



### MR. TOBEY AND THE MODERATOR

The town of Dennis was fortunate to have two of its able citizens running for the office of Moderator in our last election. One of the oldest elected offices in our town, in earlier days the moderator was chosen at each meeting, and served only while the meeting was in session. That was the custom until 1931, when a special town meeting held in July accepted an article which put the office on the annual town officers ballot, to be elected to serve for one year. It was not until 1973 that the town voted a three year term for this office. Actually, it's not an easy position. Except for the appointment of the Finance Committee, the moderator is only responsible for the smooth running of all Town Meetings during his term of office. Does that sound easy to you? Then you haven't been paying attention! The good citizens of this town have a reputation of speaking up at town meeting, many presenting unpopular and controversial points of view. Unlike a judge in court, who can call a recess, or retire to chambers to think things over, the town meeting moderator has to make his decisions on the spot. Running a town meeting, when controversy arises and feelings run high calls for the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job. Fortunately, our town has found many moderators with both.

There are several good "Moderator stories" I would like to share with you. One is told by Peter McDowell, Moderator for nearly 20 years, before Mr. Chamberlain's election. Peter wielded a heavy gavel, and at one meeting, when the relocation of the dump was under discussion, one excited citizen was out of order, and Peter rapped so hard he split his gavel in two. This was one of those famous meetings that required several nights to complete the warrant. Eric Anderson was complex supervisor for the school then, some of you knew him. He was a good friend to this town, to the school children and faculty, and he assured Mr. McDowell that he would have a replacement for the gavel for the next night. He was true to his word, and the next night Mr. Moderator tapped the meeting to order at 7 P.M. But there was a flaw in the handle, and part way through the evening, this gavel also became defunct. Mr. Anderson was not a man to take such a matter lightly. Soon thereafter, he presented Peter McDowell with a second gavel, carefully made from South Dennis cedar, a gift which Mr. McDowell continued to use throughout his term of office with his usual vigor, and treasures, still intact, to this day.

The most famous of our moderators in recent years was the venerable Dean S. Sears. Stern in demeanor, he was noted for his keen, dry, Cape Cod sense of humor. At one town meeting, an article was passed which raised his annual pay by \$25. After its passage, Mr. Sears thanked the meeting for the raise, and was quoted as having said, "I shall spend it all on riotous living." Visiting with Mr. Dean one day, in the autumn of his life, I asked if this was, in fact, what he said, and he replied, "Yes, that is what I said, and that is what I did!"

One more, a more ancient tale, which tells a lot about the moderator's job. At a precinct meeting, held in October of 1758, Mr. Tobey was elected to serve as precinct clerk, and Mr. Isaac Chapman, Moderator. The discussion dealt with enlarging the meeting house, and I quote for the old precinct record book: (The spelling is Mr. Tobey's)

"They called a vote to see if the precinct would let any pertakler persons have a priverledge to enlarge the meeting house if they appeared before Fryday evining to Mr. Crowell and Mr. Lot Howes and made such proposal as they thought the precinct would accept of, and the moderator said that he believed it was a vote, and I questioned him where it was a vote, and he answered, and so I think it was a vote."

Reminds us of the old adage:

Rule 1. The Moderator is always right.

Rule 2. If the Moderator is wrong, refer to Rule 1!

### BOOK REVIEW

#### **LIGHTHOUSES OF CAPE COD--MARIHA'S VINEYARD--NANTUCKET THEIR HISTORY AND LORE**

By Admont G. Clark

I love writing book reviews, and it gives me the greatest of pleasure to review for D.H.S. members a book written by one of their fellow members. Captain Clark, USCCR, has done a first-rate job of research and writing, and the book is worthy of a wide audience. Appealing to the student of local history, the sailor, or the reader who is interested in the science of building and improving lighthouses, the author's enthusiasm and interest in the subject makes it lively reading for all. I especially enjoyed the anecdotes about the families who once lived in these important beacons for mariners. Included in the work are all lights, past and present, that have served in the effort to warn mariners away from the hazardous coastline and guide the sailor into a friendly port. The book is liberally illustrated with old and new pictures of lighthouses, keepers and their families, of maps, charts, and shipwrecks. For those who look for such things, the author has included statistics such as date of lighting, height, type of lamp, range, etc. for every light and also a list of all known keepers. Congratulations to author Clark, and thanks for an excellent contribution to our library of local history.

### DUES NEWS

Your D.H.S. Board has reluctantly come to the decision that our dues must be raised to offset the increased cost of getting the newsletter to you. The new rates for Sept. 1, 1992 thru Aug. 31, 1993 (our Bicentennial Year!) are \$8.00 single and \$10.00 family. The \$2.00 student and \$100.00 individual LIFE membership remain the same. We feel that's still the best bargain in town. If you would like a membership card please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

## CALENDAR

Aug. 13	7:30 P.M.	DHS Board meeting at the Manse.
Aug. 22-30		Dennis Festival Days. The fliers are out. Pick one up at the Chamber of Commerce or around town and do some of the fun things that have been planned.
Aug. 24	7:30 P.M.	"On The Home Front of Cape Cod, 1941-1945". See article below.
Aug. 25	2-4 P.M.	Informal flower show at the Josiah Dennis Manse presented by the
& 27	2-4 P.M.	Village Garden Club.
Sept. 13	3:00 P.M.	Annual Meeting and Election of Officers. Jacob Sears Memorial Library. Illustrated lecture by Admont G. Clark. See article on other side.

### ON THE HOME FRONT OF CAPE COD...1941-1945

DHS will present an illustrated lecture by Lynne Horton, Curator of History at the Sandwich Glass Museum, as our contribution to celebrating Dennis Festival Days. The efforts of the Cape community to help the war effort will be discussed. This lecture highlights the contributions, hardships, efforts and sacrifices made by the people of Cape Cod and the Islands during this five year period. Through the wartime memories and experiences of many children and adults who lived on the Cape, accounts will be heard about the Cape's Civil Defense, rationing, victory gardens, collection of vital war materials, the Cranberry Army Corps, black outs, air raid drills, Camp Edwards and Camp Wellfleet, the vital work of the Coast Guard, and of course...all about German spies and POWs. This will be shown at West Dennis Community Center on Aug. 24 at 7:30 P.M. Refreshments will be served. All are welcome.

### THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT BE KING

The many and varied careers of the master mariners of the Baxter family of West and South Dennis and Hyannis could keep a novelist in material for several volumes. The story for today is about Joseph Baxter, son of Obed the 2nd, born in West Dennis in May of 1834, died in West Dennis in January of 1916. Not very many of the years were spent in the Baxter homestead. For 55 years Capt. Baxter was a mariner, sometimes working out of San Francisco where he was a member of the Vigilance Committee, at other times crew or officer aboard vessels transporting such diverse cargos as ice, lumber, and even Chinese coolies, much to his distaste. Lest we increase the size of this newsletter by several hundred pages, we must limit the tale of Capt. Joseph's wonderfully varied experiences to just one. It was a trip made from San Francisco to the Ladrone and Marshall Islands in the Pacific, as mate of the Schooner Harrison in search of fruit and sea turtles about 1855. After stops at several exotic islands, where no fruit could be obtained, they arrived at the port of Seypan. Captain Baxter, in his memoirs which he dictated to his daughter Hattie, who cared for him in his declining years, describes the harbor and the natives in detail. They dealt with the king of the island, who was able to supply them with limes, and was therefore invited to bring his family onto the ship for a meal with the officers. The king wanted his son to be educated in England or America, but Baxter's captain declined to take the risk of transporting him there. Then the king shifted his concern to his daughter. He had apparently taken a liking to Baxter, and told him that he would like him to marry his daughter. If he did, the chief would name Baxter as his successor. This was a dubious honor, for although the present king could nominate the next king, if the natives did not agree with his choice, they would fight to drive him out of office. Just the same, an offer to become king most certainly deserved serious consideration.

"I told him that this was very unexpected, that I had started out a humble seaman, simply looking for fruit and other merchandise which might give me a reasonable return for my labor, but to become king had never been any part of my ambition, and that I should want at least one night in which to think it over."

But the decision was taken from his hands, when, the next morning, the Captain of the Harrison upped anchor and sailed for the Marshall Islands in search of turtles.

"....and I lost the only opportunity that ever presented itself to me of becoming a monarch."

So ends this day.

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

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