

# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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## Calendar

**Sunday, May 7, 3 P.M.**  
"Cape Cod Shore  
Whaling"

Author Duncan Oliver explores this fascinating industry that was a major source of Cape Cod winter employment 1620-1750.

**Dennis Memorial  
Library, 1020 Old Bass  
River Road, Dennis**  
*Refreshments!*

**Saturday, May 20**  
**1:00-4:00 P.M.**

**Maritime Week Exhibit**  
"From the Bay to the  
Banks—A Fisherman's  
Story"

Ninety per cent of Dennis mariners were fishermen.

This exhibit examines their triumphs, heartbreaks and the tools of their trade.

**1736 Josiah Dennis  
Manse Museum**  
**77 Nobscusset Road**  
*Refreshments*

**Sunday, June 4, 3 P.M.**  
"Cape Cod Ship  
Building"

Author Jack Sheedy offers a captivating presentation.

**Dennis Public Library**  
**5 Hall Street**  
**Dennis Port**  
*Refreshments*

## A Day of Remembrance

Memorial Day is a United States holiday. It was originally proclaimed **Decoration Day** by General John Logan, the national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic {a veterans' organization} and was to be observed nationwide on May 30, 1868 in honor of the soldiers who had died in the Civil War. Many of the Southern States would not recognize this national day and held their own Confederate days of remembrance. By 1890 all the Northern States recognized **Decoration Day**, but it was not until after World War I that the holiday became universally accepted when it was decided to honor all Americans who had died in any war or military action. Because of the Uniform Holidays Bill of 1968, **Memorial Day** is now celebrated on the last Monday in May to make it one of several "convenient" three-day weekends. This year it is on May 29. On Cape Cod, the long weekend signals the arrival of the summer season with increased traffic and crowds in the supermarkets. But we haven't forgotten what it's really all about, have we?

*With malice toward none; with charity for all: with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.*

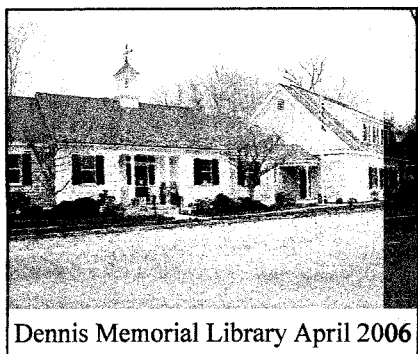
*(Second Inaugural Address, 1865, Abraham Lincoln)*

Just before Memorial Day 2004 and the dedication of our National World War II Memorial honoring the "greatest generation," then Secretary of State Colin Powell wrote for *USA Weekend*, "I do not know or care what terrorists and tyrants make of our monuments to democracy and the memorials we dedicate to our dead. What's important is what the monuments and memorials say to us. They can teach us much about the ideas that unite us in our diversity, the values that sustain us in times of trial, and the dream that inspires generation after generation of ordinary Americans to perform extraordinary acts of service.

....Do not hasten through Memorial Day. Take the time to remember the good souls whose memories are a blessing to you and your family. Take your children to our memorial parks and monuments. Teach them the values that lend meaning to our lives and to the life of our nation. Above all, take the time to honor our fellow Americans who have given their last full measure of devotion to our country and for the freedoms we cherish."

## Take Time to Remember

If we “do not hasten through Memorial Day,” our remembering may be as simple as a visit to the **war memorial in Dennis Port** at the corner of Rt. 28 and Sea Street which was dedicated after World War I to all who served in that war. The memorial also remembers the sacrifices of those who fought in the Civil War, the Spanish American War and also World War II. “Of the approximately 276 men and women from this town who have been documented as having served on active duty during World War II, twelve died in the service of their country. They were Alfred G. Babineau, Ralph S. Blake, Kenneth M. Chase, William H. Crowell, Wallace C. Doane, William O. King, Ernest W. Leach, Ernest E. Sears, Herbert L. Sears, Bernard Whitney O’Neil, Sanford B. Vincent, and George B. Wilbur III.” (*N. T. Reid’s Dennis, Cape Cod*, p 802-3)



Dennis Memorial Library April 2006

Even a trip to the newly-renovated **Dennis Memorial Library** which was first opened in 1924 in honor of all the town’s veterans can be a reminder of sacrifices made for town and country. Men who didn’t return after WW I were **Alton B. Ellis, Judah W. Berry and Carleton G. Baker**. Of the 34 men from Dennis who volunteered in the Civil War ten died in battle or from wounds and disease contracted in the line of duty. The roll reads: John Simmons Chase, Ansel Lothrop Studley, Stephen Russell Howes, Kelley Chase, Jr., Amos F. Wixon, Amos C. Ryder, Hiram H. Hall, Elisha Freeman Smalley, Alpheus Baxter, and Charles W. Weysser. (p.

410) Two seamen were also victims of the war between the states—**Captain Luther Nickerson and Captain Gideon Hall**. (p 411)

Or we could stop by **Horsefoot Cove** in West Dennis where in 1985 the town and the Veterans of Foreign Wars dedicated a **memorial to the Vietnam Veterans**, particularly to the memory of PFC Joseph Adelbert Merrill, U.S. Marine Corps, who was the only Dennis citizen to lose his life in that conflict.

We are also admonished to remember “**those good souls whose memories are a blessing**” to us and our families. A young Lucy Thacher Baker (1822-1858) from South Dennis found words of her own to convey this thought in her poem *To the Spirit of a Departed Friend*:

*Many, my friend, have mourned for thee  
And yet shall many mourn.  
Long as thy name on earth shall be  
In sweet remembrance borne  
By those who loved thee here, and love  
Thy spirit still in realms above.*

Memorial Day Tradition has us fly the flag at half-staff from dawn until noon and decorate the graves of those we love with flowers. While 3 P.M. is set aside for a National Moment of Remembrance, Memorial Day is also a time for picnics, family gatherings and sporting events. Celebrate the Day!

## A Time for Remembering

In March we received a note from Janice Urquhart Roth who is presently living in Virginia. She wrote:

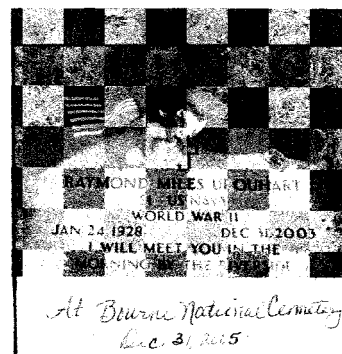
*Hi to everyone,*

*It's hard to believe that it has been two years since Dad died. There isn't a day that I don't think of him and am reminded of why he loved Cape Cod (especially Dennis) so very much.*

*I enjoy the Newsletter as it helps me stay connected to my favorite place in the world! I hope to move back to Dennis within the next two years or so—where I belong.*

*Thanks to all of you for caring so much about our beloved town of Dennis.*

Thank you, Jan. We remember fondly our very special friend and former DHS President, Ray Urquhart, who did so much for the Society and the town.



## From the Register

Shortly after writing about the “Blueberry Lady,” Kay Willsey, we learned of her death on March 8. For 21 years she worked as coordinator of volunteers at Cross Patch, a pick-your-own blueberry patch in Dennis. An unusually accomplished lady, it was interesting to learn that she had traveled to every continent in the world and had lived for several years in India. She died at the Holualoa, Hawaii residence of her daughter-in-law, Patricia Van Asperen.

## Society News

We are very grateful to Eldred's for sponsoring an Antique Appraisal Day to benefit DHS. There was a fine turn out and lots of comments about our own “Antiques Roadshow.” Though some may have been disappointed to learn that their treasure was not as valuable as they thought, there were several rare and lovely things. On one occasion we overheard the advice that a sweet older lady could “go on the web” and perhaps find out more about the item she'd brought. “The only webs I know about are cobwebs!” was her reply.

This reminded Mary Kuhrtz of something that happened at another auction house where she worked in New York. A lady brought in what she thought was a valuable soup tureen only to find out it was really a lovely chamber pot!

## Thar she blows!

Near the site of the early whale house west of Sesuet, which sheltered the watchers during the winter and spring when whales were most likely to be spotted, there is today an amazing sculpture overlooking the bay. It is a reminder of the importance of shore whaling to the early settlers of Dennis. You'll want to learn more, so join us at the Dennis Memorial Library on May 7 at 3:00 P.M. to hear author Duncan Oliver from the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth. Other HSOY programs you might enjoy are the Spring Nature Trail Walk, May 6 at 2 PM (meet at the Gate House behind the

Yarmouth Port Post Office) and the Maritime Collection Tour at Bangs Hallet House on May 13 from 1-4 PM. Admission is free!



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## The Way We Were

Nancy Reid's History (p 683) tells us that as many as twelve young women from our town served in the military in the late years of World War II. *Among those were the three Murphy sisters of Dennis Port, only children of Postmaster and Mrs. Richard Murphy. Bette was a nurse and Peg and Rosamund were WAVES.* We were sad to learn that Elizabeth A. Eager, 84, had died on February 16, 2006. She was the last living Murphy sister. After the war Bette became a nursing supervisor at the Cape Cod Hospital and later became the first chairperson of the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School Committee.

From left to right are Elizabeth (Bette), Margaret (Peg), and Rosamund (Roz).

*We are grateful to the late Rosamund M. Hunter for the pictures.*

