed for the stoves, one of us would go to the garage, taking the stove's

removable fuel tank along to re-fill. We had our stoves in an open area of the room, away from any combustibles, such as curtains or furniture. In the kitchen the oil burner at the end of the range, sat in a clear area of the room on legs of about nine inches. And in the living room, there was plenty of clear space around the stove, which sat on a large fireproof square. The square was our boundary. A little kid could get burned, so we all were taught to stay away from the stoves.

When I was three years old, in 1931, we were the first on our street to have inside plumbing and running water installed. Dad knew he had to keep the water barely running so the pipes would not freeze on bitter cold nights. The bathroom had a gas hot water heater at the end of the old claw foot tub. It heated the water for our baths, and it made the bathroom warm. So the bathroom was only heated at bath time. We did not spend much time there in cold weather, though in warmer weather, we three girls spent more time at the bathroom mirror.

With four little kids to keep warm, and unheated bedrooms, our parents bought flannel sheets and woolen blankets for our double bunks. On very cold nights we piled on knit afghans. We dressed for bed in Dr. Denton footed pajamas and on very cold nights, we wore wool sweaters and hats to bed. Plus, we each had our own hot water bottle. I always put my hot water bottle at my feet. When my feet were warmed up and the hot water bottle cooled off, I kicked it away for the night.

On snowy days, we played outside and our house always smelled of wet wool as our mittens dried on top of the living room stove. On stormy days we played inside, in the two warm rooms. Dad put up a swing between the kitchen and living room. We drew chalk circles on the wool living room rug to play marbles. We played games on a marble topped table and did puzzles and listened to the radio. We often had an extra person who boarded with us, so seven of us would share the two warm rooms all winter long.

Mom and Dad both smoked cigarettes and the boarder smoked a pipe. The air in our house was a lot less than healthful all winter. But the house was not at all air tight, so maybe the air circulated through.

In my house today, I am grateful for insulation, thermopane windows, and central heat. On very cold days I simply turn up the thermostat.

Betty Dean Holmes

² *The National Arbor Day Foundation Library*

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The Weather outside's been frightful!!

...
But warmer days are on the way.
March 20th is the "official"
first day of Spring.

Inside this newsletter we have
put together some shopping ideas,
to help you be ready for Spring
and Easter.

Saturday, April 11, 2:00 P.M.

"Old Houses of Dennis"

This illustrated lecture on our old
houses, both still standing and long gone,
will be creatively presented

by *Phyllis Horton*.

This core part of our Dennis history
displays the wide variety of building
styles employed through the years

\$5.00 Donation

Dennis Public Library
5 Hall St., Dennis Port