



A RECORD OF PRE-HISTORY

The citizens of the Town of Dennis by vote of town meeting in 1985 purchased a 23 acre point of land adjacent to the Indian Lands Conservation Area (where the lady slippers grow). In so doing, they preserved not only an area of great beauty and ecological importance, but also a record of the pre-English settlement life of the Coastal American Indians. George Stillson is an archaeologist who has studied, and continues to study, the Nickerson Point. He reported to D.H.S. at their meeting in July about what he is learning, and it was fascinating. He has been able to establish without doubt that natives lived in the area for 5,000 years and probably will soon be able to substantiate an even earlier date. With our town preparing to observe the 350th anniversary of the English settlement, that length of time appears awesome. Thanks, George, for an interesting evening. We walk upon the Indian Lands with a much deeper perspective.

HOWES FAMILY REUNION

On Saturday, September 26, we expect hundreds of Howes family members to gather at Carleton Hall for a day-long family reunion. The occasion is to mark the 350th year since the family arrived in New England. Thomas and his wife Mary (Burr) settled in Dennis, then part of Yarmouth, in 1639 and descendants have blessed the town ever since. D.H.S., in preparation for the 'Howes Invasion', has cooperated with the Manse Committee to prepare an exhibit at the Manse, which is entitled "The Family of Thomas and Mary (Burr) Howes -- 1637-1987." It depicts the interesting lives of Howes descendants everywhere - the Master Mariners who remained in Dennis, the Howes family of western Massachusetts, which produced such beautiful photographs, the circus Howes of Putnam County, New York. But the exhibit leaves untold the story of about half of the family members - the women. This omission is not in any way to suggest that the females' contribution to town and country has been in any way less than that of their sons and brothers. But how can a three-dimensional exhibit tell the heroic story of these women of generations past, whose gift to society was their loyalty and strength of character? I can tell you many stories of the stresses under which these women functioned - of the loss of young children, the absence from home of their men, and the poverty which resulted when the beloved husband did not return from sea. As an example, think with what a heavy heart Desire Howes Hall bid farewell to her son Barnabas, as he left to join his uncle on a voyage to Russia. Desire knew all too well the cruelty of the sea. She had married Freeman Gibbs Hall in 1829, and together they had prospered. Capt. Freeman was primary owner of the vessel "Greek" and a good fisherman. Their three children had been born in the old Prince Howes house on New Boston Road, a structure which I remember from my childhood. It had grown like Topsy over the years, and had peaks here and there and many windows, no two alike. The old keeping room, with its fireplace much like that at the Manse, was just as it had been when the house was built in 1713. In 1841, the couple had saved enough money to instruct Capt. Uriah Howes to fetch from Maine the lumber for a new and more comfortable home. A happy Capt. Hall bade goodbye to his wife on October 1st, 1841, as he joined the Nobscusset fishing for a trip to the Grand Banks. Unhappily, his vessel was among the Cape fishing schooners that were caught in the Great October Gale, and he never returned to build his new home. In the same storm, Desire lost two young brothers and a brother-in-law, as well as 16 other neighbors and friends. No wonder she watched with heavy heart when, in 1860, the packet pulled from the Corporation Wharf, carrying her youngest son to join his vessel. As fate would have it, her feelings were justified, for Barnabas was lost to the relentless sea on this journey. Yet this tiny woman who had known so much tragedy in her life carried on with her daily chores, at the old homestead she had hoped to leave - washing clothes in New Boston Creek, cooking over an open fireplace, and helping to raise the 12 children of her remaining son. She is but one of many Howes daughters, whose accomplishments cannot be told in our exhibit. Oh, there are a few of the belongings of these devoted women - some tea cups, a dress or two, and beautifully made doll clothes. Just possibly we also have included the tribute that these women would have felt most proud of - the portraits of the men who were trained at the knees of these noble women to have courage, trust in the Lord, and do the job that was expected of them. "Let their own work praise them in the gates."

HEAR YE, HEAR YE!

Members of the Dennis Historical Society are hereby notified that the annual meeting of the Society and the election of officers for the coming year will be held at the West Dennis Community Building at 7:30 P.M. on September 17, 1987. Dues are payable on or before that date. You will hear brief reports of a busy year. Coincidentally, this day is also National Constitution Day. And our nominee for president of D.H.S. is Sarah Kruger, who happens to be the chairman of the Dennis Bicentennial of the Constitution Committee. So we will have the privilege of seeing a movie about Shea's Rebellion, "A little Rebellion Now and Then." It's excellent. Next time, I will tell you why this event which occurred in western Massachusetts in 1786 was undoubtedly a hot topic of conversation in the seaside town which was to be incorporated as Dennis in 1793.

CALENDAR

- August 6 Cape and Islands Historical Association meeting, Bourne. For details, call Phyllis.
- August 23-30 DENNIS FESTIVAL DAYS
- August 26 7:30 P.M. "The Story of the Shiverick Shipyard." West Dennis Community Building.
- August 29 10 A.M. Guided walk on Simpkins Neck. Meet at Carleton Hall, 10 A.M. for a shuttle bus to the Neck.
- Sept. 17 CONSTITUTION BICENTENNIAL DAY
Fly a flag or banner as a tribute to the U.S. Constitution and its writers.
- Sept. 17 7:30 P.M. West Dennis Community Building. Annual meeting and election of officers. Program: Film - "A Little Rebellion Now and Then"

CAPE COD REMEMBRANCES

The Manse is not alone in having a special summer exhibit. An exhibit in honor of our late friend Marian Crowell Ryder has been arranged in the Jericho Barn. Mrs. Ryder was the author of a book of essays which she called Cape Cod Remembrances and we have used that title for our exhibit. We have assembled artifacts which help to visualize many of the chapters of Marian's book. You can amble down Main Street, West Dennis, 1880, and see Solomon Davis' cobbler shop, Browning K. Baker's blacksmith shop, church and post office, as well as Horatio S. Kelley's drug store. There are childhood memories, and relics of the West Dennis Band, Doric Hall, and the Riverside Trotting Park. One of Mrs. Ryder's chapters is entitled "Sea Farers All" and we have labelled the Ship Room with that caption. Included in the room is a large picture of many of the members of the Boston Marine Society in 1886. And what, you might ask, has this to do with West Dennis in the 1880's? First you should know a little bit about this ancient organization. Founded in 1742 and incorporated in 1753, it was a benevolent association of sea captains, meant to give financial aid to the families of members who met with adversity. In addition to dues, members were fined for such things as non-attendance at meetings or funerals of other members, and as the breadth of activities expanded, members who failed to report observations which they made as they coasted along the U.S. were fined for every month they had been away. Later activities included petitions for lighthouses, lightships, and other navigational aids, and the establishment of pilot service within Boston Harbor. Although named the Boston Marine Society, the membership was open to all master mariners who were captains of their own vessels. There are 115 men from Dennis who have been documented, and many more whose membership information does not specify their residence will no doubt be proven to be this town's native sons. Four men from Dennis have served as president of this prestigious group, and three of them, brothers Luther and Henry H. Fisk and Peter Crowell, were from West Dennis. Stop to look at this collection of pictures of Society members. They are numbered and we have identified all of those who were Dennis men. They make a very impressive group.

FESTIVAL DAYS FOR HISTORY BUFFS

1. Attend the showing of our slide show, "The Story of the Shiverick Shipyard," at West Dennis Community Building, 7:30 P.M., August 26.
2. We will have a guided walk on Simpkins Neck, Saturday, August 29. Because there is limited parking, we will meet at Carleton Hall at 10 A.M. and have a shuttle to the Neck. Wear comfortable shoes, and "Cutter's!"
3. Visit the Jericho House and Barn Museum on Wed. or Fri., 2-4:30.
4. Visit the Manse on Tues. or Thurs., 2-4 P.M. Special flower show.
5. And do read the Chamber of Commerce flyer for many more activities.

IS THIS YOUR FIRST NEWSLETTER?

If you are not a member of D.H.S., you are being sent this edition of our newsletter because we would like to have you join us. Our purpose is to preserve and teach the history of the town of Dennis and we try to do this with school programs, special exhibits, guided tours, and through our newsletter and slide shows. If you would like to be a part of our efforts, you may join by sending dues to Membership Chairman Isabelle Flynn, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660. Dues are \$5 for individual, \$7 per family, and \$100 for life. You will receive a monthly newsletter and an invitation to take part in any of our activities. Do it now!

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

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