



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 9

September 2002

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, September 11
Manse Committee Meets
9:30 AM

followed by Docent's Brunch
for volunteers and docents at
the Josiah Dennis Manse.

11:00 AM

Sunday, September 22nd
DHS Annual Meeting
Nantucket Whalers &
19th Century Sea Captains
Brief annual business meeting
followed by Theresa Barbo,
maritime historian, giving a
fascinating talk about some
Cape and Island mariners.
Refreshments. Public welcome.
2:00 PM
West Dennis Graded School

Sunday, October 20th
Beneath This Stone
Guided walk in historic Dennis
Village Cemetery exploring
18th & 19th century
gravestones, how they were
decorated, who were the artists,
what the symbols meant, and
who lies beneath them.
2:00m PM
Route 6A, Dennis
by the Village Green
(Rain date: October 27th)

Thursday, November 21st
Joe Lincoln's Cape Cod
Narrated slide show by Cape
historian, Jim Coogan, tells
how this popular early 1900s
Chatham author described the
Cape Cod characters of his day.
7:30 PM
Carleton Hall, Dennis Village

17th Century Stone Wall at Bound Brook in the Village of East Dennis

by Ray Urquhart

Stratus clouds, dull-gray, hung heavily over Bound Brook. Restless shadows pushed along by raw north winds swept across the pond which spills over into the herring run through a series of sluices. It was Monday, April 2, 2001. The forecast expected "gloomy conditions" with possibly a few rain or snow showers to continue for yet another day. The temperature at 8 AM was 34 degrees.



AmeriCorps members (11 college graduates from such places as Stone Harbor, New Jersey, Hellertown, Pennsylvania and Livonia, Michigan) were gathering at Bound Brook to begin clearing thick wooded growth and vines along a stone wall built sometime in the 1600s. The wall is located along the northerly edge of an original portion of the Yarmouth/Eastham Road. In Dennis and Brewster it passes over the herring run on Old County Road and ends at the approach to a former stage coach stop on Route 6A. Along the way is the squeaking gate at the entrance to the Sears Cemetery which contains some burial markers dating back to the 17th century.

Ryan Burch, AmeriCorps project supervisor from Scotia, New York, a graduate of Trinity College, passed out a variety of hand tools to the seven young women and their four male colleagues. They were joined by Dennis Natural Resources officer Jaime Cabot and three Brewster public works employees—James Bearse, Carly Lombard and Dana Johngren.

About 350 feet of heavy wooded growth and vines were cut away from both sides of the stone wall at a near-frenzied pace. A few stones had spilled from their former resting places atop the wall which would be reset later by Dennis and Brewster public works personnel. The project that was expected to take up to two days was completed by mid-afternoon. The temperature was up three degrees to 37. As the group gathered along the stone wall for a photograph, most managed broad smiles despite the chilly winds and the leaden sky.

Now once again the wall could be clearly seen, bending as the old

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17th Century Stone Wall at Bound Brook in the Village of East Dennis

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stage coach road itself bent where it passed by the pond. Henry David Thoreau surely would have traveled along this roadway in 1849 on his way to Orleans by coach. He described NobsCUSset glimpsed “through the mist” as “an exceedingly barren and desolate country, of a character which I can find no name for; such a surface, perhaps, as the bottom of the sea made dry land day before yesterday.” Yet he wrote, after passing through the village of Suet (East Dennis), that he “...liked Dennis well, better than any town we had seen on the Cape, it was so novel, and, in that stormy day, so sublimely dreary.” (from *Cape Cod* by Henry David Thoreau) Perhaps the stone wall edging this old lane persuaded Mr. Thoreau that in spite of storm and mist, there was an enduring quality to this town called Dennis.

Raymond Urquhart is President of the Dennis Historical Society and was largely responsible for initiating this project which was sponsored by the Dennis Conservation Trust and the Dennis Historical Society. Town officials in Dennis and Brewster then agreed to provide both manpower and equipment to support the work of the AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps-Cape Cod was funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance, the Corporation for National Service and Barnstable County. The two AmeriCorps teams were given living expenses and an educational grant of \$4,725 when the program was completed in August.

CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 1867 WEST DENNIS GRADED SCHOOL HOUSE

Once again members are called together to ratify the decisions of the Executive Board of the Society. This year the Board has voted to amend the By-Laws as follows:

Article III

1.a Student Member. This membership category would be eliminated and Article III, Number 1.a would be deleted.

3. Life Member. This membership category would be eliminated and Article III, Number 3 would be deleted.

5. Dues. Dues for individual members and families would be established as follows:

Individual	\$15.00	(Currently \$10.00)
Family	\$25.00	(Currently \$15.00)

The By-laws also require the annual election of the Society's six officers, and the election of two Board members.

With approximately 30% of our members already Life Members, some for many years, we have seen a radical decline in income to the general fund which supports our program and operating expenses. If you renew your membership or join before the Annual Meeting, you can still take advantage of the current rates. Those who are already Life Members will, of course, continue as Life Members.

Following a brief business meeting members and friends are invited to hear maritime historian Theresa Barbo who will be regaling us with a talk on **Nantucket Whalers and 19th Century Sea Captains**. Refreshments will be served.

Acquisitions and Gifts!

Last month saw acquisitions of postcards for our collection of the Grand Cove in West Dennis and one of the

South Dennis Grammar School. We also acquired a full-size copy of an 1858 insurance map of Barnstable County. At auction we found a lovely royal blue wedding dress from the late 1800s which belonged to the daughter of West Dennis Captain Mulford Crowell. It will be on display with the Jericho collection.

Bob Whittemore has donated 5 family school diplomas from the Dennis High School and elementary schools which date from the late 1800s to early 1900s. They will be framed and put on display at the West Dennis Graded School.

Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Eaton have given the original ceramic water cooler from the South Dennis Graded School to the Society to be on display in the upstairs classroom of the West Dennis Graded School. When the old dipper and water bucket came to be considered unsanitary in the early 1900s, these ceramic jugs with a push button to deliver water to a bubbler were used in the schools. They were gravity fed with an overflow which connected to a hose running into a bucket. The Eatons also donated a teacher's bell for the schoolroom.

Though not a recent acquisition, Burt has been busy transcribing the information from the Obed Howes family Bible for research, and has also cataloged Eban Hall's Bible and a 1797 Bible (writing not legible) for the library. We note that some Indian artifacts and maritime items are now in display cases at the West Dennis School.

KUDOS FOR PHYLLIS HORTON

Praise is hardly enough for the scholarship and painstaking research done by Phyllis for a new program **300 Years of Dennis Maritime History** which she presented during Dennis Festival Days for the DHS. She mentioned that often we concentrate our interests on the era of the great sailing ships without seeing the broader picture of our relationship to the sea around us. From shore whaling to salt works, from the fish weirs to the great docks which made Dennis Port into a true port, from the light ships to the Lifesaving Service, from the fishing fleets to the great gales and shipwrecks and even rum-running during prohibition, Phyllis told us great stories, both funny and sad. Thanks to Phyllis for a memorable evening, and thanks to Richard Howes for helping with the slides. Thanks also to Lynn Horton for setting up and lugging equipment and to the ladies who served pitcher after pitcher of punch to cool us on the hottest evening yet.

YOUTHFUL DOCENTS LEND A HAND

A special thanks to junior docents who came to the Josiah Dennis Colonial Open House in August to lend a hand and lots of enthusiasm. They helped with children's games and joined classes at the 1770 Schoolhouse. They demonstrated how to card wool, showed how to spin a button on a string, and even gave the adults time for a break. Yes, we saw them enjoying the cookies, lemonade and ice-cream, too. That's small pay for lots of great help. Thanks to you all.

WANTED Yes, we're looking for YOU! There's no doubt that many hands make light work, but right now some hands are carrying a heavy load. In addition to her duties as Chairman of the Josiah Dennis Manse Committee, researching and writing programs, setting up exhibits, and Heaven only knows what else, Phyllis Horton has been putting together the programs for the Society for many years. It's time she had an apprentice. If you enjoy going to programs, reading what's going on around the Cape, and making lots of friends, this job is for you. We have someone to handle the publicity and a crew to provide refreshments. All we need is someone to line up interesting programs for the year. And you won't have to do it alone! Phyllis will be glad to share her experience and suggestions.

If you like to do neat and orderly chores, there's also room for someone to mail out the Newsletter. Or dust books in the library! Or sit at a membership table after programs to sign up new members and offer our books for sale! Not interesting enough? Bring us your suggestions and expertise. We can use YOU. (Phyllis 508 394-0017) (Lu 508 385-3268)



Amy Deck, Janelle Grenier, Emily Smith, Melissa Hoeft, Carley Blake

From Alice Morse Earle's *Home Life in Colonial Days* we read, "No farmer or his wife need fear any king when on every home farm was found food, drink, medicine, fuel, lighting, clothing, shelter.

Dennis Historical Society

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The Way We Were

In early days every farmer and his sons raised wool and flax; his wife and daughters spun them into thread and yarn, knit these into stockings and mittens, or wove them into linen and cloth, and then made them into clothing. Even in large cities nearly all women spun yarn and thread, all could knit, and many had hand-looms to weave cloth at home. These home occupations in the production of clothing have been very happily termed the 'homespun industries.'” (pp. 166-7)



Lee Blake works with daughter Carley to demonstrate the art of spinning at Josiah Dennis Colonial Open House.