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Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

www.dennishistsoc.org

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How To Change A Flat Tire In 1948

In 1948 automobile tires were not what they are today. They had inner tubes and seemed to go flat regularly for almost no reason at all. A road trip without experiencing at least one flat tire was cause for celebration.

I had watched my father change enough flat tires to know how it was done. But, as a teenage girl who loved driving a car, the last thing that interested me was putting that particular knowledge to practical use, if I could possibly avoid it. As a young driver, I had my share of flat tires, but I always managed not to get my hands dirty with such a chore.

No, it wasn't that I found a pay telephone and called Triple A (American Automobile Association). I didn't even know if such an organization existed in 1948. Even if it did, my family didn't have membership.

When our car broke down – and it was almost inevitable that it would do so at least once on any road trip beyond 50 miles – my father went for help from the nearest gas station with repair service, while my mother and I waited . . . and waited . . . and waited on the side of the road.

I turned 16 in 1947 and a few months after my birthday I passed the Registry's road test and got my driver's license. My parents owned one car, a 1938 Pontiac coupe. It never crossed my mind that I might actually have my own car some day. My greatest thrill was when I got a chance to take that car on my own.

The particular driving experience that has stayed so firmly in my memory was in the spring of 1948 when my mother let me have the car for a trip to Falmouth. I was to drive myself and three other Yarmouth High School students to attend a special ceremony instituting a new chapter of the National Honor Society at Lawrence High School in Falmouth. Not only did I have the car for the trip, I actually got to drive myself to school that morning. It was heady stuff, believe me.

My memory fails me when I try to remember who two of my companions on that adventure were. The only one of the three I remember for sure is Nancy Thatcher, now Nancy Thacher Reid. She still mentions the trip we took that day.

So, by now, you have guessed we had a flat tire on the way. As I remember it – and I have always found memories to be somewhat unreliable, though close enough to be applicable – we were nearly to our destination, but still in the wilds of Route 28 outside of the center of town. Not a gas station – or anything else helpful – in sight.

"What do we do?" someone wailed, as we sat on the side of the road and considered our clean, scrubbed hands and pretty, dress-up clothes.

"I know what to do," I said confidently. "Follow me. Everybody out."

I opened the trunk of the car and gingerly extracted the spare tire and leaned it against the side of the car. I found the jack and the jack handle and set them beside the tire.

"Now watch for a car coming by and look helpless." I advised.

Was it two minutes, or was it five? Whatever it was, it worked. A car stopped and two young men got out and asked if they could help us. Of course, they could. As a matter of fact, nothing was going to stop them. Certainly not any of us.

We told them where we were going and why we were all dressed up like Sunday-go-to-meeting. We thanked them profusely for rescuing us and also saving the day for the students waiting for us at Lawrence High.

"How did you know someone would stop for us?" one of my friends asked.

"It always works," I said. "Like magic."

I admit I've used the same method a number of times over the years when traveling alone and finding myself with a broken-down automobile: Up goes the truck, out comes the tire and tools and I put on that helpless look. I believed devotedly the ancient rule of the sea that one never passes a vessel in obvious

distress without rendering aid.

Sadly that kind of thing is now mostly history. This modern age doesn't lend itself to that kind of courtesy or concern on the part of those who are passing by. It's probably better and safer that now we depend on our cell phones to call for help.

But, in 1948, four young high school girls in distress? Did I mention we weren't that bad looking either?

Peggy Eastman

DHS Library

The Pauline Wixon Derick Library (of Dennis Historical Society), now located on the second floor of the West Dennis Public Library, is gaining order and utility. We have all of our digitized collection available on a 1 TB (that's terabyte – a million megabytes) hard drive, but we are still awaiting a new printer. The super-sized scanner is set up and operational.

New items are added to the library daily. In recent weeks we have added some scrapbooks, a number of 1800s ledgers concerning shipping and ship chandlery, East Parish (Dennis) treasury records and tax records, and DHS Album 12. Soon to join the collections are more diaries, ledgers, and assessor's records.

A new book has been published by Burt Derick, this one called "Annals of South Dennis," which includes letters and diaries of South Dennis residents from the Edmond Rhodes Nickerson and DHS Collections. These include Samuel Nickerson, Obed Baxter, Seth Taylor Whelden, Augustus Hallett, Susan Freeman (Baker)(Whelden) Harding (daughter of Alpheus Baker), and Louise Alexander. The personal letters in the Whelden and Harding collections offer real insights into the times and lives of people in the village in the mid-1800s.

In coming weeks we will announce regular hours when there will be DHS personnel available during library open hours. The DHS people can offer assistance on locating research materials, retrieving digital images and documents, and opening the archived collections for serious researchers of history and genealogy.

Burt Derick

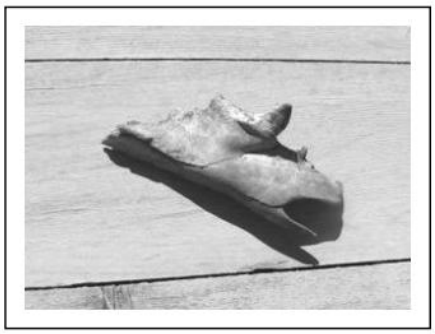
1736 Josiah Dennis Manse Museum Update



The construction team is approaching the finish of the discovery phase. This is that time when the old structure is carefully disassembled to learn the extent of the damage from over 274 years of age. Six of the eight supporting posts (one of the old, decayed posts is shown on the left) have to be completely replaced, and the girts – the horizontal members between the posts – are mostly unsalvageable as well. Not truly unexpected – but we had hoped that the structure was in better shape.

Should you drive by the Manse, you will see the full construction site, and sections of the Manse protected with large sheets of plastic. Replacement of the posts and girts is underway to prepare for lifting the building around mid-May to install the cellar.

I'm sure that all of our local readers are aware of the torrential rains of the past month, leading to what is claimed to have been the wettest April in some 30 years. As the result of this amazingly high water table, there are some design changes planned to keep the grand ol ladies feet dry when such a series of storms happen again. It really is a good thing that the repairs had not been completed a year before these rains came!





There have been two quite interesting "finds" in the dirt beneath one corner of the chimney. The first of these is a boar's skull, obviously a source of sustenance in those days. Also found was a small carved sailboat and cradle, a child's toy perhaps? Dick Howes (who took these pictures) has constructed a box for this exquisite find so that it may be displayed for all to see in the years ahead.

And a fragment of old wallpaper was found – backed by a piece of the Barnstable Journal dated Thursday evening, November 29, 1832. It will be on display when the Manse reopens.

Pete Howes

Tales From Our Past



R. Howes

On March 20 and 21, Dennis Historical Society and The Historical Society of Old Yarmouth joined together in Carlton hall to present twenty historical (and often hysterical) vignettes of Dennis and Yarmouth. With a crew numbering about thirty-two folks, the show played to packed house both days. Written by Terri Fox and Laurel Gabel and Duncan Oliver of Yarmouth, and narrated by Terri, our combined crew had as much fun presenting our 'views' of history as the audience did in hearing them. Perhaps there will be a sequel??

Pete Howes

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following folks into the Dennis Historical Society:

Nancy & James Curley
Natalie & John Mahar
Paul Lapense
James & Darlynn Roscoe
Annie Walker

Note: All members are invited to attend monthly DHS Board Meetings. The next meeting is at 3 pm on May12 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'!

Dennis Historical Society
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Maritime Days Open House

Phyllis Horton's

Dennis Mariners In The Civil War

Saturday, May 8
Sunday, May 9
Noon – 4p.m.
West Dennis Graded School
67 School St., West Dennis

- *Ship Models*
- *Salt Works Model*
- *Shipyard Diorama*
- *Paintings & More*



"Story of the Shiverick Shipyard"
1 p.m. Daily

Refreshments

www.dennishistsoc.org

Museum Opportunities

- Do you like to talk to people?
- Are you interested in Cape and local history?
- Willing to share a couple of hours a week in a good environment?
- Love to plan & be part of event preparation?
- Training provided.
- Our three museums and DHS library have places waiting. Interested??? Please call 508-385-9308 for further information.