



A 1935 ICE SKATING ADVENTURE

The November '95 newsletter appeal for donations towards the markers honoring Dennis servicemen who died during World War II brought a check from Betty Dean Holmes along with a story about one of the servicemen, Wallace Doane. Betty has honored my request to use her story in a newsletter. Looking out on this snowy day it seems an appropriate time for a winter tale.

"One bitter, cold morning, we Dean kids had been warned by our parents that the ice wasn't very thick and not yet safe for skating. We were not to go. Ignoring our parents warning, Sally, Priscilla, and Betty Dean joined a group of older Dennisport kids riding up to North Harwich in the back of a green pick-up truck driven by Brenard Taylor's older sister, Elizabeth, to go skaing on a cranberry bog. It was fairly safe to skate on the cranberry bogs, as the water used to flood them in winter was seldom very deep, except at the ditches surrounding each bog. All the kids skated across a small flooded cranberry bog, with little seven year old Betty tagging along last. Betty couldn't skate fast or well.

The boys and girls skated up to the earthen dike between two cranberry bogs and climbed over to the big expanse of ice on the larger bog. Betty hurried to catch up. When Betty reached the area of the ditch just in front of the dike, the thin ice broke and in she went. In those days ski suits were thick wool, pretty wide-legged and extremely heavy when wet. Betty was in the ditch right up to her shoulders in mighty cold water. She yelled loudly, with all her might, for help.

Hearing her cry, nine year old Wallace Doane, a little bigger than Betty, skated back, climbed over the dike, down onto solid ice, laid flat out on the ice in front of a very scared Betty, and struggled mightily, hauling on the shoulders of her jacket, to pull her out. Once out of the water, the gang of kids, who'd by now returned, hurried soaked Betty to the nearest farm house.

The woman of the house, Mrs. Chase, stood dripping wet Betty up on her wooden kitchen table, in front of a big warm black cookstove, and proceeded to quickly strip the icy clothes off that shivering little girl and wrapped her in a warm knit afghan to thaw out and warm up. Betty was too cold and scared to complain but she clearly remembers being quite embarrassed that Mrs. Chase's two high school sons were watching as all her icy clothes were removed!

Though we were scared to tell our father, Louis Dean, we'd disobeyed, middle sister Priscilla, age eight, bravely telephoned home, Harwich 276, told Dad what had happened and to please come and get us. He asked, "Where are you?" She answered, "We're at Chase's. We're at a white house with green shutters up in North Harwich." Dad said that was very little help as "about every other white house with green shutters in North Harwich had a family named Chase living in it." Eventually our frantic Dad, driving his little dark green 1934 Ford panel truck, found the right house. Dad came into Mrs. Chase's kitchen, bringing big brown furniture blankets that he used for delivering new or returning repaired radios in their polished wooden cabinets to his customers. Dad wrapped the still shivering little Betty in the quilted furniture blankets. We both thanked Mrs. Chase for all her help and as he carried snugly wrapped Betty to the car to take her home, her Dad told her she was his "real live radio". He put her in the front seat of the truck, near the heater. Sally and Priscilla, carrying Betty's wet clothes, sheepishly got in the back of the truck for the ride home. We were all three in disgrace!

Our understandably upset parents confined we three sisters to our yard for what seemed to me a lifetime, but in reality was probably a week or two. In the future we paid strict attention when our folks said the ice wasn't yet safe!

The following day, I stood forlornly in our front yard on Main Street in the center of Dennisport, confined behind our white picket fence watching the neighborhood kids playing across the street, in the empty lot between the First National Store and Mrs. Estey's Hat Shoppe. Wallace Doane walked down the sidewalk right past me. I grabbed his arm and thanked him and thanked him for saving my life. He was very embarrassed by my thanks. In fact, he got so embarrassed, he drew back his arm and socked me, which gave me a black eye. I never thanked him again.

I learned that Wallace Doane died in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. But Wallace Doane was a real hero to my family long before he went into the service."

1995 Betty Dean Holmes

Many older Dennis folks still fondly remember when Dennis Port was the "hub of our universe". Everyone came to do their weekly shopping at the Economy and First National Stores, get a haircut from Russ Chase, buy shoes or a new frock from J. H. Small's, with maybe a new hat from Maude Estey, and finish up the day with an ice cream soda at Frank Estey's or Carl Maloney's drug stores. Included in the weekly trip was a visit to Louis E. Dean's Radio Shop to browse through the sheet music rack or check out the latest records, and gaze longingly at the shiny new Philco radios or portable record players.

P.S. It is quite possible that one of Mrs. Chase's high school sons was another of our lost servicemen. Mrs. Alton Chase, mother of Kenneth, lived in a white house with green shutters. The house was actually in Dennis, across the street from the Harwich town line

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MID-WINTER LUNCHEON RESERVATION FEBRUARY 24 CHRISTINE'S RESTAURANT

Please make reservations for \_\_\_\_\_ people. I enclose a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$11.00 each)  
(Tax and gratuity included)

Choice of entree: \_\_\_\_\_ Baked Stuffed Sole \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken Christine

Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope and sent to: Mr. Joshua Crowell  
Box 963 Dennis, MA 02638

#### CALENDAR

Feb. 2 Groundhog Day. Will he or won't he??  
Feb. 14 St. Valentine's Day. Here's a hug from Ye Olde Ed!  
7:00 P.M.\* DHS Board meets with Susan and Henry Kelley. \*Note time change.

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and several cranberry bogs where "Chum" Taylor quite often took kids to skate.

Many thanks, Betty! These wonderful stories are the threads that are woven together into the fabric of what the real Dennis was and is. I sincerely urge any of you with a Dennis story to send it along to me. We shouldn't let all these bits of Dennis history die for lack of telling. Keep those cards and letters coming!

#### CELEBRATING AT THE MANSE

The Josiah Dennis Manse certainly put its best foot forward on December tenth for the DHS 1995 Christmas Open House. Susan Kelley and her skilled decorating team outdid themselves and Rev. Dennis' old homestead never looked more festive. Susan says the Manse just naturally lends itself to Christmas decorating. That may be, but it takes a talented touch to bring out all the o-o-hs and a-a-hs heard all afternoon from the large number of DHS members and friends who stopped by.

Pauline Wixon Derick was there for the dedication of the DHS library named in her honor. There were lots of smiles, a few tears, and dozens of flashbulbs going off around the room as President Brendon Joyce paid a lovely tribute to this grand lady for all her contributions to Dennis and its history.

Colonel Negus Punch reigned supreme on the groaning board in the keeping room. He makes more converts every year. There must have been a trillion calories tucked into those delicious goodies, but who was counting!

Very special thanks to Susan, Lu Crowell, Mrs. Martha Williams, Sarah Kruger, Nancy and Richard Howes, Maureen and Brendon Joyce, Beth Deck, Jean Twiss, Jim Coogan, Henry Kelley II and Phyllis Horton for all the holiday trimmings and to all the DHS bakers for the scrumptious treats.

#### A MID-WINTER TRIP TO CHINA

The 1996 Mid-Winter Festivity will take us away from the February snow and cold of Dennis to the exotic far away land of China as one of our members, Peggy Eastman, tells of her participation as a delegate to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held last late-August, early-September in Beijing, China. Peggy is the senior staff writer for the Cape Cod Times, a Dennis "girl", and an all-around interesting, lovely lady.

Dennis women have been leaders in gaining equality for women since the 1800's, and although much has been achieved over the years there is still more that needs to be done. Dennis women have also been going to China since the late 1700's and have brought back all sorts of interesting things. Come to Christine's Restaurant on February 24th to see and hear what Peggy brought back. Bring a friend to our 19th annual gathering to greet old friends and meet some new ones, socialize a bit and chase away those mid-winter blues! Social hour starts at 12 noon and luncheon at 1:00 P.M.

#### A FEW TIDBITS

The painting of the Schooner **Searsville** has been restored by Dr. Simon Coren and is back at the Manse looking almost as good as when artist William Hare put his brush down, stepped back, and said - "Finished!" Come by next summer and see how good it looks.... DHS Board member Jack Sheedy has resigned due to other commitments. Any volunteers to fill his position? Call Brendon Joyce at 385-6492....We have some new members: Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. MacMillin, Christina Gervant and Patricia B. Rothermel. Welcome to all, and a very belated but hearty welcome to Stephen P. Ellis who joined us in May....The windows are in at Jericho! -- the painting and papering are progressing and the fence is in. Everything is coming along nicely and the Jericho Committee is getting impatient to start "putting the house back together" -- a sure sign that Spring is right around the corner!

Dennis Historical Society  
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