



### TAKING THE TRAIN TO SOUTH DENNIS

June 19, 1993 was not only our Bicentennial Anniversary, and the super spectacular parade, it was also the day the train came to South Dennis. Through the efforts of Paul Prue of Dennis Village, the Cape Cod Railroad ran a special excursion train from Yarmouth Port to South Dennis. This was only the second time a passenger train had been over that route since passenger service to the lower Cape was discontinued in 1939. The only other passenger trip was in October 1982,

Rail service on Cape Cod started in 1848 with the Cape Cod Branch Railroad reaching West Barnstable in 1853 and the Cape Cod Railroad reaching Hyannis on July 8, 1854 to be met by an enthusiastic crowd of 3,000 people! The Cape Cod Central Railroad was formed in March 1861 to extend rail service further down the Cape. The railroad bridge over Bass River was completed in late spring of 1865, and the first run to Orleans was December 6, 1865. The train replaced four stage runs a day from Yarmouth, along Rte. 6A, to Wellfleet. The train at South Dennis made it much easier for south side people to use the train. Dennis Port residents used the North Harwich station as it was nearer to go up Depot Street to the station than to traverse Upper County Road to South Dennis. Frederick Nickerson was appointed the first station agent at South Dennis. The station was the center of activity at "train time". Many people went to the station just to see who was going somewhere or coming home from somewhere. The afternoon train left Kneeland Station in Boston at 4:00 P.M. and arrived at South Dennis at 7:28 P.M. 3½ hours! The station some people still remember was built in the late 1880's. It was half-way between Yarmouth and Harwich--1½ miles each way. Either way took 4 minutes when Old Colony Railroad ran the trains.

The train took our people away to work in Boston, Fall River, and other industrial towns and brought them home for holidays and vacations. It provided easy access to Boston for shopping, business, and medical attention, and it also took our young men away to fight in Europe in World War I. The railroad caused the demise of the packet from Sesuit to Boston and started the decline of the port at Dennis Port, which suffered a final blow from a devastating storm in 1888. Just as the railroad brought about the end of sailing days in Dennis, "a car in every garage" brought the end of the train to Dennis. Now the powers-that-be are talking about creating some sort of rail service to alleviate automobile congestion between Cape Cod and Boston. Sounds like it all comes full circle! Although down-Cape passenger service was discontinued in 1939, freight service continued until 1965. Those rails were removed in 1966 and the Cape Cod Rail Trail for bicycles was laid out over the old road bed in 1979. Freight service still comes to South Dennis and during the building boom of the 60's and 70's they made several runs a week.

For those of us on the 10:00 A.M. run it was a thrill to be on the first passenger train over those tracks in eleven years. The train ran at a leisurely pace because the tracks are not quite up to Amtrack standards. However, this was a plus as we had the opportunity to take in all the sights. The biggest surprise was to find **that much** greenery still existent on Cape Cod. You pretty well would not have a clue as to where you were until you came to a crossing. Even those looked different from "the other side". It was a beautiful sight to look down Bass River from the railroad bridge and everyone joined in "Happy Birthday, Dear Dennis" as we came into our Bicentennial town. The train rolled to a stop at South Dennis with bunting fluttering in the breeze. Some of us, including our Grand Marshal, left the train to get on with the days activities and the others returned on the round trip to Yarmouth. For everyone who made one of the trips it will be a pleasant memory for years to come. Many thanks to Cape Cod Railroad and Paul Prue for a very nice Bicentennial event.

### HAS ANYONE SEEN HANNAH?

Jim Carr and others on his publication committee have done a great job of collecting appropriate illustrations for our history, which help to bring it alive. Thanks to all of you who have shared photo albums, glass negatives, and other treasures with us for publication. There are a few others we would like to have and one of them is a picture of Hannah H. Paddock. Hannah was one of the town's best known women in her lifetime, a leader in the Suffrage movement, a "bloomer girl", and a generous and involved citizen. So far no attic which Jim has raided has produced her image. Has anyone out there seen a picture of Hannah?

Another well-known citizen we would like to picture is Theophilus F. Smith. Sitting in his familiar place of business would be best, but any photo of Theoph in his well-remembered overalls would be just great. Please call Jim or drop us a note, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, if you can supply either of these pictures. (ASAP, I might add for we are getting down to final decision time.)

And don't forget to let us know of veterans of any war who served from the town of Dennis. We are well aware that it is probably impossible to have any of the lists 100%, but we're trying. Thanks to all of you who have sent names and war records.

### SCHOOL REUNION

We mostly hear about class reunions, but this Bicentennial Year we are having a school reunion on Sept. 18, 1-4 P.M. This is for everyone who graduated from Dennis consolidated/ Ezra H. Baker School. The first class graduated from the 8th grade in 1932. Today's third grade class leaves Ezra Baker and moves on to Wixon Middle School. Continued....

### CALENDAR

- Aug. 20 7:00 P.M. "Dennis....200 Years Young, An Historical Revue". Original play by Ben Thacher performed by Dennis Junior Players. Wixon School. Donation.
- Aug. 24 10:00 A.M. Narrated Historic Bike Tour of Village of Dennis Port. Leave from Village Green, Hall Street.
- Aug. 27 7:30 P.M. "Salt Works of Historical Cape Cod". Illustrated talk by William Quinn. Jacob Sears Library, Center St. East Dennis. Refreshments.
- Aug. 28 1-4 P.M. Open House at Josiah Dennis Manse. Demonstrating an enhanced School Program. Quilting, Weaving, ice cream making, Colonial foods, etc. Costumed guides.

### REUNION....cont.

How times do change! The committee will try to contact every teacher from years past in an effort to have them present. They will be in their respective rooms to greet former students. Won't it great to see Miss Walker, Miss Sears, Mr. Morley, Mr. Chapman, "Muggy" and "Tibby" again? We are still trying to locate old class pictures for every class from 1931 to 1956. We have received some but would like every class to be represented. If you have a class picture, any grade in any year, please contact Phyllis Horton, Box 275, Dennis Port 02639, 394-0017 or Joshua Crowell, Box 963, Dennis, 02638, 385-3689. This should be a very special home town time. Do come and meet some of your old class mates. Bring any Dennis Consolidated/Ezra Baker memorabilia you have for "show and tell".

### WHEN'S THE HISTORY GOING TO BE READY?

There have been days when I wondered if it would ever be finished. Whatever made me think I could write a book, anyway? Not only have I learned a lot about the history of the town that I never knew before, but I've learned a new respect for those who have written histories before. My granddaughter, Allison, came in one day when I was hard at work, the table strewn with file cards, manila folders, and reference books. "What are you doing, Gran?" she asked. So I explained that I was writing history and every name, event, and date has to be checked and rechecked in order to be sure it's right. "You know, Allison, it's a big responsibility to be writin the history of a town that goes back over 350 years", says Gran, in her wisest tone. "Well, I suppose so," replied my granddaughter. "But, you know, it would be a lot easier if you just made it up!"

And so it would. But I have resisted the temptation and tried to tell it like it was. It has been great material to work with and I hope you who read it will enjoy it as much as I have.

As to when the book will be on your coffee table, we are not ready to give you an exact time table as yet, in as much as all of us are new at this publishing game. I am happy to report that the research is finished and the text has been written. I am now correcting, smoothing out, dividing into chapters, comparing footnotes, doing the bibliography and trying to think of a name. How does "A History of the Town of Dennis Massachusetts" strike you? We will update you next month and perhaps have a better idea of what the publishers schedule will be. I would like to thank all of you who have sent checks and become sponsors. We appreciate your financial help, and I personally appreciate the "vote of confidence". Knowing that so many of you are interested has kept me going when the going was rough. Stay with us now for yet a little while.

### HOWES FAMILY REUNION

The descendants of one of our first settlers, Thomas and Mary Howes, are having a reunion on October 9, 10, and 11, 1993 in Southeast--Brewster, N.Y. The committee has three exciting days planned. You will see where Moody Howes and Prince Howes settled when they left here in the 1740's, where Nathan Howes, Circus Pioneer, set up America's first big top. Participants will relive a colorful chapter of Howes history by touring Morningthorpe Castle, home of Seth B. Howes, America's first master showman, see special exhibits at the Southeast Museum, family memorial windows at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Seth B. Howes' mausoleum and nearby Howes cemeteries, the Circus Museum in Somers, N.Y. and more.

A major highlight of the reunion will be the rare opportunity to visit Stonehenge, the family homestead on the land Moody settled and where four generations grew up. The original rustic abode was transformed by Seth into a large, handsome villa before moving to Morningthorpe. Privately owned for many years, this is the first time the Howes Family members have been invited in. For more information and registration forms Howes relatives may contact Jeanne C. Howes, 19 Covenant Land, Weston, CT 06883.

Dennis Historical Society  
P.O. Box 607  
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