

MID-WINTER FESTIVITY

A fine crowd, a lovely day and an excellent meal combined to make the mid-winter mid-day festivity a great success. Special guest Ben Thacher replayed some highlights from Memory Days, and all were encouraged to join us for the remaining afternoons (see Calendar). It was a real treat to welcome 15 members of the Mid-Cape chorus, under the direction of Mrs. Irene Gailbraith. We enjoyed the music and I got the feeling that they enjoyed singing for us (and with us). Door prizes were won by the following: Thistle cup plate, given by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lailey - Ernest Stone; Trip to Boston for the State House Exhibit, given by Don and Paula Bacon - Parmalee Fitch and Marie Brophy; Plant donated by Flower and Fern - Jack McCann; and a complimentary meal at the Dennis Inn - Barbara Albret. Our thanks to those who made these door prizes available and congratulations to the winners.

One other important aspect of the luncheon was the "premier" appearance of our new logo on the souvenir menu. You will also find the logo used on this edition of the newsletter. The description which follows was given on the menu: "The logo, compiled from several of those suggested, was drawn by Phyllis Horton, with additional art work by Arthur McMurtry. The schooner in the center, like that on the Town Seal, represents the maritime history of our town, of which we are so proud. The impressionistic shell behind the vessel symbolizes all the gifts from the sea, including salt itself, which sustained the town's economy for generations. The lower border is the cranberry vine, according to Dennis her rightful honor as the first place where cranberries were actually cultivated." The logo will be featured at the State House exhibit this month and will be used to identify D.H.S. property, slide productions, booklets, publicity and mailings. Our thanks to all who assisted our search for a suitable emblem to identify our Society.

POSTMASTERS PAST

East Dennis residents had a nice break in the winter's routine when they gathered to honor retiring postmaster William Hodsdon. (I can't understand why Bill is retiring so young - he was only a couple of years ahead of me at school!) East Dennis is our smallest Post Office, too small to have its own rural route delivery. But this was not always true. Bill Hodsdon's grandfather, David H. Sears, once delivered mail from house to house in East Dennis. D.H. was excused from classes to make the morning delivery, the evening route being made after supper. This was David's first paying job, and he received 3/4¢ for each piece of mail he delivered. Then, he and a cousin started up that famous ice cream business. A later courier was Mrs. Sarah Ann Sears. Sarah Ann was apparently a legend in her own time - a character in the very best sense of that word. In an era when few women were employed outside of their homes, Sarah Ann Sears held the job of a man, and did it with gusto. It is said that she sang at the top of her lungs as she made her appointed rounds. She took it upon herself to read aloud the messages which her patrons received on postal cards. Often on her night rounds she would take off her hat and sit a spell, and was known on more than one occasion to catch a nap before going on to the next neighbors. Mrs. Sears made the mail deliveries for 18 years. She was a staunch member of the East Dennis Methodist Church and was an avid collector of antiques. She was clever with her hands, and with her mind, for she was the author of numerous essays and poems. I hope we will hear some stories about Sarah Ann Sears at the East Dennis Memory Day on March 17 at Jacob Sears Memorial Hall. I wonder if the route covered Quivet Neck alone, or did she cross the foot bridge to the west side of the harbor? How long did East Dennis enjoy this twice a day home mail delivery? And, if it continued into our century, were there other "mail persons"? Now that Bill Hodsdon has retired, perhaps he would like to apply for the door-to-door delivery route? I don't think he can sing, though. (Ed. note: Lots of happiness in your retirement, Mr. Hodsdon.)

DORIC HALL EXHIBIT

From March 1st to March 29 the visitors to Doric Hall in the Massachusetts State House will be treated to a first-class exhibit about the past and present of our town, entitled "Dennis - a Seaside Community". The exhibit includes items which illustrate the salt industry, cranberries and the maritime careers of Dennis people past, as well as pictures of days gone by and of our present school programs. The Belle of the West model is being shown and our new model of salt works, built by Hughson Hawley and Freeman Bullard. Really, folks, the exhibit must be seen to be appreciated. Credit goes first of all to Sarah Kruger for hours of hard work, not only in amassing the physical components for the exhibit, but also in attending to the finer details of liaison with the State House staff, in diagraming, labeling, appraising and preparing to move. Helping her were many willing hands, all of the Board members, in particular Gertrude Lailey, Jean and Bill Taylor, Lilla Smith and Gail Hart. Special thanks go to Wilson Scofield for photographic work, Paula Bacon for arranging for the bus trip, Nancy DeVita for the loan of one of her prints of the Shiverick Ship Revenue, and the house committees for the loan of representative artifacts. It behooves each of us to make a special effort to see the exhibit, and to encourage friends who might be visiting Boston to do the same. You will be proud at the way Dennis is being presented to the rest of the State.

CALENDAR

- March 1 - 29 Doric Hall, the State House, Boston
"Dennis - a Seaside Community" and exhibit showing some of the interesting aspects of our town and our Society. See article.
- March 3 3 P.M. Carleton Hall Dennis Village Memory Day
- March 17 3 P.M. Jacob Sears Memorial Library East Dennis Memory Day
- March ~~27~~ 7:30 P.M. Carleton Hall
26 Talk by George Stillson, archaeologist, on the Nickerson land in South Dennis. Also, first showing of our new slide production, "The Indian Lands".

THE INDIAN LANDS ON CALM BASS RIVER SHORE

We will hold an evening meeting in March (weather permitting), and the theme of the program will be the native Americans who dwelt in Dennis - would you believe over 5,000 years ago? Our speaker will be Mr. George Stillson, the archaeologist who has recently conducted a survey and digs on the Nickerson property on Bass River which the town has just voted to purchase. Mr. Stillson is excited about the evidence of very early Indian culture along the banks of Bass River. He will tell us something about what he has found and will speak about some artifacts previously found by local people, who will bring them to the meeting for display. We will begin the meeting with the premier showing of the slide show recently finished by our audio-visual committee. It is entitled "The Indian Lands" and is an illustration of a poem by Walter S. Morley, dedicated to the late Esther W. Howes. Mr. Morley composed the poem with the idea of teaching the school children about the life style of the natives of this town, using the locale of the Indian Lands Conservation Area. Almira Morley recites the poem, and the slides are actual pictures taken on the Indian Lands as well as drawings from many sources. Several of the drawings were done especially for D.H.S. by David Witkoski of Yarmouth, a student at D-Y High School. Background sounds, as recorded by Ben Thacher, were gathered as much as possible at the Indian Lands. We think that the result of all these talents is a very worthwhile slide presentation, which we hope will be useful to the school, but also appropriate for a general audience, and we want you to see it first. Don't miss this excellent evening planned for you by the Board, and please bring a friend, on Tuesday evening, March 26, 7:30 P.M., Carleton Hall, Dennis.

MEDICAL HISTORY CONTINUED

Not all medical aid was supplied by doctors a few generations ago. For example, obstetrical practices were unknown. Usually someone in the neighborhood was good at mid-wifery, and available to help the expectant mother in exchange for something like garden vegetables, or some salted pork. We have records of some of these women, and can guess at others, when we find a large number of baby girls receiving the same name over the span of a few years in one village. The majority of people lived out their lives without ever being attended by a doctor. It was such an occasion to have the doctor visit, that we find diary writers mentioning these visits even to neighbors when they occur. But don't think that aches and pains went untreated. Weekly newspapers of the last century are full of ads for patent medicines, all of which appear to be "good for what ails you," whatever that might be. Jericho House Barn Museum has a nice collection of medicine bottles. One of these is Kenney's Speedy Relief, and it is claimed to cure seasickness, bites, sore throat, painter's colic, colds, and "weak, nervous people". Also advertised was a wonderful cure for a cold, known as Alacompain. I wish I had a good supply to offer for sale today. It would be better than winning the lottery!

BARNSTABLE COUNTY TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION

If you don't mind, I'll shorten that a bit and call it "B.C.'s 300th". Whatever we call it, it looks like a year-long celebration, and Dennis is asked to participate. The big day for the County will be June 1, at Barnstable, when buses and trains will shuttle people to the county complex for a parade, a couple of band concerts, Indian dancing, square dancing - you name it. We will have some floats in the parade, based upon the theme "Dennis - One Eye to the Past and One Eye to the Future". (We need people to help build and decorate floats and also some volunteers to help guide people to and from their shuttle buses as there will be absolutely no cars allowed in Barnstable Village that day.) (If you can assist us, please help the Board by volunteering. More about Dennis' own celebration next time.)

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

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