

CHRISTMAS AT THE MANSE

The Puritans, who banned all celebration of Christmas, considered it a pagan celebration, and in many ways they were right. Even then, among many who did observe the occasion, the festivities were far from sacred, and the traditions then, as now, were drawn from many secular, and even pagan sources. Nevertheless, then, as now, also, there is a certain sacredness about this special season of year, calling us all to home and family, and instilling in us a certain spirit of neighborliness and love. We will try to capture that spirit for you at our Christmas Open House at the Josiah Dennis Manse, which is after all the spiritual homestead of this town. Susan Kelley and her helpers will once again create a beautiful display of old-fashioned decorations. Our background music will be tapes of early Colonial music from Williamsburg, where Christmas was celebrated long before it came to New England. Our board will be groaning with goodies, hot Negus and cider. But most important: we will all be there to greet you and wish you Happy Holidays. I hope you will be there too, on Sunday, December 9, from 3-5 P.M.

THE TWO DOCTORS HULBURT

This series is supposed to tell the medical history of Dennis, but I can't tell about one of the brothers Hulburt without telling of the other. They were the sons of Chauncey Hulburt, a farmer in East Sheldon, Vt. They grew up in a warm, close family, and were encouraged to improve themselves with an education, which they both earned by teaching in the district schools. Chauncey Munsell, or Munsell as he was called by his family, began his studies with Dr. Eaton, in nearby East Berkshire, where he later practiced. He concluded his studies at Berkshire Medical College and Vermont Medical College, which awarded him an M.D. In the meantime, his younger brother, Calvin, started his education at Dartmouth College. While there, he was assigned to teach a term at a district school in Harwich, MA. Here he learned that a doctor was needed at South Dennis, and soon brother Munsell was established as the village doctor here. He brought with him a young and fragile wife, an eagerness to be of service, and a fine sense of fun and humor. He also brought with him a farm boy's love of the soil, and soon his garden was the envy of the neighborhood. Brother Calvin had by this time completed Andover Theological School and been awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Dartmouth College. He shared Munsell's love of fun and often visited, and preached at the local church while here. I'm sure his visits were welcome, for Dr. Munsell had more than his share of trials. Having already lost his only son, he soon carried his young wife to her grave. But with his optimistic outlook on life, he was remarried to Lydia (Doane) Chase of Harwich, a widow with two daughters. The eldest, Mary, seems to have been a rather grim type, but young Hattie soon became the apple of her step-father's eye. Great was the sadness when she, too, suffered an early demise, following her mother to the grave by only three months. Left alone, Dr. Hulburt devoted himself to the town, serving as school health officer, doctor to the poor in and out of the almshouse, a mainstay of the church, and friend and physician to citizens all over the town. Throughout this lonely but productive period of his life, he was often comforted by the presence of the reverend doctor, who came to love the town as did Munsell. I will tell you more about these brothers next time.

OF WINTER CARNIVALS

Last year we had elaborate plans for a gala winter carnival, including ice boating, figure skating and broom hockey, with hot refreshments and a ceremonial bonfire. But we were to see our well-made plans "gae agley", as plans often do, due to the warmest and wettest February in recent memory. So this year our plans are less ambitious and we're getting an earlier start. If you are interested in old-fashioned winter fun, be alert for a period of cold long enough to freeze Scargo Lake and listen to the local radio stations for an announcement of a D.H.S. skating party. Figure skaters, ice boaters, broom hockey stars - you will all be welcome, too, and we will try to get a permit for a bonfire. All plans are subject to the weather, and if we consider the exceptionally mild Fall we have had, we may have our plans scrapped again!

MEMORY DAYS REVISITED

Due to hours of work by Ben Thacher, Sarah Kruger, Gail Hart and Phyllis Horton, we were able to relive the good times we had at Memory Days in each village last winter. Our deep appreciation to these four for the work they did to get our November program ready. The tapes from each village have been copied and can be borrowed if you care to hear them by calling Ben Thacher at Old Sound Museum, 385-8795. Below is a schedule for this year's Memory Days, all on Sunday afternoons. We are going to concentrate on Social Life Outside of the Home, but I'm sure no one will mind hearing any stories you care to share. Please make note of the dates and join us.

Jan. 13	West Dennis Community Building	2:30 to 5 P.M.
Feb. 3	Senior Center, South Dennis	3-5
Mar. 3	Carleton Hall, Dennis	3-5
Mar. 17	East Dennis	3-5
April 14	V.I.C., Dennis Port	3-5

CALENDAR

Dec. 6 Thurs. Board meets, home of Gail Hart 7:30 P.M.
Dec. 9 3-5 Christmas at the Manse
Dec. 16, 1773 Boston Tea Party. Drink hot chocolate.
Jan. 9, 1985 3-5 P.M. West Dennis Community Building - West Dennis Memory Day

MAPS AND MAPMAKERS

High on my list for Christmas books is that new book about cartography (family please note!) Of course, now that satellites peer down and photograph the outline and contours of the earth's land masses, the art of mapmaking has become a much different and easier process. I marvel at the accuracy of the early maps, done as they were largely by the acuity of the eye. There are several early maps of Dennis. Among them is the one done in 1795 by Elisha Bassett, showing not only the boundaries of the town, but the location of Meeting Houses, bridges and ferries. Another, drawn by Benj. Matthews in 1834, has tiny trees drawn in areas which were then wooded. This map also shows early roads. But it was not until 1858 that we had a map which showed where people lived. A man named A.F. Walling did an atlas of the entire Barnstable County, with the names of residents written along each street. Through the kindness of Sylvia Hoseley, we are now able to offer you a copy of a portion of the Dennis map, showing Dennis village and East Dennis, each house labelled with the 1858 owner's name. The Water Cure Establishment is clearly identified as is the M.E. Church, now Carleton Hall, the District Schools and no fewer than three windmills. The maps have been printed on heavy stock, and are available framed for \$22 (plus \$1.10 tax) or unframed for \$5 (plus 25¢ tax) until Christmas only. After Christmas, they will be \$8 unframed and \$25 framed. The maps, both framed and unframed, will be available at the Open House at the Manse, or unframed by mail, address MAPS, Box 607, So. Dennis, MA 02660, and include 75¢ per map for mailing. A nice Christmas gift for someone who owns one of these old houses!

CHRISTMAS ANGELS

I agree in principle with the Puritans. The Christmas season has been lengthened out to the absurd, and it is highly commercialized. But unlike many, I never get tired of hearing those old Christmas carols. My favorite is "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear." I always did like angels, but my vision of the heavenly host is not that of white-clad, tinsel-winged cherubs such as we so often see on Christmas cards and tree decorations. My vision of angels is inspired by the panel called "The Adoration", painted by Edwin Howland Blashfield which hangs in the meeting house of the South Dennis Congregational Church, the church where I grew up. Mr. Blashfield was one of this country's foremost muralists, and the public buildings which he decorated, among them the Library of Congress, are some of this nation's most valued art treasures. Mr. Blashfield lived and worked in South Dennis much of the time just before his death in 1936. One of my earliest memories is of being led on tippy-toes into the grand studio which had been added to their antique Cape home, there to watch the artist at work. The panel in the South Dennis Church was painted in that studio. Blashfield's angels are beautiful creatures. They are depicted bigger than life, kneeling with golden wings furled, and hands folded. Their robes are in rich earthy colors and patterns, and a raised and sculptured halo of gold rests on their dark hair. These are angels of strength and magnificence, and one could imagine them capable of hovering over the earth, as they transmitted their heavenly message. Although the picture is not as well known as the Rockwell mural at the Cinema - alas, fewer people visit churches than visit the theater - it is a famous work of art of which this town's citizens should be aware, and proud. If you have never seen Mr. Blashfield's angels, I am sure that the good people of the South Dennis Church would welcome you to any of their Christmas services. There, in that simple white meeting house, apart from the noisy, weary world, you can rest and perhaps come close to capturing the awesome feeling of the shepherds in the field as described by St. Luke, and perhaps come away with that message of peace and hope in your heart. Happy Holidays!

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