



Dennis Historical Society

Newsletter

December 2024

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Dennis Historical Society – copyright 2024 Internet: www.dennishistoricalsociety.org - Email: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org
The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, December 12th, 2:00 pm at the Jacob Sears Memorial Library
23 Center Street, East Dennis
Members Welcome

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

A Tribute to Nancy Thacher Reid, 10th Generation Dennis Resident

Written by her daughter Katharine Peace

On the 15th day of September, my three brothers and I lost our dear mother, Nancy Thacher Reid, age 94 years. Most of you will be familiar with her name, as she served as President of the Dennis Historical Society as well as newsletter editor for many years. But her biggest accomplishment, in terms of her career as historian and genealogist, was the publication of her book; Dennis, Cape Cod, From Firstcomers to Newcomers 1639-1993, a comprehensive history of our beloved town. The Society sponsored the writing of the book and published it in 1996.

Nancy was a dedicated historian and genealogist, as her dozens of boxes of hand-written index cards can attest! But she was more than that; she was an R.N., a minister's wife, mother to six children (she lost two sons), daughter, sister, friend. At the end of her life she developed moderate dementia, but she never lost her ready smile and the twinkle in her blue eyes.



Of course, her task as a mother was the role that most affected me, and she incorporated her love of history in our young lives. I remember her telling us all about the Boston Tea Party, which falls in the month of December. For weeks before the date, we all saved our used tea bags at breakfast, and on the anniversary of the Tea Party, she led us in a march, singing Yankee Doodle as we went, from our home on Main Street in South Dennis to the Bass River bridge. where we reverently and ceremoniously tossed our collected tea bags into the briny water below. What a wonderful way to teach history!

She taught us about nature too. I still know the names of all the birds on Cape Cod, and I can identify all the trees and flowers. She walked with us on the beach as we collected shells, and she taught us the names of the creatures that lived in them.

Another fun lesson we remember well was what she termed "Survival Week" which we observed each year in July. The idea was to teach us how people lived before electricity and modern conveniences. We were not allowed to use lights, but learned to fill oil lamps and trim candles. Everything we ate had to be picked, caught or harvested by us! (allowances were made for a few staples, such as flour and sugar) We went crabbing in the river and clamming at Chapin beach. We went blueberry picking up on Scargo Hill (before there were any homes up there!), and we ate vegetables that Mom grew in her sumptuous garden. With no TV allowed, we played board games and sat on the couch with Mom as she read to us. This was a fun and creative mother!

Nancy was a 10th generation Dennis resident, descending from all three of the men who first settled the town of Yarmouth in 1639, a part of which would later break off to become the town of Dennis. Our family has lived in the same town for 385 years, and she made sure we understood and had pride in that remarkable fact.

I am so glad that the last several times I visited her at Rosewood Manor, I made sure to tell her what a wonderful mother she had been. She would smile and say "Oh, thank you, dear", though she could not have told you my name. Still, she knew we were family and that she was loved.

Nancy Thacher Reid lived a life full of love, given and received, and her passing at age 94 was quick and gentle, with all of her children there with her. You can't ask for better than that! She will be remembered by her family and friends

forever, and her wonderful book about the town where she grew up will be the essential volume about the town of Dennis for many years to come. Thank you, Mom, I will miss you and I will see you again one day.

Thank you Kate for the wonderfully personal and beautiful tribute to your Mom!

Ed. note – I would like to add a personal thank you to Nancy Thatcher Reid. When I first joined the Dennis Historical Society, I can say without hesitation that I didn't have a passion for the history of our town. I give Nancy most of the credit for changing that forever. What she accomplished at the end of her monumental journey is a testament to the many skills which all come together in her magnum opus...intelligence, perseverance and the wonderful ability to tell a story. The result of Nancy's efforts is a credit to a truly remarkable person!

Dennis Historical Society's 2024 Annual Meeting/Luncheon



Photo by Dee Collins

On Saturday, October 26th, the Dennis Historical Society held its 2024 Annual Meeting/Luncheon. Over seventy members and guests gathered at the *Encore Bistro* in Dennis Village.

With arrival scheduled to begin about 11:30, President Phil Catchings welcomed everyone just after 12, and called an abbreviated business meeting to order. Rather than having the customary reports read by the officers and committee chairs, Phil referred everyone to the booklets which were dutifully handed out by Bo Durst and Mary Kuhrtz who manned the check in table. Calling for the only piece of business essential to the Annual Meeting, Phil asked Dave Talbott of the Nominating Committee to read the 2025 slate of officers and directors for voting by the members present. Before proceeding, Dave referenced the changes in the DHS Bylaws passed at a Special Board Meeting earlier in the fall and asked the two new board members Chris Kelly and Dick Roy to raise their hands and be recognized. Among the changes in the bylaws is that the President is no longer limited to one 2 year term. If he or she feels that there is work in progress which needs to be seen through to completion, another 2 year term is allowed. Hence, Phil Catchings has agreed to continue as our President! For this, he deserved and received a big round of applause!

Dennis Historical Society Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee is recommending approval of the following
Candidates for Board of Directors:

2025-2026 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT.....Phil Catchings
VICE PRESIDENTS.....Betsy Harrison, Dave Talbott
TREASURER.....Diane Rochelle
ASSISTANT TREASURER.....Dave Talbott
CLERK/RECORDING SECRETARY...Bonnie Hempel
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.....Ruth Derick

ELECTED DIRECTORS

Bill Collins, Dee Collins, Ann Croston, *Bo Durst,*
Terri Fox, June Howes, Kevin Keegan, *Chris Kelly,*
Karen Ketchum, Mary Kuhrtz, John Schofield,
Dick Roy, Maureen Sullivan, Jan Ward
(Candidates for election or re-election are italicized)

APPOINTED DIRECTORS

HISTORICAL COMMISSION.....Bob Poskitt
JERICO HISTORICAL CENTER.....Dawn Dellner
JOSIAH DENNIS MANSE MUSEUM.....Dave Talbott
WDGS, MARITIME MUSEUM.....Pat Corcoran
CURATOR/ARCHIVIST.....Dawn Dellner
LIBRARIAN.....Ruth Derick

The slate was approved by a unanimous vote, and the business portion of the Annual Meeting was concluded. All terms will begin in January 2025. It was time to eat!

Everyone enjoyed a delicious three course luncheon expertly prepared and presented by *Encore's* staff...thank you! Additional thank yous are very much in order. The first is for the center pieces on the tables which were all chosen from the *Driftwood Zoo* displayed in the Captain Baker Barn at the Jericho Historical Center. The pieces have been lovingly cleaned and restored by board members Dee and Bill Collins. The next thank you goes to board members Dawn Dellner and Bob Poskitt who selected the five items used in the guessing game of the use of historical objects

which also came from Jericho. Each of the five winners who correctly guessed/knew what the items were received a copy of the *Dennis Journal* written and donated by our guest speaker Jack Sheedy...thank you Jack! A huge thank you goes to our President Phil Catchings for the tremendous job he did making sure that the myriad of details required for a successful event were attended to. The final thank you goes to all who attended, and through their ongoing support, make the DHS such a vibrant and successful organization!

During dessert, it was time for our guest speaker Jack Sheedy. Jack was introduced by Dave who took to the podium for a second time saying – “Many of you who attended our Annual Meeting/Luncheon in 2022 were entertained by our then guest speaker Jim Coogan. This afternoon, it is my privilege to introduce the other half of the dynamic duo of Cape Cod authors Jack Sheedy! Together, Jim and Jack have co-authored numerous books about Cape Cod including such titles as *Cape Cod Collected*, *Cape Cod Harvest*, *Cape Odd*, *Cape Cod Companion* and *Cape Cod Voyage*. Among Jack’s solo titles are *Autumn Cape Cod*, *Dennis Journal* and *An Insider’s Guide to Cape Cod, Nantucket & Martha’s Vineyard*,” He has also written hundreds of newspaper articles about Cape Cod history.



Photo by Dee Collins

A 3 time contributor to our monthly newsletter writing articles about ice skating on Scargo Lake, the Swan Lake Cemetery and the Bass River Canal, Jack entertained everyone with *Mysterious Cape Cod Stories* which ranged from sea monsters to ghosts to UFO sightings. After questions and answers, Jack received a well deserved round of applause. **Thank you Jack!**

When Phil asked for a motion to adjourn, it was obvious to everyone that a wonderful time was shared by all!

Let me tell you a Story

Fortunate indeed is the editor who is supplied with material by members who love history. Such a source is one of my best, the volunteers at the Pauline Wixon Derick Library. Much of the physical archive of the DHS resides at the library, and here Librarian Ruth Derick and Assistant Librarian Maureen Sullivan are constantly combing through the volumes of material which has been gifted, willed or loaned to the Society. The following article ***Let me tell you a Story*** is an example of what their hard work and dedication uncovers!

It begins with two yellowed pages of a letter penned at Ticonderoga in 1776. Gershom Gulliver was the author, sending a letter to his brother Lemuel, at the family home in Milton, Massachusetts, where Gullivers lived for many generations. The letter is from a donation of the Fairbanks family. Elizabeth Gulliver was the wife of Josiah Fairbanks. Gershom was twenty years old when the letter was written, and although he was already a war veteran, having served at the Battles of Lexington, Dorchester Heights and Crown Point, he was now at Ticonderoga. Still a boy, he was lamenting that there were no girls there.

While at Lexington, as chance would have it, he met a girl named Mary Hawkes. She was aiding in the war by bringing food and drink to the soldiers. Little did they know at the time what fate had in store. In November of 1775, Mary married Boston lawyer, Henry Putnam, who was a nephew of Maj. General Israel Putnam, a well known figure in the war.

In 1781, Gershom Gulliver married Phoebe Harvey, and in 1792, they had a son they named John, after Gershom's father, a carpenter. Henry and Mary Putnam had a daughter Sara, who married the Gulliver's son John. John and Sara also named a son John. This John, was the Rev. John Putnam Gulliver, a professor at Andover Theological



*Rev. John Putnam Gulliver
from the Fairbanks Family Papers*

Seminary. Later he was a founder of the Norwich Free Academy, in Norwich, Connecticut along with 36 initial donors.

Rev. Putnam was also named president of Knox College, at Galesburg, Illinois. Addresses delivered at his inauguration are available at the Library of Congress.

In the next generation, Rev. Putnam's daughter Julia was a member of the first class of Smith College and in 1888 earned her doctorate in philosophy from Smith. At this time there were only about 200 women who had achieved the same.

Would Gershom Gulliver have been surprised as he wrote his letter, at what the future held, or that 248 years later, someone would be reading his words of that day?

Ed. note – You may be quicker on the uptake than I was, but multiple readings of what the future held were needed before I realized that all related back to Gershom and Sally’s chance meeting in Lexington. Their lives moved forward separately with amazing results!

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COLONIAL CHRISTMAS
*at Josiah Dennis Manse
during the Dennis Village Stroll*



Join our costumed docents December 8 from noon to 3 pm for jolly good cheer and refreshments at this year's Josiah Dennis Manse Holiday Open House



**SPECIAL OPEN HOUSE
FOR DHS MEMBERS**

At Captain Baker House and Barn
Sunday, December 15, from 3-5 pm
Jericho Historical Center, 90 Old Main Street, West Dennis

Please bring a small plate of shareable hor d'oeuvres; beverages will be provided. See Jericho decorated for the holidays, and enjoy a special time with friends!



2024 DHS Annual Appeal

Soon, members will receive their Society's 2024 Annual Appeal letter asking for support for wish list items for each of our three museums and the Pauline Wixon Derick Library.

Please give generously! Your contribution will greatly assist our dedicated volunteers in fulfilling our Mission Statement.

To Preserve, Protect & Promote the History of Dennis, Massachusetts

(For some, it may still be tax deductible)



Wishing everyone a Joyous Holiday Season!

