



BEGONE! WINTER BLUES

It's time to once again turn our thoughts towards stirring up a little February fun at the 18th annual Mid-Winter Festivity. In addition to the usual fine food and drink at Christine's Restaurant in West Dennis, and the splendid company in attendance, Program Chairman has arranged for a lively sounding group to entertain us. They are the Jovial Jazz, a six-piece band with singer Lorraine Barrie. The menu choice is Yankee Pot Roast Jardineire or Baked Stuffed Cranberry Chicken. Let's hope for better cooperation from Mother Nature than we had last year. One of the many of last winters snow storms occurred on Friday and by Saturday noon a few of our members hadn't been dug out. The ones who made it were busy relating how deep "their" snow was! Remember, reservations are required. The reservation form is below.

CHRISTMAS AT JERICHO

Overflow crowds came to Jericho for a little holiday cheer, Col. Negus Punch, and seasonal music. The weather was pleasant, the refreshments were delicious, and the decorations more than lived up to their advanced billing. Susan Kelley and her decorating team did their Victorian best and Jericho looked lovely in every little nook and cranny. Susan's helpers were Brendan Joyce, Kitty McNamara, Nancy Howes, Sarah Kruger, and Lu Crowell. Dennis Girl Scouts carolled outside to greet everyone as they arrived and later sang traditional holiday music inside with a lot of humming and singing-along from the audience. Steven Russell and Janice also lent a special ambiance to the afternoon with their interpretations of Old English and Early American songs.

FENCES, NEWSLETTERS, AND A WELCOME

There seems to be a bit of confusion in some parts about the proposed fence at Jericho. The fence around Jericho will be a three-rail fence with acorn-top posts--just like the one in front of Dennis Town Hall. The picket fence will be at the back of the lot around the memorial garden. Donations of \$130.00 have been received towards the fence. After the dust has settled from your Christmas bills please remember the Fence Fund.... In response to several requests DHS finally has some complete sets of the newsletter--from January 1978 to the present. They are available at \$20.00 plus postage for the set. To order call 394-0017 or 385-3689 or write to DHS, Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660....A very warm welcome to Rosemary Mailhot, recently appointed to fill a one year term on the DHS Board of Directors. Rosemary is from West Dennis and is on the Friends of Jericho Committee.

A VIGNETTE FROM WEST DENNIS

Recently I had occasion to call Eleanor Baker Hall (Mrs. Richard Sears Hall) to check some information about one of the post cards DHS recently had transferred to a slide. It showed the lovely home of Obed Frank Crowell, a West Dennis grocer, with his wife Pearl Gillion and small daughter Rebecca standing by the driveway. Eleanor and Rebecca were great friends as long as Rebecca lived. Eleanor's best remembrance of Rebecca in the early days when Main Street (now Rt. 28) was a dirt road was that Rebecca could have penny candy from her father's store any time she wanted it but Eleanor had to go to J. Harvey Jenks' monument store where her father, Robert Baker, was a stonecutter and sit around in the stone dust until her father decided to give her a penny--so she could go to Mr. Frank's store and make her selection.

Frank Crowell's house was struck by lightning and destroyed. Rebecca would not build again on that site. Instead she built her house at the back of the lot. For years there was a set of cement steps leading up to the empty lot where the house stood. In fact, they may still be there. I haven't look lately. It's two lots west of Christine's Restaurant.

DHS' single largest post card acquisition was when we purchased Rebecca Crowell Munroe's collection--primarily of West Dennis--after her death.

P.S.--Rebecca's mother, Pearl, was the daughter of William Gillion the West Dennis butcher who went door-to-door around the south side of town selling meats from his horse and wagon.

P.P.S.--In his later years Eleanor's father made and sold ornamental windmills from his home on Main Street, West Dennis. Eleanor's mother made homemade fudge and crocheted items to sell. Cape Codders have always been an industrious lot who could turn their hand to almost anything to provide a living. Their business was shown on post cards sold in West Dennis for many years--and are now collectors items.

MID-WINTER LUNCHEON RESERVATION FEBRUARY 11 CHRISTINE'S RESTAURANT

Please make reservations for _____ people. I enclose a check for \$ _____ (\$11.00 each)

Choice of entree: _____ Yankee Pot Roast _____ Baked Stuffed Cranberry Chicken

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

CALENDAR

Jan. 11 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meets with President Lu Crowell.
Feb. 11 12 noon Mid-Winter Festivity at Christine's Restaurant in West Dennis.
Social hour at noon, luncheon at 1:00.

YOU KNOW IT'S JANUARY WHEN....

..many mail calls find a seed catalog in the box which immediately starts you planning how to lay out the garden, remembering what things did well last year--and what didn't--and deciding what special, exotic, new flower or vegetable you will try this yearon cold, snowy days everyone's kitchen smells of homemade soup, stew, or freshly baked bread--what a treat!....the birds at the feeder seem so happy to find your offering, and you feel happy watching the antics of those delightful chickadees....sitting by the fire with a heaping bowl of popcorn and a good book or television show is by far preferable to going out into the cold....by the middle of the month you are definitely looking for the January thaw.

Earlier January days found all the above happening to people in Dennis with the exception of watching television. Years ago they had the debate at the Lyceum to look forward to for entertainment, and in January rehearsal would begin for the spring minstrel show at Carleton Hall--in those days a drafty place with a pot bellied stove that didn't throw heat very far. Many dances were held all over the Cape and Dennis people would go from Hyannis to Chatham by horse and buggy or early automobile to attend a dance, regardless of the weather. You know they loved to dance when you realize they went over dirt roads on a 20-24 mile round trip in a buggy. The side curtains may have kept out some of the wind but none of the cold. The only heat was from the pierced tin heater full of hot coals under the seat, the robe over their laps, and each other. Perhaps the latter is what generated the most heat!

There were many social and fraternal organizations that met at least monthly--sometimes more often. Doric Hall in West Dennis and Worden Hall in East Dennis, among others hosted numerous events to help pass the winter nights. Ocean Hall on the Dennis Port/West Harwich line was the scene of many good times on the south side of town. The first moving picture in this area was held at Ocean Hall (now the Harwich Junior Theater). Sometime during the movie it showed a train coming head on which caused a general pandemonium among the patrons. Chairs were overturned, people overrun, and panic reigned as people in the front rows tried to get out of the path of the oncoming locomotive. It was a laughing matter for years over which prominent man from the front row was the first one to reach the door--about four of them tried to exit at the same time through a one-person door. Weekly shows with local talent was held for years. Long time Dennis school teacher Susie Chase McHenry and her sister Thelma Chase Doane were perennial favorites. They were from a musical family and were accomplished pianists with good singing voices. They were on the bill every week and usually introduced a new song at least twice a month. They were noted for playing duets on the piano. Sometimes my father, their nephew who also had a good voice, would sing with Susie accompanied by Thelma. (When the Modern Theater was built in Harwichport to show silent movies Thelma was hired to play the piano.) There were several people who could always be counted on to give a reading, recite an original poem (often up to 50 verses!), and a couple who would demonstrate a new dance step when it reached this area. The cost of admission was minimal. On occasion these weekly interludes were taken over by some form of professional entertainment or a dance. The Mt. Horeb Lodge of the Masons held their meetings upstairs at Ocean Hall and would hold some of those meetings open to the public, usually accompanied afterwards with a collation downstairs. Almost every man in the two villages belonged to the Lodge so it must have been a full house when they held a public function.

Years later the one theme that ran through everyone's recollections of Ocean Hall was, "what a good time they used to have"!

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660

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