



### 1999 MID-WINTER FESTIVITY IS POT-LUCK

We're trying something a little different for our annual beat-the-winter-blues gathering this year. It will be a Pot-Luck Luncheon, at West Dennis Community Building, at 1 P.M. on Saturday, February 13. Each family unit is asked to bring a dish of your choice, salad, main dish, or dessert, and we will share the bounty. Never fear, board members have signed up for a variety of courses, so we won't be left with 50 desserts and no baked beans! Our program will be an appraisal of your personal antique, by John Schofield of Eldred Auction Company. So come along with your favorite cooked dish and your favorite old dish and join us for a fun afternoon.

### A.LINCOLN AND THE CRANBERRY TRADE

The anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birthday 190 years ago will probably pass with only a brief mention in the column headed "Today in History"-- oh, and maybe a "Lincoln's Birthday Sale" at the Mall. Not so in the days when a post-Civil War graded school stood in each of our five villages. In the darkness of February, Lincoln Day was a major celebration for school children. For weeks ahead of the date, essay contests were held and elocution classes practiced reciting the Gettysburg Address. On the 12th of February as many parents, grandparents and other citizens as could, gathered at their village school for the Lincoln Day Celebration. In most villages, there would be a surviving veteran of the Civil War, who would be the honored guest. The selected best essays would be read, and the winner of the elocution contest would recite that famous and moving address. A patriotic song having been sung, school was then dismissed, and the children enjoyed a rare winter holiday in honor of the nation's great hero.

Abraham Lincoln happens to be my own personal American hero of all time. I believe that his brief address at Gettysburg ranks among the most eloquent and meaningful speeches in all of American history. His words of wisdom, included in his public speaking and private correspondence, are equally memorable. "It is not wise to swap horses while crossing the river." "Truth is generally the best vindication against slander." "Let it be said of me that I never failed to pull a thistle and plant a flower wherever I thought a flower would grow."

A reference made in a very different speech from the Gettysburg Address is of special interest to us here in Dennis. It was first given in Bloomington, Illinois, October 4, 1853. Lincoln delivered the same speech in Peoria two weeks later and it was subsequently published. The subject was the struggle in Congress over restricting the admission of slave states to the union. It is a remarkable documentation of Lincoln's feelings, abhorring the institution of slavery, while admitting the legal and economic arguments of southern slave holders. But he was strongly opposed to allowing new slave states in the Union. In his dissertation he deplored the fact that pro-slavery factions were stating that the decision to allow slavery was purely a local matter. In commenting on the speech, biographer Stephen B. Oates paraphrased Lincoln's rebuttal of the pro-slavery argument this way. "It reduced a momentous national issue--the existence and growth of human bondage--to a purely local matter, equal in importance to the cranberry trade."

What did Lincoln, way out there in Illinois, know about the cranberry trade? He was right about it being a local matter, but the locality was at that time very much limited to Barnstable County. There were no official statistics about the industry until 1854. In that year, there were 197 acres on the Cape under cultivation for cranberries, Dennis leading the other towns with 50 acres. Benjamin Eastwood's book on cranberry cultivation was not published until 1856, and although there were scattered swamps in other eastern Massachusetts counties, the New Jersey crops were not planted. No doubt that his example of a matter of purely local concern was an apt one. It would be interesting to know why the cranberry trade was Lincoln's chosen metaphor.

### UNCLE EDWIN'S DESK PART 111

We've talked about the sons of Aaron and Polly Crowell, but what of the daughters? I have already told you about Huldah. She was born in 1812, and was the second child to be christened Huldah Hopkins Crowell, in honor of her maternal grandmother. The first Huldah had lived only a few weeks, one of four children of Aaron and Polly who died young. Two girls and a boy died in their infancy, perhaps born prematurely, or with congenital insufficiencies. Death of infants was not uncommon in the days before medical science developed vigorous treatments for newborns. Many children were never named, as parents foresaw that their lives on earth would be short. In other families, the ailing baby was named, and after it died, the next child of the same sex would be given the same name, as happened with Huldah Hopkins Crowell.

The fourth of the young children lost to Aaron and Polly was a son named Urbane. He had just past his fourth birthday when he met with a horrible accident, one which must have haunted his parents all of their lives. While playing in the keeping room, his clothes caught fire from the open fireplace and he died from his burns. Another son born in 1821 was named Urbane. At the age of 20, he was lost as sea. Our lives are so easy today!

More next time.

## CALENDAR

- February 10 7:00 P.M. DHS Board will meet AT JERICHO once again, due to work being done at the Manse
- February 13 1:00 P.M. Mid-Winter Festivity West Dennis Community Building  
Covered Dish Luncheon and antique appraisal. See article

### *Coming in March*

- March 10 7:00 P.M. DHS Board will meet AT JERICHO

### WINTER WONDER

Growing up on Cape Cod, it seems to me that winters were more fun than they are today. All of us kids would get together for skating, and, if the snow should fall, for sledding at Benny Miller's Hill. I remember building forts and having awesome snow ball fights, and taking walks along Main Street when everyone had chains on their tires and the streets were snow packed. I can hear the scrunch sound our boots made even today-- and also the clanking of those tire chains as the cars crept carefully along.

Then there was the switch from light fare to winter menus--Corn chowder, boiled dinners and fried oysters gathered from Bass River. Mother often baked bread in the cold season, and that meant fried dough for breakfast. Or perhaps old-fashioned, long-cooking oatmeal, set in the double boiler on the bake of the kitchen range overnight, to be served with butter and rich milk before we bundled up in boots, leggings, scarves and mittens and left for the school bus. Evenings, after the homework was done, Dad would set us up for a game of Canasta. We often had week long tournaments, with scores seesawing back and forth as one continuous game kept us in fierce competition.

Nowadays, my own grandchildren have never played Canasta, although even the youngest can beat Granny at "War." I picked Marielle up at Scargo School one noontime, when the weather prediction was for snow, and suggested that we might be able to build a snowman. But she allowed as how I would have to teach her. And if I suggested they dress in "leggings" I would surely get a quizzical look. And although some of my grandchildren live right here in South Dennis, I'll bet not one of them knows where Benny Miller's Hill is.

If winter is not as much fun on Cape Cod as it used to be, perhaps the problem is mine. I am no longer growing up on Cape Cod, I'm growing older! All right! next time it snows, I'll teach Mari how to build a snowman! And kids, get ready for a Canasta lesson. (I wonder where I put my recipe for overnight bread?)

### FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

We welcome the following as Life Members of DHS: Dorothy M. Bell; John M. Julian; John T. Sheedy.

New family and individual members since our last report in November are: Dr. and Mrs. Peter Barnes (Patricia); Mr. and Mrs. Howard Ells (Marguerite); Brian M. Devaney; Rev. and Mrs. Alex Gondola (Bonnie); Mr. and Mrs. Miles Murphy (Camilla); Mr. and Mrs. Peter C. November (Judith); and Dr. and Mrs. Robert G. White (Patricia). Welcome one and all. Please come to our Pot Luck Mid-Winter Festivity on February 13, 1 P.M. at West Dennis Community Building, and get acquainted with your fellow members.

### IN MEMORIAM

At a recent Board meeting it was voted to present a copy of Dennis Cape Cod: From Firstcomers to Newcomers to the Dennis town library for circulation, in memory of Virginia Van Vorst. She was for many years a devoted member of DHS and a long time resident of Dennis Port, actively advocating for the revitalization of that village. I know Virginia would be pleased at the decision to have the town library located in her village.

### HAPPY THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

In the darkness of February, try to remember  
We are closer to Spring than we were in September!

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