

MUSEUM

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NEWS

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Dedicated To The Preservation Of Dennis Township History

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
TO ALL OUR MEMBERS

It's that most wonderful time of the year again, a time to reflect on all that we have, and the wonderful family and friends who surround us. It's also a great time for the Friends to take a step back and really get a good look at the progress we've made in the previous year. Everyone in our group can be extremely proud of the way the Museum is coming together, and the wonderful way we all work together. I believe the camaraderie our group enjoys is the true reason for our success. I would like to thank each and every one of you for making my job fun, and for producing such a great museum in the process. The Friends are a true credit to Dennis Township. To all of you I wish the greatest Joy this holiday season.

Donna Rocap
President



Postcard from 1915

Christmas Party

Wednesday, Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m.

Our December meeting will be held in the Dennis Township Senior Center, located at the Municipal Complex on Petersburg Rd. in Dennisville. A short business meeting will be followed by Dinner and Desserts. Please call Carol Shoemaker at 861-5592 if you wish to bring a dish

Important December dates in Dennis Township history

Dec. 15, 1889 - Ice cutting in Dennisville has already begun and many an ice storage shed was already filled with the crystal clear ice from the cedar wooded areas of the village.

Dec. 23, 1921 - Charles Meerwald resigned his position as principal of the South Dennis Public School to accept a position in Collingswood. He had served as principal for ten years and was given a farewell party by the people of the community.

Dec. 16, 1944 - The Knights of Pythius Lodge Hall in Dennisville was the scene of a Red Cross bandage and dressings meeting. Many women from Dennisville and South Dennis participated in the event.

Dec. 3, 1976 - Dennis Township Ruritan Club chartered as the first Ruritan Club in Cape May County, naming Edward Tozer first president of the club. Ruritan Clubs were located in 36 states at the time and Dennis Township became the eighth club chartered in New Jersey.

Dec. 31, 1987 - Walter "Jake" Robinson retired as tax assessor and Edward J. Meerwald retired as Township Clerk. The pair had much common ground. They went through local schools together, graduating from the Dennisville school in 1925 and Middle Township High School, Class of 1929. Both were Democrats, and were the last people elected to their respected offices.

Robinson and Meerwald were members of the Dennis Volunteer Fire Company and the Dennis Township Ruritans. Both passed away in 1988.

Dec. 9, 1990 - A new addition to the Dennis Township Elementary School is dedicated with a new multi media center named in memory of Elaine R. Champion, a dedicated teacher at the school and the gym wing is named in honor of Harry Brown for his long-time tenure as Supervising Principal of the school during its growing years.

- Information provided by "Cape May County Datelines" by William Robinson

Shingle Mining - A Lost Industry

At this time of year when we bring lush pine trees into our homes, let us consider the lost industry of cedar mining, one of the most important businesses in the history of Dennis Township.

The sunken pond at Dennisville was once a magnificent grove of white cedars. Underneath the stumpy bed lie thousands of logs in perfect condition. Mining these logs for their valuable lumber was an important industry in the late 1700s and early 1800s, as they were sawed and split into shingles. The roof of Independence Hall in Philadelphia was made in part with singles supplied by Dennisville logs, and some of the finer wood was made into violins.

The Great Swamp headwaters of Dennis Creek is perhaps the largest sunken forest in America. Stretching through both Dennis and Upper townships, with outlets into the Delaware Bay and Tuckahoe River, it extends for 17 miles. The soil in which these trees grow is black, peat-like earth of alluvial origin, which when dry burns. It varies in depth and can be found as deep as 13 feet. It is very loose and porous and always full of water.

Miners found the sunken logs with a progue, a slender pointed iron rod six to eight feet long. They would shove this into the ground until it hit a submerged log. A small piece of log would be cut with a saw, and in the water it would turn over, pop up and float. If the cut off was desirable then the tree was cut free of its limbs and roots and would be brought to the surface.

Shingle mining was a profitable business. According to a report made in 1855, in the five years prior 600,000 shingles were taken out each year. They were worth \$13 to \$16 a thousand.

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