



#### FLORA AND FAUNA OF A CHANGING WORLD

We certainly want to thank Mr. Joseph Nickerson who spoke to a large and attentive audience at Eagle Pond last month about the beauties of Monomoy Island. His pictures are lovely and he gave us all some insight into the past and possible future of this most fragile of fragile outposts. Many of us have never visited this remote part of Cape Cod, and we appreciate seeing it through Mr. Nickerson's perceptive eyes. Come again, Cousin Joe!

#### D.H.S. IS HAVING A TEA PARTY

You are cordially invited to attend a tea party at Carleton Hall on Thursday, April 16, at 7:30 P.M. Actually, it's a party talking about tea. And that party is Mr. William Congalton, who is a professional tea taster. Mr. Congalton has been in the tea business for forty years. He will tell us some of the history of that popular beverage and explain the process by which it is produced. Join us for this interesting program and also enjoy a cup of tea with an expert.

#### WANT ADS

D.H.S. has several needs which we hope some of our members can fill. First: We are planning two exhibits this summer. One at the Manse will be all about the Howes family. That at Jericho will honor the late Marion Crowell Ryder, based upon her book entitled Cape Cod Remembrances. If you can contribute any items, pictures, or information to either, we would be grateful. Especially needed are memorabilia of the West Dennis Band, Doric Hall, and Riverside Trotting Park, including the baseball team.

Second: We need squash, pumpkin, and watermelon seeds for an Indian craft project on the Ezra H. Baker field trip in June. If you use any of these, will you wash the seeds, seal them with a wet paper towel in a plastic bag, and get them to a Board member or bring them to a meeting?

And lastly: Mr. J. Wenzel is a marine scientist doing a study on whale strandings on the Cape. He is particularly interested in a whale which came ashore on West Dennis Beach in December of 1936. He has asked us to place a "want ad" for him, for any pictures or descriptions of any whale strandings, modern or historical, that our readers may have. Please contact him by mail -

Mr. J. Wenzel  
51 Allerton St.  
Plymouth, MA 02360

(Just wait until he finds out what we charge for Want Ads!)

#### A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

The family of the late Robert Eldred, Sr. has requested that contributions in his memory be made to Dennis Historical Society. We are honored to have a part in establishing an appropriate memorial to this fine gentleman. It is the family's wish that these contributions be used to acquire something which pertains to this town's maritime history. There is at present an ad hoc committee exploring the possibility of establishing a maritime museum in this town, and we hope to be able to make an important addition to our maritime collection in Mr. Eldred's memory.

#### DENNIS AND THE TEA TRADE

There is no more glamorous chapter in the maritime history of this country than that which tells of the tea trade with China. The chapter tells of shipbuilders, merchants, and master mariners who dared to press sail across the vast Pacific Ocean and deal with the strange world of the Orient. Diplomacy, tact, good business sense, combined with a fast ship and daring navigation, were all ingredients necessary for success in this highly competitive field. The port of Salem, the names of Derby, Forbes, and Crownshield come to mind when we think of this era. But in the 1830's and 40's there were other men who made this trade economically important to the U.S. One such man was Captain John Land. He was a shipmaster who had all of these skills, and more. He was courtly, charming, a man who made a scientific study of wind and currents, and used them to accomplish fast passages. You may be surprised to learn that he lived for some of his most productive years in a Cape Cod cottage in West Dennis. Why he came here I do not know. In 1836, he married Betsy, daughter of Captain Alexander Robbins of West Dennis, and settled in our town. Here, between voyages on the ship Splendid, he bought shares in local vessels and helped local men invest in foreign voyages. The Splendid was sometimes employed packeting from New York to Harve, but also made some voyages to China. These trips seemed to be a chance for John Land to study conditions in the Pacific and to develop some theories as to the fastest route to the Orient. The married life of Betsy and John Land paralleled that of so many of our town's families in the period. For many months, while her husband was at sea, young Betsy faced the joys and sorrows of life alone. In 1843 the sailing firm of Howland and Aspinwall of New York selected Captain Land to be the master of their new and radical ship, then abuilding. She was christened Rainbow, and I will tell you of the remarkable career of this vessel under John Land's command next time.

## CALENDAR

- April 14 7:30 P.M. Board meets with Phyllis.  
April 16 7:30 P.M. Carleton Hall. Mr. William Congalton - Program on the history, legends and production of tea.  
May 30 10 A.M. Lady Slipper Walk. Meet at Town Hall parking lot.  
\*\*\*Save May 13 for a program meeting at V.I.C. Hall, 7:30 P.M.\*\*\*

### OH, TO BE IN ENGLAND, NOW THAT APRIL'S THERE

There is some sort of genetic weakness in the personality of New Englanders which results in an annual self-deception. Every year, about the 1st of March, we begin to "think spring". Everything that comes our way is tolerable because spring is "just around the corner". The Ides, St. Patrick's Day, vernal equinox - all come and go, and still the snow flurries around us, and it's cold and bleak. Yet we remain adamant - "Spring is almost here." I guess it all began when New England's first press agents - such early colonists as Bartholomew Gosnold and Edward Winslow - wrote home to England to try to attract settlers. They extolled the climate of New England. However, you will note that they boasted that the winters were milder, the autumns long and colorful, and the summers sunny and more pleasant than those of the British Isles. Not a word about March and April! I have learned so much about the settlers of this part of the country that I enjoy trying to imagine their feelings about being transplanted to the New World. I can't help but wonder how they felt about New England weather, press agents aside. Within the first few years of their lives in this colony, our ancestors experienced the most severe hurricane in the memory of the native Americans, the fury of which would not be matched for generations. In addition to that great calamity, several earthquakes struck New England, one strong enough to knock down some of the new stone chimneys. Add to this the fact that the first winter spent on Cape Cod was the most severe in decades. Surely those transplanted English men and women yearned for signs of spring in 1639, just as we do in 1987. Were they also destined to disappointment? The home thoughts from abroad of these pioneers must have closely paralleled those of the later poet Browning - Oh, to be back home in England now that it is April, for there, spring has come! I have never been in England in April. But perhaps it is no different there than on Cape Cod. Perhaps our habit of self-deception about the arrival of spring came across the Atlantic with our ancestors. But I am a loyal enough New Englander to spurn suggestions that April and March - or any other time of year - be spent elsewhere. Because, also written into the genetic memory of a true Cape Codder is the transient but shimmering beauty of this land, the gold and pink of Cape Cod when, at last spring, however tardy and short, is here. Let us hope that very soon our ancestors learned to anticipate and enjoy that breathless season - sometimes just one warm day in May - that makes the vicissitudes of winter all worthwhile.

### RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Probably the most important acquisition to the collection of the D.H.S. was made recently when the original will of Thomas Howes and a very early copy of the division of his land among his three sons was bought at auction. Our thanks to Pauline Derick and Henry Kelley III for their help in the acquisition. The documents are presently being examined by a paper conservationist. We hope to make them an important part of the Howes family exhibit this summer.

Another very important acquisition - the complete set of prints of Nancy DeVita's paintings of eight Shiverick vessels. We hope to be able to arrange for them to be on exhibit in a public place while our summer visitors are here.

We have also purchased a sketchbook of Mr. Hansen, who summered in Dennis in the late 1800's, and made some charming pencil sketches of places on the North Side. You may see these sketches at our April meeting.

Dennis Historical Society  
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