

CALENDAR

February 26	8:00	Wixon School	Banjo Dan Concert (See article below)
February 26, 27	Noon	The Columns, West Dennis	Mid-Winter Festivity - Brunch \$6 (See article)
March 23	7:30	Carleton Hall	"Rescue 36500" Talk and slides about an important boat in the Life Saving service, USCG

Also of interest to our members: Provincetown Day -- March 10, Robert Prescott.
Lunch at Red Inn. Call Paula Bacon 394-5739

STREETS OF OUR TOWN

Our grown-up children all love Cape Cod and have a great deal of fun when we all get together here in South Dennis, as we did at Christmas time. But as teenagers growing up, how they would have laughed if they had heard sleepy old Dennis referred to as "Funn Town"! Yet that is an actual historic nickname for a small part of our town and its background is very interesting. On the hilltop near where Route 134 (The Old Mail Road) intersects with Route 6A (The Old County Road), there lived in the 1800's several sons of Stephen Sears--Jonathan, Luther, Josiah and Levi. They were all farmers and cranberry growers just like their neighbors, but unlike their neighbors the Sears engaged in industry. They manufactured a substance known as lampblack, a form of pure carbon used in the manufacture of inks and paint. It is produced by burning a fuel with high carbon content in a structure called a Funn. Built of bricks, each funn was a nearly air tight structure resembling a large igloo. When the burning of the fuel was completed, the soot, lampblack, was scraped from the inside of the funn, packed in a barrel, carted to the East Dennis Wharf and shipped off to Boston. The manufacture of lampblack was carried on at the hilltop in East Dennis from as early as 1840 to after 1875, but more exact dates I cannot find. The area where the funns stood was nicknamed "Funn Town" and the brick foundations of the funns were still visible in the 1930's. I cannot discover how the Sears became involved in this business somewhat foreign to the Cape. But this small industry, which spanned several decades, has left its legacy to our town in the name of Funn Pond Road, one of the Streets of Our Town.

RESCUE!

Our March meeting will feature a slide and talk presentation by William Quinn of the Orleans Historical Society concerning the rescue from destruction by deterioration of the Coast Guard rescue boat 36500. Including some spectacular aerial pictures of the rescue of the crew from the Pendleton off Chatham, the evening is sure to be exciting and informative. There will be no admission charge, but we will accept donations to the fund established by our sister (or brother?) historical society for the preservation and maintenance of this historic rescue boat, an important link in the Coast Guard Rescue and Lifesaving service, and an important part of Cape Cod's history. Please come, March 23, 7:30 P.M., Carleton Hall.

BANJO DAN FROM THE VERMONT HILLS

In cooperation with the Community Schools program, we are privileged to co-sponsor a concert of Blue Grass music played by Banjo Dan and the Midnight Plowboys, at the Wixon School on February 26 at 8 P.M. This is an outstanding Country Music Group, and comes to us through the auspices of the Arts Council. Tickets are \$4 for adults and \$2 for children, and may be obtained at the School, at the Music-smith in the Mall, and at the Health Food store in Orleans, or call 394-5739.

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

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DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Edited and compiled by Nancy Thacher Reid

THE CAPE CODGER SPEAKS

Snow didn't keep the hardy away from our January meeting at which Ben Thacher spoke on Cape Codgers and their delightful way of speaking. We soon warmed up, as chuckles turned to laughter at the telling of tales of Cape Cod characters of yesteryear. Some of the oldtimers stood around jawing after the meeting and more stories were exchanged. "Have you lived here all of your life?", asked a newcomer. "No, ma'am," replied Mr. Thacher, "Not yet." The classic Cape Cod humor depends on understatement, and it would be an understatement to say that all enjoyed the evening. One old timer was heard to remark as he left the hall, "I haven't had so much fun in a coon's age!" Thanks, Mr. Thacher.

AH, FEBRU - WEARY!

Our annual Mid-Winter Festivity is designed to relieve the Februwearies. Plan to join us at The Columns for Brunch, hear about the progress of The Year of the School and also a report on the media show under production. Mr. Walter Morley, principal of the Ezra H. Baker School will be our guest and we hope a member of the school's first faculty will, also. Door prizes, good conversation and a beautiful old home, tastefully "recycled" as a modern restaurant, should make the day bright. Brunch includes choice of seafood crepe, chicken à la king, vegetable, potato, fruit salad, garden salad, breads and butter, pastries, and beverages. For reservations, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope together with a check for \$6 per person to: Joshua Crowell, Box 936, Dennis, MA 02639. February 27 - Social hour 12 - 1, Brunch at 1.

EDUCATION IN DENNIS 1859 - 1929

The tiny one-roomed district schools had served the children for over a hundred years when the first move was made to build larger graded schools. The first of these two-storied buildings was constructed in Dennis in 1859 across from Carleton Hall where the fire station now stands. Town meeting reports indicate some controversy, as many wanted to retain their little neighborhood schools, and others thought the location was too close to the burying ground. Nevertheless, the school committees for the two North Dennis districts persevered and the school was opened. Soon East Dennis proudly announced that they would erect "a new two-story and commodious school house," which was built next to Worden Hall in 1862. Progress in education was slowed by the Civil War, but resumed in 1865 when the Dennisport School was erected on Depot Street. The School Committee proudly proclaims in the report for 1866-67 that the Town Meeting has decided to build two more schoolhouses, West and South, which when completed will "introduce as perfect a system of graded schools as can well be adapted in a country town." The town had furthermore shown its interest in the education of its youth by the appropriation of \$5,500 for the support of its public schools. There were 744 scholars in the public schools of Dennis that year, taught by 7 males and 18 females. The average wage per month was \$53 for males and \$23.31 for females. And the average cost per pupil was \$7.40! "Let all our citizens be as earnest and as faithful, as the facilities and means granted by the town are liberal, and we shall reap, we doubt not, a rich reward for our so-doing." But in 1929, as we shall see another time, these facilities were described by the new Superintendent, Chester R. Stacy, in somewhat less glowing terms.

WOMEN WHO WENT TO SEA

Although Lucy Lord Howes had suffered a harrowing experience at the hands of Confederate privateers, who plundered and burned the clipper ship Southern Cross, she nevertheless returned to sea when her husband assumed command of the Bark Lubra, involved in China Trade. Capt. Howes had concluded some successful trading in Hong Kong and the vessel was loaded with tea and spices. They sailed on Sept. 22, 1863, to cross the Pacific and return to Boston. One day out of port they were overtaken by Chinese pirates, one of the greatest dangers of the China trade. The pirates boarded the Bark, terrorized and killed most of the crew, and for six hours, plundered and destroyed, before killing Capt. Howes before his wife's eyes, and leaving the vessel adrift and badly disabled. Lucy Lord Howes and the First Mate, who had survived, managed to work the vessel back to Hong Kong where Lucy accepted an offer from another Cape Captain to return her and her two children to their Dennis home. Captain Benjamin Perkins Howes, her late husband, was but 30 years old at the time of his death. Their infant son did not survive, but their little daughter Carrie Bertha grew up in Dennis and married her cousin, Charles Wesley Howes. One wonders what nightmares of days at sea haunted her young life.