



### LADY SLIPPER WALK

Our June dates and deadlines didn't cooperate this year, so, a belated **thank you** to Dr. Norton H. Nickerson Jr. for his continuing interest in sharing his knowledge of the natural flora of the Town's beautiful conservation area known as the Indian Lands. The many friends and members of D.H.S. who have joined him for the walks over the years have come to anticipate them with pleasure each spring. Also, each year new walkers are introduced to this natural phenomena seen in few New England woodlands today. Dr. Nickerson has been very generous in helping D.H.S. remind its members that our heritage is not only that contained in written records, but is also written across the land we occupy as trustees for future generations. For those of you who walked with Dr. Nickerson on June 2nd, the sight of the thousands of delicate blossoms will remain in your mind forever. For those of you who didn't...we'll see you next year.

### 197 YEARS YOUNG

Our annual Town of Dennis Birthday Luncheon June 24th at Lighthouse Inn was a huge success. A sell out crowd enjoyed a fine luncheon with the Stone Family, who once again provided us with a lovely birthday cake. Mary Jane Fragano, with her accompanist, entertained us with musical selections from Broadway shows. The centerpiece of our day was the new painting commissioned by Deputy Chief Paul Prue of the Dennis Fire Department. This work by Cape artist, William R. Davis shows the old South Dennis and Dennis Fire Stations. Our special guests were Retired Chief Richard and Eleanor Hall--he was our first Fire Chief. Also attending were present Chief Robert Hersey, Retired Chief Mahlon Chase, and Retired Yarmouth Chief Dana Whittemore, son of Dennis' last Forest Warden, Earl Whittemore. The trivia contest was won by Joshua Crowell, who retired as Deputy Chief of D.F.D. after 38 years.

The door prizes were won by Charles Ehly...a Pairpoint "Cape Cod" plate donated by Gertrude Lailey; Cape Cod Collections, Ltd. new "Cape Cod Map"...Jim Carr; Anita Robbins and Edward Chase...lovely floral arrangements by Positively Depot Street; and Dee Moore and Bill Davis (the artist)...two luncheons at Lighthouse Inn. Congratulations, all!

### HOW MUCH DID YOU KNOW ABOUT FIRE PROTECTION?

When we were children my father used to tell us that when he was first married the South Dennis Fire Department was housed in his barn--a few buckets of sand and some old brooms! We always thought he was joking, as Dad was wont to do. But, Dad, we were wrong! The "farmers" of Dennis and the fishermen, and other voters as well, it appears, took the very attitude described by our New York visitor who we quoted last time. "It ain't no use having a fire engine...." Not if you don't have many fires, leastways. The town fathers apparently felt that there wasn't any harm in having a little equipment which I have found is in the annual town report for the year 1922, when approximately \$100.00 was expended for "fire extinguishers, shovels and brooms". I guess the sand was free. The town reports do list expenses for fire fighting, channeled through the various gentlemen who held the office of Forest Warden. Many of the fires reported were caused by sparks from the engines which pulled the long trains of passenger and freight cars back and forth. The costs of fighting these was reimbursed by the railroad company. As the century advanced into the 1920's the Commonwealth became concerned at the number of acres of woodland being lost to fire. Two remedies were recommended. It was suggested that the towns purchase sufficient equipment for supplying water to fight fires and that each town begin a vigorous reforestration program. Dennis voted to follow both recommendations. By vote of town meeting in 1928 two 200 gallon portable pumpers were purchased. Some of our early firemen recall they were known as "Fitz-henry Guphill" Pumpers, and as for being portable--it took four rugged men to get them moved. One was kept at the town barn behind the old Town Office in South Dennis, one at the Dennis Garage on the corner of Rt. 6A and Old Bass River Road. Still no formal fire department. The work of upkeep of equipment and answering alarms was all done by volunteers, which by 1931 had organized and become known as the Dennis Firefighters Association. In 1930, with an appropriation from the town, these volunteers mounted the pumpers on chassis, and fire sirens were installed. When a fire was reported the first one to get the word sounded the alarm. A specified number of wails of the siren told volunteers in which village the fire was located. The first men to arrive at the garage took the pumper and left a message on a blackboard."Grass fire back of Isaac Peterson's store" was enough to let later arrivals know where to report. If the emergency required it, Mrs. Hallett the telephone operator, would "ring up" as many men as she thought she could locate, and thus a full complement of fire fighters was gathered. In 1932 Richard Sears Hall of South Dennis was appointed the first Fire Chief of the Town of Dennis and our Fire Department, still manned by volunteers, was official. The Fire Fighters Assn. continued to be the catalysts for upgrading the town's equipment. They received permission to remodel two of the town's old school houses--in South Dennis and Dennis as fire stations. In the first year our fire department answered 68 alarms, and for many years the number remained about the same. The annual appropriations varied from \$750 to \$1000, with an occasional special article appropriating money to purchase or upgrade equipment. My, how times have changed. Last year our fire department responded to 2, 536 calls, 769 which were fires, 1,767 for other emergencies. We have 26 career firefighters, and 21 call firemen. Two fire stations house many thousands of dollars worth of equipment, and a new central fire station is now in the planning stage. The annual budget for 1990 includes an appropriation of \$1,132,596.21. We've come a long way, Dad, from brooms and sand.

(Continued on next page..)

## CALENDAR

- July 11 7:00 P.M. Board meets with Nancy  
July & August Josiah Dennis Manse open Tuesday and Thursday 2-4 P.M.  
Jericho House and Barn Museum Wednesday and Friday 2-4:30 P.M.  
Bring your summer visitors to see our historic centers.
- August 18-26 Dennis Festival Days.  
August 21 10 AM to noon Bike tour of West Dennis sponsored by D.H.S. Meet at West Dennis  
Community Center for a guided tour to points of interest.  
Rain date Aug. 22.
- August 24 9:30 to noon Bus tour of the 5 villages narrated by Nancy Thacher Reid. Limited  
to 43 reserved seats. Call the Dennis Chamber of Commerce. Meet  
at the Ezra Baker School lower parking lot. Reservations must be  
made at the Chamber.

### FIRE PROTECTION continued...

We of Dennis should be grateful to the 6 fire chiefs, and the hundreds of men and women who have served as both volunteers and career fire fighters in our town in the 58 years since Dennis has had a Fire Department. It's a demanding and dangerous job and Dennis citizens can sleep peacefully knowing that the Fire Department is ready and able to protect our lives and property.

### A MAN CALLED JOB

The story of Job Chase really belongs to Harwich. But, as he was a descendant of William Chase, a first-comer to Old Yarmouth, and because of his close relationship to the development of the Port of Dennis at Crocker's Neck, now called Dennis Port, not to mention the marriages of many of his children with prominent Dennis families, I think his life should be recorded among the annals of this town. Besides, it's a good story, and I think D.H.S. members will appreciate it. If ever a man received an appropriate name at his birth, it was Job Chase. Even if you're not a Biblical student, you will probably be aware of the Old Testament character of this name. He was a pious man who had achieved a good deal of success and honor, but in his later years, all that he loved was taken from him and his patience and piety were sorely tried. So it was with Job Chase. Born in 1776, Job was the son of Job and Hope (Howes) Chase. They lived on ancestral land, passed down for generations on the west side of Herring River. The family belonged to the Baptist Society, a religious society which was gathered in West Harwich in 1756 and incorporated by the Massachusetts General Court in 1789, with Job's father as an incorporator. Job Sr. was typical of the men of his generation in this town. He combined farming and fishing in a successful blend to provide amply for his family and learned as he practiced each to trade his skills and his commodities in a manner which improved his worldly estate. Job early learned the skills which both farming and fishing required, and assimilated his father's expertise in trading goods and services with neighbors whose needs and skills meshed with his. That was a way of life on Cape Cod in the early 19th century. A man's value was not only reckoned by his visible estate, but by his skills and abilities. Job Jr. had little formal education. As was customary he attended school at the district school on a regular basis until he was ten, but then it was time for him to learn a man's work. No one has recorded his first trip but undoubtedly it was to cook aboard a fishing schooner off to seek the valuable cod fish in early spring of his tenth year. But Job seemed more inclined to use the mental skills he learned from his father than the fishing skills which his father also possessed. One of his first decisions when he reached the age of discretion was to marry Polly Eldridge and provide himself with a home of his own, also on family land in West Harwich. Then he had built for himself a schooner which he named Job Chase, no doubt in honor of his father, not to perpetuate his own fame. Outfitting the schooner, but not manning her himself, Job managed to benefit from a profitable fishing voyage, while remaining at home to establish the business of supplies which all the fishing vessels must have when setting out for a trip. Job apparently earned the trust and respect--and more importantly--the business of many of his neighbors.

More about Job Chase next time...

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