



THE BRIDGE FROM LONG NECK

Perhaps you have noticed that both South Dennis and West Dennis have a Cove Road each leading to Grand Cove on Bass River. There was a time when the two roads were connected by a bridge. In fact, in the 1840's that bridge was very much a topic of discussion, you might even say controversy, for at several town meetings in those years a petitioned article to build such a bridge was introduced. Many felt there would be distinct advantages for the entire town, if a short cut could be built connecting the thriving village of West Dennis, with its shipyard, salt works, wharves and piers to the equally busy village of South Dennis, and thus to north shore villages of East Dennis and Dennis with their packet lines to Boston. Many other voters, however, felt such a bridge was an extravagance in which the town should not indulge and the article was tabled every time it was presented. Undaunted, the proponents of the bridge sent a petition to the General Court of the Massachusetts Legislature in 1848, asking permission for the County to undertake the project and they were successful. In the Acts and Resolves, Chapter 35 of 1849, can be found the authority for the County of Barnstable to lay out a highway, and "cause a bridge to be built across Bass River at Grand Cove near the Western end of Long Neck, to a point near the dwelling house of Francis Small." The act was approved on March 16, 1849, but it was not until 1852 that plans were completed and specifications drawn up for the bridge. One of the problems to be taken into consideration was the fact that some of the fishermen who called Bass River their home port were accustomed to winter their vessels in the Cove, thus necessitating a draw bridge to be part of the span. It was finally built in 1853 and proved a great convenience. The West Dennis reporter to the Yarmouth Register says in 1857, "... (the land) is somewhat elevated (and) the sight-seer can command from thence an admirable view of the surrounding country.....before many years this will be the "Fifth Avenue" of West Dennis and South Dennis." To appreciate fully the writer's enthusiasm, one must remember that in the mid-1800's hardly any trees stood to interfere with the view of Bass River, making much of South and West Dennis property with "a view of the water."

The bridge served the town's citizens with but little attention until a mid-winter storm of 1905 when ice in the river, wind-driven, damaged the superstructure and caused the collapse of the middle section. The Town Meeting that February voted to discontinue the bridge and remove the collapsed section. West Dennis citizens joined those of South Dennis in lamenting the loss of their convenient connection. Petitions to reconsider the vote to abandon the bridge were circulated, but all to no avail. As late as 1910, a petitioned warrant article was introduced to rebuild the bridge, but defeated. Due to the continued deterioration of what was left of the bridge the matter was thereafter dropped.

D.H.S. has recently come into possession of two different pictures of the old Cove Bridge. One is a photograph looking west from Long Neck, South Dennis, located at a yard sale in South Dennis by Carol Horton and purchased for the Society's collection. The other is a view from the West Dennis side, an enhanced photograph showing many of the structures surrounding Grand Cove on both the West Dennis and South Dennis side. The picture comes to us from Clifton Chase Nickerson through the kindness of Pauline Derick. Wilson Scofield has reproduced this latter picture, in his usual artistic fashion, and it will illustrate the souvenir menu for our Mid-Winter Luncheon of 1992.

CHECKED YOUR OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC LATELY?

Remember that in January we printed a comparison between the weather forecast in the almanac of 1792 and the weather as recorded by Mr. Nathan Stone? Here's a comparison for January 1992, between Old Farmer's Almanac prediction and the actual weather.

ACTUAL	OFA PREDICTED
	Avg. temp 35° -- 6° above average
	Precip. 2.5"--1.5" below average
Jan 1-3 Sunny, Moderate	Jan 1-2 Sunny then milder
Jan 4 Rain (snow elsewhere)	Jan 3-6 Northeaster
Jan 6-8 Moderate for the season	heavy rain. Mild
Jan 9 Rain	Jan 7-9 Sunny, cold
Jan 10-13 Sunny, warm for season	Jan 10-12 Heavy rain
Jan 14-15 Rainy, wind NE, cold	Jan 13-16 Sunny, mild
Jan 16 Snow, about 1 inch	
Jan 17-22 Cold, windy	Jan 17-19 Light snow, seasonable
Jan 23 Ice, sleet and rain	Jan 20-25 Flurries, milder
Jan 25 Sunny, windy, cold	
Jan 26-28 Cold, snow flurries	Jan 26-28 Snowstorm
Jan 29-31 Partly sunny, mild	Jan 29-31 More snow, clearing

How does this stack up on the average against the predictions of Mr. Lowe in 1792?

CALENDAR

Feb 12 7:30 P.M. Lincoln's Birthday.....and the board meets at Dick Howes'
Feb 14 Happy Valentine's Day
Feb 15 12 noon Mid-Winter Festivity at Christine's Restaurant, West Dennis
Feb 17 President's Day
Feb 22 George Washington's Birthday--what would he think if he could see us today?!

THE SOUTH DENNIS MEETING HOUSE AUTHENTIC "PERIOD RESTORATION"

One of the most exciting preservation projects currently underway in Dennis is the authentic "period restoration" of The Congregational Church of South Dennis' 1835 Meeting House on Main Street in South Dennis. Presently in a state of sad disrepair, this ambitious restoration, which follows the general guidelines and sentiments of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), calls for the meticulous restoration of the Meeting House in detail which would have been found at the time when it was built. We are fortunate that painstaking efforts have been made to research and authenticate the approach to this restoration effort. Plans call for complete restoration to the entire body of the Meeting House, from weathervane to foundation, including true restoration of the main spire, corner "spirettes on the belfrey roof with Gothic railing connectors, faithful restoration of the three clock faces, installation of a red cedar roof over the entire main sanctuary, and, of course, a thorough preparation of the sidewall surfaces prior to hand-brushed application of traditional white paint. The beautiful hand-hewn window shutters will be repaired, mended and restored wherever necessary, rehung on pintels and hinges, and painted the classic Essex Green color of record. The "Friends of The South Dennis Meeting House" are working towards completion of this project. If you are interested in helping with the restoration of this important South Dennis landmark you may write to The Congregational Church of South Dennis, Post Office Box 52, South Dennis, MA 02660, or stop in at the Church office, 218 Main Street for an attractive flyer and/or information. It's a great way to remember or honor a family member, perhaps the original homeowner/housewright of an antique home, a past resident of the villages, or just as a way of helping to keep a small corner of Cape Cod special. Success to all such good work.

BICENTENNIAL BIT

One of the most far reaching projects sponsored by the Bicentennial Committee planning for the celebration of the town's anniversary is the creation of a workbook about the town's history for the Ezra H. Baker School. Activities such as puzzles, word finds and scrambles will be used. Interspersed will be facts about the town's past especially the lives of the children of past eras. The working title is "The Young People's History of the Town of Dennis". Artist Lynn Nardini is creating original art work. Nancy Reid is consulting for historical information, and the faculty of the school will be asked to advise as to appropriateness of subject matter and difficulty. Our thanks to Jan Halverson and Mary Larkin, both residents of Dennis who have had previous experience in a similar project, and have allowed us to review their work and learn from it. It is anticipated that the "Young People's History" will also be made available to interested folks outside of the school. We'll keep you posted.

MID-WINTER REMINDER

Here's a reminder to get your reservations in soon for the Mid-Winter Festivity at Christine's Restaurant, West Dennis on February 15. Social hour at 12 noon and luncheon at 1:00 P.M. The Mid-Cape Chorus will serenade us after lunch. The Old Farmer's Almanac says, Feb. 13-15 "A balmy spell, then cold as hell" for the next week--Feb. 16-18. Come join us while the weather promises to be good. See last month's newsletter for the reservation form, or send \$11.00 per person with a choice of Baked Chicken or Scrod to: Joshua Crowell, Box 963, Dennis, MA 02638 with a self-addressed, stamped envelope so he can return your tickets.

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