



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 22 Number 11

November 1999

Calendar of Events:

**Monthly Meeting,
Board of Directors**
Open to all interested
members.

**Wednesday,
November 10th
7:00 PM**

Jericho Historical
Center

**Sunday, December
12
Christmas Open
House**

Celebrate the spirit of
the season with Den-
nis Historical Soci-
ety's annual event.
Sample some Colo-
nel Negus Punch in
this beautifully deco-
rated 1736 home.

Josiah Dennis Manse
2-4 PM

TWO HUNDRED BILLION CRANBERRIES

By Jack Sheedy

Part three of a three part series

Cranberries were picked by hand up until the late-1800s when wooden scoops were first introduced. Picking time prior to the advent of wooden scoops was as much a social event as a job. In some areas, whole communities would gather at the local bogs in September to harvest the annual crop. In family owned bogs, the children would miss school during the harvest season. Some communities actually began school in October after the harvest.

Pickers would gather at the bog with their measures in hand. A measure was a six-quart pail made of tin into which the picker would place his or her cranberries. The bog would be segregated into a series of four-foot wide rows cordoned off with fishing line or rope. Two pickers would work side by side in each row. Behind them would walk a person who checked their progress and made sure that the vines in their wake were truly picked clean.

"Coming ashore," as it was called, referred to the point when the picker's measure became full and was then brought forth from the bog to the screen and barrels where the good berries would be separated by hand from the bad. The small, unusable berries would fall through the screen; good berries would be packed in barrels and then placed in wagons for transport to the buyer. At the end of the harvest, the bog owner would tally up the number of quarts harvested by each picker. For the longest time the going rate was one and a half cents per quart

Toward the turn of the century the tools of the trade became more "sophisticated" in order to cater to the growers' needs. Actual growers who knew best what was needed to do the job developed these tools. For instance, a curved-bottom rocker scoop replaced the original flat-bottom tip up scoop. The curved bottom allowed the picker to make a number of consecutive passes through the vines without emptying the scoop after each pass. Other scoops were made for tender, young vines while long handled picking rakes were used for snagging berries at the edges of the bog.

During the days of handpicking a good picker could harvest fifteen barrels a day - some 1,500 pounds worth. As mechanized methods were developed that figure jumped to seventy-five barrels. Wooden hand scoops were used into the 1950s; for



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THE WAY WE WERE

A letter received from Michael Dubin of East Dennis.

In the October 1999 Newsletter is an article by Peggy Eastman entitled "The Way We Were" about the Beaches in Summer: which reminded me of the days the beaches changed to "pay" from "free."

I believe it was in the late 1950's Dennis instituted a "beach sticker" program, and along with it the "policemen on the beach." Charlie Crowell and I applied for the jobs on the North Side and we were selected to patrol the Sea Street Beach, and the Cold Storage Beach and Harbor. It being a rather slow job, we switched each day, one day on Sea Street, and the next at Cold Storage.

But there were always funny things that happened and stories to tell. Wearing our uniform of policeman's hat and a bright silver badge pinned to our blue shirts (the rest of outfit optional) we felt quite official, and so, one day in early July, when a visitor showed up and asked me if it was OK to launch his new Sears & Roebuck aluminum boat from the boat ramp, I gave him my full approval.

Little did he know that neither of us knew just how to launch it. He carefully backed down, and after rolling off each side a few times, he had the boat lined up. He got out of the car, and reached in to put his fishing gear into the boat, along with his sandwiches and refreshments. The tide was coming in, and as he gave a hefty push, the boat, still tied to the trailer, and the trailer still hitched to the car, and the car, still idling and in neutral all proceeded backwards, and started to float into what was then Sesuit harbor. The man yelled for help, and as I was the only official, and maybe even the only person around, I felt duty bound to perform the rescue. (No radios, cell phones, or even emergency phones in those days, you'd run or drive to a neighbor's house for help.) Anyway, a few gulps of Sesuit Water and we had the car back on the ramp, our friend inside driving everything up to dry land to re-think the process.

He got into the boat to dry off, offered me a seat, and then proffered a sandwich. It consisted of two slices of white bread and a big slice of Bermuda Onion! I looked carefully around to see if something more nourishing had dropped out, when he assured me he had made the sandwiches himself, that very morning. I drove over to Sea Street to tell Charlie of my adventure and his only remark was, "Did you save me any of the sandwich?"

In August we got a report from a visitor on the beach that a plane had crashed off Sea Street Beach; he pointed out to me that there was smoke to be seen a few miles out. I went to a neighbor's house and he saw it too, so we called the police. (But aren't you the police? You have a hat and badge.) In a short while the town police car showed up and agreed. A call was made and in a while an Amphibious "DUCK" showed up with soldiers on board. They paddled a few hundred feet offshore and while they were waiting for a bigger boat, they dropped fishing lines overboard and picked up a few flounder.

The next day it was foggy and as the fog lifted a barge and crane could be seen offshore. Charlie and I were called to go to the police station and met with a few official looking folks from Camp Edwards. We were told to forget what we had seen, and not to give interviews. We felt this was right out of the movies, but some 30 years later there was an article in our local paper about a fisherman snagging a piece of an unknown plane and mentioning our saga of years ago!

Many adventures as the Dennis Beaches went from "free" to "pay" but don't we all feel lucky for those days when we walk down to the water and just breathe in the salt air and remember all of those good days?

And it IS nice to be a part of the Dennis Historical Society!

The Dubin Falmily moved to East Dennis in 1948 where father Philip and mother Abbie along with the children's grandmother, "Nana" started Players Pharmacy, and raised four children. Since 1961 the Players Pharmacy has been run by son, Michael, and his wife, Judith, and is part of Players Shopping Plaza in East Dennis. And the reason for the name Players is a story from another time...



Sesuit Harbor, 1965

If you have remembrances to share, send them to Beth Deck at P.O. Box 93, East Dennis, MA 02641

Dennis Historical Society

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THE WINTER SEASON IS APPROACHING

Nancy Thacher Reid

In 1927, the well-known American poet Alfred Kreymborg spent the summer at the home of Dr. and Mrs. George B. Wilbur in South Dennis. That home still stands, directly across from the South Dennis Meeting House. It was built in 1730, and harbors a great deal of the history of the south side of Dennis within its walls. Mr. Kreymborg published a volume of sonnets in 1928, which he entitled The Lost Sail – A Cape Cod Diary. Most of the poems are romantic sonnets. A few, however, do have some local flavor. As we wind down from the summer of 1999, you might be interested in this verse reflecting Kreymborg's interpretation of the reaction of a Cape Cod native in that year to the doin's on the Old King's Highway.

Stranger and Stranger

I've seen 'em pass in limousines an' Fords,
Strangers an' strangers, drivin' like lunatics.
I've felt 'em smash the summers an old man hoards—
The fewer they are the more the memory ticks.
Before the Old King's Highway turned macadam—
While this was just a lane that needed weedin'—
A man could take a walk like he was Adam
The girl beside him Eve, an' these trees Eden.

None of us had machines inside the heart.
None of us cared which one of us won a race.
We loved an' lived an' died an' had to part.
It's hard for a man like me to change his pace.
The old all need the summer as they grow older.
I long for the lonely winter, though it's colder.



Along Route 6A – The Old King's Highway

Answer to our Back-to-School Trivia Question...

We were told, on good authority, that Dennis Port was the only village that did not have a church with a clock. Therefore, the clock was put on the school!

