

MID WINTER FESTIVITY

An excellent buffet luncheon, served at the Cape Half House in West Harwich was only a part of the success of our well-attended annual event. Falling on Valentine's Day, our theme was, naturally, Hearts and Flowers. Antique Valentines were on display--part of the collection of Mr. Gene Albert. There was also one especially interesting Valentine received in 1840 by Annie Doane, who lived just around the corner from the Cape Half House. It is lovingly preserved and kindly shown to us through the courtesy of her granddaughter, Ann Hibbard. A strolling violinist, Richard Wetmore, provided romantic background for lively conversation and a good time was had by all.

CAPE COD ARCHITECTURE

The Cape Cod Cottage, a style of house much expanded and enlarged upon, represents to many the true native architectural style of our sandy homeland. But if you look about you, you will see that although many Cape Cottages do exist in all varieties of size, many other architectural styles exist beside them, and all have something to say about the economic and social development of our towns. Claire Baisley will give us an overview of the architecture of the Cape and the periods in which each style developed at our March 25th meeting at the West Dennis Community Building at 7:30 PM. As usual, guests are most welcome.

THE ART OF SCRIMSHAW

Generally regarded as a folk art developed by American Whalers, scrimshaw has a much older history, in European and African folk art. Scrimshaw, or scrimshandering, or scrimshorning, or whatever name you choose to call it, differs from most folk art in the painstaking detail and endless hours of work it exhibits. To learn more about this art form which developed as a result of maritime involvement, be at our April 14th meeting, at V.I.C. Hall, when Arnold Lett of West Dennis will tell us about this art.

EVACUATION DAY

Although April is the month when we celebrate the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the month of March contains two dates which commemorate events which may have had an even greater effect on Cape Cod. Long before the 18th of April in '75, Boston patriots were rebelling against British rule. But the Revolutionists were rather a small minority. Most colonists remained loyal subjects of the king. It was believed and fervently hoped by many that affairs with the mother country could be mended. English citizenship had many advantages, and independence would be costly. The rebels, however, led by such zealots as Sam Adams, were determined to pursue independence. Aided by eloquent speakers and expert propagandists, they seized upon every incident and tried to incite their fellow colonists to rebellion. The Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770, was a rich propaganda incident, and the Boston Tea Party on December 16, 1773 aroused even more of an anti-British response. The rebels had pushed the British a little hard, however, with the destruction of the tea. In retaliation, the Parliament passed a law on March 31, 1774, which closed the port of Boston until the tea was paid for, and the citizens of the town promised to behave as loyal subjects. By June first, the harbor was full of British ships closing the port to all marine business. The plight of the citizens of Boston deeply effected Cape Cod. Already largely dependent on the sea for economic security, Cape fishermen had lost their largest market and her merchants their busiest source of imports and exports. The sufferings of the Patriot citizens, and eventually the Loyalists who remained, are hard to imagine. All of the colonies were enraged by the British action against Boston. As a result, the First Continental Congress was called to address the many grievances, especially those perpetrated against Boston, and petition the Parliament for redress. None being forthcoming, the moment of truth was fast arising--would it be loyalty to the King, or freedom and the return of the rights to the people. You all know the story of the shot heard round the world, of the surrounding of Boston by local militia to prevent further seizure of arms, and of the successful siege of Fort Ticonderoga which captured the artillery which it was hoped would drive the hated British troops out of Boston. And realizing the dependency of Cape Cod Marine industries upon the port of Boston, you can understand why, when the cannon were in readiness on Dorchester Heights, 81 men of Old Yarmouth (including the East Precinct, later to become Dennis) responded to the recruiting efforts of Capt. Joshua Gray, and rallied to march to reinforce Gen. Washington's troops. What exciting days! Action at last. The women of the town melted down their pewter and other soft metals to provide bullets for their men. And after a march of 88 miles, the 81 recruits arrived in Dorchester in time to help Gen. Washington force the hated British troops and their Tory supporters out of Boston town. They sailed out of the harbor for Halifax leaving behind them a devastated town. All vessels not used on their evacuation were destroyed. The homes of patriots who had escaped the city were looted, the interior woodwork used for fuel. Practically no food remained, no firewood, no merchandise on shop shelves. The Yarmouth soldiers hurried home to man their vessels and restock the suffering town of Boston. The devastation deeply impressed the home-loving Cape Codders, and may have influenced the unanimous vote to instruct the Continental Congress to declare for independence. At any rate, the tales of Evacuation Day, March 17, 1776 were retold in our town for years by the veterans of Old Yarmouth who had been there on the fateful day.

CALENDAR

- March 24 Executive Board Mtg., home of Gail Hart
March 25 HAPPY NEW YEAR (Old Style) Remember? If not, see January 1979 newsletter.
March 25 "An Overview of Cape Cod Architecture", Claire Baisley, 7:30 PM, West
Dennis Community Building, open to the public
March 26 Special Town Meeting, 7:00 PM, Wixon School, Please be there!
April 12 Workshop on Vikings on Cape Cod, 3:15 PM, Jericho House
April 7 & 9 Tour of Boston and Cambridge. See article for details.
April 14 "The Art of Scrimshaw", Mr. Arthur Lett, 7:30 PM, V.I.C. Hall, Dennisport.

THE STREETS OF OUR TOWN

In the last issue we spoke about the ice farming industry which was so important to the Cape for close to one hundred years. Today I would like to tell you about another Dennis business that was dependent upon the ice farmers--cold storage. At the Bay end of Cold Storage Road on Quivet Neck in East Dennis stood the Crowell Cold Storage Plant built about 1888 and maintained by a company made up mainly by members of the Quivet Neck branch of the Crowell family. Prince M. Crowell was the principal owner. The cold storage plant was a giant fish freezer. Out in the bay the company maintained weirs, and a wharf stretched out from the shore. Large buildings contained a freezing room and storage area. The fish were removed from the wiers, sorted as to variety and placed in large pans in the freezing room. A brine solution, chilled by huge blocks of ice, circulated through pipes around the freezer and froze the fish into solid blocks. They were then removed to the warehouse which was probably constructed much like the ice houses (although the Cold Storage Plant in Provincetown was made of bricks and cement). The fish could then be stored and shipped, packed in ice as the market demanded. Mackerel and whiting were two popular fish which were handled in this way. The Crowell Cold Storage Plant was destroyed by fire in March of 1910 with an estimated loss of \$25,000. The site was sold in 1914 to the Puritan Cold Storage Co. which rebuilt and operated it for several years. The plant was abandoned around 1920 when mechanical refrigeration became practical. Today I can find no trace of the building, wharf or warehouse. All that remains is Cold Storage Road, one of the Streets of Our Town.

HISTORIC DISTRICT THREATENED

The final Article in the Warrant for the Town Meeting on March 26 deals with the controversy over the Old King's Highway Historic District which presently protects our lovely North side villages from over-development. We have already taken the editorial position that some kind of historic districting must be preserved continuously on Route 6A, or all of that historic heritage may be lost. We appeal to all who are interested in preservation, whether or not you agree with the present regulations, to be present and to vote to preserve the regional district, at least until a study can be made and alternative preservation regulations can be thought out and proposed. Through hasty action, the work of many years can be lost. A year without preservation regulations can be irrevocably destructive. PLEASE attend Town Meeting and vote to save the beauty of our very special town.

MEDIA PRESENTATION PLANNED

The D.H.S. Board has applied for a grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities to produce a multi-media presentation highlighting the history of Dennis. We have the endorsement and support of several civic organizations, and there is a great deal of excitement about this project which is spear-headed by Paula Bacon. As progress is made, we will keep you posted as to the plans. Stay tuned.

BUS TOUR SCHEDULED

Because of the interest of our members, the D.H.S. Board will sponsor two bus tours each year to historic sites in Massachusetts. The next tour will be held on April 7 and 9, to Boston and Cambridge. Our tour-guide in residence calls this one of the best tours yet, featuring a nautical Museum, the Glass museum at Harvard, and the Longfellow House in Cambridge, as well as a look at Spanish treasure at the New England Aquarium. For more information, call Paula Bacon, 394-5739. (P.S. Don't forget to wave at Dorchester Heights as you pass by!)

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

Postal Permit No. 2 South Dennis Mass. 02660
