



# Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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[www.dennishistoricalsociety.org](http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org)

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## Just Ramblin'

September is fast approaching, several of our grandkids are in college, too many tomatoes are ripening and the docents are all eagerly awaiting the end of the season in the various museums. As you astute readers know, it has been a very busy time for your Society. Our October Annual Meeting announcements will soon be mailed (it's October 20, so please mark your calendars), dues are still flowing in (I hope yours have been mailed) and there are still several other fall activities ahead.

This summer at the Manse and Jericho have been excellent and visitors abounded. We have had several special tours at the West Dennis Graded School, but the lack of air-conditioning did limit their activities. The Rose Victorian Shop reopened and has been successful. It is open Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 5p.m. through the fall.

By the way, we occasionally are asked "what can I do to help?" We have attracted some wonderful new volunteers this summer, and are ALWAYS seeking folks that would enjoy new camaraderie while spending a few hours supporting DHS. Want to help us move into the future? Board elections will be held at the Annual Meeting, and if you are interested in a Board position or just helping out, please call me (508-385-9308) or drop me a note at [pjhowes@verizon.net](mailto:pjhowes@verizon.net).

Oh, yes - the author of the last piece was my great-grand uncle, of whom I knew nothing about until this manuscript surfaced!

I look forward to seeing you on the Lobster Roll Cruise on September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Pete Howes

## From Here To Hawley

Once upon a time, in a simple home on the edge of Sesuet meadow, there was born a little boy named Rufus Sears. He was the sixth child and first son of Capt. Nathaniel Sears and his wife Phebe. How joyfully he must have been welcomed by his five older sisters and proud parents. He was christened in the old East Parish church by the Rev. Nathan Stone who had christened his sisters. It would

seem that Rufus would live a contented life in the quiet Cape Cod village now called East Dennis. Probably he would follow his father to sea, and marry a girl from his neighborhood. But fate decreed otherwise. When he was but one and one half years old his father was lost at sea. Widow Sears must struggle to keep her family together, educating and providing for them as best she could. Perhaps she was unable to afford to send Rufus to school at the new district schoolhouse, but she did make sure he learned to read. It is very likely that his reading primer was the Bible, a book with which he continued to read and study throughout his life. In due time, Widow Sears became the wife of Gorham Baker, and Rufus' sisters found husbands and set up their own homes. They married farmers at a time when farming was becoming less and less profitable on the Cape due to the depletion of top soil. And so it was that in 1781 a large group of young Cape families packed up all their belongings and emigrated to Western Massachusetts. Rufus' sister, Phebe, who had married Deacon Joseph Bangs, were among those emigrants, and Rufus, age 11, made the long journey to Hawley with them. It was a sad parting for these young pioneers. They were headed for a rugged wilderness and they knew that it was unlikely they would ever see home and family again. Tradition says they were accompanied to the town boundary by most of the residents of the two north side villages, and there were bidden a very sad good-by. However, the children of Phebe Sears Baker made the trip without any serious problems and soon were settled on their own homesteads raising sheep for wool and mutton. Rufus lived with the Bangs family, working around the farm to earn his keep--and learning farm ways. As his early education had bent him when he was but a twig, so as a young man did the tree incline. He continued to be an avid student of the Bible, a staunch supporter of the Hawley Orthodox Church, which his brother-in-law served as Deacon. As he reached maturity his thoughts returned to

the little seaside village where he had been born. He longed to see once more the mother at whose knee he had been taught. So, carrying his possessions on his back, he set off for East Dennis. It is not recorded how many days he walked, but walk he did--every step of the 216 miles from Hawley to Quivet Neck on Cape Cod. There he enjoyed a happy reunion with his beloved mother, her husband and his young step-brother. He spent the winter "at home"--hearing the sermons of Rev. Stone, and becoming reacquainted with the sounds of the sea and his sea-faring relatives. But after 10 years of living away Rufus was now more of a farmer than a mariner. He found no interest in following his father in a career at sea. So, as winter waned, Rufus prepared to leave his ancestral home, to return to his adopted homeland in Western Massachusetts. As he left Dennis, the farmer-fishermen of Cape Cod were getting ready to plant before going a-fishing. When he arrived in Hawley snow was still on the ground. This was to be the only journey home that Rufus Sears would make. In Hawley, he married a distant cousin, named Priscilla Sears. Like him, she had been made an orphan by the sea, and, also like him, had travelled with family members to find a new, perhaps safer, life in the farmlands of Western Massachusetts. Rufus became a Deacon of the church, a farmer widely known as a pious, highly respected citizen of his adopted town. And in the autumn and winter of his life, until the day he died in 1856, I suspect that he delighted in retelling the story of his long walk--home to East Dennis, then home to Hawley--way back in 1791.

Nancy Thacher Reid  
September 1988 Newsletter

### **COLONIAL DAY AT THE MANSE, AUGUST 17**

Thanks to a grant from the Education Foundation for Dennis and Yarmouth many visitors to the Manse enjoyed watching Tom Kelleher, blacksmith from Sturbridge Village, forge wall hooks, rosehead nails, etc. from iron and Len and Anna Heaney cooking over an open fire. Terri Fox hand dipped candles. Sylvia Doirin worked on her hooked rug in the parlor. Spinners on the green, pie making in the keeping room as well as touring the Manse and schoolhouse were also big attractions. Our thanks to all who helped to make it such a special day.

Nancy Howes



Tom Kelleher, Sturbridge Village Blacksmith



Terri Fox, Candlemaking For The Kids

### **Teddy Bear Picnic**

A teddy bear picnic on the Jericho grounds was a fun time for everyone. Kids arrived clutching their well-loved teddies. One boy also brought his (obviously) very beloved terry cloth frog "so he wouldn't get lonesome home alone". The Jericho Committee and DHS volunteers provided teddy-shaped PB&J sandwiches, lemonade and watermelon. Families sat on blankets to enjoy the picnic followed by a scavenger hunt through the barn and house, bubbles, ring toss and story time. Two mothers were so pleased they stayed to help clean up.

Phyllis Horton



Dawn Dellner & Friends  
Teddy Bear Picnic



Dick Howes Won The Rose Victorian Raffle  
And Is Presented With His Prize By  
Rebecca Gallerizzo.

### The Dance

(This event occurred about 155 years ago)

As I have mentioned before there were four or five young ladies that were strangers to us boys, I will give a faint description of their looks, general appearance and any other little incident that may come to my mind at this time. I think if I should give the names of those Yarmouth belles it would be all right for I cannot say anything disrespectful of them and neither would I if I could. The first two that I will mention were sisters; they were perfect strangers then but in a few years from that time were well known. Naomi Jane<sup>[1]</sup>, the older of the two, was of a slender build, somewhat round shouldered with a heavy mass of black hair, small snaky eyes set in deep beneath a low forehead, small face and a long slender neck, flat chested and altogether a very skinny young lady; her weight could not have tipped the scales to more than ninety or at the most to ninety five pounds, but to say that she was a good dancer would be too small praise, for she was a cracker jack. Susan the younger of the two, was quite the reverse from her sister; she was of a much different complexion, having light hair, blue eyes, a soft rosy skin, with a very full puffy face, and a stature short and uncommonly fleshy. She resembled somewhat as the old saying is a pudding bag tied in the middle. She was slow of speech and moderate in her movements while Naomi was of a quick turn, with a tongue that could move faster than a typewriter in the hands of an expert in that line. She was also on the floor up and ready for the dance on the slightest invitation. When Nomy (as she was called for short) got warmed up a hair pin perhaps would occasionally fall from its place until a number sufficiently large to give freedom to that covering that all women so much delight in – a good head of hair – would be flying in all directions, and with skirts slightly raised to give freedom to her feet, she was a perfect whirlwind in a real old fashioned bread down dance. Susan hardly ever was seen to take part, unless perhaps in dancing what was then called a Virginia fence. She might waddle through that after a fashion, for that was more fitted for Sue's slow gait.

There were two other young ladies, but those were not sisters – I think they were cousins. At any rate one was a Wixon girl<sup>[2]</sup>, the other a Chase. Now these two were quite good looking, especially the Wixon one, and it was with the last named that I made a promise to pay a visit on the coming New Year's night. The Chase nymph also got a promise from a cousin of mine, and we two – with that secret to anyone else unknown – waited patiently for the coming night. This my first frolic had passed and it seemed that there never was one that could compare forever after.

*Memories of the Past* – Joshua Eldredge Howes p55 circa 1841, transcribed by Burt Derick

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<sup>1</sup> She was Naomi Jane Lewis, b. Yarmouth, 9 Dec 1839; d/o James Lewis Jr. & Mary A.; the sister Susan Maria Lewis was born 8 July 1841.

<sup>2</sup> The only Wixon girl in Yarmouth in 1850 was Eliza Ann Wixon, b. 20 Dec 1840, d/o of Ahira & Rhoda (Chase) Wixon. It's difficult to say who her cousin Chase might be.

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### **Bits 'n Pieces - September 1963 - from The Dennis-Yarmouth Register**

- 9/06 \* Col. Dean Yount, U.S.A.F. is moving his family to the former Sherburne Howes home on Hope Lane. Mrs. Yount's mother, Mrs. James Cosgrove, has purchased the Walsh house on Nobscussett Rd. They will make Dennis their permanent home.
- 9/13 \* Headline: "Time For The Towns To Take Charge"; concerning national magazine articles about visiting Cape Cod, ppg 2 states: "Then, invariably there is a shot of Rt. 28 between Hyannis and Dennis Port. This text goes: 'Is THIS what will happen to Cape Cod?' or words to that effect."  
(Personal view: yes, it could be happening to *our* town again.)
- 9/20 \* "Blashfield Exhibition benefits South Dennis Library building fund". His painting, "Adoration", was presented by him to the Congregational Church of South Dennis in 1935. Mr. Blashfield, cited as America's most celebrated mural artist, died at his home in South Dennis on October 12, 1936. Robert Eldred volunteered his talents as Auctioneer of the many donated artifacts to benefit the library.
- 9/27 \* Special town meeting approves the building of a municipal golf course by the crucial vote of 207 to 49.  
\* Schools to open on Wednesday. D-Y Regional High School expects 713 students, 60 more than last year's peak.

### **DHS CURRENT EVENTS FOR SEPTEMBER**

- September 6: Walk Through the Dennis Village Cemetery with Terri Fox, Friday, 10:00 a.m. A guided walk through this historic cemetery. Rain date: Sunday, August 25.
- September 7: Lobster Roll Cruise of Cape Cod Bay: lunch, boat ride & interesting talk by Mary Kuhrtz. For Information call Phyllis Horton at 508-394-0017 *immediately!*
- September 28: "Autumn at The Manse" Saturday, 1 - 4 p.m. Our annual "Fall for the Arts" celebration with tours and refreshments.

June Howes