



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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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 Wednesday, May 11 @ 2:00 P.M., The Rose Victorian, 485 Main St., Rte. 28, West Dennis, MA

Dennis Honors Phyllis Robbins Horton

On Tuesday, January 26th, Phyllis Horton, DHS Board member and Curator, was honored at the opening of the new Town Hall. We feel quite sure she was surprised! Phyllis was escorted to the second floor where she found the hallway filled with Town officials, DHS Board members and friends. She found that a conference room has been named in her honor, a well-deserved recognition for her many years of tireless work in preserving the history of Dennis. On the door was the following notice:

Betsy Harrison



"PHYLLIS ROBBINS HORTON 3RD FLOOR SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM

Phyllis Robbins Horton was born and raised in Dennisport, MA. In 1946 she married Clarence L. Horton. As the wife of an Air Force officer, she lived from base to base for many years while raising her four children, Michael, Richard, Lynne and Carol Anne.

After retirement, Phyllis returned to her hometown of Dennisport and has become an eminent historian active in promoting and preserving the history of Dennis. Phyllis became involved in the Dennis Historical Society soon after her return and continues to be an active, involved member. In 2007, she was co-chairman of the "Maritime Treasures of Dennis and Yarmouth", an exhibit held at the West Dennis Yacht Club in partnership with the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth.

A few of Phyllis's other accomplishments include: member of the Dennis Historical Commission since 1985, member of the Bicentennial Committee from 1991-1993, the South Side Historic Committee in 1984, Trustee of the Caleb Chase Fund, Hearse House Renovation Committee, the West Dennis Community Building Restoration Committee and was involved in the preservation of Quivet Neck. She is an active member of the Cape & Islands Historical Association, and has worked most recently to convert the Dennis Village receiving tomb into the Dennis Cemetery Education Center. In 1987 Phyllis was appointed to the Josiah Dennis Manse Committee and became Chairman, a position which lasted for 15 years. As Chairman, Phyllis was instrumental in developing the "Manse" into one of the finest interpretive museums on Cape Cod. As a costumed interpreter, Phyllis loved sharing colonial and Town history with visitors. She retired from this position in December 2005 with the hope of having more time to spend with her family and possibly to write that book that's begging to be put onto paper."

A Most Generous Gift

After fifty-three years as a long-term loan the Howes Chest finally belongs to the Dennis Historical Society.

The chest of stout English oak, paneled on all four sides, came to America at Salem, MA, moving to Lynn, MA in 1637¹ when Thomas and Mary Burr Howes arrived in the good ship *Mayflower*, not the grim ship but the third one of that name to come here from England.



Howes Chest-Sept. 2009

The chest held everything the Howes family would need to start life in the wilds of New England. Can you imagine starting your life over again in a wilderness with two other families in a place inhabited almost entirely by Native Americans—of whom they knew almost nothing? The other families were Anthony Thacher and John Crowe. The three families were given land grants in Yarmouth in 1639 by the Plymouth Colony Court. Samuel Worden and Richard Sears had settled unofficially in East Dennis before Thomas and Mary arrived.

¹ "History of Old Yarmouth" by Charles Swift, 1884, lists this as 1635.

It turned out the Natives were friendly, helpful and good teachers, the land was bountiful and it was a good place to cast your fortune.

Thomas and Mary settled in the Nobscusset section of Yarmouth, now Dennis, cleared land, raised their family and prospered. Thomas died at age 75 in 1665/6. His will gave Mary the Great Chest and other items, a rather unusual act as most widows of that time were remanded to the care of a son, who inherited the house, and his wife became the new mistress of the household. The widow was given a small room, or part of a room, until her death. Mary's life took a much better turn. She next married Thomas Prence (Prince), Governor of the Colony, as his fourth wife and moved to Plymouth taking her chest and other items. At his death in 1673 he "returned to her the Great Chest which she had brought to me, my Court Cupboard and warming pan". Mary came back to Dennis to live with her son Jeremiah and his wife, Sarah Prence, daughter of Governor Prence. Quite possibly this is how the governor met Mary, but it gets better! We have recently learned that Jeremiah's house is now the 1694 Josiah Dennis Manse. So, the Howes Chest is back in one of its original homes!

The chest passed down from Jeremiah through almost one hundred years of Howes families to Oren Howes Shiverick of Dennis who died in 1939. Oren had used it as a grain chest for his livestock, probably the fate of many great chests that came to America.

It was then inherited by his daughter, Ethel, who married Charles Foley. At her death in 1971 it passed on to her children, Irene Foley and twins, Oren Foley and Ethel Foley MacQuarrie. They placed it on loan to DHS and it went on display at the 1801 Jericho House and Barn Museum in the summer of 1971. When the Manse was purchased and renovated it moved across town to where it had been so many years ago.

In 1999 it was evaluated by Keith Bakker of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now Historic New England) with thoughts of having it restored. After careful perusal he said the chest needed nothing, "Just keep it clean", which we have done. It has never been oiled, stained or painted. The only non-original parts are the leather hinges which probably have been replaced a time or two in 382 years. Mr. Bakker said it was one of the premier antiques on the East Coast and possibly in the United States.

You are cordially invited to come view this lovely antique chest and consider all the history that has passed since it came to America. The opening

reception at the Manse is Saturday, June 25 from 1-4 P.M. and seasonally from June 28 on Tuesdays 10 A.M. - 1.00 P.M. and Thursdays 1:00 - 4:00 until August 30.

Thank you, Ethel, for this magnificent gift!

Phyllis Horton

Death Warrant of a Pirate²

ELEAZER BUCK was a member of the pirate crew commanded by that handsome reprobate, Captain Thomas Pound, which, in 1689 up and down the Cape, preyed on vessels sailing Massachusetts Bay.

The first boat captured by these pirates was the ketch "Mary" loaded with fish and bound for Salem. A small prize, but the beginning of an exciting, though short, career, for with success these men grew bolder and more piratical, until they were finally seized, after a battle, by a government boat off Tarpaulin Cove, tried and sentenced to death.

The death warrant of Eleazer is a picturesque document and under date of "Ye 7th of January, 1689" recites that:

"Eleazer Buck Marriner indicted by y^e Jurirs for our Sovereign Lord and Lady ye King and Queen upon their oath by three severall Indictm^{ts}: viz y^e Eleazer Buck upon Fryday y^e ninth of Augst 1689 o., y^e High seas that is to say ab^l three Leagues from half way Rock in the Massachusetts Bay upon y^e Ketch 'Mary' of Salem, Hellen Chard, Master, and upon y^e s^d Master and men their Ma^{ty}, Leige people wth force and army an assault did make and as a felon and Pyrate wth gun, and sword, did enter and y^e s^d Ketch wth all her Lading of fish being y^e value of sixty pounds, of y^e goods and Chattells of their Ma^{ty}, Leige people tooke and carryed away"

The second occasion recited was an assault on the Brigateen "Merrimack" in Vineyard Sound, and the third affair stressed in the Warrant finds the pirates again in the Sound "being under a Red flag in defiance of their Mat^{ty} Authority."

Buck pleaded guilty to the first indictment, not guilty to the other two, but the jurors found "y^e s^d Eleazer Buck guilty of the felony and piracy whereof he stands indicted. As also guilty of ye felony and murther whereof he stands Indicted." The Court ordered Eleazer Buck "to have y^e sentence of death pronounced agst him," but Fate decreed otherwise.

² Shoemaker, Elisabeth, *ed.*, Cape Cod Legends, Cape Cod Advancement Plan, Hyannis, MA June 1, 1935 pp 9, 10

Taken to Boston for the execution of the sentence, the noose was actually around Buck's neck when, by the intervention of prominent Bostonians and the payment of a fine, he and all his companions were saved.

The Giants' Shore

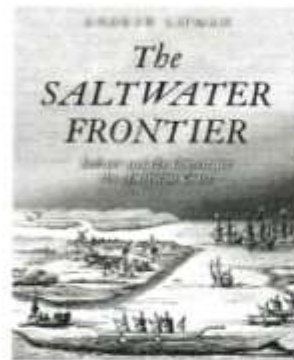
The following is the opening of a highly acclaimed new book that I found fascinating, and, if your interests includes the founding and development of our country, you might just similarly enjoy.

"Once there was a moody giant who roamed the waters from the Hudson River to Cape Cod and ate roasted whales for breakfast. When he enjoyed a pipe, the smoke became fogbanks that shrouded the coast for miles. With taps of ash from his pipe's bowl, he created the two sandy lumps we now call Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. In his amphibious adventures he was sometimes graceful, sometimes clumsy, and always emotional. In one story a crab bit his hand just as he was rolling boulders across the waters west of Cape Cod, causing him to abandon his rocks and fling the pinching crustacean all the way to Nantucket to spawn a local crab fishery. In another fit of pique he transformed his wife into a wave-swept cluster of tiny islands near the mouth of Narragansett Bay and morphed his children into fierce killer whales!

The stories often ended with the towering man disappearing into the deep. In various tellings he made an angry clash toward the open ocean, pelting various bays with massive boulders and creating several chains of stepping-stones across the region. Just before he dove into the sea he left massive footprints on the mainland and islands as though the stone were mud. Munsees called the pacing titan Maughkampoe; Narragansetts, Pequots, and Mohegans knew him as Weetucks; Wampanoags named him Maushop. Later English-speaking Christian Natives at times referred to him as the Evil Spirit or the Devil, though a devout colonist who listened to "many strange Relations of one Wetucks" fixed on the stories in which he strode upon water and suggested he bore "some kind of broken Resemblance to the Sonne of God."

Yet this brooding colossus was quite unlike the only child Europeans worshipped. He shared a crowded land-and-seascape with many other spirits, including little people, magical animals, and capricious gods who needed constant reminders of humans' gratitude through gifts of food and tobacco. These immortal actors' fluid spiritual power, which Natives called *memutto* or *manitou*, could shape or

influence all things, living and inanimate. And few places were more obviously sites of manitou than the sea, with its constant creation and destruction. Water itself could be seen as "the threshold to the underworld," the cusp of the known and the unknown. Creatures that crossed this dangerous boundary were especially potent. Thus stranded whales, whose bodies were rich with meat and oil, were seen as prized gifts from Maushop or Weetucks, while beads fashioned from whelks and hard-shelled clams were treasured. The giant's tantrums also accounted for a number of the region's geological oddities: the sandier soil in outlying peninsulas and islands, the erratic strings of wayward boulders and rocky islets scattered from west to east, the deep grooves where it looked like something huge had scoured the earth."



A fascinating new perspective on Native seafaring and colonial violence in the seventeenth-century American Northeast

Andrew Lipman's eye-opening first book is the previously untold story of how the ocean became a "frontier" between colonists and Indians. When the English and Dutch empires both tried to claim the same patch of coast between the Hudson River and Cape Cod, the sea itself became the arena of contact and conflict. During the violent European invasions, the region's Algonquian-speaking Natives were navigators, boatbuilders, fishermen, pirates, and merchants who became active players in the emergence of the Atlantic World. Drawing from a wide range of English, Dutch, and archeological sources, Lipman uncovers a new geography of Native America that incorporates seawater as well as soil. Looking past Europeans' arbitrary land boundaries, he reveals unseen links between local episodes and global events on distant shores.

PDH

Looking for the perfect gift?

Please visit your society's bookstore.

Go to the DHS Website,

Click on Bookstore and browse! If your family, or friends love Dennis and its history the way we do, your selection is sure to please!

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"The Rose Victorian"

485 Main St., Rte. 28, West Dennis, MA
2016 Opening Day ~~~ May 20th 10 A.M.

Unique Gift Shop with jewelry, china, and more.
The DHS Book Nook has history waiting to be read.
Simply Linens 'n Lace, etc. in the Big House
DHS Members: 10% discount always



The Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660
A 501 (c)(3) Corporation established in 1963.
Volunteer opportunities at this historic DHS property
Phone: 508-394-1696

"Dennis-The Sea Captain's Town"

Saturday, May 21, 1:00-4:00 P.M.

Hear Some Of Their Amazing
Stories in the

1800's Schoolroom at the
Dennis Maritime Museum
West Dennis Graded School
67 School Street, West Dennis

~~~~Opening For The Season~~~~



DHS Meeting: Wednesday, May 11 @ 2:00 p.m. at the Rose Victorian, come.