



### MORE ON THE LITTLE HOUSE

Thanks to Red Chase, I have moved on in the research into the life of our Little House from West Dennis, now on Uncle Stanley's Way in South Dennis. One of the families who lived there was that of Lucretia Emmeline (Baker) Lewis. She was born December 21, 1808, the youngest daughter of Thankful (Winslow) and Captain Barnabas Baker. In 1829, she married Captain Orin Lewis. Although the Lewis' are mostly a Barnstable family, one interesting branch did move to West Dennis and were very prominent there. Lucretia and Orin became the parents of seven children. Capt. Lewis was well-known in maritime affairs, and several other Master Mariners of this town began their careers under his tutelage. In 1844, Capt. Orin was master of the schooner Francis Hallett, trading in the Caribbean Islands. Edward E. Crowell of West Dennis was his mate, Ed's first assignment as a ship's officer. The Francis Hallett was loaded with coffee at Aux Cayes, Haiti, and ready to leave for home when Capt. Lewis and some other crew members became ill with yellow fever, of which malady the Captain and some of his crew subsequently died. First Officer Crowell was a lad of but twenty years, and inexperienced, but he was forced to take command of the vessel, undermanned as she was, and set sail. Facing many difficulties with fortitude, the young man brought the vessel and her cargo safely home, although the voyage took nearly twice as long as usual.

Once safely in port, Mr. Crowell had the unpleasant duty of informing Lucretia of the death of her husband. Presumably, she took the news as most Cape wives were forced to do, with an outward display of courage, designed to hide her inward desperation. In those days, few seaman had any life insurance, and of course, no IRAs, 401 (k)s or Social Security. A widow with children was at the mercy of the town, being given what charity was available. It was common for the children of a widow to be "indentured" to other families, where they would work for their keep until legally of age. Lucretia and her children probably escaped such a fate as in the records it appears that her family remained intact. Perhaps this was because her father, Barnabas Baker, was a man of means and influence. More about Captain Baker and the history of the house next time.

### A NECESSITY OF LIFE IS BEING RESTORED

In this game of trying to preserve the history of Dennis, we win a few and we lose a few. As an example, the Josiah Dennis Manse Committee was dismayed when they were informed that the outhouse in back of the Manse was infested with termites! Some of you may have only a vague notion of what an outhouse is, but in the decades past, it was a necessity of life. In fact, in some families where niceties were very important, this useful building was referred to euphemistically as "the Necessary." It was so much of a necessity that we even have found reference to the small building in legal documents. A division of property of an intestate man in West Dennis gives as part of the widow's dower a room with its furniture, the use of the oven and the "privilege to pass and repass" through her sons' part of the house to the back door, in order to get to the Necessary. Could this "privilege" have been the root of another common euphemism, "privy?" Probably not, for my Oxford dictionary ascribes that term to the same Latin root as "private."

In all due respect to those who research the origin of words, "private" is not an adjective usually used to describe an outhouse. The one at the Manse was a three-holer. I remember the one at my grandfather's house. It was a five-holer--three large seats for adults, two smaller, lower seats for children. There was also a neat square compartment for last year's copy of the Sears Roebuck catalog.

Well, the old outhouse at the Manse had to be torn down, lest the termites spread to the Manse itself. Fear not, however, all is not lost. With the united efforts of Steve Estey's crew and the Mighty Manse carpenters, a replica of ye old outhouse is being constructed. Thus the school children and other visitors to the Manse will still be allowed a glimpse at what was considered necessary in early Cape Cod Life.

### LAST CALL FOR LUNCH

DHS will meet and eat on Valentine's Day, our annual Mid-winter festivity, at Christine's in West Dennis, social hour at 12, lunch at 1 P.M. The Dennis Union Church Men's Chorus will serenade us after lunch. To make reservations for the luncheon, use reservation blank in last month's newsletter or call 385-3268.

## CALENDAR

Feb. 11 7:30 Board meets at Jericho House  
Feb. 12 LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY  
Feb. 14 MID-WINTER FESTIVITY, Christine's Restaurant, West Dennis  
See January Newsletter for details

### OUR CRANBERRY HERITAGE

The theme for the Heritage Cape Cod '98 Week is Traditional Cape Occupations. Certainly one that will be featured by many historic centers, including our own, will be the cranberry industry. We often have questions from visitors about cranberry culture, and those of us who live where the industry began should know some answers. Therefore, this month we begin a season by season series about cranberries and how they are grown. Each of you has a seasonal assignment, and it is to visit a bog at least once to view the natural changes which take place from season to season.

Every citizen of this town should know the story of how cranberry culture began. In early days, wild cranberries were gathered from the swamps all over Cape Cod. Each family had its own favorite place, and the Henry Hall family favored the wild bog between what is now Whig Street in Dennis village, and Cape Cod Bay. One fall, Henry cut his next winter's wood from the bluff between his cranberry crop and the Bay. Subsequently, the usual northeasters of the winter blew sand from the deforested dune across the end of his bog. Henry allowed as how he would have to pick from another spot that fall. But, surprisingly, the sanded portion of the old wild bog produced better than ever. Henry shared this news with neighbors, and soon all began to intentionally sand the swamps, with the same results. Still the cranberries were harvested solely for the family's use. But Alvin Cahoon of Harwich got word of the use of sand on cranberry swamps and tried it on his favorite wild bogs in Harwich. He had such good results, that he and others who he interested began to think of ways to introduce the cranberry as a commercial crop. We all know how the story ends. Cranberries and Cape Cod are now synonymous.

If, (I mean, "when"), you visit a bog in this season of winter, you may find it flooded. Flooding is done for many reasons, but winter flooding is done to protect the vines from the cold, especially cold spells accompanied by harsh winds. The layer of ice which forms provides insulation from the cold and protection from the drying effect of the winds. Growing up on Cape Cod, we kids all learned to skate on these flooded bogs, which provided a relatively safe surface, with only a little water below. Today, families can still be seen skating on a frozen bog.

From time to time, however, skaters are disappointed to find that the ice on "their" bog has been sprinkled with sand. Many take this to be a sign of mean-spiritedness on the part of bog owners, who wish to spoil the skaters fun. But that is not the case. The process of sanding is still an important part of bog culture. Sand provides good drainage, increased oxygenation, break down of debris into nutrients and insect control. To keep bogs healthy and productive, they should be re-sanded every few years. This is most easily accomplished by spreading the sand from trucks driven across ice.

In the early days of the industry, sanding was done by laying planks on the bogs and wheeling sand-filled wheelbarrows to all areas. Today, in open winters, sand can be spread by trucks with a hopper at the rear driven over the bog, but this can be injurious to roots. Spreading sand by helicopters is possible, but not practical because of expense and noise. Spreading the sand on ice remains the method of choice. So if you visit a frozen bog this month, bring your skates. But should you find the ice spread with sand, don't blame the grower. He is doing his best to maintain Cape Cod's reputation as The Land of Cranberries.

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