



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter October 2023

Volume 46, No.10

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The next Board Meeting will be our Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 28th, 11:30 am

The SeaView, 76 Chase Avenue, Dennis Port

Members and their guests are welcome, reservations are required

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

On the last day of August, I received what every editor loves – good copy! It was a type written letter from longtime member and lifelong Dennis resident Jean Sears Tripp. Included was the following hand written note – *After reading the latest newsletter, I thought this might interest the members. I believe that I am the longest living native of the Town of Dennis along with Bill Crowell.* As we continue our journey in the 21st Century, let us thank once again those who have willingly shared their recollections of the 20th*Our Memories Are Our History!*

Memories from Jean Sears Tripp

I have fond memories of growing up in Dennis....walking around town in the 1940s and 50s; growing up on New Boston Road. Time has brought many changes.

I remember walking down New Boston to the corner where my great grandfather Obed Shiverick lived. Obed was a son of one of the Shiverick Shipyard brothers who built the clipperships at Sesuit Harbor. At one time, we had five generations alive and living in Dennis.

Across the street from my grandfather's was the IGA convenience store run by Louis Terpos.

Ed. note - This picture was taken from the north side of Main Street (Route 6A) at what was the corner of Obed's property. The newest cars in the photo are a 1955 Chevy and a 1954 Ford.

Louie's wife Helen and family ran an ice cream shop in the market and also sold sub-sandwiches. Ice cream cones were 25 cents.

Walking down Main Street across from the village cemetery was the Stageway Restaurant which later burned to the ground. Ed. note 1975.

In the summer, you could buy fireworks, sparklers and caps for cap guns, on the opposite side of the road from where the Cape Cod Creamery is now. Ed. note – the sale of other fireworks was banned in MA in 1943! Farther east down Main Street, we stopped at the Post Office and general store run by Mr. Goodspeed (grandfather of Jay Crowell). Today it is a candy store.



Louie Terpos' Dennis Super Public Market, mid 1950s, DHS Digital Archive

Across the street was the old Whittemore House which took in guests. Earl Whittemore Jr. the Chief of the Dennis Police lived there, and his mother Ethel had a coffee shop which served breakfast to many of the Playhouse stars. I worked there a couple of summers as a waitress. To the right of the Whittemore House was Dan Walker's and Paul McDowell's gas station and garage.



The Whittemore House, DHS Digital Archive

I remember joining the Dennis Union Church choir when there was just the original building, Yes, those were the good old days! I have many fond memories.



The Dennis Garage, DHS Digital Archive

Thank you Jean from all of us!

CCC meets CC

Last month, I said it would be coming. Now it's time for the *Rest of the Story* – Cape Cod Captain meets Calvin Coolidge. More specifically, how a fisherman from West Dennis went to the White House to meet the President of the United States!

My introduction to this story began with the email which came into the Dennis Historical Society from which I quoted in the September Newsletter - *I found an article from one of your newsletters from 1988*. Going to our website, I clicked on the Newsletter tab at the top and scrolled down to 1988 to peruse the issues. I didn't have to look very far, as the issue I sought was February's. At the time, the newsletter was compiled and edited by Nancy Thacher Reid. It was Volume 11, No 2. The issue you are reading is Volume 46, No 10...wow, we've done well! Here is Nancy's article in its entirety. Ed. Note – the first sentence in Nancy's article refers to a quiz about U.S. Presidents which appeared in her newsletter. Here is question 3. – *A U.S. President actually made an official public appearance here in Dennis. Can you remember who, and when?* Ed. note - The answer was in the March 1988 Newsletter, U. S. Grant in August, 1874.

DENNIS GOES TO THE WHITE HOUSE

Despite the appearance of a U.S. President here alluded to above, Dennis cannot claim to be a Mecca for chief executives. But don't blame them. They would have come, if they had known what a nice town it is. Our town has not been totally unknown to the inhabitants of the presidential mansion, nevertheless. At least two of our citizens have made personal calls on the chief executive. Captain William Garfield was a cousin of President James Arthur Garfield. Shortly after Garfield's inauguration, Captain William found himself on a coasting voyage in the South and detoured via the Potomac to bring his complements to his cousin. It must have been an interesting meeting, as the crusty sea captain, accustomed to command, sat with the newly installed President, exchanging family gossip over a cup of tea. It would be only a few months before the Garfield family in West Dennis would wait anxiously as President Garfield hovered near death, the victim of an assassin's bullet. When he died on September 19, 1881, theirs was a special sense of loss. There was another Dennis caller to the White House whose visit brought greetings from Cape Cod to Washington. David B. Phillips also lived in West Dennis, but in 1925. He was of a generation now vanished, perhaps the last one of true Cape Cod "characters". Noted for their independence, honesty and hard work, these men were the product of tough economic times. Mr. Phillips was a friendly, outgoing, jack-of-all-trades, who could earn his living at whatever job came to his hand. But he was exasperating to the summer folks who hired him. For, typical of his breed, on the full moon sea clam tide, David would leave his job unfinished and hitch a ride to the north side, to fetch a pail full of clams for a pie. If scallop raking was good, you'd find him down at the cove with his waders, gathering a nice mess for a stew. And should the tide be low at mid-day, that lunch break would extend for as long as it took to dig a dreaner of soft shells. Ed. note – although it seems from the usage that “drearer” is another word for a pail or bucket, I was unable to find that word anywhere! Can any old Cape Codder help? You probably never met David Phillips, but you may have seen his picture. He was a good-looking, ruddy-faced, fisherman, with a full beard and twinkling Cape Cod blue eyes. A post card producer recognized him as what folks imagined was a typical Cape Codder. He convinced David to pose in his yellow slicker, and this picture became one of the Cape's best selling post

cards in the '20's. Well, anyway, David Phillips decided to visit Washington and call on President Coolidge in 1925. So he dug a dreaner of steamers, picked a bunch of poesies and took the train south. This is a meeting I wish I had witnessed - the taciturn president and the garrulous fisherman head to head in the oval office. David had something interesting to talk about for the rest of his days as he waited with the other men of West Dennis for the evening mail. (Postscript. David's daughter, the late Maude Gillette, who will be remembered by West Dennis residents as a character in her own right, had a picture of her father with President Coolidge. Has anyone any idea where that picture is today? Ed. Note – thanks to the Sturgis Library Newspaper Archives, here is the picture.



CLAMS FOR COOLIDGE – On the back is a letter written by Captain George C. Cahoon explaining the shot. It seems that Captain David B. Phillips of West Dennis, Captain George C. Cahoon of Chatham and Alden H. Kenyon of Boston made a trip to Washington, D.C., to bring some clams and oysters to President Coolidge. They had a very nice reception and were taken out to the White House lawn for this photo. The two captains are dressed in their oilskins and boots.

Barnstable Patriot, July 1, 2005

BY JIM COOGAN
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The 30th President of the United States lived much of his life a considerable distance from the seacoast.

It's a good assumption that growing up in the farming environment of Plymouth Notch, Vermont, Calvin Coolidge was a lot more familiar with cowflaps than he was clams. Later, as mayor of Northampton, MA, it is doubtful that he saw much fresh shellfish in the Pioneer Valley.

Two Cape Cod captains took it upon themselves to educate the president in this matter when they traveled to Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1926 to present Coolidge with a gift of

local bivalves.

Captain David B. Phillips of West Dennis and Captain George C. Cahoon of Chatham carried a couple of pails of cherrystones, sea clams, and oysters when they boarded the evening train in South Station.

They made quite an appearance dressed in traditional oilskins and heavy rubber boots. The next day, after checking in to the New Willard Hotel, the two captains were met by Congressman Charles Gifford from Cotuit.

Gifford, who represented the Cape and incidentally was president of the Cotuit Oyster Company, brought the captains over to the White House where they were given a short audience with the nation's 30th chief executive.

Taken outside, Phillips and Cahoon posed with the president for a souvenir snapshot. As the formally dressed president looked them over – they were still dressed in clam digging garb, he eyed Captain Phillips and then did something quite out of character for the man known as "silent Cal."

With a slight smile, Coolidge quietly nudged Phillips and advised him to take the pipe out of his mouth. "Better do it, Captain," said the president, obviously thinking about his bearded running mate, Charles Dawes. "If not, a good number of people who see this picture will mistake you for the Vice President!"

Barnstable Patriot, June 24, 2011

And finally, in this account from *Cape Cod Magazine, May 1926*, Captain George C. Cahoon recalls his visit with Captain David B. Phillips to the White House where they presented the president with pails of clams and oysters they brought from Cape Cod – "Captain David B. Phillips, of West Dennis, and I left Chatham on the afternoon of April 29, bound for Boston and Washington. Alden H. Kenyon, president of the Kenyon Company of Boston, made the trip with us. When we reached Boston we went to Mr. Kenyon's office and there dressed up in oil clothes and rubber boots. Then with our pails of clams and oysters we walked over to the Back Bay station. There we were surprised to find many newspapermen and photographers waiting for us. After disposing of them we boarded the Federal express for Washington.

Next morning at 7:30 our party, headed by Mr. Kenyon, arrived at the New Willard hotel. There we were met by the reporters of the Washington Post. Congressman Gifford of Cotuit took us from the New Willard at noon to the White House in our oilskins, rubber boots and sou'westers. Captain Phillips and I carried a pail of clams and one of oysters. On the steps of the White House, we were again met by photographers.

Ten minutes later, we were called into the White House and at 12:25 were introduced to the president by Mr. Gifford. I presented the clams to President Coolidge with a short speech. He then invited us out onto the front lawn to have our pictures taken with him. When we were all ready to have them taken, the president told Captain Phillips he had better take his pipe out of his mouth or people would take him for the vice-president.

After this we were escorted back to the hotel by Congressman Gifford, highly pleased at the cordial reception that we received from the president, who gave us nearly twenty minutes of his valuable time.

After dinner, the Congressman took us through the House of Representatives, the Senate and also the Supreme Court, each of which was in session. From there, Mr. Kenyon furnished a car with a guide who showed us the most important places in Washington. We left the city and crossed the Potomac to the Arlington cemetery, putting in nearly two hours looking at the monuments and statues of the noted men who were laid at rest there, and the stones which marked the graves of nearly six thousand unclaimed bodies from the World War.

The view from the grave of the Unknown Soldier across the Potomac to Washington was one of the most beautiful sights one would wish to look upon.

On the way back to the hotel, our guide took us through the multi-millionaire district. After supper, we left on the Federal express again and reached Boston Saturday morning at 8:30, arriving at the Ferguson in Hyannis in time for supper there."

From the time of Cleveland and Coolidge to JFK, these presidents impressed many Cape Codders, some of whose recollections are chronicled here. Coolidge is recalled for his amiable reception of Cape Codders at the White House. Cleveland and JFK are remembered as presidents, but also as neighbors who found in Cape Cod a peaceful retreat that brings so many people to Cape Cod today. **Thank you Cape Cod Magazine!**

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**The
*Return of the Apple
Pie Contest***

**scheduled for October 7th at the
Jericho Historical Center
has been canceled.**

It is the hope of the *Jericho Committee*
and the *Dennis Historical Society* that
this wonderful autumn event will
return in full vigor next year.
We'll kept you posted on the date, but
for the moment -

Yum's the word!

The Dennis Historical Society

***Annual Meeting & Luncheon
will be held at***

The Sea View

**76 Chase Avenue in Dennis Port
Saturday, October 28th at 11:30 am
Event is for members & their guests
only and pre-registration is required.
Details will be sent in early October.**

**HSOY author and lecturer
Duncan Oliver will speak about**

Tempest in a Teapot

**Reply promptly to the mailing and
Don't miss this event!**