



### ICE IS NICE---EXCEPT WHEN IT'S NOT!

This past month of snow and ice and rain and ice and ice and more ice has led many of us to feel that we've had enough of that three letter word. Cape Cod Hospital has treated a goodly number of people who have met their downfall due to the ice. Personally, I prefer my ice in a glass or an ice cream freezer and not on the ground, but perhaps that's just another sign that I'm 'getting on'. At any rate, we've had plenty of opportunity to bless the DPW for sending out the sanders. In my youth they would dispatch a truck of sand with two men in the back to spread sand by the shovelful while the truck drove slowly along the roads in town. That was an all-day and all-night labor intensive job (not to mention how cold it must have been in the back of the truck). Today one man in a heated truck can turn on a sander with the flick of a switch and do the job in just a few hours. That's one of the better kinds of progress we've seen here in Dennis.

But, not everyone seems averse to a little ice. There were a number of people ice fishing on Scargo Lake---just like the old days. Also, the Dennis Fire Department Rescue Team was practicing rescue procedures under the ice with scuba equipment---definitely not like the old days. A number of ponds and cranberry bogs had their share of skaters trying out the new Christmas blades---and that brought back old memories. In Dennis and East Dennis a lot of the people went skating on Scargo Lake and the others used the nearest cranberry bog. In South Dennis Fresh Pond was good, but a little off the beaten path. In later years Fire Chief, Post Master, and Village Grocer Clarence Bayles would flood the cedar swamp across the street from his store in the winter and that was a wonderful place for everyone to skate. In West Dennis Kelley Pond drew the Nancy Kerrigans of the 1890's. Can you imagine skating with long, heavy skirts and petticoats flapping around your skates? In Dennis Port everyone headed for the Plashes. Remember Crack-the Whip and the bonfires that kept us all from freezing?

Of course, when you were skating on the big ponds you had to be careful to stay away from where they had been cutting ice. That was a big business for a number of years. Edgar Wixon cut ice and had an ice house on the Plashes, and his son Nathaniel (Than) Wixon followed in the business to provide ice for their summertime fishing business. Joseph Chase also had an ice house there furnishing ice for himself and the Busalacchi Brothers who fished from West Dennis Beach and later from Herring River. Earlier Capt. Jonathan P. Edwards harvested ice from the Plashes for his Dennis Port Fishing Co. Barnabus Sears and later his son-in-law Smith R. Kelley cut ice on White's Pond, half in Dennis and half in North Harwich, but retailed it in Dennis Port during the summer. Stephen Eaton cut ice in West Dennis, probably on Kelleys Pond, Ruben A Baker on Fresh Pond in South Dennis and on Scargo Lake it was Nathan A Howes, later followed by his son Anson Hedge Howes. The Nobscussett Hotel also had an ice house on Sacrgo. It must have taken a lot of ice to satisfy their guests in the summer.

There were a number of smaller independent businessmen who cut and stored ice for their own particular use, such as Southworth Nye who cut ice on a small pond on his property, stored the ice in an addition on his barn and used it to keep the meat fresh in his butcher shop on South Street (now Rt. 6A), Dennis. That shop is now the Cape Playhouse. D. H. Sears of East Dennis had an ice house on Cedar Pond and used the ice in the manufacture of ice cream---for which he became locally famous.

The ice cutting and ice houses were pretty sell standardized. A team of men would score the ice in squares, cut it with special ice saws, then use a horse or horses to drag the blocks of ice up a ramp into the ice house. The ice house was specially constructed with extra thick walls and the ice was packed in hay or sawdust to insulate it against the warm weather. Some of us can remember when there was an ice box in the kitchen and the ice man came to make deliveries. In my mother's day he came around with a horse and wagon with some scales hanging off the back and the blocks of ice covered with a heavy canvas to retard the melting. In my youth Albert Crowell of West Dennis came to our house with ice and I seem to remember that a 25 pound block of ice cost 50¢---and you had to remember to empty the drip pan under the ice box or the water would be all over the floor. Wouldn't our great grandmothers have loved a self-defrost refrigerator? In later years the Cold Storage Plant at Sesuit Harbor made ice with steam generated refrigerating equipment---a lot of technology, but not much romance.

A popular pastime in earlier days was fishing for eels through the ice. Fried eels or eel stifle is a delicacy to some old Cape Codders and there is a special art to fishing for them. Fred Kent of Barnstable became famous for his eel spears throughout the Cape and southeast Massachusetts. Another favorite sport was ice boating which was enjoyed on all the larger lakes on the Cape, but locally on Scargo Lake. The ice boats were all home made, basically a three runner sled with a wooden deck, metal runners, a tiller to steer the runners and a sail to provide the running power. A person could get the ride of his life depending on how hard the wind was blowing.

A final note on ice. On Saturday, January 29 the local authorities were called to Sea Street Beach in Dennis Port because a seal was reportedly frozen in the ice. A number of people assembled to watch this little drama unfold. What they saw was a seal laying on top of the ice soaking up some sun (on our first sunny day in weeks!), stretching, flapping his flippers and thoroughly enjoying his time on the ice.

### MID-WINTER REMINDER

Time is running short for you to order your tickets for the Mid-Winter Luncheon. Use the order sheet in last months newsletter or call Joshua Crowell at 385-3689. It's always great fun to get out with our DHS friends and while away a winter afternoon.

### CALENDAR

Feb. 9 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meets with President Lu Crowell.  
Feb. 12 12 Noon Mid-Winter Festivity at Christine's Restaurant, West Dennis.  
Banish the mid-winter blues and listen to the Mid-Cape Chorus.  
Feb. 14 Happy Valentine's Day to all.

### MORE ABOUT HENRY

Our guest writer, Joshua Crowell, is on a roll. Last month's article about Henry Chapman brought other Henry recollections to mind, so here he is with more on one of the interesting men of our town.

Henry R. Chapman (1838-1911) was a hard working, respected citizen of East Dennis. A farmer, landowner, and life long bachelor, Henry was highly vocal at Town meetings. His barn was situated on 6A where the first house east of Palmer Lane now stands. His house was next easterly of the barn, but was moved away in the 1930's and replaced by another house moved onto that site. He had another large barn just west of Sears Road on the south side of 6A. The 1910 Assessors Report lists Mr. Chapman's taxable property as: 1 horse, 5 cows, 3 yearlings, 1 bull, 1 ox, 2 dwellings, 2 barns, sheds, 10½ acres of cleared land, 62½ acres of pasture, 41 acres of woodland and 21½ acres of cranberry bogs. He did most of his farming and bog work with oxen. The record shows that he kept a horse also, that was probably for personal transportation. This horse drawn vehicle became a liability in his later life, and probably contributed to his death. Henry in a horse-drawn carriage was involved in an accident with an early motor vehicle near the Airline-6A four corners (known in my early years as "Annie Rooney Four Corners"--although I have no idea why it was called that) which left him a semi-cripple for the remainder of his life. Because of the injuries suffered in the accident Henry used a walking aid thereafter. Instead of employing a cane he used a lath to assist his walking. Webster describes a lath as "a thin, narrow strip of wood that could be nailed to rafters, joists, or studding as a groundwork for slats, tiles of plaster". In that era nearly every rural resident kept a bundle of 4 foot spruce laths, which were used for many repair and building purposes. At Crowellton, father always kept a bundle of laths overhead in the corn crib. When he sent either of his sons for one (or more) of these utilitarian strips of wood he would refer to it as a Henry Chapman Walking Stick.

Thanks, Josh, these old time stories are great. We'll take another any time. Also, if any of our readers have some old time Dennis recollections we'd love to hear them. Jot them down and mail to: Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660.

P.S. There was one other Henry fact that Josh decided to omit from his narrative, but he'll tell you if you ask him in person.

### 1994 SCHOOL PROGRAM

The dates have been established for this years Ezra Baker School third grade program at the Josiah Dennis Manse. It will be held on May 16, 17, 19 and 20 of the first week and May 23, 24, 25, and 26 of the second week from 11:30 - 2:30. Can you believe we now have eight third grade classes in Dennis? When I was in third grade at Dennis Consolidated School there were 36 students and 1 teacher. The teacher/student ration has improved since then, but still, 8 third grades....my, how we've grown.

This program has expanded over the years and is now a very informative, hands-on learning experience for the students. They assume old-fashioned names, put on Colonial costumes and learn what life was like for boys and girls in the 1700's. Our biggest fans are the parents who come through now as chaperones and remember doing the program when they were in the third grade. The program is in serious need of some new recruits. Several of our long-time volunteers have retired and we need replacements. Come one, come all. The work is easy, the pay is nil, but the rewards are wonderful. Reading the students letters after their visit will give you a warm glow that will last for a long time. If you can possibly help--even for one day--it would be greatly appreciated. You will get training, and it's all much easier than you would think. To help in the program call Nancy Howes at 385-3528. She'll be delighted to hear from you....and so will the kids!!

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