

THE ALEWIVES ARE MIGRATING

George MacDonald, town conservation officer, has seen them with his own eyes. They are migrating in the town's only viable run, located at Bound Brook off Airline Road in East Dennis. Mr. MacDonald told the large group gathered at the West Dennis Community Building that there are two articles in the Town Warrant which will make it possible for the Conservation Commission to revitalize the run in West Dennis which used to be so active as to be commercially important. He also discussed the possibility that the Scargo run will be activated soon, where the Flax Pond Fishing Company constructed and maintained a brook for a herring fishery in 1852. The meeting concluded with a showing of the movie "The Run" shown for us by Bob Prescott of the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History. This delightful film left us all with a healthy respect for the plucky little fish which, driven by instinct, returns from its far flung journey at sea to spawn in the spring in the pond where it was

born.

IT'S BIRTHDAY TIME AGAIN

And this year we aim to make our celebration a real homespun event. A committee is getting together a menu that will feature Clam Chowder and old fashioned hospitality, and we will hold our town birthday party at West Dennis Community Bldg. on Sunday, June 22 at 12:00 noon. Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Taylor are coordinators and would appreciate hearing from anyone willing to serve or help prepare our home cooked luncheon. Entertainment, door prizes and a town birthday cake will make the afternoon, and old fashioned games will be supervised for the youngsters. Reservations are now being accepted from members, and should be made early as we have limited seating. Please send your check with a self-addressed envelope to Mr. Joshua Crowell, Box 963, Dennis, MA 02638. The total cost for the luncheon and entertainment is \$4.00 per person.

FOCUS ON SOUTH DENNIS

The village of South Dennis has been a local historic district since 1974. The Dennis Historical Commission is preparing to nominate the district to the National Register of Historic Places, as an Historic Neighborhood. DHS feels that an appropriate celebration of May as National Preservation Month is to focus on this village and present a program at Liberty Hall on May 18 from 3-5 PM telling some of its history. Edmund Rhodes Nickerson who is preparing to publish a manuscript, History of Liberty Hall, South Dennis, will speak about some of his research. He will have on display and for sale aerial photos in color taken throughout the village. These photos are available for enlargement at a price of \$45. for an 11x14" print. There will also be on display a framed enlargement showing the entire village. Individual home owners in the historic district and members of the Union Circle and Congregation Church are especially invited to attend. We will happily share any information we have uncovered about individual homes. To round out the afternoon, a film made during the bicentennial for Tales of Cape Cod will be shown and refreshments will be served. All welcome.

And speaking of historic preservation, Old Liberty Hall has been receiving a face-lifting of sorts in the form of a newly painted exterior through the efforts and courtesy of Gene Owen and Paul David of the Owen and David Painting Company of South Dennis. We applaud their help in efforts to keep this fine old building in useable condition.

THOUGHTS WHILE WAITING TO GET THE CAR INSPECTED

Every year on April 1st and again on September 1st, I make a resolution that I will not be the last one in line for car inspection this time, and every year about May 13 or October 13, I find myself cued up with other procrastinators inching my way toward the bay, hoping that nothing needs to be repaired before the deadline. If you are among the down-to-the-wire inspection people, I have found it helpful to improve my time while waiting by thinking about the whys of the whole business? How long has annual inspection been required and who in the world was the first person in Dennis to register a car? Now, next to the IRS, no agency strikes terror in my heart like the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Nevertheless, after last fall's wait in line, with heart in hand, I composed a letter to the Registry and asked these very questions. You can imagine my joy to receive a prompt and informative reply and I share my new-found information with you to take and read while your car is inspected. The first automobile registered in the town was a 6 H.P. Locomobile, owned by George Raynor, born on New Boston and living then on Nobscussett Road. His registration was Mass. 2114 and the year was 1903. The following year, E. Clarence Matthews also of North Dennis registered a 5 H.P. Locomobile as Mass. 5908. Mr. Matthews lived with his wife on the corner of Corporation Road, in the home now owned by Sue and Granville Chalke. Mr. Lorenzo Pickering tells me that gasoline was sold by the container in these early days with the store being located near the piers, as they served mostly the Weir fishermen. My Registry correspondent, Mr. Baril, closes his very interesting letter by asking if anyone in Dennis has any early pictures of vehicles which clearly show a Massachusetts registration plate of the year 1903 to 1915? If you do, he would like to know of these pictures. Perhaps, while I'm sitting in line this year, I will come up with more questions for Mr. Baril--like how much did Mr. Raynor have to pay for a gallon of gas? and what was the estimated MPG for a 6 H.P. Locomobile? By the way, about 89,000 vehicles were inspected in 1928, the first year of compulsory inspection. Over 3,500,000 will be inspected before the 15th of May, 1980. I hope mine is one of them.

- May 5 Town Election
 May 6 341st Annual Town Meeting
 May 17 Bicycle Tour--Dennisport. Meet at Sea Street Beach at 1 P.M. Drivers are welcome to follow us.
 May 18 3-5 P.M. Focus on South Dennis. Liberty Hall. All welcome. (see article)
 May 14 7:30 PM. Executive Board Meeting, home of President Hart.
 June 2-9 Ezra Baker School Field Trips to the Manse and Jericho. HELP WANTED!
 June 22 Birthday Luncheon. Reservations are necessary. See article.

BICYCLE TOURS RESUME

Our series of guided bike tours will begin this month with a ride through Dennisport. The bicyclers will congregate at Sea Street Beach at 1 P.M. on Saturday, May 17, to go in imagination back to the days when three wharfs extended 400 feet or more into Nantucket Sound, each the home of a sizeable fishing fleet, with packets and schooners tied up at the piers, loading and unloading goods exchanged with southern ports. From this remembered scene of waterfront activity, we will pedal to Swan Pond, and the site of the first homesteads in the village, then called Crocker's Neck, and stop at a picturesque Herring Run, to see the plucky alewife struggle to return to the fresh water spawning place. Please join us--our bike tours are always fun. And remember that maps for all six bike tours of historic sites are available year round for self-guided rides through the history of our town. Call Virginia Gifford, 398-2160, for information.

TOWN GOVERNMENT IN ACTION

For the 341st year the citizens of this town will be privileged to meet together to conduct whatever town business is necessary to "maintain a good neighborhood." Our town's Historic Commission in cooperation with Town Clerk Elinor Slade, is engaged in restoring and binding many valuable records of our town's early history. Among those recently restored are some records of early town meetings. They make very interesting reading. While our form of government has altered but little, the items of business, process of financing, and list of elected officers have certainly changed. Take for an example the annual town meeting for the year 1848. It was held at the old town hall, near Mayfair, with about 200 men (no women) in attendance, to conduct the affairs of the town which then had a population of about 3,250. The warrant, which was posted in "each of the public meeting houses, and in the windmill at Crocker's Neck," contained 14 Articles. The 1980 Warrant contains 61. The "Budget" for the town was not proposed in advance, but at the meeting. First it was voted to raise \$3,500 to defray expenses, but Mr. Crowell, the Moderator, entertained a motion to reconsider and the final appropriation was cut to \$2,500 with an additional \$1,200 for schools and \$600 for road repairs. That makes the total expenditures for the year 1848 \$4,300, which I calculate works out to about \$1.30 per capita. This year's proposed budget is \$4,492,639 plus \$3,711,476 for the school district and special articles which total \$314,160--a grand total of \$8,518,275 or, with a population of about 13,000, \$655.25 for every man, woman and child in the town. (Well, of course, we do have better schools and roads!)

The town officials were elected at the meeting and they included the town clerk and treasurer, three selectmen, "one from the southside, one from the north side, and one from the north east part", five highway surveyors, two constables and tax collectors (one for the northside, one for the southside), three field drivers, three beach drivers, three fence viewers, a pound keeper, five surveyors of lumber, wood and bark, and two sealers of weights and measures. An additional vote which is intriguing is to keep the "town standard" on the southside for six months and on the north side for six months. I'll tell you some interesting developments in the north-south rivalry another time. For now, in the interest of keeping our newsletter non-political, I will decline to reveal my own personal choice for Beach Driver, and just urge you all to vote, and to remember to attend our 341st town meeting on May 6.

EZRA H. BAKER FIELD TRIPS SCHEDULED

We are looking for people who will help us guide our third and fourth grade scholars through time to experience life as it was when the two beautiful homes which are our town's Historic Centers were built. Those who have helped in the past have enjoyed the experience and probably learned as much as the kids! If you can help, please call Enid Crook at 394-6795.

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

