



#### CHAPIN BEACH WALK

A beautiful afternoon, sparkling water, fishing boats in the background--but all of us found it very easy to concentrate on what our speaker, George MacDonald, was saying. He told us about the barrier beach on which we stood, and efforts--past and present--successful and not so successful--to preserve this unique coastal feature. We all came away knowing that whatever happens at Chapin Beach in the future, our Natural Resources are being protected as best they can be by able people like Mr. MacDonald.

#### CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

This year we will gather at the Manse to open the Christmas Season around a warm bowl of Negus, at table spread with tempting refreshments. You will be greeted at the front door by carollers from the Dennis Girl Scouts, singing your favorite carols of today. The lovely old homestead will be decorated in the usual tasteful style that Susan Kelley and her friends always produce. An additional treat this year--Stephen Russell, singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist will sing and play pre-twentieth century carols. He is charming, good-looking and very talented and we know you will enjoy his special Christmas program. So plan to launch your Christmas celebration with us at the Josiah Dennis Manse on Sunday, December 4, from 3-5 PM.

#### STANDING COMMITTEES FORMED

Board members have accepted assignments to serve as chairman of the various standing committees which keep our Society going. They will be recruiting other society members to serve with them on these important committees. If you are asked, please say yes. Assignments so far are: 1. Program--Gertrude Lailey 2. Acquisitions--Nancy and Dick Howes, Henry Kelley 3. School Programs--Nancy Reid, co-chairman Lilla Smith 4. Publicity--Nanct Howes 5. Audio-Visual--Co-chairmen Joshua Crowell and Wilson Scofield 6.--Membership--Isabel and William Flynn 7. REsearch and House Dating--Nancy Reid 8. Special Exhibits--Phyllis Horton and Sarah Kruger.

We have a special need for assistance with the Jericho House school program. If interested, please call Lilla Smith, 398-3367.

#### THE MORE THINGS CHANGE.....

I've been reading the newspapers, and the news is not altogether pleasant. Two teenage boys are arrested after breaking and entering, and assaulting an elderly woman in her home. A gentleman from East Dennis on returning from a short trip to Boston finds his home vandalized. The post-election editorials remind public and press that if they continue to come down so hard on candidates, fewer and fewer food men will run for public office. Sounds like "The Globe's here!" Right? Wrong! The newspapers I have been reading are from the 1876 edition of the Yarmouth Register. Times and lifestyle have certainly changed since 1876, when government land in the west could be purchased for \$1 and a quart of whiskey for \$2. Basically, people and the challenges they must deal with have changed but little. Earning a living, providing for a family, births, deaths, and marriages, disappointments and successes, were as important to early residents of this town as they are to us

In 1989 we will be observing the 350th anniversary of the founding of the town of Yarmouth, and as we were part of that town until 1793, it is the anniversary of our founding as well. I believe that we should spend some time in this anniversary year trying to understand the challenges these founders faced, and the limited means they had to overcome these challenges. Life is different today, although I'm not so sure it is easier. But there are lessons in history that are important to us. One of those lessons is that despite radical changes in communication, travel, medicine, and scientific knowledge, the same things matter to you and me that mattered to our founding families. Some of the creature comforts available to us were undreamed of in 1639. But some of the stress and pressure we find ourselves bombarded with today would be just as unimaginable also. So, as we prepare to honor the pioneers who carved this town from the dense forest which they found when they arrived here in 1639, let's not look at them as quaint relics of another time. Let's look at them as real flesh and blood people who laughed, cried, loved and disliked, just as we do. And when we do, the adventure which they undertook will become real as well, and I think we will understand better what a tremendous thing ordinary people were able to accomplish. Next time I will tell you the story of Elizabeth Jones, who at the age of 19 became the second wife of founder Anthony Thacher, and the step-mother of his five children. Six weeks after her marriage, she and the family immigrated to the New World. Probably in her wildest dreams--or nightmares, perhaps,--she never imagined the adventures of which she would be a part. I think you will agree, a true story is often the most exciting. Come back to 1635 with me and get to know Elizabeth Jones Thacher.

## CALENDAR

Dec. 4 3-5 PM Christmas Open House at Josial Dennis Manse

Dec. 13 7:30 PM Board meets with Sarah

LOOKING AHEAD

Feb. 11 12 noon Mid-Winter Luncheon at Christine's in West Dennis

### THE STREETS OF OUR TOWN

When our D.H.S. newsletter first began, we had a series on the origin of some of the street names in Dennis. Just recently, two different people have asked me about Fisk Street in West Dennis, so I thought I would revive that column and tell the story. The street is named for the four Captain Fisks who lived in that neighborhood a hundred years ago. The Fisk family was early in New England but not among the first comers to Cape Cod. I have been told that the first Fisk in Dennis came from Vermont, but he was named Nathan and it seems to have been a very popular name for that family. So far I have not discovered where he came from or why he settled here. I do know he lived for a while in Yarmouth, where he married Hephsebeth Baker, who was nicknamed "Happy". Their intentions, filed in March of 1796, calls them both "of Yarmouth", and two daughters were born to them there. But they soon moved to Dennis and lived near the mouth of Swan Pond River. Probably Nathan Sr. was a fisherman, as South Village, as that neighborhood was called, was a fishing village. Two sons were born to Happy and Nathan, Ebenezer and Nathan Jr., and both of them took to the sea. Nathan Jr. owned his vessel, and besides fishing he ran a packet service around the Cape to Boston. The area around Swan Pond River was very different then than now. Salt Works lined both sides of the creek. The Fisks owned shares in the wharf which extended out from the west side of the stream. It was the home of a fishing fleet that went to George's Bank and elsewhere on extended fishing trips. In 1826 Nathan Jr. married Polly Baker. Over the years they became the parents of 10 children, 7 of whom lived to marry. Among these 7 were four sons--Uriah B., born in 1828, Luther in 1831, David in 1838 and Henry H. in 1843. These four began their maritime education as did most of the South Village lads--at the age of 10 or 11, as cooks to the crew of one of South Villages fishing vessels. From there they advanced to positions on small trading schooners, and when in their early 20's each of them became master of his own vessel. During the Civil War each was commander of a schooner carrying troops and supplies for the Union Army. Among the schooners they commanded were the Henry N. Squire, (Capt. David), Sch. Hill Carter, (Capt. Luther), Anne S. Brown, (Capt. Henry) and the Port Jefferson, (Capt. Uriah). The Fisk brothers had their share of excitement, whether sailing together or separately, but they always seemed to "sail profitable". In due time, working together, they began to amass a fleet of schooners of their own, shipping all types of carge from coal to ice, and commissioning new vessels from the best shipyards, until the fleet numbered over 30 bottoms. In manning the schooners, the Fisk boys did not forget their neighbors with whom they had learned their craft. Many a Dennis family earned their living sailing for the Fisks. All four of the Captains Fisk married and lived in West Dennis, and their homes still stand. They were all members of the Boston Marine Society, both Luther and Henry serving as president of the prestigious organization. They supported the West Dennis Methodist Society, were Master Masons in Mount Horeb Lodge, and Capt. David was also a member of the Knights of Pythias. As they retired from active sailing, they improved their time by engaging in local business. David became the manager of the Riverside Trotting Park, where his trotter, Little Nell, was a favorite. Capt. Uriah's horse, Atossa, was among the fastest trotters on the the Cape and held the record for the Park of 2 minutes and 32 seconds. Capt. Luther served the district as representative to the General Court, and all of the Fisk families were strong supporters of the public schools and socially active in village life. And so it is that the street in the neighborhood where these four captains rose to economic and social prominence, and remained in their native village to the benefit of all their friends and neighbors--Fisk Street, one of the Streets of our Town.

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