



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 31 Number 3 Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to pmrhorton@aol.com May 2008

Calendar

Saturday, May 17,
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

*"Dennis
Lifesavers"*

Historian Phyllis Horton will present her Maritime Days Exhibit. This Exhibition features the lives and times of those who risked their lives in violent storms and angry seas to rescue the mariners of Dennis and Cape Cod.

Refreshments
will be served

1736 Josiah Dennis
Manse Museum

THE 211TH COAST ARTILLERY

This past March Raymond Miles of Dennis Port passed away at age 94, another member of the Greatest Generation gone from our town. With Memorial Day approaching it is good to remember those who gave so much to keep us safe. Ray was a member of the 211th Coast Artillery, Battery G who left here with a group of other Dennis men in 1939 to answer their country's call to arms.

In early 1939 the Massachusetts National Guard started recruiting young men on the Cape to join the Guard, to go to Hyannis, later Falmouth, for practice once a month and get a nice little check from the state for every time they came to the drill. This was a very tempting offer to Cape Cod boys. The Depression was still alive and well and a few extra dollars each month were more than welcome.

Summer of 1939 in Dennis was not bad for a young man. A few people were able to come on vacation bringing some new girls to town. The extra National Guard money was helping out, gas was 18 cents a gallon and the weather was good. Over in Europe Hitler had invaded Austria and Poland, and there were rumblings of war in Congress, but that was a long way from spending Sunday afternoons at the beach and sharing a soda with a special someone at Maloney's Drug Store on a soft summer evening. Life was pretty good!

Suddenly, summer was over, the girls had gone home and life was about to get serious. By Labor Day the 211th was put on alert. They started intensive training, called "hardening", at Camp Edwards, knowing that they would shortly be reassigned.

The parents and friends of the men planned a big send off on September 14th for our new soldiers. The Village Improvement Club Hall was decorated, merchants were solicited for donations of food and the good cooks of Dennis Port put on a supper for them to remember when they were eating Army chow. The Dennis Drama League and the Harwich-Dennis American Legion joined in to help where needed. The guests of honor and the Legionnaires were requested to come in uniform.



Front Row: Paul Wixon, Ralph Kimball, Clarence Horton, Eddie Orton, James White, James Campbell
Back Row: David Bearse, Kenneth Rogers, Vernon Mercer, ?, Charles Kendrick, Arthur Cahoon, Joseph Nickerson, Bruce Jerauld, Ray Miles

Farewell Party for the Boys of the 211th

James White

From: Reid, Nancy Thacher, "Dennis, Cape Cod" pp 659

The question mark is Francis St. Our. Missing from the photograph is: Warren Dearborn, Douglas Crowell, Wilfred Ellis and Robert Horton.

The 6:30 P.M. supper, at which only National Guardsmen were invited, was an "all you can eat" affair followed by a short interval "for smoking". At 8:00 the visiting dignitaries made the expected "Godspeed" remarks and some of the soldiers expressed their thoughts on leaving. The soldiers performed a close order drill exercise which was followed by Jim Campbell of Dennis Port enacting a confused one-man drill skit that had everyone laughing hilariously. Then Louis Dean started the record player with all the latest tunes and everyone was dancing or watching and beating time.

After another short break the Beachcombers Orchestra, hired by Dennis Port electrician and Commander of the Legion, started playing with the lights dimmed and the serious "will you write to me—will you wait for me" music began. The festivities ended at midnight and

the men were presented with a going away gift of cigarettes, candy, writing paper and stamps as they left.

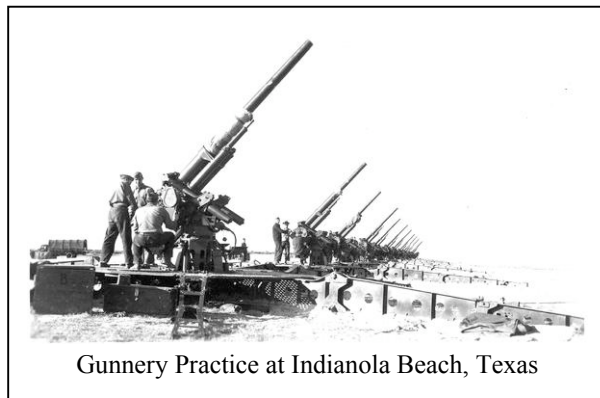
Battery G, 211th C.A. was formed with 137 men. 130 were from Cape Cod. Twenty-one soldiers were from this area, including

19 from Dennis Port. When they reported for duty on September 16th the 211th was federalized. They spent the next two weeks training and packing for a transfer to Camp Hulen on the Texas coast. Some of the men were allowed to come home on occasions. My grandmother Nora Snow Murray's diary noted on Sunday, September 22nd, "Good to see some of the boys who have joined the Army at church. Eddie Orton, Jim White, Arthur Cahoon, Raymond Miles, Jim Campbell and Clarence Rogers."

On a rainy Tuesday, October 1st Batteries G, H and A left Camp Edwards for South Station in Boston and took the train for their four-day trip to Texas. Some of the men had never been past Boston. Their lives would change drastically before they saw Boston again. Almost every soldier sent one or more letter to the folks at home telling of all the different things they saw on the trip.

Arrival at Camp Hulen at Palacios, Texas was a physical and cultural shock. That camp was also just getting started. They had left Boston at 28 degrees and arrived at Camp Hulen in 80 degree heat in heavy wool winter uniforms. The cultural shock was from not seeing a single tree in any direction—only open prairie. The town of Palacios was small. Wood-framed buildings with false fronts that looked like a movie set made up the business district and almost every building open to the public sold beer, except for the post office. The firing range for the big guns was 50 miles south in Indianola Beach on the Gulf of Mexico.

Every battery had a mascot or two. Battery G left Falmouth with a rat terrier pup. Battery A (Headquarters) had a little ten-week old bridle goat bought from a Falmouth farmer for \$2.00. He was named Sgt. Billy Carruthers. The oddest mascot was assembled piece-meal. Battery H found the head when they were on summer maneuvers in New York State and her body in Falmouth where Malchman's Department Store put the two together. "Margy" was a well dressed young lady with a wild mop of red hair. All the boys danced with "Margy" at canteen entertainments and she always had the female lead in numerous impromptu skits.



Gunnery Practice at Indianola Beach, Texas

On December 7th, 1941 cattle cars, box cars and flat bed cars were assembled from all over Texas. The men and equipment were loaded up and dispatched in haste over the Rocky Mountains to San Francisco to await orders for the Pacific. When they arrived three days later orders had changed. The Japanese were expected to assault the West Coast at any moment so they were strategically placed around San Francisco. Battery G was positioned to protect the Mare Island Naval Station in Vallejo. Days went by, then weeks and months. The war action was everywhere but California. There was, however, plenty of other action as a number of Bay area girls came to Massachusetts later as Battery G, H and A wives. Soon many original Cape Cod members grew impatient with sitting around while there was a war going on. They were allowed to transfer to other units where most of them saw more action than they bargained for.

On D-Day brothers Clarence and Robert Horton of Dennis Port were nearer each other than they knew. Bob was going ashore under heavy fire as commander of a half-trak unit and Clarence was flying overhead in a B-17 to drop bombs behind the lines. They also were being fired at. Clarence looked down at the beach and said, "Boy, I wouldn't want to be down there. Those guys are sitting ducks". Bob looked up at the flak surrounding the B-17s and said, "Boy, I wouldn't want to be up there. They're sitting ducks!" They didn't see each other until after the war was over and they came home. Clarence was my husband.

Everyone who left here with the 211th returned safely home. They were able to pick up the threads of their lives and achieve every man's American dream of a good job, a home and family. Maybe their Dennis heritage was a good luck charm!

--- Phyllis Horton

LETTERS

March 2, 08.

Dear Lura,

I hope this note finds you well.

I wish to give you this book by Daugherty to put in the DHS library. I have two of them so I would like to pass this one on to you. Although it is a fictional account of how the Pilgrims spent a little over a month on Cape Cod before settling in Plymouth, I believe there is a lot of truth in it.

Had the explorers not gone out to sea after spending the night in Eastham, they might have come upon Sesuit Harbor and saw that the land beyond was a good place to settle. I'm glad they didn't. Enjoy.
Leslie Worden.

(Ed. Note: Leslie Worden is a direct descendant of Peter Worden, Sr. who settled here before the Howes and Crowe land grants were given in 1639. His home stood on present day Route 6A overlooking Sesuit Creek and extended south from 6A for quite some distance.)

TO TICKLE YOUR FUNNY BONE

An 83 year old gentleman arrived in Paris by plane. At the French Customs desk it took him a few moments to locate his passport. The Customs Officer asked him sarcastically if he had been to France before. Acknowledging that he had the Customs Agent commented, "Then you should know enough to have your passport ready." The American said that the last time he didn't have to show it. Indignant, the French Agent said, "Impossible, Americans always have to show their passport." The gentleman gave him a long hard look and said, "Well, when I came ashore on Omaha Beach I couldn't find a Frenchman to show it to."



CANTON PORCELAIN

Of all the cargo that came from China on the clipper ships, perhaps the most endearing is the porcelain known as "canton". In the 18th and early 19th centuries thousands of Chinese hand painted these dinner sets in the familiar blue and white colors with the gray blue glaze. The background contains one or two pagodas, pine trees, mountains, a sampan or two and a bridge in the foreground. The clipper ships would wait in the Pearl River until their order was ready, then the porcelain would be loaded deep in the holds of the ship. It was good for ballast and would not get damaged if the boat leaked. This was always a concern with the silks and tea cargo. Across the Pacific they would sail, around Cape Horn, up the coast of South America and finally to the

ports of the United States. George Washington owned some and it can still be seen at Mount Vernon.

This porcelain is very collectible and can be found at antique shops and at auction. Why not purchase a plate and put it on your mantel? When the grandchildren visit tell them the story of how the little plate got here. —Mary Kuhrtz

A REVERSE WHY I CAME TO DENNIS

A while back we asked for our readers to tell us why they moved to Dennis. We thought it would be nice to know what brought people here from away. This is what we received and what a great letter it is. Thank you, Roland!

My name is Roland W. Kelley and I was born in Dennis in 1931, the son of Roland B. Kelley and Eleanor P. (Ellis) Kelley. Unfortunately, my mother died in 1933 when I was about twenty months old. My father, of course, had to work so he left me with his parents, Winfred R. and Stella (Ryan) Kelley who lived on the corner of Fisk and Main Streets, West Dennis until they built a new house on Pond Street. This was the depression era and times were tough, but I'm sure it helped having my uncle, who was married to my father's sister, build the house.

No one ever told me, but I believe my grandmother had a lot to do with taking in her first grandchild to raise. She was only about forty-two and she was the only mother figure I knew. In 1940, at age 48, my grandmother died after a long battle with stomach cancer. She would still walk me to the bus stop at the corner of Pond Street and Loring Avenue, often losing her breakfast on the way. At that time I was too young to appreciate the love and courage of this woman, but later recognized her sacrifice.

My father had remarried and over the years had six more children. My grandfather could not raise me alone, so my father's sister, Lillian Bassett and her husband, Lester, took me to live with them in Chatham....so that meant changing towns and school. I attended first and second grades at the Consolidated School of Dennis (Ezra Baker) and I made friends with Norman Babineau, Jimmy Todd, Franklin Johnson, Sherwood Cahoon, and Douglas Hallett and others, so leaving that school was just one more traumatic event in my young life. I was a Kelley going to live with Bassetts and leaving my birthplace of Dennis to go to unfamiliar Chatham.

I am still a Kelley and I survived the ordeal and graduated from Chatham High School in 1950. If my mother or grandmother, or both, had lived I would most likely still be living in Dennis where my roots are.

Several years ago I loaned some postcards from my collection to the Dennis Historical Society so copies could be made. We met at Phyllis Horton's home and spent a few hours talking about Dennis and family history after picking out the postcards the DHS did not have. When I told Phyllis I was born in Dennis in 1931 she excused herself, left the room and came back with a copy of the 1931 Dennis Town Report which she opened to the page where my birth was listed—December 23, 1931. This was an extra copy which she graciously gave to me. Needless to say, I was thrilled. I have enjoyed looking through that report many times and was surprised to find my parent's marriage, my great grandfather, Roland D, Kelley's death and the announcement that my grandfather ran for selectman that year and was not a winner. There were many other names and events that brought back memories.

I am forever grateful to Phyllis for giving me that treasured report and for being a good friend.

**Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02990-0607**

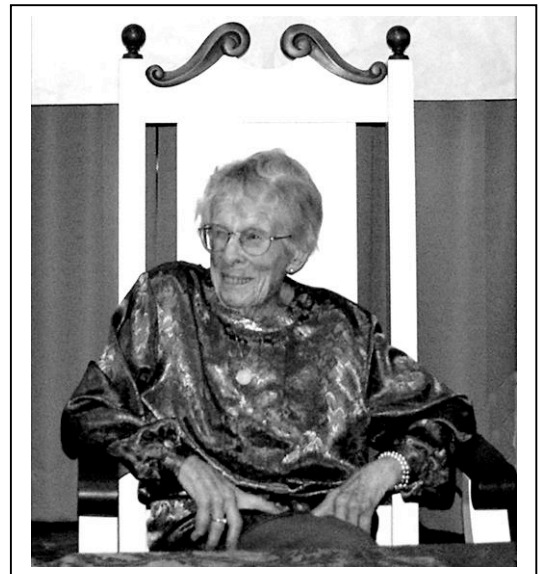
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**Non-profit
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South Dennis,**

DO YOU REMEMBER IRENE TIBBETTS DUMICAN?

Our heartiest congratulations to Irene Tibbetts Dumican who celebrated her 100th birthday on Wednesday April 9th. She was first raised on Spectacle Island in Boston Harbor where her father was the lighthouse keeper. When she was but four years old, he was reassigned to Highland Light and she grew up on the North Truro shore, often trekking a mile and a half to school. After graduating from Provincetown High School in 1924 and from Hyannis Normal School in 1928, she was hired to teach second grade at the Dennisport Graded School in 1929. With six grades in one room and a winter-freezing outhouse, teaching there was certainly a bit of a challenge. When the Dennisport Graded School burned down, she transferred to the West Dennis Graded School, and in the following year was one of the initial seven teachers at the new Ezra Baker Elementary School.

She left her love of teaching to marry David Dumican as teachers could not then be married. During her thirteen year teaching hiatus, she raised two children and penned a 140-page memoir on her life on the Outer and Mid-Cape. Returning to the Ezra Baker School in 1949, she returned to teaching second grade – and remained in that position for an additional twenty-five years before retiring in 1974.



PDH 4.13.08

Please send your congratulations and best wishes to her at P.O. Box 727, West Dennis MA 02670

“Dennis Union Church Celebration”

Congratulations to the Dennis Union Church on the completion of their new Sanctuary and Church remodeling. To help honor this celebration, the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum will be open **Saturday, May 31, 2:00- 4:00 p.m.**

Newsy Tidbits!!! - Continue to send your thoughts, ideas, stories, jokes, etc. so that we can include all of our readers in the happenings of past and present Dennis.