



THE CRIMSON HARVEST

Thanks to R. Lincoln Thacher of Harwich for bringing us the video tape prepared by the Cape Cod Cranberry Association to tell the story of the cranberry industry. A fine crowd filled Jacob Sears Memorial Hall, better known as the East Dennis Library, and enjoyed the pictures and Link's comments. Cranberry farming is still one of the Cape's most important and colorful industries, and we compliment the Association for making this fine production.

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE AT JERICHO

It's the southside's turn to be the site of our annual holiday party. December 3rd will find us making merry at beautiful little Jericho House, through the courtesy of the house committee. Adding to the joy of the day will be Georgia Reyburn, singing seasonal music. This is always a pleasant beginning to the Christmas festivities, so please mark your calendar. The usual great refreshments are promised and the West Dennis Garden Club will decorate the house in appropriate style. Bring a friend. Note that the time of our Open House is different than in years past. The hours this year will be from 2-4 P.M.

STREETS OF OUR TOWN

By Request--Black Ball Hill and Signal Hill Drive

A D.H.S. member who lives on Signal Hill has asked for a repeat of the explanation of the origin of the names of the streets in his neighborhood. I'm happy to do this, as the original article about these streets was published in 1979 and I have gathered more information since then. The basic story is the same. Early on, it became apparent to the residents of Cape Cod that travel by sea was easier (if not safer) than travel by land. So enterprising mariners on both north and south side offered to transport both passengers and goods for a moderate consideration. The vessels were called packets, a word which means a vessel which travels over a certain route, usually between two ports, on a more or less regular schedule. Those of us who sail know how important that "more or less" is to the definition, for with a fair wind you might sail across the bay to Boston in a matter of hours, but given adverse winds, or no wind at all, it could take days. With no better means of communicating to the travelling public what they could expect, the masters of the vessels agreed upon signals to display on poles placed on the highest hills in the neighborhood. Thus Signal Hill acquired its name. But now the story gets a bit muddled. There are three different signals mentioned--a flag, a barrel, and a black ball. But historians do not agree upon the meaning of these signals. An interesting article written about the packets in the March 1932 edition of the Yarmouth Register says that the empty barrel signalled arrival and the flag the departure. Haynes Mahoney, author of the monograph Proud Packets, agrees, stating that the barrel was red. But Daniel Chase, in an article from the Christian Science Monitor, in 1951 says that the barrel was raised on Black Ball Hill to signal departure. Possibly the signal was changed from time to time. An announcement in the Yarmouth Register for the sailing season of 1845, signed by Capt. Hallett of the Packet Sloop Flight of Yarmouth, says that a flag will be raised as the signal of sailing and a Black Ball will signal arrival. Incidentally, "Black Ball" was the name of the first cross-Atlantic packet line from New York to England, which may explain its use. But what about that barrel? Hattie Blossom Fritz, in her delightful book Horse and Buggy Days on Old Cape Cod, which she wrote in 1960 when she was 80, tells it this way. The flag, says Hattie, announced the arrival of the packet, but whenever a vessel brought in a supply of rum, instead of the flag a small keg was raised! We can at least agree on one thing. The name of Signal Hill and Black Ball Hill Drive, as well as Watchman and Packet Drive all relate to the long ago packet which sailed from NobsCUSset to Boston. Perhaps in another 10 years someone will have the signals straight, and will write out for us a more exact definition of the origin of the names of these scenic Streets of Our Town.

CAN YOU HELP US OUT WITH A SMALL PROBLEM?

It seems that we have on hand a few Life Membership certificates with a date engraved which begins 'Nineteen eighty____'. We would hate to have to throw these away as a new decade dawns. Would anyone out there be willing to sign up as a life member before the end of the year so we won't waste these nice certificates. Hurry, there are only a few remaining!

NEEDED FOR THE JOSIAH DENNIS MANSE

The Permanent Exhibit Committee at the Manse, Susan Kelley chairman, is preparing a children's room to be open next season at the Manse. We would like to have a 3/4 bed for that room. This is an old bedstead, between a twin and full bed in width, but somewhat shorter, which was commonly used for several children to sleep in. Does anyone have such a bed that they would consider donating? If so, please call Susan, 385-3300.

CALENDAR

- Nov. 19, 1850 The first insurance policy was issued on a woman's life.
Dec. 3 2-4 P.M. Jericho Historic Center. Christmas Open House. Music by Georgia Reyburn.
Dec. 5, 7:30 P.M. Board meets with Nancy and Dick Howes.

SENSING HISTORY

I was speaking with another "old timer" recently about how much the Cape has changed since we were kids. In truth, if our first-comers could be transported via time machine to see what has happened to the nearly virginal wilderness they found here in 1639, they wouldn't know where they were. The wood lots which they needed for fuel and lumber are replaced with shopping centers and parking lots, ice arenas and, soon, a waste disposal transfer station. Meadow lands and uplands where hay was cut and cattle pastured are now homesites. They just wouldn't believe their eyes! But the sights that greet their eyes would not be the only evidence of radical change. Our modern society would present challenges to all of their senses. Smell, sound, taste, and touch would all reveal that this is indeed a different world. To realize just how different are the signals conveyed to our brains by our senses today, I thought I would invite a guest from the 17th century to be a visitor in our home over this holiday season. I chose Elishua Crowe, alias Crowell, for several reasons. From the shadowy knowledge we have of her she seems to have been young, strong, and stable when she arrived in the wilderness that the settlers found. Other characteristics--those of courage, fortitude, and ambition--she certainly shared with her neighbors. Elishua was probably in her twenties when the move to Nobscusset was made. She was already the mother of three sons, one of whom was to die as a young child, and probably of two living daughters. Her new home was located just north of Scarge Lake, on the edge of the Indian Field that was reserved for the use of Mashantampain and his tribe. Tradition says that it was of palisade construction, inner and outer walls of vertical boards, with the space between filled with stones and clay. But I'm not interested in the difference in the convenience and comfort of her home and mine. I'm interested in the messages which her senses would receive today which would be new and exceedingly strange. How I will get her here in the twentieth--almost twenty first!--century, we will just leave to the imagination. We'll just "beam her up" a little before bedtime. There's a last cup of coffee in the automatic drip and a fig newton for a snack, then I shall whisk her off to bed in our guest room. The electric blanket is on so it's nice and cozy. But Elishua will certainly notice that perm press sheets feel nothing like homespun linen. My posturpedic mattress is firm, much different than her ticking full of hay. The electric blanket clicks gently off and on, and now and then the hot air heater does its thing. My guest room is at the front of the house, so an occasional car goes rumbling by, flashing its lights in the window. Across the room, the luminous dial of the clock radio shows the passage of the night. For a woman used to a dark and silent night, this could be a scary scene. But Elishua is a woman of good sense and courage. Probably she'll cover her head and get a good night's sleep anyway. Perhaps the worst part of the night will be first light, when the alarm clock-radio suddenly starts to list the murders, oil spills, and car accidents that have happened while we slept. Elishua may be a little worried as she awakens. The familiar smell of wood burning is absent. Will we have to borrow coals from the neighbor? Obviously she will assume that breakfast will be late as she cannot detect the aroma of anything cooking. But trusty Nan will have a cup of instant coffee and a bowl of instant oatmeal ready to "nuke" for a minute and a half in the microwave. No welcome aroma but a nice warm breakfast all the same. Will Elishua's senses survive in this noisy, odor-free, less than tasty modern world? Can the five senses of a woman from the 17th century learn to cope with the clamor of sound and sights of this brave new world? I will tell you more about Elishua's reactions, but right now we have to watch "Good Morning America". I'm anxious to get her reaction to that J.C. Penny "Pee Wee" store ad.

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