



FROM GIANT WHALES TO PIRATE TALES

You can't say that the Board doesn't provide a good variety of programs for our monthly get-togethers. Last month, Kathy Swegart told the story behind the story of Moby Dick, to a delighted audience, many of whom were summer visitors. This month our program will be part of Dennis Festival Days, and will be held on Wednesday, August 27, at 7:30 P.M. at the West Dennis Community Building. We will again have the privilege of hearing Mr. Winslow Weeks, who will give a talk which he calls 'A Parody on Pirates'. He characterizes this talk as 'historical hysterics', or 'history with a laugh', and he tells his tale using audio-visuals, artifacts, and characterization - a 'distant relative' of the famous pirate, Jean Lafitte, does much of the talking. It's sure to be fun. Join us, and bring the kids.

CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

Members of the Dennis Historical Society are hereby notified that the annual meeting will be held on Thursday, September 11, at 7:30 P.M. at Carleton Hall. Reports will be received and election of officers for the ensuing year will take place. Following the meeting we will be entertained by Walter Babbitt and Louise Kelley of Harwich, who will present an amusing dialogue entitled 'The Post Masters'.

IT'S TIME TO DUST OFF THAT OLD BIKE ONCE MORE

They say that bicycle riding is a skill which one never loses, however long between rides. So all of you can get out your old bike and join us for our Annual Historic Bike Ride during Dennis Festival Days. This year we will tour East Dennis on Tuesday, August 26. Meet at the Community Church parking lot at 10 A.M. for a leisurely ride around that lovely village, with stops at the site of the Old Cold Storage plant, captains' houses, the Queen Anne style library, and many other points of historic interest. These rides are always fun and you do learn something. If your bike or your legs are out of order, you may follow the bikers by car. Rain date is Wednesday, August 27.

SEVENTY-SIX TROMBONES AND A BIG BASS DRUM

Did you get to the Barnstable County Fair this year? I didn't, but I have heard it was really great. This was the 121st time a county fair has been held on Cape Cod. The first announcement by the County Agricultural Association that it would hold a fair and offer awards for the most outstanding agricultural entries brought shouts of merriment from farmers from richer farming areas. They seemed to think that the produce of our sandy peninsula would be less than spectacular and hardly worth exhibiting. But after viewing the fine specimens which took prizes at that first fair, off-Capers had to admit begrudgingly that the farmers of the Cape could work miracles with their ungrateful soil.

The County Fair is not only for vegetables; it's also for politicians. I noted that Governor Dukakis came directly from Boston to the fairgrounds by helicopter. Earlier governors had to be satisfied with a special train, but they were guaranteed V.I.P. treatment when they arrived at the depot. One Governor's Day of long ago brought special pride to the Town of Dennis. In 1884 the young men of West Dennis decided to organize a brass band. It was kind of a major undertaking, for none of them were professional musicians - in fact, not musicians at all. But remember how different life was in 1884 - no TV, no radio, no juke boxes. If you wanted music, it had to be live. And the boys thought that West Dennis would be a better, livelier place with a little music. So they hired Professor Carter of Middleboro to advise them as to what instruments were needed. Then the professor came to West Dennis every week or so to teach them how to play. Can you imagine what would happen if every young person on your street decided to learn a brass instrument at one time? It was a very noisy business, and there are some amusing stories about the early stages of practicing. However, the boys persevered and the neighbors were eventually rewarded for their patience. The next summer a bandstand was built on Main Street and the West Dennis Brass Band gave weekly concerts. They also gave some indoor recitals at the old Doric Hall. But the greatest honor that the fledgling musicians received was to be invited to escort the Governor from his special car at the depot to the fairgrounds of the 1885 County Fair. Resplendent in their gold-trimmed uniforms and plumed hats, they were the pride of Dennis for that day. You can see a picture of the West Dennis Band and also one of their ancient uniforms, if you visit the Jericho Barn Museum on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, from 2-4:30 this month.

WE APOLOGIZE.....

.....Even though it really is not our fault. Several of our meetings this year have had to be rescheduled due to conflicts in scheduling at the town-owned meeting places. We make a real effort to book the halls far in advance, but errors seem to plague us all the same. In addition, work at the West Dennis Community Building has caused some re-shuffling. Please bear with us for yet another change in the time and place of the Annual Meeting. We hope it will be the last.

CALENDAR

- August 26 10 A.M. Bike Tour, East Dennis. Meet at Community Church parking lot. Rain date - Wednesday, August 27. If in doubt, call 398-8842 or 385-2966.
- August 27 7:30 P.M. West Dennis Community Building. "Parody on Pirates". Winslow Weeks. Fun for all.
- Sept. 11 7:30 P.M. ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS. Carleton Hall.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

Each year at this time we mail complimentary newsletters to those people we think might like to become members of the Dennis Historical Society. An ever-growing number of our town's citizens are presently members, as well as some from out of town with an interest in the area's history. Many are active in the Society's programs, others are merely interested in helping to see that our town's past is not forgotten. If you fall into one or the other of these groups and are not a member, won't you please become one? Dues are \$5 per individual or \$7 for a family or \$100 for life membership. To become a member, send the dues with your name and mail address to: Isabelle Flynn, Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660.

HELP WANTED

Many of you are reluctant to be actively engaged in the programs of D.H.S. because you feel you do not have enough knowledge about the history of the town. But many of you could be contributing some of your skills to help us in various ways to collect and preserve that history. There are many times when typing is needed, no knowledge of history required. Also, we need someone or maybe more than one, to make and stencil the white dateboards placed on old houses, and to fold and sort the newsletter in preparation for mailing. We are also looking forward to working with the Cemetery Commission and the Historic Commission in a drive to clean and protect the valuable gravestones in our old burial grounds. Can you help in any of these tasks? If so, please call President Phyllis Horton, 394-0017, or any Board member.

THE TRIALS OF CAPT. MARCUS LAFAYETTE HOWES

Capt. Marcus Lafayette Howes was in many ways typical of the Master Mariners of Dennis. The son of Jonathan and Fanny Howes, he was born in 1840 and received all of his formal education at the district school in Dennis village. His education at sea, however, was practical and thorough, as he worked his way step by step into the Captain's cabin. I'm sure that the reason that there were so many mariners from the Cape who eventually became skilled ship masters was that they went to sea very early and usually were trained by officers who were also their neighbors or relatives. These superiors saw to it that they learned more than just the basic skills required to keep sails trimmed. They taught them navigation, the basics of trade, and the obligations which a ship master must assume when he takes command. Probably no single person in any period of history has carried as much direct authority and responsibility as did the captain of a merchant sailing vessel in the nineteenth century. On one of Capt. Howes' voyages that authority and responsibility were to be severely tested. He had been given the command of the bark Freeman, and was to make a voyage to Japan and the Far East. He arrived on the Japanese Islands in the late winter of 1887 and when the cargo had been off-loaded, his crew was assigned to another vessel which was ready to sail. In due time, the Freeman had received her cargo and was preparing to depart for Calcutta. Capt. Marcus applied to port officials for a new crew. He was given a seasoned crew all right, but all except the steward were Japanese. The first officer spoke but little English, the rest none at all. Nevertheless, the Captain set sail. They were not long at sea when it became apparent that one of the crew, Hidaka Kikimatsu by name, was of a quarrelsome nature, and especially antagonistic toward his countryman, the first mate. Next time I will tell you of the events of this voyage, which changed Capt. Howes' life.

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