



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter April 2023

Volume 46, No.04

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**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 11th, 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

Dennis Port Potpourri

Jeopardy's Ken Jennings might have some fun stumping contestants with this category! Here are some bits and pieces which will add to our knowledge of Dennis history. We start with an article which appeared in the *Cape Cod Times* in 2016, but never made it into our newsletter. It was written by our own Phyllis Horton and was published with the title -

“History solves mystery of Dennis village name”

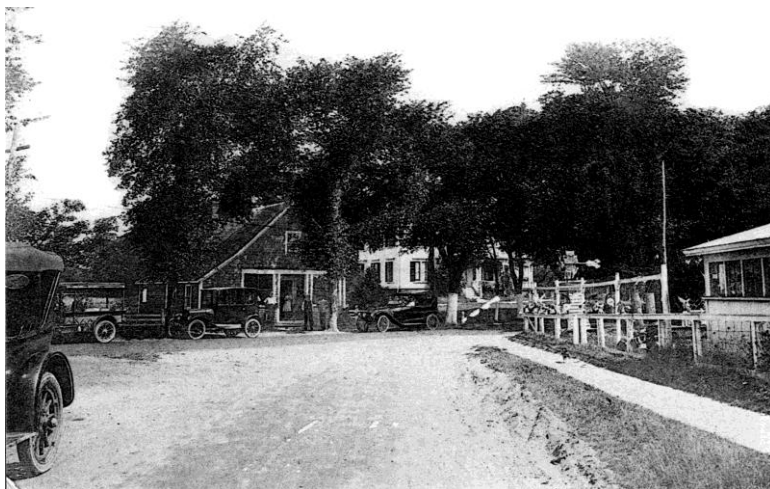


David Wixon's Store, located at the north end of South St. also operated as Post Office

In response to his Sept. 16 letter, George Eastman lives in Dennis Port (“Cape man needs help knowing where he lives”). When the first English Colonists settled in the southeast corner of Dennis (then Yarmouth), the area was called Crook’s Neck after its owner, Jacob Crook. That later morphed into Crocker’s Neck. People who lived there received their mail at the West Harwich Post Office.

Fast-forward to the mid-1800s, when three 600-foot wharves reached out into Nantucket Sound from Depot, Union Wharf and Sea streets. Many vessels called it their home port.

Retired Capt. Thomas Howes of Main Street had a general store attached to his home. In a smart move to increase his business, he volunteered to bring other people’s mail from West Harwich to be picked up at his store. Howes was subsequently appointed postmaster and renamed the village Dennis Port. The Dennis Historical Society has letters, postcards and documents with the two-word name. Sometime in the 1920s or ’30s the postal service changed most two-word towns into one word. In recent years many towns have reverted to two words and are recognized as such by USPS. I understand the Dennisport sign on the post office will be changed when the building is repainted; presumably other businesses will follow suit in time. Ed. Note - 3/3/23 - NOPE, NOT YET!



Post Office Square Dennis Port, circa 1916 on a 1922 postcard

Phyllis Horton, Dennis Port

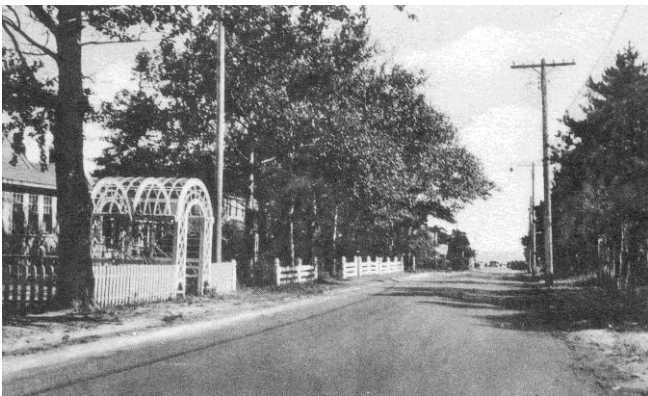
It's actually a wonder how either Dennisport or Dennis Port ever came to be the names on a United States Post Office! Here is an excerpt from the United States Postal Regulations at the end of the 19th century, notice "Port" on line four. It is also a wonder that mail was ever successfully delivered!

Instructions Relative to Names of Post Offices
Post Office Department, Washington, D.C., April 9, 1894:
Ordered, No. 114.

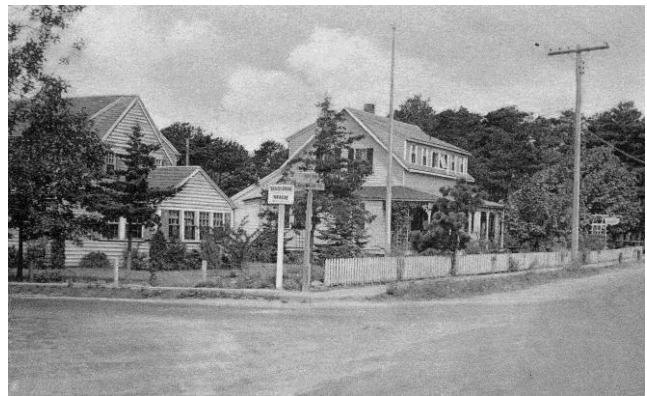
The prefix of "East," "Old," "New," "North," "South," or "West," to the name of a post office is objectionable; as also is the addition of "Burg," "Center," "City," "Corners," "Creek," "Cross Roads," "Depot," "Hill," "Hotel," "Hollow," "Junction," "Mill," "Mound," "Peak," "Plains," "Point," "Port," "Prairie," "Rock," "River," "Run," "Ridge," "Store," "Station," "Springs," "Town," "Vale," "Valley," or "Village," and all other prefixes or additions, as such prefixes or additions are liable to lead to confusion and delay in the transmission of the mails.
R. A. Maxwell,
Fourth Assistant Postmaster-General

A Southside Survivor

Of all the villages in Dennis, probably none has altered more in the past 100 years than Dennis Port. So it was both refreshing and a bit amazing to see that a resort property could not just survive, but still be recognizable a century later. A little background – It started with an email last August from one of our members who wrote - *Our family has a home in Dennis Port off of Old Wharf Road. I've heard many stories of the homes that dotted the shore from the Belmont west that are now mostly motels and condos. I'm curious if the historical society has information/images of some of those homes?* In response, I sent him some photos from the Digital Archive.



Depot Street, Dennis Port, looking toward Nantucket Sound



Corner of Depot Street & Old Wharf Road



The "Edgewood" on Old Wharf Road



Old Wharf Road, looking west. The "Edgewood" is first on the right

His response had a nice bit of current information and the history of the development of the waterfront in Dennis Port. *Fascinating - I believe that "Edgewood" is the current Old Wharf Inn - of which the owner in his late 90s is still alive and well! See current street view photo below. I'm not sure how many estates were right out by the water (other side of old wharf right at the beach) but the story was that all it took was one developer asking one family many years ago, if*

they wanted to sell - and the first motels were then built - with other families following suit for what was then a small fortune.



Old Wharf Inn in the offseason today. Photo from owner's website



Location in Dennis Port. Courtesy of Google Maps

Although the waterfront in Dennis Port has changed dramatically over the years, there have, amazingly, been some properties which have survived! With a nod to our son Geoff who says *you can never have too many pictures* and apologies to Barbra Streisand for the heading, this segment concludes with four Digital Archive images, the first two of the beaches of Dennis Port which were taken during the early days of the twentieth century.

The Way We Were



The Beach in Dennis Port



The Road to the Beach



Grindell's Beach in Dennis Port



Main Street, Dennis Port looking west

Ed. Note - If you haven't visited the newly updated Digital Archive, please be sure to do so. On the top task bar of the DHS Website, click on Archive, then Access the Digital Archive >> You won't be disappointed!

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It's Membership Renewal Time!

Don't just renew your membership; give a membership to a family member, or friend.

What a great gift!

Not only will that membership be appreciated, it will help us grow!

Please include a note with the name and mailing address of the gift recipient along with your payment.

You can do so online using **PayPal** at <http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/GetInvolved/Membership>

After making your payment, email us at info@dennishistoricalsociety.org to send the name and mailing address of the lucky recipient.

Thank you!

***Greasepaint, Gunpowder
&***

Gertrude Lawrence

***Joseph Yukna Director and
Co-founder of the
Cape Cod Military Museum
will speak about how the three
came together during
World War II***

***April 29th, 2:00 pm
Dennis Memorial Library
1020 Old Bass River Road
Dennis Village***

***Co-sponsored by DHS & DML
\$5.00 donation is encouraged***