



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 5

May 2002

Calendar of Events

Saturday, May 18 Blue Water Wives and Mothers 1-4 PM

Opening exhibit in the Maritime Wing 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse How women carried on their everyday lives and raised their children while accompanying their husbands on the seven seas.

Saturday, June 1 Lady Slipper Walk on the Indian Lands 9:30 AM

Reservations requested
(508) 398-0376
Limited to 40.

Narrated walk over the Indian Lands Conservation Area led by horticulturist Shannon Goheen.

Meet at Town Hall parking lot,
485 Main St., S. Dennis

Saturday, June 15 Bus Tour & Box Lunch

Celebrate Dennis' 20th birthday with a tour of Dennis historic sites narrated by Nancy Thacher Reid, town historian. Lunch with a lovely view at noon. \$12.00 per person, limited to 20 people. Reservations required. Call 508-394-0017

Saturday, June 22 Bathsheba Dennis: At Home in 1740

An interpretive exhibit focusing on every-day life for the wife of the town's first minister.

Josiah Dennis Manse
1-4 PM

Sunday, June 23 Opening Tea at Jericho Historical Center 1-4 PM

From: Blue Water Wives and Mothers

by Phyllis Horton

This is one of the stories from the upcoming exhibit at the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum "Blue Water Wives and Mothers." Many Dennis women accompanied their husbands on voyages, some with tragic consequences and others with happy endings. Come to the opening exhibit on May 18th, 1-4 PM.

Phebe (Chase) Murray of Dennis Port occasionally accompanied her husband, Captain Timothy Murray, in the coasting trade along the Atlantic seaboard. Captain Murray was born in Framingham and came to Dennis at age 10 as a cook's helper on a coaster that made port in Dennis Port. At that time it was the custom for any family man down at Job Chase's Wharf to take a boy, such as young Tim, home to spend his shore time with a family, instead of being thrown in with carousing seamen looking to loosen up a little after being at sea. Owen Chase, who lived on the east side of Swan Pond in the old Chase homestead, was down at the wharf and volunteered to take Tim home until the ship was ready to sail again. Owen Chase's family and Tim Murray became fast friends and every time Tim arrived at Dennis Port he went right up to the Chase homestead. Over the years Tim and Phebe Chase fell in love and in September 1878 he came back, married Phebe and made his home in Dennis Port. They were blessed with three children, Owen and twins, Mertis and Bessie.

When the children were young Phebe stayed home, but as they grew older and school was not in session they would all go down along the east coast while Captain Tim traded at different ports. With refrigeration being nonexistent, Phebe brought many of their provisions locally when they were in port. At Savannah a man and his young son came on board selling sausage. It looked fresh, so Phebe took her purse from her pocket and paid the man his asking price. She watched the two go down the gangway before going below to put the meat on to cook. Just as they reached the pier the young lad said, "Father, can I have a little bit of the money? That was my dog, you know." Phebe walked across to the other rail, threw the sausage over board – and never bought sausage again in her life!

When Captain Timothy retired from the sea he followed many other retired sailors by signing on with the U.S. Life Saving Service. He was assigned to the Orleans station. In addition to their other duties the surfmen were assigned a one week rotation of being station cook. When it was Tim's first time to cook it was so disastrous that from then on Phebe went up to the North Harwich Railroad Station, caught the train for Orleans, and took Tim's turn at cooking. No doubt, the rest of the crew were eternally grateful. Phebe said for

(Continued on page 2)

From: Blue Water Wives and Mothers

years afterward that East Orleans was the last place God ever made. "You couldn't even buy a spool of thread there."

Phebe and Tim were my great grandparents. He died in 1913, long before my time. Phebe died in 1940 and I remember her well. She was a quiet, unassuming lady with lots of stories to tell about the old days in Dennis. Oh, how I wish I had paid more attention, but at age 13 the here and now were much more important than "those olden times." Now I spend countless hours researching things I might have learned first hand. As the saying goes, "Too soon old, and too late smart!"

Meet Your Board Members

Born in Hyannis, MA, **Richard S. Howes** is an eleventh generation direct descendant of Thomas Howes, one of the first settlers of the East Precinct of Yarmouth which is now the town of Dennis. He is also descended from William Brewster and Stephen Hopkins. He has an impressive record of service to his home town.

He graduated from John Simpkins High School in 1947 and the Massachusetts Radio and Telegraph School in Boston, in the radio course, June 25, 1948. He served in the US Army from April 18 of 1951 to April 17, 1953, testing guided missiles at White Sands Proving Grounds in New Mexico, and was discharged with the rank of Corporal. Returning to the Mass. Radio and Telegraph School in Boston, he graduated as a television technician on June 3, 1954. He worked on Martha's Vineyard and in Boston until May of 1957. He then opened his own sales and service business, Dennis Radio & TV, from which he retired after 32 years.

As a call firefighter on the Dennis Fire Department, Company 2, from October 1958 to September 1980, he retired with the rank of Captain. He also served as President and Treasurer of Cape Cod Foresters & Firefighters Association. He was elected to the Dennis Recreation Commission from May 1977 to September 1980. He served on the Dennis Communications Advisory Board until March 3, 1979. He was one of the original founders of the Dennis Senior Softball League in 1973, Treasurer for five years and Commissioner until May of 1984. He was elected to the Board of Directors of the Dennis Association of Youth in 1979. He was also elected to the Board of Directors of the Northside Business Association from 1979-1984, where he served as Treasurer.

He joined the Dennis Historical Society in 1982 and became Vice-President from 1987 to 1989, President from 1991 to 1993, and an elected Officer on the Board of Directors from 1997 to 2000. He also became the official photographer for the Society in 1994 and serves in that capacity today. He was appointed to the Josiah Dennis Manse Committee in March of 1990 and to the Dennis Historical Commission in March of 2000. In November 2001 the Commission appointed him to serve as its representative to the DHS Board of Directors. With his experience and knowledge we are lucky to have him back on the Board as a voting member!

Nancy Steere Howes was Valedictorian of her class at Oak Bluffs High School in June of 1954. For four years she worked as Clerk/Secretary to the General Manager at Cape & Vineyard Electric Company in Vineyard Haven, MA, then as bookkeeper in the company's Hyannis office for four more years. She served on the Board of Directors and as a Sunday School teacher at the Dennis Union Church in the early '60s. Then she joined her husband Richard as Bookkeeper/Salesperson for Dennis Radio & TV from 1972 to 1988. In 1987 she was elected to the Board of Directors of the Howes Family Association where she serves as Treasurer today. On March 23, 1989 she was appointed to the Josiah Dennis Manse Committee where she now serves as its Treasurer and Vice-Chairman. At the Manse she is Coordinator of

Meet Your Board Members (Continued)

Volunteers and the Director of the School Program for local third grades. Recently she became a member of the Dennis Village Garden Club, she also volunteers with the craft group for Dennis Memorial Library.

Nancy has served on the Board of Directors of the Dennis Historical Society since 1982. She was President from 1989 to 1991, and then became Secretary, and is now an elected Officer. If you need to know about former Board decisions and records, about planting a representative 1700's garden, about caring for the 1736 Manse, or about planning a guided tour through the Manse, Nancy has the answers! The school children think she's Mrs. Dennis herself.

Nancy and Richard have been married for 45 years. They have two grown children, Karen and Christopher, and one grandson, Ryan,

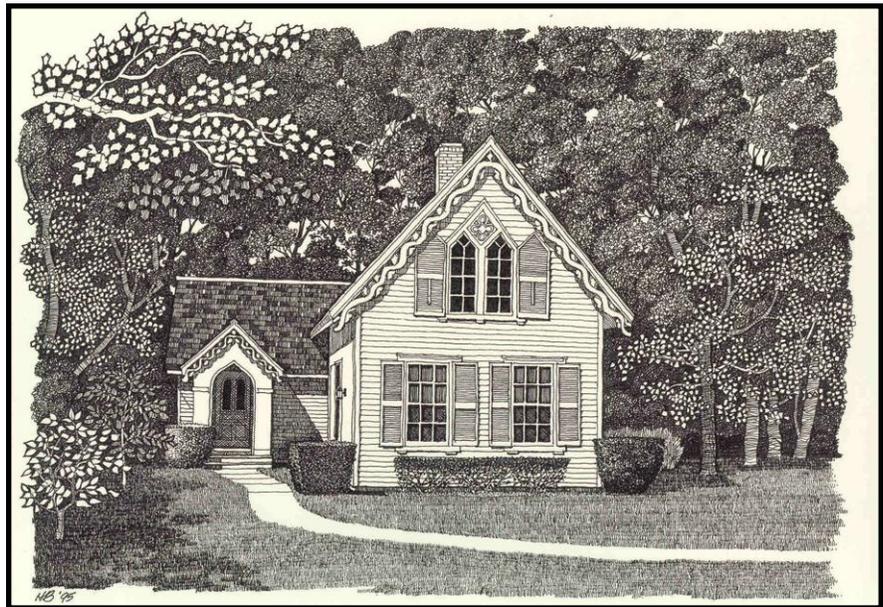
Dennis Retiree Known for Artistic Works

At the age of five, **Howard Bonnington** began copying comic strip characters—the Green Lantern, Captain America, The Crimson Avenger, Captain Marvel and others. After attending Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, he practiced architecture in New York City. Then he worked as an interior designer, and later as an airport planner focusing on terminals and feasibility studies. Today he is retired, having settled permanently in Dennis in 1996. Last season, his skill with pen and ink and color pencils led to a first prize in a Senior Citizens Artistic Interpretation of the State House Holiday Card Contest—the theme, “Lighting the State House for the Winter Holidays.”

Howard's large collection of ink drawings and sketches of places of interest throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe began in 1983 when he decided to leave his camera at home and sketch appealing scenes instead. Now there are over 300, including Liberty Hall, Scargo Tower, the South Dennis Village Library, the South Dennis Congregational Church, an 18th century barn on Rt. 6A, and several Cape Cod homes.

Recently the artist donated a stunning black and white drawing of the 1867 West Dennis Graded School House to the DHS. He has also offered to do sketches of the Josiah Dennis Manse and Jericho House for the Society.

In a comfortable room overlooking a pond where ducks and other wildlife are readily seen, a container slowly filling with wood chips is yet more evidence that an artist is at work, this time at woodcarving! You will find him here surrounded by his carvings of birds, his sketches, oil paintings and water colors. He is truly a man of many talents. Thank you, Howard Bonnington!



The South Dennis Village Library by Howard Bonnington

Dennis Historical Society

P.O. Box 607

South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

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The Way We Were

Preserving historic sites in Dennis with pen and ink, local artist, Howard Bonnington has captured Samuel Chapman's barn on Route 6A in East Dennis. Samuel's daughter, Helen, was married to Judge Burt Holland. As they had no heirs, the property passed to the Judge's partner, Whitfield Johnson. Driving by today, you can still appreciate the pastoral setting of days gone by.

