

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THORNTON BURGESS

Beautifully presented in words and pictures, the Old Orchard and friends of Peter Rabbit, especially Mr. Bob White, came to life at West Dennis Community Building with a program presented by Nancy Titcomb on the life and times of Thornton Waldo Burgess, and the efforts of Sandwich citizens to preserve his memory. Many thanks to Ms. Titcomb and all who attended to make this another memorable program.

THE EARLIEST NATIVE CAPE CODDERS

Anthropologists and archeologists estimate that the Cape was inhabited by humans about 2,000 years ago. The legends of the local Indians say that they came from the South and the West, and the type of crops they cultivated seem to bear this out. The remnants of their language reflect their relationship with the great Algonquin Nation, in particular the Wampanoag Tribe. Here on the Cape the natives lived in villages, with some tribe like qualities, each having its own sachem or sagamore. When the Europeans first recorded visiting these shores about 1590, they describe a large native population. In the years 1616-1619 an epidemic of some sort, no doubt introduced by visiting Europeans, reduced the population of Massachusetts Indians from 10,000 to 1,000 by the best estimates that can be drawn from Indian and European accounts. Even so, Governor Hinckley reported 121 Indians living in Satucket (West Brewster) and Nobscusett (Dennis) in 1685, with three times that many children, a total of nearly 500. So for the earliest settlers, the native Americans were very much a part of their daily lives, their presence perhaps feared at times, but their knowledge of the land and sea a welcome help in the struggle for survival. Our meeting on November 18 at the West Dennis Community Building will focus on our local Indians, their life style, and the sites for their homes and how we can "read" the information they have left behind. It can fairly be said that no Indian of the Nobscusett Tribe survives today. The last official report was the Indian census taken in 1785, in which it was reported that there was then but a single wigwam on lower Bass River, inhabited by an "Old Squaw" and a "male negro".

FOREFATHERS DAY

November is notable mostly for Thanksgiving, secondly for Armistice Day. How many of you celebrate ForeFather's Day on November 21 (N.S.)? If you are a Mayflower descendant, the date should be familiar as the anniversary of the signing of the Mayflower Compact in Provincetown Harbor. Many Cape families descend from Mayflower passengers Stephen Hopkins, John Howland and Elizabeth Tilly, Elder William Brewster, Frances Cook and others, all of whom except Elizabeth were signers of this first document in the development of American democracy. The Forefathers of Plimouth Plantation were not seeking Democracy, nor did they practice it. They set up a government which was a theocracy, church membership being the first requisite for suffrage (how many less voters would we have today if this was still a requirement, I wonder?). The Mayflower Compact was merely an agreement to set up a government and abide by its rules, in the common interest. It was signed by 41 of the male passengers and is notable as the first effort to establish self-government by a group of people in the new world, excluding the natives. So as last month on October 25 we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the state constitution, this month on Nov. 21 let us commemorate the 360th anniversary of the signing of the Mayflower Compact as well as the memory of the courage and perserverance of our ForeFathers which brought success to their tiny colony and the eventual establishment of our Cape Cod towns.

AND SPEAKING OF FOREFATHERS...

Everyone will agree, they wouldn't have gotten anywhere without the Foremothers! I plan to devote considerable space in a future edition to a look at some of the spectacular and ordinary accomplishments of these valiant ladies. For this issue let me just quickly mention: Proud to see that the Dennis Union Church recognized the 100th anniversary of the ordination of Anna Howard Shaw, who served that parish and East Dennis in the 1880's. Rev. Shaw was nationally and internationally known as a suffragette and the Dennis Union Church, with the able guidance of Mrs. Anson Howes, prepared a booklet telling of her life. Secondly, if you would like to honor your foremothers by emulation, D-Y Schools will offer Spinning and Weaving in Adult Education classes beginning in January. For information, call Carolyn Zellars.

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

We receive lots of comments, pro and con about our newsletter, and we thank all of you who have taken the time to let us know how you feel. Of course, we love to talk about the pros, but the most frequent "con" is that the newsletter sometimes arrives later in the month than expected, not in time to make plans to attend meetings. We are well aware of this problem. It is the result, first of the time it takes to compile, edit, type, print, fold, address, sort, and mail the over 400 copies. Secondly, as a non-profit organization, we take advantage of mailing at bulk rate, and therefore the Post Office has the privilege of delaying our mail for up to seven days. In an effort to combat both of these problems, we try diligently to include dates of upcoming meetings as far ahead as they are known. Will you all please help by circling dates on the calendars as they appear, just in case your next month's newsletter is delayed in any one of its several steps? Thank you, and we will try hard to get it to you well in advance.

----- CALENDAR -----

- Nov. 11 Armistice Day
Nov. 18 Panel discussion on the Indians of NobsCUSsett, West Dennis Community Building, 7:30 PM
Dec. 7 Josiah Dennis Manse, 3-5 PM, Open House, All welcome.
Please note--there will be no executive board meeting in November.
Nov. 21 Forefather's Day
Nov. 27 Happy Thanksgiving Day to all.
Coming events: January Bird carving
 February 14 Mid-Winter Festivity Luncheon 1 PM, Social hour 12 PM.

THE STREETS OF OUR TOWN

I searched the street list for names which honored our forefathers and found quite a few. The obvious, Pilgrim Road in Dennis and Pilgrim Terrace in Dennisport, name directly the first of the Cape's First-comers, and the Settlers of America's Home Town. Also in Dennisport, Puritan Lane reminds us of the religious quest of the earliest settlers. Many of the first ministers on the Cape were clergy who had been removed from their living in England because of their Puritan leanings, and fled to New England not only to earn a living, but to find a congregation. Near Puritan Lane, a street that commemorates the spunky young girl who had the strength to state her preference for the messenger, young Priscilla. Nearby Standish Way honors the sender of messages, and is a very appropriate name for a street of Dennis. Early settlers quarreled about land division and the General Court in Plimouth sent Captain Standish down to settle these disputes. This man, a stranger among the Pilgrims, hired to accompany them and teach them military arts, was at first regarded as belligerent and unfriendly. But Captain Standish arises from the history books as a man who learned from criticism. By 1645, his fairness and good judgment made it possible for him to serve as arbitrator in land disputes and his decisions regarding boundaries were so well accepted that some properties in Dennis have the very lines that were laid down by the Captain in the 1640's. In addition to all of the above forefathers streets, we honor the first two governors of Plimouth. Carver Road, near Hokum Rock, is named for the first governor, who died so suddenly after a day working in his field. And Bradford, nearby, honors a man who probably visited our town many times in his career of thirty years as a leader. William Bradford, a man of good family, excellent education and unaltering devotion to his religious and moral ethics, was a man of action and of humility. He set an example for his people, both in adherence to his professed code, and to the principles upon which the Saints had made their move to Plimouth. He epitomizes the very best of this totally human and individualistic band of Pilgrims whose struggle inspires us all, and, as we come to know him from his very fine writings about this struggle, we should be very proud to honor him with the name of Bradford Street, one of the Forefathers' Streets of Our Town.

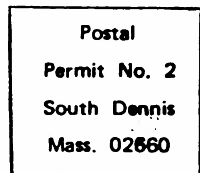
CHRISTMAS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

And we will welcome in the season, as has become a tradition, with a Historical Open House, this year at the Josiah Dennis Manse. Music, decorations, good fellowship, and the Dennis Historical Society's legendary punch will make this afternoon one to be remembered throughout the Christmas Season. Please join us, and bring your friends and family to the Josiah Dennis Manse on Sunday, December 7, 3-5 P.M.

MORE ABOUT VESSELS

I have only a little space to tell you a bit about Barks. As with ship and sloop, the term bark was at times used synonymously with boat or vessel, referring at times to a hull design. But by the Golden Age of Sail on Cape Cod, the term was being applied to a specific rigging. The Bark of the mid-1800's was a three masted vessel with fore mast and main mast square rigger, and mizzenmast fore and aft rigged, with a large hoist-and-lower sail and a gaff topsail. Another popular rig was termed the Barkentine. It carried at least three masts, with only the foremast square rigged and the remaining masts fore and aft rigged, schooner style. And now that you have that definition, here's a nifty little tie-in. The Mayflower II, as reconstructed from what is known of the original Pilgrim vessel, is Bark rigged!

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