

THE MYSTERY OF THE NOBSCUSETTS

A panel consisting of William Crowell, Jr., Nancy Reid, Pauline Derick of D.H.S., Marilyn Crary of The Cape Cod Chapter of the Massachusetts Archeological Society, and Linda Towle of the Primitive Research Team of the Massachusetts Historical Commission gave a varied and interesting program on the native Indians, their culture, artifacts, and ways of identifying, cataloguing and interpreting relics of their civilization. Many fascinating things were touched upon, and the entire program was taped, and hopefully will be transcribed and available in our library. All of us learned a great deal and yet we came away with a wish that more of the Nobscusetts culture and history will be learned. Perhaps next year a survey of Indian sites here on the Cape will add to our knowledge. Thanks to the panel and to Gail Hart, moderator, for a fine original program.

CHRISTMAS AT THE MANSE

It's becoming a custom for D.H.S. to sponsor a Christmas Open House at one of our town's Historic Centers to begin the holiday season. This year the afternoon of December 7 will find the Josiah Dennis Manse bedecked with boughs and ribbons by Susan Kelley and Nancy Flinkstrom and their crew. Jean McMurtry will preside over the steaming Bowl of hot Historical Punch, and Georgie Bagge will fill the rooms with Christmas music at 3:30 and again at 4:30. We will try to arrange for our traditional snow shower just about dusk. Come and bring your friends, and get into the holiday spirit, December 7, 3-5 P.M.

THE STREETS OF OUR TOWN

Of all the Christmas customs which are now so much a part of our culture, the Christmas tree may have been the earliest to break through the austere Puritan concept of Christmas as a holy day. The custom was brought from Germany by the Hessian mercenaries who fought in the Revolution, and was brought back home with the returning soldiers. If you are travelling from West Dennis towards Dennisport, just after you cross over the Swan Pond River on the South side of Route 28, you will see a fine specimen of an evergreen tree (which I believe is a green spruce). Decorated for Christmas, it would certainly be a beautiful sight. One is tempted to surmise that this tree, which has grown on that spot long enough to tower over the neighboring buildings, may have inspired the name of the little road that passes near it, Lone Tree Road. This lane runs from the state highway southward, and winds along the smaller of our two pretty rivers. Perhaps, however, the name of the road is even more ancient than the venerable evergreen. A deed for a plot of land in this area of lower Swan Pond River, from Uriah Fisk to William Garfield, was recorded in 1883. The description of the lot begins at "a lone tree", moving southward along the range of the heirs of Joseph K. Baker, westward to the river, then north along the river, and last, east again, to the lone tree from which it began.

If one believes the accounts of the Pilgrims who first explored Cape Cod, the peninsula as they found it in 1620 was heavily forested from shore to shore. What circumstances could have led to a deforestation so complete that a lone tree could become a conspicuous landmark? We must remember that the New England colonies were literally carved out of wood. Shelter was built from pit-sawn and hand-hewn timber, and covered with shingles and clapboards whittled from local cedar. The tables, benches and bed-steeds were of wood. The only fuel for heat and cooking was wood. Wooden vessels were used for transportation, whaling and fishing. When the whaling was successful, the oil was extracted from the blubber by drying it out over huge fires. When the fishing produced an excess, it was cured by sea-salt, made before the Solar salt works, by boiling huge cauldrons of sea water until the sodium chloride precipitated. Even the industry that came to the Cape demanded wood. It was not the fine sand which attracted the Sandwich and Boston Glass Co. to the Cape. The sand for Sandwich glass was imported from New Jersey. It was the supply of pine woods for hot fires which brought Deming Jarvis to Sandwich. No wonder that photographs of our villages in the 1880's show our streets without a single tree. Only recently have efforts been made to reforest. Little by little the black pine and scrub oak are giving our barren land a bit of cover. So let our Christmas evergreen remind us of the consequences of poor management of natural resources, as should the name of Lone Tree Road, one of the Streets of our Town.

WITH LOVE FROM YOUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

One Christmas custom which is probably even more universal than the use of the decorated Christmas Tree is that of sending Christmas cards. As Yuletide customs go, the exchange of cards is fairly modern. The first known printed Christmas card was created in England in 1843. It was designed by John Calcott Horsley for Sir Henry Cole, a busy man with no time to write the customary Christmas letters to friends and family. It is also said that Sir Henry was interested in expanding the national postal service! The Valentine as a printed greeting card is much older than the Christmas card, some surviving in America which date from the early 1700's. Our mid-winter Festivity falls on Valentine's Day this year, and we are looking for old valentines to display for your interest. Do you know of anyone who will loan us some? In fact, St. Valentine will provide the theme for the entire luncheon, which will be held at the Cape Half House on Saturday, February 14, Social Hour at 1 P.M. and a Buffet Luncheon at 2. Cost per reservation is \$5.95, tax and tip included. Reservations can be made with Joshua Crowell, and we hope you will plan to attend.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN.....

..... a reminder that you must pay your dues to remain a member. See the quotation from our by-laws in the August edition. The Mailing List will be revised after the holidays, and those whose dues have not been paid in accordance with the by-laws will have to be removed.

CALENDAR

December 7 3-5 P.M. Christmas Open House, Josiah Dennis Manse
December 16, 1773 Boston Tea Party. Drink Sassafras.
January 14 Birds. 7:30 P.M. Carleton Hall, Dennis.
February 14 Mid-Winter Festivity. Luncheon 1 P.M. Cape Half House.
\$5.95 Reservations must be made.

Also of interest to our members.

December 8 Bus Tour to Lexington and Concord. For details call
Bacon Tours at 394-5739.

MORE ABOUT VESSELS

Before we end our series on the vessels which local mariners sailed, whether here in the bay or across the deep waters of the ocean, I want to mention another type of rigging fairly common hereabouts, and still used on sailing vessels. The Brig is a two-masted vessel, both fore-mast and main-mast being square rigged. On the main mast is a standing gaff, to which is rigged a small fore-and-aft sail. To make matters confusing, there are three classes of brigs, all variations on this rigging just described, but we'll leave that for another time. Let me just mention two of the thousands of shipwrecks which have occurred in Cape Cod waters. Both of these took place in December, and both involved brigs. You already know of the tragic wreck of the troop ship General Arnold. Rigged as a brig, she set sail from Boston on December 24, 1778 and was caught in a strong no'theaster, which stranded her off Plymouth. There, within sight, but out of reach of the land because of the storm, she was pounded by waves and awash with icy water and snow. Of the 105 men aboard, only 33 survived the cold. 12 of these men were members of the Barnstable militia. Another fierce December storm caught the Brig Democrat out in Cape Cod Bay in December 1876. She was a coasting vessel loaded with passengers and goods headed down east, but the gale winds of an early winter storm drove her closer and closer to the Cape, until at last she grounded on the outer flats of Dennis. The incident had a happier ending, however. All hands were rescued. The people of the village of Dennis spent a profitable time arranging for the passengers to reach their destinations when the storm subsided. The Captain and crew of the brig remained in the village for the winter, for the vessel was driven so hard into the sand that it wasn't until the spring tides of March that she could be floated. It sure must have livened up the quiet winter a good bit to have a crew of down-easters at the socials and church meetings. No doubt a lot of stories were exchanged before the Brig Democrat and her crew departed for Maine, and perhaps a lot of tales were told when they had finally departed.

NO TAX ON TEA

December 16th is the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party. I think that there is no better illustration of the reaction of the Cape Colonists to the British Acts of Suppression preceding the Revolution than the response of our thrifty Yankee forebearers to the news that tea was to be taxed. Not only was British tea boycotted by Cape Citizens, but when a British ship loaded with tea was wrecked and its cargo tossed upon the shores of Cape Cod Bay, our citizens made a pact not to consume or sell any of that tea. For a citizenry, some of whom lived in houses built entirely of timbers gathered from the beaches and which paid their clergy from the oil from drift whales which the waves brought ashore, this was indeed a patriotic sacrifice!

A TOUR OF CONCORD AND LEXINGTON

Bacon Tours is sponsoring a bus trip which is sure to be of interest to many of our members. The tour will visit the battlegrounds of Concord and Lexington and other historic and literary sites of interest. It will also include luncheon and a tour of the Concord Antiquarian Society. Anyone interested in details of the trip, call Paula Bacon, 394-5739.

JANUARY MEETING IS FOR THE BIRDS

"I heard a bird sing in the Dark of December....You are closer to Spring than you were in September." Since the joyful sound of birds is seldom heard in January, we will have a program which features bird models. The meeting will be held at Carleton Hall, Dennis on January 14th at 7:30 P.M.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED