

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

August 1979 Newsletter

DID SOME GOOD LUCK RUB OFF ON YOU?

Chimney Sweep Paul Sheehan of Falmouth arrived at West Dennis Community Building complete with top hat and black swallow tailed coat, to give us some background and interesting sidelights about an old craft, recently reviving in importance--that of the chimney sweep. Pictures and slides of some interesting flues and chimneys and the lovely old homes (and some new ones) that they belonged to illustrated the information and suggestions he gave us. Thanks to Mr. Sheehan and his lovely wife and to all those who came out on a very hot and humid evening to a talk which was not only interesting, but which brought to us all the good luck that a chimney sweep has to spread around.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IN PROGRESS

We are presently conducting a membership drive to try to convince more people to become members of the Dennis Historical Society. At present our total number of members is approaching 350. We would like to reach that number by the annual meeting. If you know of a prospective member, won't you ask them to join? Dues should be paid to E. Slade, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660, and are \$3.00. Members receive the monthly newsletter, have first choice for reservations at the occasional events where numbers must be limited and of course can vote and become officers of the organization. This year we have an added advantage of half price admission to the Old Sound Museum on Route 134 in East Dennis. D.H.S. members will also be given a discount of \$1.00 if they wish to attend the New England Fire and History Museum on Route 6A in Brewster on September 4, 5, and 6 only, anytime from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. We are also arranging a group tour at discount rates to the Drummer Boy Museum in Brewster in the Fall for D.H.S. members. But the biggest reason for becoming a member is to share in the exciting work of preserving and teaching the history of our wonderful old town.

The LEGENDS OF PRINCESS SCARGO

I have been asked to tell the story of Princess Scargo. Nothing could please me more, for this beautiful lake is one of the loveliest inland waters of the Cape and the story adds to its charm. Bear in mind that there are as many versions of the formation of the lake as there are children who grew up hearing it from their parents and grandparents. Two different stories appear in the book, The Narrow Land, by Elizabeth Reynaud. A nice telling is in Jeremiah Digges' Cape Cod Pilot. There is also a children's version which can be obtained at the local libraries, and a long, quaint poem which appeared in the Cape Cod Magazine, January 1922, on file at the Sturgis Library, also tells the tale. Here is my favorite version. I'd enjoy hearing yours.

Once upon a time there was born to the wise and great Chief Sagam of the Nobsclussets, a tiny and beautiful daughter whom he named Princess Scargo. Her mother, who was much beloved by Sagam, unfortunately died shortly after the princess' birth. The grieving chieftain decreed that in all of her life the little Princess should never suffer the grief and agony he felt and the tribe was instructed to keep all knowledge of death from his daughter. Under the shelter of the loving tribesmen, the Princess grew to be a beautiful young woman. She was especially admired by a particular handsome brave, who one day presented her with a gift. He was going on a long journey of several months and his gift was a handsomely carved pumpkin shell in which swam five fish. He promised to return to her and claim her as his bride in the time of the flaming of the trees.

Princess Scargo tended her little fish carefully, but as the weeks passed by, they became too big for their pumpkin shell home. Princess Scargo undertook to dig a small pond for their home, but while she worked, one of the fish died. The Princess was terribly distraught, and she appealed to her father for help. Chief Sagam ordered his squaws to dig a large lake for his daughter's fish. His strongest brave shot arrows North to South, East to West, to mark its boundaries. All summer the squaws dug. They heaped the dirt from their digging on the south side of the hole. By the time of the fall rain, the lake was finished. The rain filled it with water, and Princess Scargo's remaining fish were freed to swim in the clear water where their descendants swim even today.

There is another Wampanoag legend which ascribes the formation of the Lake to the Giant God Maushop. (I will tell you some of the Maushop legends some day.) The geologists would probably say it was a kettle hole pond of glacial origin. But as you stand at the top of Scargo Hill Tower, you can easily see that the squaws have shaped the lake exactly like a fish, and if you listen quietly, you can hear the grumbling of Chief Sagam's squaws as they dig throughout the hot summer months.

Dear little Princess Scargo, I hope that your handsome brave did return before the snow fell, and that after many moons, you sat contently on the beach which bears your name and watched your children grow tall and as straight as the arrows that flew to mark the bounds of the lovely lake by which they played.

CALENDAR

August 21 7:30 PM Executive Board Meeting--home of Mr. Peirce
August 26-September 2 Twenty-first annual Dennis Festival Days. Be sure to
get a calendar of events at the Chamber of Commerce or Post Office
Throughout August--Tuesday and Thursday, 2-4, Josiah Dennis Manse open. Also
Saturday 10 AM - 12 noon.
--Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 2-5, Jericho House open.
September 4-5-6 10-5 Special Admission days for D.H.S. members, New England
Fire and History Museum in Brewster. See article on membership.
September 10 7:30 PM V.I.C. Hall, Depot Street, Dennisport. ANNUAL MEETING.

DENNIS FESTIVAL DAYS

A complete copy of the program for this annual week of festivities can be obtained at the Chamber of Commerce or at any Post Office. The Historical society will sponsor an old fashioned game day on Monday, special days at the Historical Centers when crafts will be demonstrated and the history of the town told, and a bicycle tour on the North Side on Saturday, Sept. 1st. The Manse committee will again have a Doll Exhibit on Tuesday and Wednesday. We also hope to have a drill by the Barnstable County Militia to close the week on Sunday, September 2, in Dennis. Be sure to check the program for other events of interest to members.

THE STREETS OF OUR TOWN

Researchers will search in vain for the family or Sea Captain whose name was given to Winston's Path which runs eastward from Main Street in South Dennis, just north of the Church. The street is right in the middle of ancestral Nickerson land. Just opposite the street is the old farm house which was built by Eleazer Nickerson, Sr. in 1770 and old Nickerson homes surround the corner of its intersection with Main Street. I could find no Winston who had married into the Nickerson clan, nor into the Baker, Wheldon, or Baxter families who later lived in some of these houses. Then, whence the name, Winston's Path, and of what significance? I pondered this for some time until one rainy day, I happened to be driving my son on his paper route. The Esten's who live on the corner of the Path have two lovely collies, and Peter told me that their names are Heather and Winston. Here was a clue, and so we inquired--was the Path named for Winston, or was Winston named for the Path? The answer--the path was named for Winston, a venerable dog, much beloved and a part of the family for many years. So I record this story for future historians, to save them much fruitless searching. "Every dog has his day" as the saying goes, and the dog-days of this lovely collie have been immortalized, for he has given his name to Winston's Path, one of the Streets of Our Town.

WELL, DOG-GONE!

We got through St. Swithin's Day without rain, now to get through these dog days. And here's some interesting, little known, and absolutely useless information about that. The hot humid days arrived in ancient Greece at the time of year when the dog star Sirius rose with the sun. The star-guided Greeks thus named this listless period "Dog Days", and so they have been called to this very (hot and humid) day.

CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

To the members of the Dennis Historical Society: Greetings. You are hereby notified that the annual meeting and election of officers for the year, 1979-80, will be held at the V.I.C Hall on Depot Street, Dennisport, on Monday, September 10, at 7:30 P.M. You are also advised that at this meeting the By-Laws Committee will present their report, and will recommend changes in our present by-laws. These changes will be discussed at length at the August meeting of the Executive Board, and the recommendations presented to the membership will represent the thinking of the board as a whole. We urge your attendance at this important meeting.

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
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Postal Permit No. 2 South Dennis Mass. 02660
