



HEADS VERSUS HEARTS

October was kind of a romantic month in our household. My favorite minister married no fewer than four happy couples and was consulted by two more brides who are planning spring weddings. Also, in our own family, four couples, including my spouse and I, celebrated wedding anniversaries this month. In the midst of all this romance, the grandfather of one of the brides-to-be said to me, "This might be a better world if we depended on our heads rather than our hearts when choosing our mates." Considering the number of marriages which end in divorce these days, that observation might bear consideration.

Yet, historically, our culture has been ruled in this matter more by the heart than the head. Our history abounds with love stories. Remember Priscilla Mullins' bold response to John Alden? In our own town's history is the story of Richard "the Tailor" Taylor, who, in 1646, sought permission from Gabriel Whelden to marry Whelden's daughter Ruth. Goodman Whelden said "no way", although we have no indication of what his objections to Taylor might have been. Richard pressed his suit, but Mr. Whelden remained adamant. At last, Richard appeared before the Court at Plymouth and pleaded for the magistrates to intervene on his behalf. Apparently impressed with the young man's sincerity, the Court asked Whelden to reconsider his stand. At length, Gabriel bowed to the wishes of the young people and Ruth and Richard became husband and wife.

Col. John Thacher, the stalwart leader of militia in King Philip's War, was also a romantic. As a young man, he was married to Rebecca Winslow in Marshfield. On the way home to Yarmouth, Col. John stopped at the home of his good friend John Gorham. There the bride and groom were introduced to baby Lydia, the newest member of the Gorham household. John was charmed by the baby and is said to have told his bride, "This lovely girl will be my second wife!"

Rebecca and John were parents nine times over before she died in 1682. John composed a long, tedious poem in memory of his wife:

She young and fair, a comely one.
She's now gone. I'm left to mourn
My case most sad and desolate
Because I have lost my tender mate.

Four months later he married Lydia Gorham. Family tradition says that his son Peter also paid court to Lydia and that John bought off his son with the promise of money and a yoke of black steers. It is more likely that Lydia's family encouraged her to choose the father, a man of considerable wealth and importance, rather than Peter, who was a year younger than she was and with little wealth or stature in the community.

Some of the tales of marital relationships of our ancestors are not as romantic. Take the case of a gentleman who, to protect his identity we will call Mr. Howes. When his wife of many years was laid to rest, a neighbor consoled him at the burial. "You have been very fortunate to have had so fine a wife. She was a perfect housekeeper, good cook and frugal as well." "Yes," replied Mr. Howes, "she was all of that and faithful and a good mother, too. But, you know, to tell you the truth, I never did like her."

And of course there is the story of Captain Kelley, master of the schooner Bulldog, who managed to escape matrimony until approaching middle life, when he was captured by Miss Lucy Ann Chase. Soon after his marriage, while fetching the evening mail, one of his colleagues was heard to ask him, "Well, Captain Kelley, now that you're married are you fixing to change the name of your schooner to Lucy Ann?" "No sir," replied Captain Kelley, "but if the wife turns out to be as faithful, helpful and steady as my schooner has been, I might change her name to Bulldog!"

FROM THE DESK OF THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

We have some new members to report: Family--M/M Allen H. Machon, M/M Charles W. MacMillin, M/M Donald B. Maclachlan, M/M Roland W. Kelley, M/M/ Raymond M. Urquhart, Thomas Moran and Elizabeth Mongillo, Carol Simkin and Ronald Lehrman; Individual--Mahlon A. Chase, Jr., and Mariana E. Buckley. And there are three more people who will have all of the privileges of membership in this prestigious organization, but will never have to pay dues again. Why, you ask? Because they have become Life Members. Wouldn't you like to join them? Some of you have yet to pay this year's dues. Why not make out the check to Dennis Historical Society for \$100, and like Ruth, Kate and Pat, you will never have to worry that your newsletter will stop coming because you forgot to pay your dues.

CALENDAR

Nov. 11 Veteran's Day
Nov. 12 7:30 P.M. Board meets with Henry and Susan Kelley
Nov. 22 10-12 Jericho House will be open for "Christmas Shopping"
Historical books, tiles, cup plates, etc. for sale
Nov. 27 All day Happy Thanksgiving
Dec. 14 2-4 P.M. Christmas Open House at Josiah Dennis Manse

A WORD ABOUT YE OLDE ED.....

... (as she often calls herself,) who is well, and has not abandoned us. Right now, PRH is taking a well-deserved sabbatical, traveling far and wide, just to remind herself how lucky she is to live in dear old Dennis. I have her promise that she will be contributing to the newsletter again real soon. Enjoy your time away, Phyllis, we will be glad to have you back!

A TREASURE RETURNS TO ITS HOME

Picture a little girl, sitting by the window in her home on the corner of Trotting Park Road and Old Main Street, where South and West Dennis meet. It is 1835, and 11 year old Mercy Baker is working on her sampler, demonstrating her knowledge of the alphabet and her skill at fine stitchery. Across the road is another Baker house, occupied by the family of Theophilus Baker, Jr. She can wave at her friend Sally, as she plays in her yard. Soon, the sampler on which Mercy spent so many hours will be on display right across the street from the house in which she worked it. The sampler was acquired this Fall by DHS and is being deacidified, cleaned and framed to become part of the Jericho House collection next year.

THE YEAR WITH TWO THANKSGIVINGS

The holiday which we know as Thanksgiving is one of the oldest holidays which we in New England still cherish. We all know of the First Thanksgiving held at Plymouth in 1623. A harvest holiday was held regularly in Massachusetts Bay Colony throughout the Colonial period and the early days of Massachusetts as a state. In colonial days, thanksgivings were proclaimed for specific purposes. In many instances, thanksgivings were proclaimed for events which took place in the mother country--"victory in Ireland," "the preservation of the royal person of King William"--and also for the benefits of which the colonists felt themselves to be the recipients, such as bountiful harvests and recovery from the effects of epidemic disease.

We learn from the Nathan Stone diaries that in 1777, there were two Thanksgivings within a period of one month. The first was the regular thanksgiving proclaimed by the governor, to be observed on November 20th. It was to be a day of freedom from "servile labour", (excepting those who were the cooks!) and a time for the minister to offer prayers in thanksgiving for blessings. There was also that year a Continental Thanksgiving, proclaimed by the Continental Congress to be observed on December 18th, with prayers to be offered in gratitude for the victories which the Continental Army had enjoyed over the British at Saratoga. The men of our town, then the East Precinct of Yarmouth, had done their part in this victory by participating in the effort to threaten Newport and keep the British troops stationed there from joining General Burgoyne's troops in Saratoga. Although many of our young men spent more than two months encamped in Tiverton, acting as a threat to the British troops at Newport, they all returned home without casualty. It must truly have been a day of celebration for our town's families.

Dennis Historical Society
P. O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

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