



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

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**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 12th, 2:00 pm at the Dennis Memorial Library
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village**

Members Welcome

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

The West Schoolhouse Reopens!

Finally, after many long months of anticipation, on Saturday, July 29th, visitors to the *Josiah Dennis Manse Museum* were able to enter and see the newly renovated *West Schoolhouse*. Because of her years of involvement with all aspects of this project, I asked Diane Rochelle to provide us with some of her research material; much of it gleaned *hands on!*

Diane, many of you will remember, is the chair of the *Dennis Historical Commission*, board member and assistant treasurer of the *Dennis Historical Society* and member and treasurer of the *Josiah Dennis Manse Committee*. Her middle name should be *research*, a vocation at which Diane excels!

When one stands at the main entrance to the *West Schoolhouse*, it is quickly evident that it is divided into two eras.



Front door as viewed from Whig Street. Photo by Dave Talbott

The right side is Colonial Education (1620 - 1793) and the furniture, layout and décor is reflective of that time period. The following description was written by Diane and appears inside the door of the schoolhouse.

Education was very important in Plymouth Colony. The first lessons were taught by the minister in his home. Soon, families shared the expense of a teacher, who traveled to each neighborhood staying in student's homes. Eventually, a one room schoolhouse was built. School was held based on agricultural planting and harvesting, as well as weather. Most sessions lasted several weeks; teachers traveled from school to school. The age of a student ranged from about five to eleven years. Most were boys, but girls and

Christianized Native Americans were also educated. By about age 11, boys became apprentices, learning crafts and trades, or took to the sea. Girls remained at home helping with household chores and caring for siblings. Some students continued private education locally or were referred by their minister to college in Boston.

The teacher stood on a raised podium facing students who sat together on long benches, according to their ages. The youngest students sat on a very low bench or on the floor. Good manners, attention to the teacher and not speaking until called on were strictly enforced.

The left side is Early American Education (1793 - 1859) and like the Colonial Education side, the furniture, layout and décor is reflective of that time period. This description was also written by Diane.

After the American Revolution, the need for more effective education increased. The ability to manufacture and innovative development demanded this. There were now fourteen district schools in the town of Dennis, all still using one room. Families paid their share of education to the district, which organized and supplied the schools. Women became school teachers. Private academies were built. Curriculum expanded and became more refined. History now included American History. Science and the classics were also taught. Education continued beyond age 11. Wood pens with steel nibs quickly replaced quill pens. Books were readily available to students and their families. There was more time to attend school and more students went on to college. Supervising the school room used embarrassment rather than punishment. The high stool and dunce cap became popular. After 1859, Graded Schools with a separate room for each level of education replaced the one room schoolhouse. This was the beginning of our modern educational system.

Ed. note – Because of a lack of docents, there are days when the Manse is open, a chain is strung across the doorway of the schoolhouse. Although the interior of the schoolhouse can be seen, the lack of an interpretive guide lessens the

experience! The Josiah Dennis Manse Museum needs docents. Please contact the DHS Docent Coordinator Dee Collins through our website – Get Involved/Volunteer. The *Josiah Dennis Manse Committee* needs you!

The West Schoolhouse, a Brief History

Diane contributed this synopsis of the history of West Schoolhouse.

The West Schoolhouse, so named because it was on the west side of the East Precinct of Yarmouth, now Dennis was built ca. 1745. It stood along the Kings Highway (Route 6A) across from what is now Dennis Public Market. It was also called the “Howes School,” because most of the students were from that family or the “Nobscusset School,” the name for local area.

It was rebuilt ca. 1810, on the original foundation, by Nathan Stone, Jr., son of the second minister of the East Precinct, a housewright who apprenticed in Boston. He was also the Dennis town clerk and postmaster.

The construction is called timber frame. Trees were cut and dried. The posts and beams were fitted together with “mortise and tenon” joinery, like a jig saw puzzle. Parents of the students gathered together to build each of the four sides, raising them up to form the building. King post and dragon beam trusses held the building together. Girts and bents, joists, rafters and studs completed the frame. The low roof was “hip” or pyramid shaped. A door at the southeast corner led into a small lobby, entering into the school.

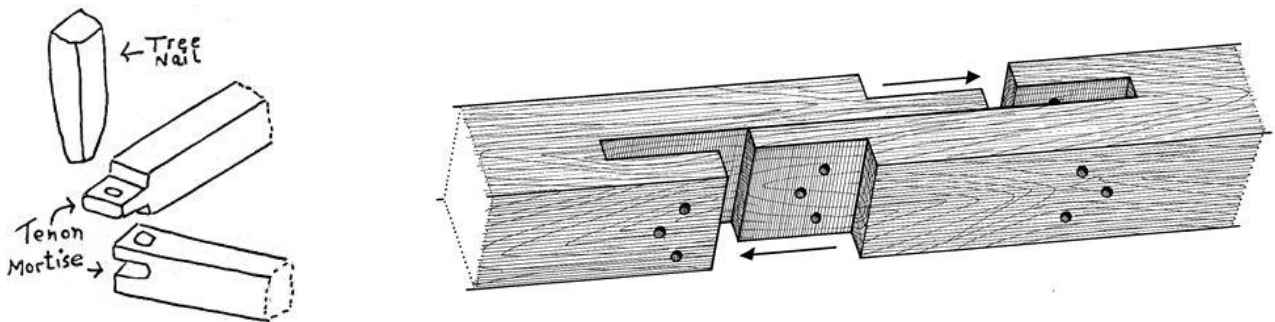
Architectural Historian Myron O. Stachiw surveyed the schoolhouse and made measured drawings of all of the original timber frame elements.

A dragon beam is a horizontal & vertical truss, commonly used at corners of a hip roof. It was also used to support the decks of ships. The four dragon beams in the corners above you were dated ca. 1808 by Historic Deerfield. It was also determined, by comparing rings and knot holes that some rafters were cut from the same tree. The trees were cut, dried, mill-sawn or pit-sawn and used to build the schoolhouse ca. 1810.

A king post truss is made of a thick central vertical beam connected to a horizontal beam. An older repurposed pine wood truss supported a fireplace with an enclosed chimney on the center of the east side. Looking at the center of the wall, you can barely see signs of brick mortar.

The king post truss to the west supported the other half of the building. In 1826, the chimney & fireplace were removed and a “modern” wood burning stove was placed under the west truss with a brick chimney that vented through the roof, along the king post. Looking up you can see the lime deposits of brick mortar and a wooden patch, placed there when the stove was taken out.

In the middle of the north and south sides, you can see “lap scarf joints,” used to make the structure longer when the length of one tree was not sufficient. They were also used in building ships. Many settlers were farmers or mariners. Building their own houses and working in the shipyards gave them a familiarity with basic carpentry. As with the rest of the schoolhouse, these joints are held together by pine wood tree nails inserted into a mortise and tenon.



Its use was discontinued in 1859, when graded school systems were instituted. The building fell into disrepair. In 1885, it was sold and stripped down to its timber frame and sheathing. The chimney, fireplace, interior walls & ceiling were removed. The frame was moved across Route 6A to become a barn. The original wainscoting was used to replace damaged sheathing.

It was converted into a Cape Cod antique shop ca. 1930, the facade you see today. In 1974 it was saved from demolition by the town of Dennis and moved here to the Manse grounds to become a museum of educational history.

In 2016 the Dennis Historical Commission and the Josiah Dennis Manse Committee began a major stabilization and repair of the building. Catalyst Architecture/Interiors provided architectural plans and construction oversight, along with the Town of Dennis Dept. of Public Works. MCI Contracting, Inc. completed the stabilization, new foundation, repairs and accessible ramp with parking. We could not have accomplished this without the generosity of the Community Preservation Act and the Dennis CPC committee. Thank you Diane!

As part of the preparation for the *West Schoolhouse* reopening, the following items, with the exception of the last, were rehung on the walls. Be sure to take note of the last when you visit – it is amazing!

School House Clock

American, oak, Seth Thomas eight-day wall clock
Gift of the Yankee Pedlar Chapter 811 of
Questers, Inc., October 1980

This gift was a result of the efforts of Mrs. John Baker and her committee, as they furnished the schoolhouse after it was moved here in 1974. The clock is a dial clock with a trunk extension that has a glass viewing window in a small door which allows for pendulum adjustments. It was used in post offices, saloons and public places as well as schools of the mid 1800's. Seth Thomas (1785 - 1859) was a Connecticut clock maker, his company producing clocks until the 1980s.

"Recess"

American, watercolor by Arthur W. McMurtry,
framed, 1975
Gift of Mr. Arthur McMurtry

Painted exclusively for the West Schoolhouse by Mr. Arthur McMurtry (1910 - 2007), a Dennis artist and teacher, it portrays a one-room school and its students enjoying recess. The one room school concept (1650 - 1783) had a single teacher, who taught basic education to several grade levels of boys and girls from ages 6 to 11.

1776 Map of the Original 13 Colonies

American, print reproduction, Office of the Library of Congress, 1881; Gift of Mr. Richard Roy

Thirteen colonies & important battles of the Revolutionary War are represented. Eastern territorial waters are noted as "80 Leagues Boundary on the Sea Coast of the United States." The "Boundary of Louisiana" extends almost the Canada of today.

Map of the United States of America

American, print reproduction, 1870; Gift of Mr. Richard Roy

The United States in the late 1800s is depicted. North and South Dakota are noted as "Dakotas" as they did not become states until 1889. "Indian Territory" became the state of Oklahoma in 1907. The "Dominion of Canada" was formed in 1867 & the rest of what we now call Canada is noted as "British possessions." "Alaska," purchased from the Russian Empire in 1867, did not become the 49th state until 1959.

Map of Norfolk County, Massachusetts

American, print reproduction, Historic Mapworks LLC., ca. 1876; Gift of Mr. Richard Roy

Norfolk County, meaning "Northern folk," was named for a county in England. Norfolk County was created in 1793 with legislation signed by Mass. Gov. John Hancock. Known as the "County of Presidents," it is the birthplace of John Adams, John Quincy Adams, John F. Kennedy & George H. W. Bush.

Writing Slates

American, Two-sided, tin & slate in wood frame, maker unknown, ca. 1800

Used for practicing writing & math, when paper was not available, ca. 1770, to the early 1900s. A finer variety of slate, was cut by hand and finished by sawing, grinding or polishing. Pencils were made by cutting & turning sticks of soft shale, chalk or soapstone, that was a lighter color.

The wood framed tin writing board is a gift of Mr. Anson H. Howes of Dennis.

The smallest slate is a gift of Grandville Chalke, son of Effin & Helen Chalke of Dennis. The donors of the other slates are unknown.

The fireplace insert is taken from photography by Myron Stachiv.

It was enhanced to match the replicated brick hearth by

Ms. Linda Rochelle,
Senior Creative Director,
ADG Creative,
Columbia, MD.

Fabrication was done by
New England Reprographics.

A Happy Camper!

On July 14th, an email came into our website with the following request - *I am trying to learn as much as possible about Maude Gillette (Phillips) and her father David B. Phillips of West Dennis. They are my great, great and great, great, great parents respectively. I found an article from one of your newsletters from 1988 that included a section about David (and Maude) because he was invited to the white house by Calvin Coolidge. Any information you have would be greatly appreciated! I am eager to find the address of Maude's house (she passed in 1983 in West Dennis) as my mom cannot remember the address even though she came here every summer.*

Knowing this was a bit of a long shot even for Diane Rochelle and her mystical powers for research, I sent her this email - *Hi Diane, Do you by any chance have the address of a property in West Dennis associated with either Maude Gillette (Phillips), or her father David B. Phillips? I know it's a long shot, but they are the great, great and great, great, great grandparents respectively of an inquirer.*

On July 20th, I was able to respond to the inquirer with this email!

Thanks to Diane Rochelle, Board Member of the Dennis Historical Society and Chair of the Dennis Historical Commission, and her researching skills, here is the information! Her email back to me with the attached pdf and pictures read as follows - Finally done, ended up to be a bit of a puzzle. See attached. I think he grew up on Uncle Freeman's Road and purchased on School Street. 51 School Street is still there, not sure about Uncle Barney's Road. Had some fun on this one!!

There is a very interesting story and some amazing local history associated with Captain D.B. Phillips which will appear in a future newsletter. For the moment, however, it is with great pleasure that I announce that the picture which accompanied Diane's research was recognized by the inquirer's mom as the place in which she summered growing up!



51 School Street, W. Dennis, MA Historical Commission

Here is the final email from the Happy Camper - Wow! Thank you SO MUCH! I am very impressed! I sent the house picture to my mom and she confirmed that is where she spent her summers. She was so happy to receive this information.

Thank you Diane for your impressive piece of research! I look forward to telling the Rest of the Story and the connection between Captain Phillips and the White House when Calvin Coolidge was our President!

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AUTUMN AT THE MANSE

Saturday, September 16, from 1-4 pm

Time travel to the 18th century for a very special one-day-only event at the iconic 1736 home of the minister for whom Dennis is named

JOSIAH DENNIS MANSE
61 Whig Street in Dennis Village
FREE ADMISSION (donations gladly accepted)

Join journalist/author Lee Roscoe for
WAMPANOAG ART FOR THE AGES



Saturday, September 23, at 2 pm
Dennis Memorial Library, 2nd Floor
A \$5 donation is recommended

Sponsored by the Dennis Historical Society and Dennis Memorial Library

*There's still time to renew your membership.
Don't let this be your last newsletter!*