Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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TREASURES FROM THE MANSE: REQUESTS FOR PRAYERS

A previous newsletter discussed that among the treasures discovered during clean-out of the Manse was a large collection of items from the Stone family, descendants of the Rev. Nathan Stone, the second minister of the East Precinct, and the one credited for naming the town after the Rev. Josiah Dennis.

In those papers were a number of scraps of paper written by people requesting prayers because of some circumstance in their lives. These were then handed to the minister, in this case Rev. Stone, who would have read them during meeting.

One scrap reads as follows: "John Nickerson and his wif Disiers to turn thanks in this Conngration to god for his goodness to them in making hur the Liven mother of A Liven Child" This is probably John[5] Nickerson (1744-1818) and his wife Mary "Molly" (Harding) Nickerson of what is now South Dennis, and was probably written soon after the birth of her last child, Susanna, born 30 Jan 1789. Childbirth was a dangerous affair for a woman, and they would have been very thankful for her survival as well as that of the child. Mary had joined the church in 1788, and seven surviving of her 10 children were baptized that year.

On the back of this same scrap of paper is written, in Rev. Stone's hand, the cryptic message "we lived together 24 years 6 months & 11 Days," together with a number of sums done in his hand. This message refers to the death of Rev. Stone's first wife, Mary Cushing, which occurred 28 Apr 1790. She had been born in Shrewsbury, the daughter of Rev. Job Cushing, and she and Rev. Stone had married 17 Oct 1765.

Another reads "Esther Welts remans very Weak and Low and Desires the continance of your prayers." The Welts family was in residence in the East Precinct for some years. This is Esther (Howes) Welts, daughter of Nathaniel Howes & Esther (Ryder), born about 1714. Her death is recorded in Nathan Stone's diary as occurring on 1 July 1788, aged 75 years. Following her death, about 1790, all of the Welts family took advantage of the government land grants in Maine, for service during the Revolution, and moved to the area of Farmington in Franklin County.

Another is "Isaiah Howes Being bound to Sea Desiars prayers in this Congation that god Would Keep him from all Evil and Danger and Return him home to his frinds in Safty." And another "Joseph howes with his wife Desire the prayers of this Congregation to god for two of their Sons that are gon to Sea that god would go forth with them & Keep and preserue them from those dangers to which they may be exposed to in the Corse of their voig and espauly from the euil of Sin and that god would returne them to theire frinds again in due time if it be his will." Or another "Joseph Sears & his wife Desire your prayers to god for them that the Death of hur father may be Santifid to them for their Spiritual Good."

Faith was strong, but not so strong that they expected every prayer to be answered. The following three items show that some fatalism crept into their thoughts:

"Mehetable Crosby desires the prayers of this Congregation for her Son
Continuing in a weak and low and languishing Condition that God would
be pleased to Restore him health again or prepare him for his holy will
and pleasure." [The poor lad died.]

"Sary Sears the Wife of Isaac Sears Desiers your prayers to god for her
being in a weak and Lo Condistion that he would Rais her to Stregnth and
Helth A gain or fit and Prepair her for her grat and Last Chaing"

"Smith Rogers with his wife Desire prayers of this Congregation for her who Lies
in a poor State of health that God will be Pleased to Raise hur a gain to a
State of health or fit hur for his will and holy Change"

Research on these is left to the reader, if interested. If stuck, write a letter and I'll help you out.

Burt Derick

Restoring Historical Artifacts

A few weeks back, Phyllis Horton, Dennis Historical Society Archivist asked me to attempt a repair on a decorative box that had – quite literally – fallen apart. This is the first part of a two- part article.



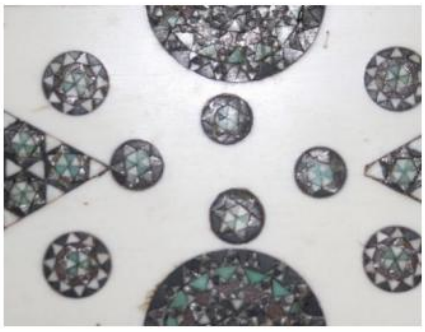
The completed box shown here dates from the 1800's. It is approximately 3 ½ inches wide by 2 ½ inches deep and 1 ¼ inches tall.

The initial challenge with the project was to figure out where the various pieces (about eight in all) were supposed to align. This required several trial-and-error fittings of the bottom against the lid. It could be observed that that the original box had been hand crafted to fit together only one way. The loose pieces had to be aligned against the neighboring joint and then against the lid that was only intact reference piece.

In the process of close examination and dry-fitting the pieces, it was evident that an earlier restoration effort had been made. Unfortunately, this attempt misaligned some of the original craftsmanship. This required *very* careful trimming and sanding so that the pieces would fit snugly as they were originally designed, while *not* causing harm to the overall appearance and integrity of the piece. Fortunately, it was only necessary to adjust the interior wood framing and not disturb any of the decorative inlay or ivory.



When doing this sort of work, it is important to work on a clean and clear surface. As shown in Fig 2 below, the box is covered by intricate inlay work of ivory and Mother of Pearl. The same glue that had deteriorated over time in the joints and caused them to fail was also used in fastening the inlay to the wood frame. Consequently, when the box was turned or set down, tiny Mother of Pearl beads would fall out onto the work surface and need to be re-fastened. This was difficult to accomplish because the smallest bead of glue on the tip of a toothpick was larger than the Mother of Pearl piece itself. They resembles grains of ground black pepper on the work surface. It is very helpful to have a magnifying headset for this type of extreme close-up work.



To get a sense of the scale and craftsmanship, this figure shows a closer view of the lid. Each of the four smaller 3/16 inch circles at the center is composed of about 18 separate cut beads. Each of the larger ¼ inch circles has twice that number. The mosaic pieces are precisely cut so as to fit together with no gaps and form beautifully intricate designs. How craftsmen over a hundred years ago were able to accomplish this precision without the use of modern tools is quite remarkable to ponder!

The most challenging task was to replace a couple missing ivory corner and inlay trim pieces. Ivory is not commercially available and would be quite expensive to acquire in any event. After checking with a couple local merchants, I was directed to the **Antiques Center of Yarmouth** at 325 Route 28 West Yarmouth. After showing the box with its missing ivory pieces, the proprietor kindly provided a piece of antique scrimshaw – at no charge. The Dennis Historical Society is grateful for this

contribution to saving our history. With some careful cutting, sanding, and fitting, the scrimshaw proved perfect for the need. In the second figure, the right vertical corner post, top and bottom have been replaced.

This proved to be a challenging, yet rewarding project. With careful handling, one hopes that it will last another hundred years as part of the DHS antiquities collection.

Roger Sullivan

Shady Window Fund

The West Dennis Graded School Museum has been greatly updated, and will continuously be improved; however, those old lovely *large* windows are letting in damaging amounts of light. And there are ten of them that need light-blocking window shades – at $100 each.

Yep – We are seeking folks willing to contribute to our "**Shady Window Fund**". You can be as shady as you want – completely shady (buy one shade), partly shady (fund part of a shade) or become a really shady person by funding two or more shades. PLEASE HELP!

Here's the catch - name your favorite shade character - political or otherwise – when you send your check in and we'll publish the "Shady Window Character Names" – and amounts (*not your names*) in an upcoming edition!

We'd really like your help to avoid the sun damage. Just send your checks (and shady character name) to the Shady Window Fund, DHS, POB 607, South Dennis, MA 02660. Pete Howes

1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum Update

Progress is on schedule. The building sits on its new foundation, and this next month will see completion of the extensive waterproofing, basement floor and stairs, return of the Maritime Room, foundation backfilling and the start of all the internal work. More details forthcoming next month. Pete Howes



Our Members in Afghanistan

Here is a photo of Thomas Edward Howes (on the left), and Major Andrew R. Howes taken at Kandahar (Afghanistan) Air Field, May 2010. I received this photo after publication last month but thought you folks might love to see our folks in theatre. These men belong to the Army Corps of Engineers - Afghanistan Engineer District South (USACE-AES).

Tom a DHS member is a civilian electrical engineer. Tom's 'cousin' on base with him is Maj. Andrew Howes, one of our Army's finest!

Pete Howes

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Note: All members are invited to attend monthly DHS Board Meetings. The next meeting is at 3 pm on July 14 at the Jericho Historical Center, Old Main Street, West Dennis.

PLEASE NOTE – THE NEWSLETTER CANNOT BE FORWARDED

If you move or are temporarily away, the post office will <u>*not*</u> forward your newsletter. Before leaving, notify us and we will change your address for four months or more. If your newsletter is returned we have to pay extra postage, and we will remove you from the mailing list until notified.

Emailed Copies – We will gladly change your newsletter delivery to email *instead of* snail mail while you are away. Just drop a note to us at **dennishs@cape.com** with "Newsletter" in the subject line. This is a wonderful way to keep your newsletter coming, especially if you're a 'snowbird'!

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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming DHS Programs

Sea Captain's Cemetery Walk

Friday, July 23, 2010, 10:00 a.m.
meet in the parking lot
South Dennis Congregational Church
210 Main St., South Dennis

Terri Fox will guide you through this historic cemetery



Dennis Historical Society
www.dennishistsoc.org 508-760-0433
Rain Date Sunday, July 25, 2:00 p.m.

Old Fashioned Pie Sale

Baked by the all volunteer Josiah Dennis Manse Committee and Friends



Monday
July 5, 2010

6:00 p.m.
When the Bell Rings!
(No Early Sales!!)
Dennis Village Green
Corner of Route 6A & Old Bass River Road

Whole Pies, Slices and Cookies For Young'uns

Band Concert follows at 7:00 p.m.

Music by the "Monlighters"

Concert Courtesy of The Village Improvement Society, The Arts Foundation of Cape Cod and Citizens Bank

Thank you Brendan Joyce ~~~ Another Quivet neck Walkabout with over 40 folks attending!!!