



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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Burton Nathaniel Derick, 77 12th Generation Cape Codder

South Dennis – Burton Nathaniel Derick of South Dennis slipped his mooring and went peacefully over the bar on April 11, 2014 surrounded by his loving family. Burt came into the world at Cape Cod Hospital on March 1, 1937 and left it from the same place. He was a 12th generation Cape Codder from both of his parents.

Burt was raised in Dennis Port until 1952 when the family moved to South Dennis. He gained an early education and appreciation for commercial fishing with his grandfather, Nathaniel H. Wixon, a skill he was always proud to own. He graduated from Dennis Consolidated School and Yarmouth High School where he pitched for the baseball team and served two times as Class President. He graduated from Lemoni College in Graceland IA and transferred to the University of Maine, Orono where he received an MA in Physics with specialties in Optics and Nuclear Physics and became a member of Sigma Iota Tau Sigma Physics Honor Society.

In 1962 Burt joined E. I. DuPont Nemours Polychemical Research Department in Wilmington, DE where he helped to develop Crofton plastic fiber optics. General Motors utilized the material to light up the instrument panels in cars. He later worked with Butacite, the plastic interlayer in windshields. He owned two and co-owned two other U. S. patents for that material. He ultimately became a senior technical consultant.

In 1967 DuPont sent Burt and his team to Australia to oversee the sales and technical service for Butacite for safety glass. It was so successful that his territory was expanded to Japan, Southeast Asia and South America. In 1971 DuPont transferred Burt to Parkersburg, WV to set up a new plant. Eventually Burt traveled the world for DuPont building a plant in Australia and in Hamm, Germany. He logged more than 1.5 million air miles and had some wonderful stories to tell about much of it. He also became a connoisseur of fine food and a glass of good red.

Burt took a sabbatical in 1996 when his mother, noted historian and genealogist, Pauline Wixon Derick was in failing health. He and his family came to South Dennis and cared for her until her death in 1997. He returned to Parkersburg, retired and moved permanently to South Dennis where he took up Pauline's work. He became a Vice President/genealogist for the Nickerson Family Assn. and Director/President of Swan Lake Cemetery Assn. He served the Town of Dennis on the Historical Commission, on the 1693 Josiah Dennis Manse Committee, the West Dennis Graded School Restoration Committee and stayed on for the Oversight Committee, Land Acquisition Committee, Cemetery Advisory Committee, Community Preservation Committee and South Dennis Historic District. Burt became the librarian and historical custodian of the Dennis Historical Society. He had acquired and digitally converted well over fifty thousand pieces of Dennis history, ranging from pictures, letters, log books, journals, laboriously created transcriptions and more. This treasure of historical data will remain his lasting legacy to the Town of Dennis. While living in Parkersburg he was Master of the Parkersburg Lodge #169, A.F. & A. M.

Burt has been a prolific writer for the Nickerson Family Assn., Dennis Historical Society newsletter, the Cape Cod Genealogical Society, scientific papers and others. He was the author of several books.

Living on Bass River it was natural for Burt to become interested in Native American artifacts. He and his mother collected many arrowheads and other items, He participated in archeological digs here and in WV. A few years ago Burt had his DNA checked and was delighted to find that he was descended from the Vikings.

Burt leaves his beloved wife of 40 years, Ruth Marjorie (McNutt), he was the devoted father of Rebekah Derick and proud grandfather of Colby Nathaniel Hancock. He is also survived by sister-in-law, Wilma Derick of Wales, ME, brother-in-law & wife, Tom and Andi McNutt of NM, sister in-law & husband Dorothy & Webb Blevins of DE and numerous nieces and nephews and his dear "unrelated relatives" Jill James Slowik and Phyllis Horton. He was predeceased by his beloved son, Nathaniel, his parents Orion and Pauline Derick and his brother, Elbert Derick.

As an expression of sympathy, requested donations may be made to: Swan Lake Cemetery Assn., P.O. Box 291, South Dennis, MA 02660

Phyllis Horton

Burt Derick

We shall all miss Burt in so many, many ways - friend, scholar, raconteur, writer, researcher, vociferous defender of his opinions and so much more. His passing leaves an unfillable gap in our society and in our larger Cape Cod community. Yet we will go on, secure in the knowledge that DHS will be continuing what he so highly valued and tirelessly worked, namely the preservation of the history of his beloved town. One man could ask no greater tribute.

Ave atque valet et requiescat in pace!

DHS Survey

Our thanks to the folks who returned their surveys. We received a lot of valuable information and insights, and commencing with next month's issue will start sharing the results with our readers. And for those of you who so bravely volunteered to help, we are very grateful and will soon contact you. We are seeking to insure that our society not only remains relevant in these modern times but also succeeds in attracting that next generation of folks who will be able to carry on when we, too, become a part of history. We always welcome your comments, suggestions, presence at our Board meetings and, quite importantly, your help.

Dennis and the Civil War

As you know from the calendar that we mailed to you, this year we are including programs dealing with Dennis and the Civil war.

Dennis hosted no major anti-slavery or war events as did other towns, but its residents were deeply involved in the political upheaval concerning slavery and the Southern states and by and large were vehemently anti slavery.

Dennis' Captain Prince Crowell of Quivet Neck was a local leader and among the most influential and active abolitionists, leading rallies often in the church of the North Parish that was

Dennis' Captain
Prince Crowell:
anti-slavery efforts
on Cape Cod



used for these meetings.

On April 15 1850, two days after the Southern states succeeded and opened fire on Fort Sumpter, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers. In Dennis the town called upon none other than Captain Prince Crowell to read Abe Lincoln's call for volunteers, and standing at Hockum's Rock before the assembled crowd, he read the document.

"In 1859 and 1860, men of the Cape gathered signatures petitioning the Massachusetts legislature to ban Southern slave catchers from entering the state in search of runaways. Name gatherers included Henry Coombs, Alvan Howes, Russell Marston, Joshua H. Robbins, Samuel Smith, Amasa Paine of Truro and ministers Joseph R. Munsell of Harwich and William H. Stewart of South Orleans. Their work, however, was for naught because the Massachusetts Senate ruled that an "anti-man hunting law" would violate the federal Constitution." Alvan Howes, one of the Cape's more important antislavery figures, was born around 1801 in Dennis. In 1850, he placed a notice in the Patriot that because his wife, Mercy P. Howes, had left his "bed and board," he would no longer assume her debts. In 1854, he married fifty-three-year-old Nancy Lovell, born in Barnstable and daughter of Boston shipping agent Cornelius Lovell. According to the 1860 census, the Howeses lived east of Barnstable Village in the vicinity of Mary Dunn Road. In an uncorroborated account in the Patriot of April 21, 1913, Francis WT. Sprague wrote that the Howeses harbored runaway slaves of

<p><i>Saturday, April 26, 2:00P.M.</i> “Underground Railroad, Indenture, Slavery and Abolition on Cape Cod” <i>Jim Coogan</i> presents a look at what very quietly happened back in the early and mid-19th century. \$5.00 Donation Jacob Sears Library 23 Center St., East Dennis</p>	<p>**Maritime Days Exhibits** <i>Saturday, May 10, 1:00-4:00 P.M.</i> “A Sea Captain or Two Named Howes” 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum, 77 NobsCUSSETT Road, Dennis Village.</p>	<p>**Maritime Days Exhibits** <i>Saturday, May 17, 10:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.</i> “Wearing of the Blue on Land and Sea” “Dennis Men in the Civil War” With Civil War Reenactors Dennis Maritime Museum, West Dennis Graded School 67 School Street, West Dennis</p>
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the Underground Railroad at their home and that others stayed along Mary Dunn Road. Fact can be hard to separate from folklore when it comes to the Cape and the Underground Railroad, Abolition and Politics but the Howes—Mary Dunn story seems credible. Mary Dunn was a black woman who lived in the woods "about two miles from Barnstable Village"¹

Kittridge added another view: "Some of the seafaring Abolitionists adopted other measures to show their convictions, and used their vessels to bring slaves North to safety. Among these kind-hearted smugglers was George Lovell, of Osterville, who died in 1861. He was a wealthy and very influential South Side shipowner with strong anti-slavery convictions. It was quite natural, therefore, that he should slip a runaway on board one of his vessels in Norfolk or Savannah now and then, and land him some dark night on the free soil of Cape Cod. The slaves made their way across the Cape, via a pretty well-established 'underground railroad,' to Barnstable, where they were always welcome guests at the houses of Ezekiel Thacher and Alvin Howes. Yet the atmosphere of these New England homes seems not always to have proved congenial to the Negroes; for they frequently sought their own level in some hang-out in the woods on Mary Dunn's road, where rum and a less rarefied environment put them more at their ease."²

Dennis vessels were very active among those throughout the Cape in providing troop transports during the war. These vessels have been noted as participating:

Name	Vessel	Year
Baxter, John	steamer <i>Pocahontas</i>	63-64
Baxter, Samuel	steamer <i>Pocahontas</i>	63-64
Crowell, Freeman III	brig <i>John Freeman</i>	62
Crowell, George	schr <i>John Ponder</i>	64
Crowell, George W	schr <i>Western Star</i>	64-65
Crowell, Guilford	schr <i>Star</i>	62
Crowell, Guilford	schr <i>John Ponder, Jr.</i>	64
Crowell, Hersey	schr <i>Roxbury</i>	62
Crowell, George, Luther	schr <i>La Plata</i>	65
Crowell, Pliny	schr <i>West Dennis</i>	63
Eldridge, Joseph	schr <i>Westover</i>	65

Evans, William	stmr <i>John Adams</i>	64
Fisk, Luther	schr <i>Sarah M. Smith</i>	62
Hall, Gideon	schr <i>John Farnum</i>	62
Harding, Isaiah s	stmr <i>Dudley</i>	63-64
Howes, Daniel	stmr <i>John Rice</i>	64-65
Howes, Thomas P.	ship <i>Black Prince</i>	61-62
Kelly, Fernandus	schr <i>Mountain Ave.</i>	62
Nickerson, Asa W.	schr <i>A.H. Manchester</i>	62
Nickerson, Cyrus	schr <i>E. Nickerson</i>	62
Peterson, Isaac	schr <i>Rhodella Blew</i>	63-64
Sears, Benjamin P.	schr <i>Searsville</i>	62
Sears, Edward Jr.	schr <i>Victor</i>	62

Other Captains and vessels were engaged in this capacity, yet others tried to evade the blockades up and down the coast in order to maintain some semblance of commerce. The Civil War decimated the maritime commerce of the Cape. But that story is for another time.

Rose Victorian

The Rose Victorian Gift Shop will open in May this year, planning to extend its success of last year. It eh Shop was open for a little more than ten weekends last year, but managed to cover all of the property expenses for the year plus show a modest profit.

We are hoping to expand the Rose Victorian Committee, and look to have a 'kick-off' session there in the near future. Last year there were two subcommittees, House and Grounds and the Gift Shop, but all of the participants are involved in the operation and overall planning of the various uses of the property.

We are always seeking new members who are interested in supporting this exciting initiative. If are working, we can meet on weekends. Interested in being a part of something new and exciting?

Call June – 508-385-9308

Kap'n Kezzie's Komments

"The only difference between a tax man and a taxidermist is that the taxidermist leaves the skin."

-- **Mark Twain ...**

¹ Miller, Stauffer *Cape Cod and the Civil War, The History Press, 2010 pp 22-23*

² Kittredge, Henry C., *Cape Cod - It's People And Their History*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930 pp200

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(As a tribute to Lu (Lura) Crowell, our former and longstanding newsletter editor, selections from her “The Way We Were” will occupy this space all year.) From May, 2006 Edition

THE WAY WE WERE

Was it really just a few months ago that Sesuit Harbor looked like this? Now that spring is well under way, someone is bemoaning the loss of their little yellow sailboat which was blown by wind and carried by ice and waves all the way from Plymouth to the waters off Corporation Beach. The harbor master at Sesuit wasn't able to do more than notify the Coast Guard as Sesuit Harbor was solidly frozen in. Those of us who walk the beach watched helplessly as the tiny boat was dragged closer to the point of rocks east of Corporation (which on old maps is sometimes called Crowell's Point). One morning the boat was swamped by waves, and by the next it had sunk, leaving only part of its mast showing above the rocks. In the days that followed pieces washed ashore, the life jackets were found frozen into the ice on the beach, and the little yellow sailboat was only a memory—one more shipwreck off the coast of Cape Cod.

Photo of Sesuit Harbor February 2004
courtesy of Martin Halpert.

