

OUR BEAUTIFUL BAY SHORE

We were delighted by Mrs. Georgia Ferguson's and Dolly Dodge's presentation in sound and pictures centering on the delights of Cape Cod Bay. A large and appreciative audience applauded the artistry and informativeness of their program and we look forward to seeing more of their excellent work in the future.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Members of the Dennis Historical Society are hereby notified that the annual meeting of the Society will take place on Monday, September 8 at 7:30 P.M. at V I C Hall, Dennisport. Reports of committees and elections of officers will take place at this time. You are most earnestly urged to attend this important meeting. Dues for the year are payable at or before this annual meeting. The schedule for dues is \$3 for an individual, \$5 for a family or household, and \$100 for life membership. Please mail to Mrs. Elinor Slade, Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660 if you are unable to attend the annual meeting.

MORE ABOUT TALL SHIPS

In referring to the item in last month's letter about the Clipper Ships, someone asked me how one should refer to the sailing craft such as our Master Mariners sailed in the nineteenth century if one does not know the specific type of craft. As we have learned, the word "ship" is not always correct, and "boat" has come to mean a smaller sailing vehicle. My dad used to refer to the craft sailed by his grandfather and uncles as "vessels", and I find this is also used a lot in written references. The optimum thing, however, is to learn to identify the various vessels and to refer to them by their proper name, such as "Sloop Sally", "Schooner North" and "Brig Democrat". Let's start with the Schooner, by far the most common vessel to tie up at the various wharves along the shores of Dennis, the type most likely to be owned and sailed by Dennis mariners, certainly the early lifeline of our fishing industry and merchant marine. The schooner is a native New England craft and the story of her beginning, though perhaps apocryphal, is recorded in at least two contemporary writings, and reported in various reputable maritime histories. The name Schooner comes from an old verb "scoon", to skim lightly over water. About 1713, Captain Andrew Robinson of Gloucester recognized the need for a vessel especially designed to face the peculiar complexities of sailing in New England's waters. So he designed, built, and rigged a vessel and prepared to launch her. Now, as Mr. Sears has said, A launching was the occasion for celebration and all of the neighbors gathered to see Captain Robinson's craft take the ways. What gasps of wonder, what cheers of acclaim, as the trim fore-and-aft rigged vessel skimmed across the harbor. "O, how she scoons!" commented one of the by-standers, and Captain Robinson, standing nearby said happily, "Aye, and a Schooner she shall be," and so she became, and is today. Originally two-masted with triangular sails, the forward edge of which attached to the mast, later designers fitted her with three, four, even seven masts and great sails. If you would like to get a better idea of the rigging of a schooner, study the town seal of Dennis which depicts a three-masted or tern schooner. Our local fishing fleets were composed of this type of vessel and many of the packet boats which plied back and forth to other ports were also schooners. New England and Cape Cod should be forever grateful to Captain Robinson and his lovely vessel.

DENNIS FESTIVAL DAYS REFLECT HISTORY

The Board of D.H.S. has a strong feeling the Dennis' unique history, maritimes and otherwise, should be one of the biggest reasons for attracting visitors to our town. In this 23rd celebration of Dennis Festival Days, we continue our efforts to attract attention to our historic resources and sponsor events of historic interest. The schedule of D.H.S.-sponsored events follows, also events which are of special interest to our members. Please support these events, and most importantly, encourage visitors to learn about our history by doing the same.

- Tuesday, Aug. 26 2-4 P.M. Josiah Dennis Manse - Informal modelling of antique costumes, tea, light dramatic and musical entertainment.
- Wed. Aug. 27 12 Noon Lighthouse Inn - Fashion Show by Emily Lawrence and a modelling of our old fashioned outfits.
- Wed. Aug. 27 7:30 P.M. Old Sound Museum, Rt. 134, East Dennis - Silent Movies, with authentic sound track, piano and organ music. (Watch for our easel display of Posters and Signed pictures of silent movie stars at the libraries)
- Fri. Aug. 29 3 P.M. - Meet at Town Hall for a bicycle tour over the new Recreation Commission Bike Path, which will point out early settlement sites, Indian lands, Viking and Quaker traditions, and the old town center and alms house site at Mayfair. Designed to celebrate the town's early history, and present day efforts by the Recreation Commission.
- Sat. Aug. 30 2-4 P.M. Jericho House - A repeat of the Tuesday modelling by models from our 7th grade students.

Also, Jericho will be open on Wednesday and Friday, 2-5, the Manse, Tuesday and Thursday, 2-4. Old Sound will hold special programs Tuesday and Thursday evenings and the traditional Antique Auto Parade will open festivities on Sunday, August 24th.

***** CALENDAR *****

August 20 7:30 P.M. Board Meeting Home of Mrs. Richard Dunham
August 24 - Sept. 1 23rd Annual Dennis Festival Days. See schedule, page 1.
Sept. 8 7:30 P.M. V I C Hall, Dennisport - Annual Meeting, program of "The Dennis Clippers"

STREETS OF OUR TOWN

Beginning at the Jericho House Historical Center, Trotting Park Road runs in a more or less straight line southerly, through the old Baker Neighborhood, crossing Route 28 and proceeding to Lower County Road. Near the point where Pine Road bears off to the right, is the site which represents the historic reason for the name of this quiet road. In my girlhood there was scarcely a house, but now it is "Thickly Settled" with many pleasant side streets to left and right. We spoke last time about our Master Mariners of olden days, racing each other under sail to all the ports of the world, establishing and breaking records for speed. Captains who had retired from the sea, by reason of age or because of the challenge of steam, seemed to have retained their love of a good race. In the 1890's race tracks provided a popular form of Saturday afternoon entertainment up and down the Cape, and Dennis was no exception. The Riverside Trotting Park Association was formed in 1890, and bought a piece of Woodland near South Village. David Fisk was elected president and superintendent of the park. In the late winter and early spring of 1891, he undertook the construction of the track, grandstands, starting tower and other appurtenances. By June of 1891, all was in readiness, and opening day arrived. The account given in the Yarmouth Register certainly does not do justice to what must have been a most colorful event. Luckily, Marion Crowell Ryder, in Cape Cod Remembrances, recounts some stories that fill us with some of the feeling of excitement of those summer afternoons of nearly 100 years ago. Imagine sleek pacers with flying hoofs, drawing sulkeys in which sat the driver, sometimes a local young man, sometimes the salty bearded Captains themselves, urging their trotters to victory as once they urged on the crews of their tall ships. Reading Mrs. Ryder's account, one can almost hear the cries of joy as Atossa, driven by Capt. Uriah Fisk, established the track record, 2:32, or the moans of defeat when a dandy from a neighboring town crossed the finish line ahead of the local favorite. Now, alas, all is quiet at the track. Modest houses surround the oval and the sounds of children playing basketball have replaced the roar of the crowds. The Association dissolved in 1899 and sold the track to Capt. Uriah Fisk. It continued to be used for a while as the training site for trotters heading for grander parks, larger prizes. Some old timers can remember racing Model T Fords around the .7 mile track. Younger locals learned horseback riding on the track and trails, when a Riding Academy occupied the stable in the '40's. The cries and moans of the excited crowd are no more heard in Dennis, but the memory of these colorful days is preserved in the name of Trotting Park Road, one of the Streets of Our Town.

A NOTE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

If you are receiving the D.H.S. Newsletter today and are not a member, it is because someone has told us you would like to be. Membership is open to all interested persons, upon payment of dues of \$3 individual or \$5 family, to Elinor Slade, Box 607, So. Dennis, MA. As a member you will receive a newsletter monthly and learn of all the activities of historic interest that are planned. You will be welcome!

TO PRESENT MEMBERS

Thanks for your response to our request to send dues with stamped envelope before the Annual Meeting. You have saved the D.H.S. a substantial amount of postage money, to say nothing of time. Keep those cards and letters coming, folks.

THE BOYS OF SUMMER

Time was when the citizens of Dennis did not have to suffer the indignities that baseball fans have suffered in recent years. The boys of summer in those days were not called Yazstremski, Torrez and Zimmer, but Crowell, Eaton and Chase. I refer, of course, to the Dennis Clippers. Come to the Annual Meeting, Sept. 8 and see films of this fantastic team at play. Former players will be especially invited.

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
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