

ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The 1981 Annual meeting of the Dennis Historical Society was held at Liberty Hall, South Dennis on Monday, Sept. 13 at 7:30 P. M., Gail Hart presiding. A report of the last annual meeting was read by Mrs. Lansing Bennett. A treasurer's report was given by Joshua Crowell. Ms. Hart called for reports from various committees, all of which demonstrated a high degree of activity. Reports were also heard from the respective chairman of the two town-owned Historical Centers. The slate of officers as presented by Mrs. Richard Dunham for the nominating committee was elected by instructing the secretary to cast one ballot in its favor. Elected were: Pres. Donald Bacon, Vice-Pres. Nancy T. Reid, Treas. Joshua Crowell, Cor. Sec'y Isabelle Flynn, Rec. Sec'y Gail Hart, Directors for three years, Edmond Nickerson and William Crowell. Please get behind this fine group of hard-working individuals and support Society activities with your presence.

HAIL GAIL!

All of us who are members of D.H.S. know the tremendous contribution that Gail Hart has made to the organization during her presidency. One of the busiest young women in town, she has nevertheless found time to arrange programs, open the meeting halls, set up and take down chairs, graciously introduce speakers, type, mail, telephone and preside firmly but tactfully at monthly board meetings. Her enthusiasm and insight have greatly enriched the programs which the Society pursues. Fortunately, we are not losing her talent, as she will serve as recording secretary for the coming year. Thanks, Gail, for a really outstanding job as president.

THE YEAR OF THE SCHOOL

We were pleased to have Mr. Walter Morley, principal of the Ezra H. Baker School, speak following the annual meeting. He told us of the plans being formed for the 50th anniversary of our town's elementary school this year. Those present agreed with Mr. Morley's concept of involving the school children, parents and all town's people in celebrating this landmark. D.H.S. will be sponsoring a contest for the students which will center around the history of education in Dennis. That history is nearly as long as the history of the town itself. In 1663, the Cape towns were instructed by the General Court in Plymouth to give "serious consideration" to the matter of public schools. These early schools, however, had little in common with the multi-level facility whose anniversary we will celebrate this year. They were, in fact "schools without walls," there being no school buildings as such until perhaps 1730. A teacher was hired by the town, and he held school in the various neighborhoods for a few weeks each, moving on to another group of students on a prescribed schedule. In 1693 there were five divisions, 3 of which were in what is now Dennis. The schoolmaster spent from Jan. 4 to April 10 in Nobscussett, holding school daily in "a convenient place," probably someone's keeping room, then moved to East Dennis - drawing his pupils from the area "from Widow Boardman's house to Satucket Mill" (West Brewster), from the 11th of April to June 19th. He then travelled to Thomas Follins neighborhood, taking the children along the east side of Bass River, where he stayed only from June 20 to July 19th. I wonder why? Perhaps there were few children there, or the Quakers in the area were teaching the children themselves. This method of schooling was called "Squadron Schools" and seems to have continued until about 1740. I will tell you more of the history of education in Dennis, including something about our Restored 1771 school house on the grounds of the Manse in subsequent issues.

IN OCTOBER.....

We will learn about the true forms of American furniture from Glenn Ream of Doryman Antiques in Dennis. He will talk about "American Furniture of the 18th and 19th Centuries" at a meeting at Carleton Hall on Oct. 27 at 7:30 P.M. Mr. Ream will tell us about the three classic periods of American furniture makers - Queen Anne, Sheraton, and Chippendale - and will illustrate his talk with slides and examples. As usual the meeting is free and open to the public. Bring a guest!

DENNIS FESTIVAL DAYS ARE HISTORY

The three programs sponsored by D.H.S. as their part in the annual celebration were excellent and very successful. Thanks to the Congregational Church, Mr. Donald Enos, Ms. Eliz. Dorriss, Paula Bacon, Bill and Isabelle Flynn, Pauline Derrick, Mrs. Leon Hall, Edmond Nickerson, Lena and "Viking" Eric Andersen, our Chanty Leader Don Bacon, the Taylor's, Parm Fitch and the Jericho Committee, and all who helped us put a little history into the Festival Days.

AS WE GO TO PRESS

Word has been received that we have received a \$1000 matching grant from the Mass. Council of Arts and Humanities for a media show about the history of our town. More next time.

CALENDAR

- Oct. 27, 7:30 P.M., Carleton Hall....."American Furniture of the 18th and 19th Centuries"- Glenn Ream, Doryman Antiques
- Also of interest to our members -
- Oct. 29.....Bus Tour to Strawberry Banks, Portsmouth, N. H.
- Nov. 12....."The Splendor of Alexander" - Museum of Fine Arts and a Concert at the Isabelle Stewart Gardner Museum. Call 394-5739

STREETS OF OUR TOWN

The beautiful church where our recent concert was held was built as the second meeting house for the Second Congregational Parish of Dennis in 1836. However, the very first house of worship to be built in what is now the town of Dennis was not built by the Congregationalists at all. Very early in our history converts to the Society of Friends, known as Quakers, settled on the shores of Kelley's Bay on Bass River and in 1714 they built there the first Meeting House to stand within the borders of our town.

Quakerism began in England in 1648, inspired by the preaching of George Fox. The zeal of the Friends of Truth spread rapidly and in 1656 Quaker missionaries appeared in New England. Boston bitterly persecuted Quakers and they sought other areas in which to spread their faith. Here on Cape Cod, the settlement of Sandwich was in the midst of religious ferment and was ripe for the missionary work of Nicolas Upsall, the first New England convert, who conducted the first Quaker Meeting in Sandwich in 1657. Evidently his message was very convincing, for in 1658 the Congregationalists reported with great concern that there were 18 Quaker families in the town, despite vigorous prosecution and fines for attending Quaker meetings. The anti-Quaker sentiments led some Quaker families to seek a more compatible location, and this they apparently found in Yarmouth, which then encompassed Dennis and had jurisdiction over parts of West Brewster and West Harwich. Yarmouth seems not only to have let the Quakers live in peace but has the distinction of making the earliest efforts to grant them freedom from paying tax to support the Orthodox minister.

There is no doubt that the presence of these peaceful people had an effect on our town's history. They were staunch friends of the native Indians, they refused to bear arms, and fought diligently against slavery. They championed education and the rights of women in the 1700's even as they do today. Our town has recognized their contribution by naming three streets in their honor. They are Quaker Beach Road, near the site of the first Meeting House; Quaker Road in West Dennis, where second and third generations of Quakers lived; and the Ancient Way known as Quaker Path. This sylvan by-way runs from the Brewster border through what is still partly woodland, and is the path by which the Quakers who lived in Harwich and Brewster walked to the old meeting house for nearly one hundred years. Little of the path is visible today. But let us hope that the town will forever maintain this ancient way, not only as a memorial to our early Quaker settlers, but also to the townspeople who, before religious tolerance was the accepted rule, were willing to grant this freedom to their neighbors of different conviction. We can continue to honor this spirit by maintaining Quaker Path, one of the Ancient Streets of Our Town.

KEEP THOSE DUES AND STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPES COMING

Mrs. Slade has begun the job of billing those whose dues have not as yet been received. If you have paid your dues recently and still receive a bill, don't panic. The process of preparing and mailing is slow, and some mail will certainly overlap. We appreciate your enclosure of a stamped, self-addressed envelope in which your membership card will be returned to you.

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

Postal
Permit No. 2
South Dennis
Mass. 02660