



### THE DATING GAME

Dating houses is fun. It is perfectly amazing to me how much can be discovered about an old building from existing records, and what other interesting things are learned in the process. Dating houses also helps us in our efforts to preserve what is still good and useful from the past. There have been several instances recently when D.H.S. work on house dating has convinced owners to recycle their building, rather than tear down and build anew. There have also been instances when realtors have consulted us for information about older houses, and in some instances sales have resulted to buyers with a sense of history. Pauline Derick is our champion house dater, and she has agreed to give a class to all interested people at Jericho House on Thursday, May 30, at 7:30 P.M. Whether you are actively interested in researching houses, or just curious to know how the process goes, you are welcome. Bring writing materials, and we will provide you with "how to" information as well as the talk by Pauline.

### IF ONLY THIS HOUSE COULD TALK.....

How often we have wished this, as we sat at the hearthside in our old house in South Dennis. This house has seen its share of life's vicissitudes since it was built for Capt. Roland Kelley in 1891. But the Captain - Uncle Rol, as he was called - was jovial and gregarious, and when he was at home, the family often entertained. And so it is, when the southwest breezes rattle our windows and make the fireplace dance with light, it is the sound of music and laughter that we imagine we hear. Of course, our house is relatively young. Many houses in town could reveal much more of the doings of days of yore, could they but tell what they have seen. One such house stands at Center Street, Dennis Port, and its history will be included in the historical survey being completed in that village. It was originally built on the West Harwich side of Division Street and was the first Temple for Mount Horeb Lodge, chartered in December, 1855. A seminary occupied the first floor, where many a Captain's daughter received a first-class education for the times. As the lodge grew, it was decided to build larger accommodations, and "Ocean Hall", now the home of the Harwich Junior Theater, was built in 1865. The old Masonic building was sold to Captain Fernandes Geoffrey Kelley (I'll tell you about that name sometime), and with the help of his Masonic brothers, he rolled it to its present location. Captain Kelley had been going to sea since he was 12, and had "come ashore" for a while. He had served four years, carrying supplies and food to the Union Army from Boston and New York to the Chesapeake, in his coaster, the Schooner May. He decided to become the proprietor of a general store, and met with some success, but competition from the new grist mill cut into his flour business and he became discouraged and went back to sea. For a time the building was used as an auction house and the second floor was used by the Baptist Society, while their new church was abuilding. Then in 1870-71, the structure was converted into a two-family tenement. Edward Payson Chase, a long-time member of D.H.S. and Dennis Historic Commissioner, was born on the second floor of that house. (I won't tell you how long ago, because you wouldn't believe me!) The first floor was the home of Capt. Prentiss Linnell and his wife Adelia, a daughter of Fernandes Geoffrey Kelley. If you were at either of the Dennis Port Memory Days, you probably feel that you knew Delia Linnell personally. She was a fiesty little woman, not afraid to speak up at Town Meeting or anywhere else, and there are many oft-repeated stories about this lady of character, known as Miss Delia. If only her house could talk - we would learn about the type of education being given in 1855, the economy of 1865, "vendoos", as they used to call auctions, religious meetings, Masonic get-togethers, as well as the everyday lives of at least two families with deep Cape Cod roots.

### THE LADY SLIPPER WALK

One of the most spectacular natural horticultural sights in Massachusetts is the mass of lady slipper blossoms which appear each year on the Indian Lands Conservation Area in South Dennis. We are fortunate to have as a member of D.H.S. botanist Dr. Norton H. Nickerson, Jr., who is not only an expert on the flora of this area, but on the history as well. He has consented once again to conduct a walk for us on Saturday, June 8, meeting in the Town Hall parking lot at 10 A.M. We walk at a leisurely pace, and enjoy this treat of nature as well as pleasant company. Do join us.

### HELP! HELP! HELP!

Our entries into the Tercentenary Parade will be constructed on trucks very kindly loaned to us by some local businesses, which I will list next time. However, this means that the floats must be put together at the very last minute. If you can give any time on Friday evening, May 31, or Saturday A.M., June 1, please call Hughson Hawley, 394-7508, Ben LeBlanc, 394-5140, or just show up at Crowell Construction on Great Western Road.

## CALENDAR

- May 30 7:30 P.M. Jericho House. Class on House Dating.  
June 1 Tercentenary Celebration, including Parade. See insert.  
June 3-7 Ezra H. Baker School field trips to Historic Centers.  
June 8 10 A.M. Town Hall Parking Lot. Meet for the Lady Slipper Walk.  
At about 11:30 A.M., we will show the slide show entitled  
'The Indian Lands' in the Town Hall large hearing room. Free.  
June 13 7:30 P.M. Board meets at Nancy's.  
Also coming in June - Heritage Weekend, June 22-23. See special insert.

### THE ART OF DENTISTRY

I have been getting to know my dentist pretty well over the past few months, as a result of a procedure known as a "root canal". What sadist do you suppose invented that procedure? It seems that my dentist has determined to prove that the roots of this poor tooth are even deeper than my Cape Cod roots. But, as is characteristic of a history buff like me, my intensive dental treatment has set me to wondering about the history of dentistry, especially here in Dennis. I don't know of a dentist who lived on Cape Cod prior to 1900, and my encyclopedia tells me that there is good reason for that. Treating teeth as a specialty is quite new. Generations of our ancestors knew only extraction as a form of dental care, and these extractions might be performed by any strong man, from the barber to the blacksmith. I have a portrait of my great-great grandmother, Thankful Nickerson Thacher, who died at the age of 92, totally toothless. Around 1840, schools were established for dentists, but the treatment still consisted mostly of extraction and the creation of false teeth. William T. G. Morton, a dentist, was the first to demonstrate the use of ether as an anesthetic at the Massachusetts General Hospital in 1846. The practice of drilling and filling is quite new in the U.S. The Yarmouth Register of 1896 reports on the wonderful discovery, "Roentgen rays", and this discovery, now known as X-Ray, has allowed the dentist to develop methods of saving teeth which years before would have been removed. Anyway, you must have figured out by now that all of this is leading into an historic anecdote. It concerns Capt. Marcus Hall, who was born here in 1839, and was engaged in the China trade as a young man. He retired from the sea, in 1888, and took an active part in the life of the village of Dennis. He has left us many charming poems about Dennis people and their lives. A gentleman whose knowledge of Dennis history far exceeds mine tells me that, perhaps about 1920, he had occasion to drive Capt. Marcus to Hyannis to visit a dentist, the Captain then being about 80 years of age. There he had a tooth extracted, and he asked the dentist if he could keep it as a souvenir. In the tooth was a gold filling, and Capt. Marcus related that he had had that tooth filled in China when but a young man. The Chinese dentist was a skilled craftsman of a class which could not do manual labor. So, after examining Captain Marcus' tooth, he placed a small chisel in the cavity and his assistant tapped it with an ivory hammer, to remove the decayed area. In this manner the tooth was "drilled" and the Chinese dentist filled the cavity with gold. Given the date of the Captain's retirement from the sea, and that his involvement with the China trade was early in his career, that filling had lasted him for well over thirty years, perhaps as many as fifty. "Darn clever, these Chinese!"

### OF INTEREST TO OUR MEMBERS

Two bus trips in June, arranged by Paula and Don Bacon, are to places which are rich in maritime history. Thursday, June 13th, the bus will leave the Senior Center for the Gloucester-Rockport area at 8:30. The tour, which is \$32, includes dinner at Captain's Courageous, and visits to the local art and historic museums. On Thursday, June 27th, the bus will go to Bristol, Rhode Island, with stops at the Haffenraffer Museum, Blythwold and lunch at Seaface Inn, all for \$33. Call Don or Paula for information - 394-5739.

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