



### THE TRUE CAPE COD NATIVES

A capacity audience at Carleton Hall heard Mr. George Stillson speak about the recent archaeological work done on the newly acquired Nickerson Lands near Bass River. We were all impressed with the enthusiasm of Mr. Stillson and the respect which he showed for this ancient site. D.H.S.'s newest slide production was also shown. It is a sound and slide production of the poem "The Indian Lands", written by Walter S. Morley. Intended as an aide in acquainting the schoolchildren with the pre-history civilization of the local Indians, it is illustrated with lovely scenes from the Indian Lands Conservation area, supplemented with other pictures of Indian culture, including some specifically drawn for us by David Witkoski. The background sound, done by Ben Thacher, includes as many sounds as possible which could be gathered on the Indian Lands, such as birds and insects. Ben also simulated the sound of Indian women preparing the soil for planting by actually scraping with a sea clam shell, as the squaws did. It is a beautiful production, suitable for audiences of all ages. The narration is by Almira Morley, and the poem is dedicated to the late Esther Howes. We were pleased to have both Almira and Walter Morley present for the premiere, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Richard Howes, son and daughter-in-law of Esther Howes.

### HERITAGE WEEKEND

Be sure to check the dates on the Calendar this month and make plans to be present at our Town's celebration of the County's 300th, and the Town's 192nd, anniversary. These events will be detailed in the next edition and a reservation blank will be enclosed for the luncheon. Please note - anyone who would like to help with floats, please call Nancy Reid, evenings, 398-8842.

### SIMPKINS NECK

Very much in the local news this past month has been an area of land known as Simpkins Neck. I'm surprised that many of the townspeople don't know where it is located. It is an area of upland situated south of New Boston Road and west of Hall Street in the village of Dennis. Its name, sometimes corrupted to "Sinky Neck", comes from Nicolas Simpkins who, with William Chase, received extensive grants of upland and meadow in this area surrounding Chase Garden River, in 1639. Nicolas was not long in this Town, for in 1646 he sold his lands to Thomas Boardman and removed to Scituate and later to Boston, leaving only his name on the neck, still so called.

The area around Simpkins Neck is salt and fresh marsh, which extends all along the Chase Garden River and Bass Hole, to the dunes at Chapin Beach. It was these "Meadows" which attracted settlers to Nobscusset in the first place. Remember, the early settlers here were farmers, and the hay on the salt and fresh marshes offered free-for-the-taking fodder for their livestock. But they soon learned that these marshy meadows were closely interlocked with the whole fragile coastline, and anything which damaged the marshes would result in changes to the creeks, dunes and beaches, and also to the adjoining uplands. So, in 1749 the men of Nobscusset, led by their Harvard-educated minister, Josiah Dennis, delivered a petition to the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony which resulted in an act "to prevent damage to the Nobscusset meadows". The meadows are defined as being south and west of a place called "Black Earth", and in a later description (1755), more closely described as "south of an East to West line from Fox Hill to the Seashore and so to the extent of the meadows and beaches aforesaid". The act provided for a fine to be imposed upon anyone who allowed his livestock to graze on these meadows from early spring to late fall, and was oft times renewed and reviewed, into the 1800's. It is difficult in this century to define these ancient borders with certainty, for their description in old deeds and divisions are usually in such terms as "as the fence now stands", "by the walnut tree", or "from the tree which is marked on the east side" - trees and fences which have long since disappeared. But we can define the general area, and it is interesting to note, at a time when a group called the Dennis Meadows Conservation Trust is attempting to preserve Simpkins Neck, that the earliest conservation act in this town was to preserve the very same meadows they seek to protect. As for Fox Hill, it is long gone, but I am told that the foxes which gave it its name still survive on Simpkins Neck. Perhaps in years to come the little foxes will also be gone.

### RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- Account books, Colimbia Lodge (Dennis) of the Good Templars.
- Child's slate, hand-made with rounded corners. - Ruth Colby
- Collections of documents regarding the building of the village schools between 1859 and 1865. - David & Nancy Sears
- Collection of early Post Office documents. - Donn DeVita

We are grateful to the donors of these and all other gifts which help us to learn our town's history.

### HOUSE DATING CLASS

May is Historic Preservation Month, and we will present a class on how to date a house on May 30 at 7:30 P.M. at Jericho House, taught by Pauline Derick. All welcome. Bring pencil and paper.

## CALENDAR

### MAY IS HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

May 9 7:30 P.M. Nancy's house. Board Meeting.  
May 30 7:30 P.M. Jericho House. Class on House Dating.  
Coming in June-----Ezra Baker School field trips. HELP!!

Also circle:

June 1st Barnstable County Tercentenary Parade.  
June 22-23 Heritage Weekend in Dennis:  
Saturday, 22, Open House at Jericho and the Manse, with craft displays  
and activities.  
Sunday, 23 Luncheon, Lighthouse Inn, 12 noon, honoring the 192nd Birthday  
of the Town and the 300th Birthday of the County.

### MEDICINE ON SHIPBOARD

Perusing the Town records as I often do, I am always amazed at the number of men in the census reports of 1830-1890 whose occupation is listed as 'mariner'. It seems to me that 75% of the men are listed thus, and I must therefore conclude that, at least from March to November, the Town must have been very much a female society. (Substantiating that conclusion is the fact that the seating capacity of the women's side of the Quaker Meeting House is much greater than that of the male side, not because the women were more pious, but because the men were often away from home.) Nowadays when one goes to sea, a first-class clinic is found aboard ship, where the latest in medical attention can be obtained. But for our mariners of the nineteenth century, there was no such skilled care available. The captain and the mate were supplied by the vessel's owners with a medicine chest, containing remedies popular at the time, and a list of what to give for what symptoms. Since the officers hadn't any training whatsoever, the potions were numbered - #1 for heartburn, #3 for headache, etc. At that, the seaman was in no worse a position than the landlubber, who often had to travel many miles, and may have received only the same level of care. But the stories of medical disasters at sea are many. Among them is the story of the young sailor who complained to the mate of stomach cramps. After receiving the remedy prepared for him by the mate, the man's condition worsened, and the Captain was apprised of the situation. "What did you give him?", the Captain asked the junior officer. "Well," replied the mate, "the chart said to give #15 for stomach cramps, but we were all out of that, so I mixed #8 and #7."

When the Captain's wife and family were aboard, the health problems were often more complicated. If you would like to read an interesting account of one mother's experience with ill children aboard a sailing vessel in 1881, read the letters of Esther Crowell included in the final chapter of Marion Crowell Ryder's book, Cape Cod Remembrances. Esther was the wife of Capt. Luther Burnell Crowell. When ashore, they lived at what is now 520 Main Street, West Dennis. It is an ornate house, near the intersection of Route 28 and Old Main Street, with numerous peaks, turrets and stained glass windows, a building recently converted to condominiums. Esther and Capt. Luther had four children, all born in West Dennis, and all of whom, at one time or another, spent time at sea with their parents. Mrs. Crowell went on seventeen voyages with her husband and her adventures were related by letters to her friend, Annie Doane, and are retold by Mrs. Ryder in this delightful chapter. The book is no doubt available at your library, or it can be purchased in hard cover (\$10) or paperback (\$5) from any officer or Board member of D.H.S.

### LADY SLIPPER WALK

This is becoming an annual event. If you have not joined us on one of these walks, this is your chance. Those who have seen our slide show on the Indian Lands have a suggestion of how spectacular the sight is. Walk with us on June 8, leaving the Town Hall parking lot at 10 A.M., and see for yourself. You will also be offered the opportunity to walk out on the newly acquired Nickerson land and hear about the Indian archaeology.

Dennis Historical Society  
P.O. Box 607  
South Dennis, MA 02660

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