



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 24 Number 5

June 2001

Calendar of Events

Saturday, June 2nd

Lady Slipper Walk on the Indian Lands

Narrated walk over the Indian lands Conservation Area to a premier stand of lady slipper orchids, led by horticulturist Shannon Goheen. Reservations requested - 508-398-0376
Meet at the Town Hall parking lot.

9:30 AM

**Wednesday, June 13th
Board Meeting**

All interested members are welcome to attend.

**Josiah Dennis Manse
7:00 PM**

**Saturday, June 16th
Early Dennis Transportation: Schooners, Packets &
Clipper Ships**

Learn how Dennis residents got around in the early days. Exhibit at 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum
1-4 PM

**Sunday, June 24th
Jericho Bicentennial Celebration and Opening Tea**

Commemorating 200 years of the 1801 house built for sea Captain Theophilus Baker. The Jericho Committee invites you to tea and a tour of the historic house and barn museum.

1-4 PM

Jericho's Big Day, June 24th 1-4 PM

Lura Crowell

It's not every day you can go to a bicentennial celebration. Join the Jericho Committee and Friends of Jericho on this wonderful day at the 1801 home of Captain Theophilus Baker, owner of one quarter of the schooner *Jane Brothers*. His descendants lived in the house until 1955 when Miss Emma died. Her sister, Mrs. Mary L. Kelley, sold it to Elizabeth Reynard, who described the house as follows in an article entitled "The Walls of Jericho" in the *Cape Cod Compass* in 1960.



The fireplace had been boarded up. Stoves were used to heat the rooms. Salt hay, stacked against the outer walls to keep out winter cold, ate away the hand-cut shingles. Plaster on ceilings and walls cracked and crumbled and some of it fell, but heavy timbers kept the little house staunch and straight, true to its lines. Thick hand-hewn rafters, oak-pegged against hurricane lift, held up a roof gently bowed to let the snow slide softly down. I had no business to buy Jericho. I have the responsibility of caring for two large houses, and I am crippled and old. It's just that something is dying, something which ought not to die.

Miss Reynard restored the house somewhat to its original condition. After her death, the house was donated to the town by her cousin, Virginia Gildersleeve who said it was Miss Reynard's wish that the house be maintained as a West Dennis historical landmark, perhaps a library. Ernestine Perry, who at that time was secretary of the Council of Dennis Libraries and personal friend of Dean Gildersleeve, opposed the suggestion that Jericho be made into a library. She pointed out that Miss Reynard and Miss Gildersleeve were known nationally and worldwide and that Jericho should be associated with their illustrious names and made into an Historical Center open to summer visitors.

Thanks to the voters of Dennis and the work of the appointed Jericho

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Jericho's Big Day!

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Committees, and with the support of the newly formed Dennis Historical Society, the old house, whose walls were once "tumbling down," became an exceptional restoration of a period home. The Barn Museum was officially opened in 1967 and houses a re-creation of a country store, machinery used in the salt and cranberry industries, farm gadgets, old prints and photographs.

There's something for everyone to enjoy. Children of all ages use their imaginations in the driftwood section of the barn. The Museum is fortunate to have acquired an antique tool box complete with tools from Bob and Jean Anderson, which is now part of the fine collection of old tools on display. Gentlemen, check these out! Those interested in architecture will note the front entrance, the bowed roof and the divided chimney. What did people wear? You'll find many outfits on display. Look for the hand operated vacuum cleaner and the "modern" washing machine. Interested in art? Look for the portraits and ship paintings. Hungry? The hard-working Jericho Committee, under the leadership of Ann Chalmers, is planning a special treat for us all. Don't miss this celebration! Happy Birthday, Jericho House! 200 years old!

The Life and Times of Capt. Marcus Lafayette Howes

We hope that many of you were able to attend the open house at the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum on May 17th. Perhaps you'd like to hear a bit more about the trials and tribulations of this Dennis ship's captain...

For over 200 years Japan had prohibited virtually all interchange with foreign countries (except for one Dutch trading post at Nagasaki) when in 1853 Commodore Perry sailed to Japan with a letter from the President of the United States. The sight of Perry's steam-propelled ships, their powerful guns, and all the specimens they carried of western wonders from sewing machines to miniature railways, had practically broken down the barriers of Japan's isolation without need for treaties or conventions. Practically, but not quite. It wasn't until the first consul-general, Townsend Harris, arrived from the states that a treaty was signed in July of 1858 declaring that on July 4, 1859 Yokohama would be open and commerce between the United States and Japan should be freely carried on there. It is interesting to note that this treaty was not signed by the Japanese sovereign in Kyoto, but by a local shogun. Westerners were still guarded and confined to a small area. It wasn't until 1863 that the Japanese factions were convinced of their country's powerlessness to defy the Westerners, even as they were aware of the weakening effects commerce would have on their feudal system. They worried about the changes to come caused by the desire of their countrymen to study foreign civilizations.

Suspicion of these Westerners was still obvious when Captain Marcus Lafayette Howes sailed to Japan in 1887 aboard the *Bark Freeman*. We mentioned last month that Captain Howes had to take on a Japanese crew for his return journey. Only the Japanese mate spoke English, so there was a problem in getting orders to the crewmen. The story of a quarrel between the mate and one of the sailors named Hidaku Kikimatsu is told in Nancy Thacher Reid's history of Dennis. The quarrel led to mutiny and in the end Captain Howes was forced to shoot Kikimatsu when he came at him with a knife. The sailor was critically wounded and later died. A full report was made by Captain Howes when he returned to Boston. According to maritime law, he had acted reasonably under threat so it came as something of a

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The Life and Times of Marcus Lafayette Howes

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shock to find the Japanese agent in Boston had brought charges against him. It was this same agent who became the prosecutor in court and who translated all testimony given by the Japanese crew. According to the agent, they testified to a man that the Captain had "acted rashly." Only the American steward spoke for the Captain. Under these circumstances, the jury found Captain Howes guilty of the death and he was fined and sent to serve three years in the Barnstable County House of Correction.

Remember all the Japanese suspicion of those Westerners? Now it was returned in full with prejudice against the Japanese. Newspapers published their outrage and questioned the testimony of the crew and the translation by a Japanese agent. How did it end?

Mariners and colleagues from all over Massachusetts who knew Marcus Lafayette as an honorable man appealed to U.S. Representative John Reed of Yarmouth, and in 1889 Captain Howes received a pardon from President Benjamin Harrison. He returned to his family and home in Dennis. He never went to sea again.

We don't want to leave you with just this story of our Captain Marcus, who was in the merchant service most of his life. On one trip to the Mediterranean with his family on board the schooner *John L. Kranz* we were told his younger daughter, Blanche, was kidnapped from the dock in Portugal "because she was so fair!" (Grandma Blanche herself told this tale with great relish and a twinkle in her eye.) She was rescued by the loyal crewmen, who returned her safely to her father and mother, Desire (Hall), and her sister, Grace.



Captain Marcus Lafayette Howes and his wife, Desire (Hall) Howes



Blanche Howes Crowell (left) and Grace Howes Howes (right)

Another family story Grandma liked to tell took place on a dock in Boston, where their mother had taken the two girls to see their father. As children will, the girls dashed all over the ship, not heeding their father's admonition to keep out of the barrels of sea biscuits. Munching away when their father next noticed them, he suggested it would have been better if they had obeyed him, as the sea biscuits were being returned because they were wormy!

Another reminder to jot down your family stories while they are still fresh in your memory. If you have any to share – we'd love to hear from you!! Please send your contributions to: Newsletter Committee, Dennis Historical Society, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660.

Dennis Historical Society

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THE WAY WE WERE...

Wearing her Grandmother Blanche (Howes) Crowell's wedding gown, Nancy (Crowell) Allen appeared in the Pageant of Brides in May of 1954. First she modeled Grandma Blanche's gown, and later, because she was the newest bride in Dennis, she appeared in her own wedding dress.

Captain Marcus Lafayette Howes (father of Blanche) was in Calcutta when another sea captain told him that a baby daughter had been born. He purchased a bolt of pineapple silk, which was set aside to make his daughter's wedding gown.

[After the pageant, Richard Aldrich (husband of Gertrude Lawrence) came up to Nancy and said any time she got tired of her new life, he could find her a job in Hollywood. That has to make a girl feel good!]



Nancy (Crowell) Allen
modeling Grandma Blanche's gown