



MID-WINTER LUNCHEON A SUCCESS AS USUAL!

A fine group attended and enjoyed our Mid-Winter Festivity held at the Colonial House Inn in Yarmouth Port. Jean and Bill Taylor really outdid themselves with great door prizes and the happy winners were as follows:

Lois Steele	Ceramic gnome made by Gertrude Lailey
Rosamond Kent	Wall hanging
Eleanor Perry	Centerpiece from Chase House of Flowers
Lynn Horton	Clock from Cape Cod Collection
Lilla Smith	Trivet from Touch of Brass
Nancy Howes	Bottle of scotch from Harney's
Wayne Latham	Fruit basket

Our thanks to the donors of these prizes and congratulations to the winners. And accolades to Jean and Bill Taylor for their excellent planning for this event, to Josh and Elinor Crowell for taking reservations, to Pres. Phyllis Horton for putting some hearts into our logo for the attractive souvenir menus, to our musician, Ted Stevens, and to our hosts at the Old Colonial House Inn. And also to all of you who attended and made it such a happy time.

THE WHALES AND JONATHAN HOWES

If Jonathan Howes, Esq. could return to Dennis today, he would most certainly be mystified at all the fuss over the predicament of the whales. Jonathan was born in 1669, the son of Thomas and Sarah (Bangs) Howes. In that long ago day, whaling was an important component of the town's economy. Most families were perhaps 90% self-sufficient, growing and fishing for their food, raising sheep for wool, and flax for linen, boiling down sea water for the salt they needed for preservation of food. They lived a comfortable if not luxurious life, family oriented and relatively uncomplicated. The one thing they could not grow was money - and even in their simple society money was needed from time to time. There was the schoolteacher to pay, certain taxes were levied, and the minister needed to be supported. And, so it appeared to the early colonist, the Lord was providing the means for obtaining the needed cash by sending the mighty whale right to our shores. It didn't take long for the General Court to make certain that colony, King, and minister received an ample share of the drift whales that the Lord seemed disposed to provide for the benefit of the local people. And it didn't take the townspeople long to realize that even when the Lord, the King and the colony had taken their share of the profits, there was still local profit to be obtained from the business of shore whaling. Many towns set aside a portion of the shoreline as a whale ground, and ours was at the end of Nobscusset Road. Town meeting elected watchmen, for a time, who received a larger percentage of the profit for every whale they spotted. At first the catch depended on whales which became stranded on shore or the flats, but soon, with instructions from the natives who had whaled for generations, crews were trained to herd the whales onto the beach. Here a tryworks was set up and the blubber reduced to oil. Probably the oil was barreled and shipped right from the beaches. So you see, whale watching meant something entirely different to Esquire Howes and his family than it means to you and me today. They were so successful that they established their own tryworks on Sesuet. Of course, while the whaling brought Jonathan wealth enough to construct a two-story house that was the envy of his neighbors, it also brought tragedy. The vital records state that on the 10th of January in 1719 Jonathan, the 18 year old son of Squire Howes, was killed by a whale. Still the family prospered financially. In addition to the crew of Indians that Jonathan owned, he also had two slaves, one black man called Old Kiah - there's another rich story - and a mulatto girl named Deborah. When he died in 1750, his surviving sons continued the business at Sesuet for a while. Son David's sons and even a grandson continued to go a-whaling, long after shore whaling had been abandoned in favor of voyages off the backside of the Cape and even beyond. Save the whale? Whatever for. There's money to be made from blubber and bone!

THE WHALES AND US

Winslow Weeks will appear in a program of slides and dramatic lecture during which, I am told, he assumes the character of a whaling captain of yore, at V.I.C. Hall, Dennis Port, on March 9th at 3 P.M. Young people are especially invited to this program, as it is a lively presentation both of history and of the present concern for the future survival of the whale. It's free. Please come.

SERMONS IN STONE

Betty and Richard Bliven are experts on gravestones. They will share their knowledge on the artistry and history one can learn from a study of these interesting memorials when they speak to members and friends of D.H.S. at Carleton Hall, Sunday, April 13, at 3 P.M. Mark the date now and be sure to join us.

CALENDAR

- March 9 3 P.M. V.I.C. Hall, Depot Street, Dennis Port. "Men and Whales". Talk and slide presentation by Winslow Weeks, also known as Capt. Josiah Black. Be sure to be there.
- March 18 7:30 P.M. Lilla Smith's house, 64 Garfield Lane, West Dennis. Board meeting.
- March 16 3-5 P.M. Carleton Hall. D.H.S. will be a co-host with other Dennis civic and social groups in a reception for our new town Executive Secretary, William Hinchey. All are invited.
- April 3 10 A.M. Eastham Chapel in the Pines. Meeting of the Cape and Island Historical Association. All welcome.
- April 13 3 P.M. Carleton Hall. Program meeting, featuring Betty and Richard Bliven. Subject: Gravestones.
- April 19 All Minute Men please be at the ready!

WHAT SHALL WE NAME THE BABY?

My husband and I missed the Mid-Winter Festivity this year. Our reason was a very joyful one. We drove to Connecticut for the weekend to become acquainted with our newest grandson, Steven Richardson Reid, Jr. He is beautiful! We are most happy to welcome this little boy as the newest member of our clan, for a couple of reasons. First because he joins a sister Maggie, and it's nice to have both a boy and a girl, and secondly because he has a name. If the little arrival had been a girl, it might have been some time before Baby Girl Reid had a name of her own. Although several were under consideration, no decision had been reached for a female offspring. And as you may guess, this reminds me of a story. In the archives of D.H.S. is a collection of papers which we call the Capt. Obed B. Whelden Papers. It contains ephemera and documents which illustrate the life and times of that Master Mariner. Among the papers are letters to and from Capt. Whelden, many written between husband and his wife Sarah. To me, these are most interesting. Sarah writes folksy letters telling the latest gossip, and details about her life at home in South Dennis in the mid to late 1800's. Her writing is tiny, flowery, and her sentences long and flowing. Obed writes details of the wind and weather he has encountered, the kinds of cargo he is loading, and the problems with his crew. His writing is dark and bold, his sentences short, almost curt, and his spelling atrocious! The story I refer to begins with a short note to Obed, not from Sarah, but from her sister Eunice. She tells Obed that he is the father of a 7-pound baby girl, mother doing well. "If she is not so well, I will let you know." (So I guess, then as now, no news was good news). About two weeks later, Sarah herself writes to Obed, telling of the problem she has had in procuring a nurse, and how sweet their new daughter is. As a postscript she writes, "What shall I name the baby?" Apparently Capt. Whelden has other things on his mind. Sarah's next letter is dated about three weeks later. In this letter she also asks the question, "What shall I name the baby?" Three months later, her letter is full of details about church, births and deaths in town and news of the new baby and their other two children. But the baby still remains "our little stranger" and the "sweet little one". No name! Of course, the baby eventually is named - Sarah Swift Whelden - but whether with or without her father's advice and consent I know not. I knew Miss Sarah when I was a child. It seemed to me she was as old as Methuselah then, but I find that she died at the age of 90 - not all that old by today's standards. Miss Sarah was very deaf and kind of crumbled over, and something of a legend in the town. Little did I know that I would someday write about the first few months of her life. I wonder if she ever knew how long it was before she had a name of her own?

HELP WANTED

A quote from the letters referred to above has me stumped. Sarah is writing to Obed about a Ball to be held at Baker's Hall... "...a treat, three pieces of music, all 'upper ten'." I know where Baker's Hall was, but what's upper ten? Perhaps an 1870 version of the Hit Parade? Anyone know?

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