



# Dennis Historical Society

## Newsletter

### June 2021

#### Volume 44, No.06

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**The next Board Meeting will be conducted by email on Tuesday, June 8th**

Please send information & stories for the newsletter to Dave Talbott at the DHS Website email address: [info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org)

### *The Homestead*



Under the heading *Location Unknown*, the March Newsletter included this image sent in by James Bryant of Newton, MA. All that was known about the photograph was that *Constant Sears & Isaiah Sears House* was written on the back. I think you will all be amazed at what has been learned! The first email response came from board member Mary Kuhrtz. On the day she received her newsletter, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Mary wrote – *would the house be the old house that was on the land where Henry Kelley's house now stands? It is listed with a picture in the DHS archives.* The next to nail the correct location was member and past newsletter contributor Steve Martin.

Drawing information from numerous references, Steve provided a very detailed description of the property – *There are two views in the DHS archives of what they call The Isaiah Sears house which was on Airline and no longer exists.* Ed.note - You can type the web address below into your browser to see these images. *One picture is from the John Herrick archive that was at Jacob Sears Library (<https://archive.dennishistsoc.org/handle/10766/11491>). The other photo with more of a yard showing is (<https://archive.dennishistsoc.org/handle/10766/11268>). That house resembles the Dillingham house just up 6a in Brewster a little beyond Stony Brook Road. That house is supposed to have been built in 1660 (though it may be later). The Dillingham house and the saltbox in Mr. Bryant's photo and the 2 views of the Isaiah Sears house in the DHS archives are similar saltboxes. I think Mr. Bryant's photo is this Isaiah Sears house. You can see the position of that house (I. Sears) on both the 1858 and 1880 atlas maps that show home owners and house locations, on what is now Airline just a little above the intersection with 6a and just beyond what they say is the A. Chase House. Looking at the 1860, 1870 and 1880 Censuses (where there is an A. Chase listed next to an I. Sears), that seems to be the home of Anthony Chase, and, judging by the location of Old County way, the A. Chase house would be just about where the parking lot for the old Sears cemetery is. So the Isaiah Sears house would be a little further up Airline, near where Henry Kelley's house is now. You can see where it would be from the map. Looking at the Census of 1860, it was occupied by Isaiah C. Sears 43, a fisherman and his wife Jedide (or Jedidiah), and what look like their sons Obadiah B 18, a mariner, Isaiah F. 16, a fisherman, Herbert W. 11, Horace A. 8 and Chauncy H. 6. In 1880 Isaiah C. and Jedidiah are still there and Obadiah B and his family are next on the Census listing, maybe on the same property (it is a big house with several other buildings you can see in the picture and the cow!). In the picture at DHS that shows more of the countryside, that may be the pond sloping down on the right side. Steve's email was preceded by one from another member and frequent newsletter contributor L. Ray Sears III. Ray thought the house might be the 1719 house in West Brewster adjacent to the Ancient Sears Cemetery (46 Main Street, Brewster). This was not the case. However, the accurate historical information he provided makes reference to the house identified correctly by both Mary and Steve. It was the homestead of *Elder Richard*. Here is what Ray emailed -*

*Capt. John Sears (1677-1738). This title probably came from his militia service, and it is noted that this Capt. John Sears built a house in 1719 that is still standing near the Ancient Sears Cemetery in West Brewster. This is probably very close to where Elder Richard had his homestead, maybe just beside what is now Airline Rd and an idyllic pond at the head of Quivet Creek. Nearly all of the people in this story are buried in that old Sears cemetery or the cemetery on Quivet Neck. Capt. John served in many offices in the town, including surveyor, juror, fence sitter and selectman. He was even moderator of the town meeting. Capt. John Sears married Priscilla Freeman and they had ten children including twins John and Bathsheba born in 1712. Twins do seem to run in this branch of the family. My grand uncle and his brother were also twins. There does not seem to be much discussion in those days about "identical" twins so we can only hazardous a guess when the gender of the twins is the same. There is really only one Constant that might fit b. 1802 E Dennis, d. 1887 Brewster- Capt John Sears was Constant's grandfather.*

*Capt Constant Sears was born, and long resided in the ancient house built by his great-gr-father, Capt John Sears, in East Dennis, but after the death of his first wife removed to the house which he built in West Brewster, on the site of the old Capt Samuel Sears' house. In early life he followed the sea, and became a shipmaster; after retiring he was a farmer and salt manufacturer. He held many places of trust and honor, and at times taught school. He was esteemed by all who knew him as a kind and upright citizen.*

Information provided by long time DHS member and local historian Henry Kelley II provides the conclusion for this article. It not only documents, but personalizes the story of the *Homestead*. Henry and his wife Susan are the owners of a home which they built on the property. What follows is a series of photographs sent to me by Henry. The first eight included his hand written descriptions which I have transcribed. The introduction in Henry's accompanying letter reads as follows -

*Dear David,*

*Here are the photo copies I have of the John Sears House.*

*Photos 1-5 were given to me by Dean S. Sears at the time I purchased the site in 1968. They were produced from a large collection of glass plate negatives then owned by "Henry Homer" Sears. Perhaps they now belong to the Dennis Historical Society.*

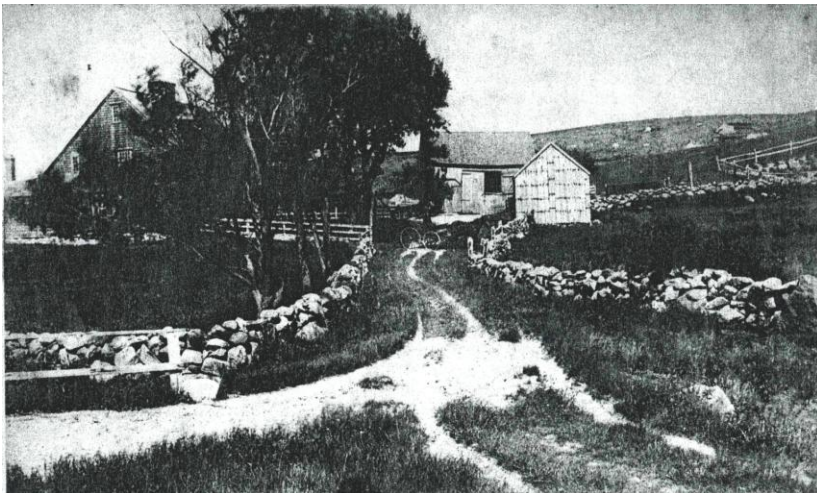
*Image 6 is from the identified book.*

*Image 7 was given to me many years ago; the reverse side states, "taken in 1894"*

*Image 8: I do not recall how it came to me.*

*[I recall the late Josh Crowell saying, "I have a good memory, but it is short!"]*

Photo 1



*This driveway is the one still in use at 730 Airline Road, East Dennis. Note the man in the horse drawn wagon barely visible at the end of the dirt tracks. Attached was a post-it note from Henry. "I regret I am unable to type my comments as captions below these evocative pictures."*

*Ed. note – It was my pleasure to do this!*

Photo 2



*This house, perhaps the largest of that generation, was built by profits from "along shore" whaling, according to oral tradition. The two shade trees were locally known as "silver leaf" trees, but actually are a variety of cottonwoods, I believe. Their rapid growth made them popular as shade trees, but they were not strong nor long lived. An extraordinary grove of them can be found at "Uncle Hiram's" in the vicinity of Hiram Pond Road and Silver Leaf Lane, Dennis Village, east of Nobscussett Road.*

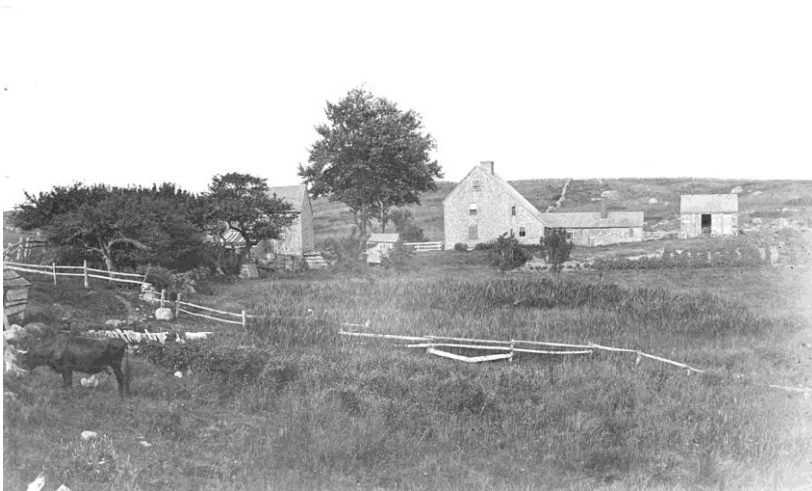
Photo 3



Again, note the extraordinary size of this family home. Even large homes had an addition to accommodate a “summer kitchen” to avoid heating up the main house in hot weather. It was usually an ell to the rear of the house on the north side, as here. Note: not a tree on the surrounding hills, but a cow is visible in the right side of the photo. This is the only one of the photos which looks east. In a follow up letter I received from Henry, he shared the following: *The late Velma (Sears) Dexter and Dean Sears both told me that the hillside just behind my barn was known as “Shantum’s Hill,”* Traditionally the summer camp site of

*Shantum, a Native. There are historical records about one Joshua Shantum of Harwich who is believed to be a descendant of Mashantumpaine, a sachem of NobsCUSsetT, when the English first settled at NobsCUSsetT, now Dennis Village.*

Photo 4



*This view shows the east side of the homestead. Airline Road is hidden in the valley on the far side of the house at the foot of the hills beyond. Again, the hills are devoid of trees and used as grazing grounds for animals, hence the noticeable stone walls ascending the hillside. The valley was anciently called “Bound Brook Valley and was formed geologically over the millennia by a stream cutting through the surrounding hills to drain Cedar Pond into Quivet Creek.*

*This is also the first of the images referenced by Steve Martin from the Digital Archive*

Photo 5



*This more distant view of the east side of the house shows a small building to the left, It is a “spring house,” built over a natural spring of ground water. Here the farmer would place his milk and butter to keep it cool. The swale of dark meadow in the foreground, running back toward the vegetable garden patch, is now under water, as part of a small fresh water pond. The pond was created in the late 1800s to establish a fresh water reservoir to serve cranberry bogs lying on the north side of Route 6A from South Street to Sea Street dike, I believe.*

*This is also the second of the images referenced by Steve Martin from the Digital Archive*

Photo 6



THE CELEBRATION  
 —OF THE—  
 TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
 OF THE  
 FOUNDING OF  
**OLD YARMOUTH,**  
 MASS.  
 THE PRESENT TOWNS OF YARMOUTH AND DENNIS  
 SEPTEMBER 1 AND 3,  
 1889.



Sears House, East Dennis. It was built in 1711 by Capt. John Sears, and has been in the Sears family ever since.

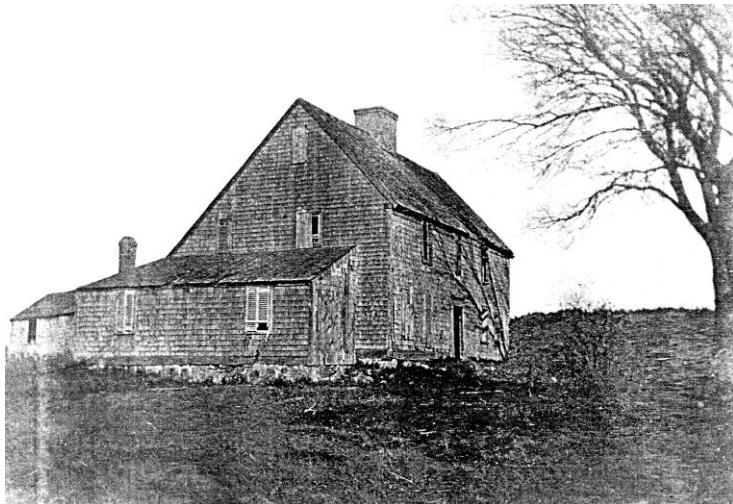
Henry's notation  
*This photo is  
 taken from the  
 above titled publication  
 HK. 2021*

Photo 7



*The old homestead from Airline Road looking N.E. to the front of the house. Could any scene be more quaint? Image 7 was given to me many years ago; the reverse side states, "taken in 1894"*

Photo 8

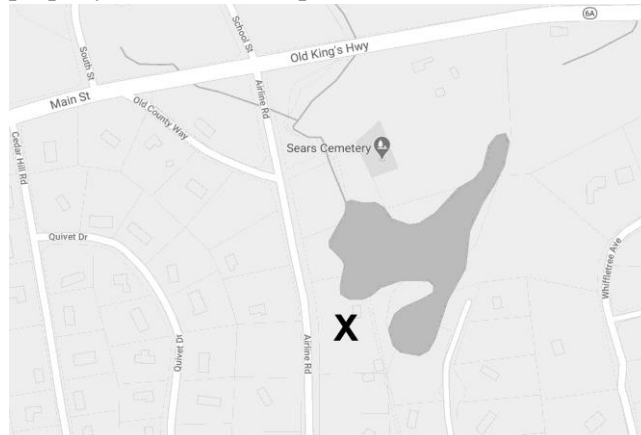


*Personally, I find this photo haunting. A picture of pathos – a mother-mansion, having sheltered many generations, here, at long last, standing weary and forlorn.*

## House of Isaiah Sears

dc.contributor.author	John W. Herrick
dc.coverage.spatial	Dennis, MA
dc.date.accessioned	2014-09-24T16:10:47Z
dc.date.available	2014-09-24T16:10:47Z
dc.identifier.uri	http://hdl.handle.net/10766/11491
dc.description	Isaiah Sears - Near east view of Old Isaiah Sears House, East Dennis. When the house was built, the sills projected into the rooms, and still do in some of them. Formerly on Airline Road. No longer exists [on site where Henry Kelley now (2004) lives]. JWH.
dc.format	PDFX
dc.language	en_us
dc.publisher	Dennis Historical Society Inc.
dc.relation	Photos from the Collection of the Jacob Sears Library, East Dennis, 3 June 2004. A large number of these photos were made by John W. Herrick, Photographer (JWH) and printed by T. P. Stiff, Home Bank Building, Brockton (TP)]. All comments in the Captain ainainainions in square brackets [ ] are by Burton N. Derick, South Dennis, who processed these images.
dc.source	ALBUM 08\Jacob Sears Library\Isaiah Sears.jpg
dc.subject	Isaiah Sears
dc.subject	House
dc.subject	Airline Road
dc.subject	Henry Kelley
dc.title	House of Isaiah Sears
dc.type	Photo

The left image is the *Metadata* for Photo 4 which appears in the Dennis Historical Society's Digital Archive. Be sure to read both the dc.description and also the dc.relation. The one below is the location of the property on a current map.



*Image courtesy of Google Maps*

## Photo 9



*Photo by Dave Talbott*

This photo was taken from part way up the slope to the east of the homestead on March 20, 2021. It is the slope which is earlier referred to as "*Shantum's Hill*." It shows a pond similar to the one which submerged the "swale of dark meadow" in the foreground of Photo 5. Fortunately, out of view beyond the top of the now heavily treed ridgeline, are the many homes on Quivet Drive. As Henry says in his annotation on Photo 7, "*could any scene be more quaint?*"

By now, it shouldn't surprise me anymore, but I remain in awe at the level of knowledge and the love of history exhibited by the membership! Coincidentally, my appreciation for the willingness of members to share what has been gleaned, many times over a lifetime, of studying the history of Dennis is beyond measure. The continuing response and participation of readers makes this job extremely rewarding! As I have said on a number of occasions in the past:

## *Our Memories Are Our History*

Please continue to share your knowledge and memories with all of us. Your contributions are welcomed.

**Thank you!**

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***Coming in July!***

***Howard Bonington  
does it again!***

Continuing the series,

***Imagining the Past***

which he began in March,

Howard takes us back to 1874.

Without giving away the surprise,

the tease is to say that there are no

known images of his latest

rendering!



***Renew Your Membership***

Come on folks, do it today!

If you have lost your paperwork, print out  
the form found on our website and mail it

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You can do it all online using **PayPal** at  
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to send the name and mailing address.

***Thank you!***