

ANNUAL MEETING - OFFICERS ELECTED

The reports of the activities that your historical society has carried out over the past year were warmly received at the annual meeting held on Sept. 13. Highlights included a report from Joshua Crowell, Treas., that the media show was fully funded and that the Belle of the West model had been completely paid for through the sale of shares. Those elected to be officers for one year: Donald Bacon, Pres., Nancy Reid, V.P., Elinor Slade, V.P., Phyliss Horton, Rec. Sec'ty., Isabelle Flynn, Corr. Sec'ty. and Joshua Crowell, Treas. Elected to serve as directors for 3 years: Nancy and Richard Howes and Gail Hart. With this excellent Board, we look forward to another banner year.

JACK FROST IS COMING!

Not only figuratively, but literally! Jack Frost, well-known New England artist and illustrator, whose artistic pen and ink drawings of historical buildings all over New England have been published in newspapers, periodicals and books, is coming to our October 5th meeting at Carleton Hall at 7:30 P.M. and will present a program entitled, "Jack Frost at Large". Many of you know his work from one of his several published books, Cape Cod Sketch Book. You won't want to miss this engaging artist. If you own a Jack Frost book, bring it along for an autograph - and bring a friend for an evening we are all sure to enjoy.

CRANBERRY COUNTRY

At our annual meeting, we heard about the numerous and varied steps necessary to produce cranberries on our local bogs, by grower, R.L. Thacher. The many questions which R.L. fielded so well after his talk showed a real interest in this unique type of local agriculture. Our thanks to Link for taking the time in the midst of a constantly busy annual schedule of flooding, spraying, dusting and sweeping, etc. his many acres of bogs. And now, on to the all important stage of picking. Let's hope that Jack Frost does not get to the bogs before Link is through!

WANTED: A CROWELL CRANBERRY BARREL

All of you by now probably know that the cultivation of cranberries began here in Dennis when Henry Hall accidentally discovered that sanding bogs increases productivity. Many of you probably also know that the first book on cranberry culture was written in 1858 by the Rev. Mr. Benj. Eastwood of Dennis, and that the Howes berry, one of the Cape's leading varieties, was developed by Eli Howes of Dennis. But did you know that a special barrel for shipping cranberries with a system of ventilation to keep them dry was invented by a man from Dennis? In 1877, William Crowell patented a 'ventilating barrel' which featured a centerpiece exiting through the barrelhead which had air-admitting grooves. The invention proved successful enough for Mr. Crowell to renew his patent in 1881. I have never seen a Crowell ventilating barrel. Does anyone have one, in attic, barn or cellar? It would be good to have one on display with the other cranberry paraphernalia in the Barn Museum at Jericho. If you have such a barrel and are willing to loan it for exhibit (or even just to take pictures of), please let us know - Box 607, So. Dennis, MA 02660.

THE BELLE OF THE WEST IS OURS

The Board is most happy to announce that all of the shares have been sold and the model of the Belle of the West, created by Mr. James White of South Dennis, is ours. This most beautiful of Clipper ships, which represented Dennis in all of the major ports of the world in the mid-eighteen hundreds, lives again in this accurate scale model. She will be on display at different places throughout town and can currently be seen at the Old Colony Bank in South Dennis. Thanks to all who bought shares and encouraged others to do so.

ALONG SETUCKET ROAD

When I told you about Rum Crossing last time, I was reminded of another nearly forgotten place name along Setucket Road. My Dad always referred to the area where Setucket crosses the Airline as "Punkhorn Center". The name may be a corruption of the Indian name for a swamp in Brewster near the Middle Mill Pond, which old deeds as far back as 1790 refer to as Sepunkhorn Swamp. The path of the section of the Airline which runs from Rte. 6A to Setucket Road then bears left into Brewster and Harwich was no doubt the road leading to Sepunkhorn. My father used to tell of a lady who lived in this area who was called "The Queen of Punkhorn Center". I fancy that this sobriquet was coined by an envious neighbor, for "The Queen" was noted for being a fashionable dresser, known especially for her very fancy hats, which she wore on all occasions. Who else but a jealous female would have invented such a name? Today, Punkhorn Center is notable as that part of the Airline that lies in Brewster, but to me the name recalls the days when a Sunday afternoon ride which took us through this crossroad almost always ended up at D.H. Sears', in East Dennis for a cone of fabulous ice cream. And it conjures up a picture of an old-fashioned lady, with a huge hat trimmed with feathers, flowers and ribbons, turning many a head as she passed by.

CALENDAR

Oct. 5 7:30 P.M. Carleton Hall "Jack Frost at Large"
Coming in December Christmas Open House. This year we expect to hold this annual event at the Josiah Dennis Manse

Also of interest to our members:

Oct. 30 Bus Tour to Salem, Visit the Witch City for Hallowe'en
Dec. 8 Old Concord Christmas, Antiquarian Society
For information call 393-5739

CRANBERRY HARVESTING - 1904

I recently had the pleasure of visiting with a gracious lady, who is approaching 100 years of age. A Dennis native, she retains a remarkable vivaciousness and keen memory. She attended school on Depot Street, Dennisport, in the school which stood where V.I.C. Hall now stands. When she graduated from High School, she began to look for work in Dennisport. Having not found a job by September, she did what so many Cape people did in those days - and a few still do - she signed on as a cranberry picker. The need was greatest and the pay best on the large bogs owned by the Makepeace family in Carver and Middleboro. So, in company with some neighbors, she boarded the train in North Harwich and travelled to Parker's Mill, now known as Wareham. They were met by a horse and wagon which carried them and their belongings to the Bog House. This was a large dormitory type building, adjacent to the bogs which would be home to the pickers until the crop had been harvested. Each picker brought with him a feather bed, blankets, pots and pans, and eating utensils, as well as clothing. Groceries could be ordered weekly and were delivered, a running account being kept, to be settled when the pickers were paid at the end of the season. Pay was according to the number of quarts of berries picked. In addition, some growers provided a recreation hall where dances and socials could be held. Sometimes, whole families would sign on for picking, making the few weeks away from home a sort of vacation, as well as a money-making expedition. At the end of the picking season, all of one's possessions would be wrapped in the feather bed, labelled, and shipped home by freight, while the pickers reversed their routes, arriving back at the depot on Cape Cod, tanned, tired and glad to be home. My friend remembers picking on bogs which are still active, such as Frogfoot and Wankinco. Today, these bogs are picked by machine, certainly more efficiently and no doubt more quickly. If you have a young reader in your family, Marion Crowell Ryder's book, Scuttle Watch, contains an interesting chapter on harvesting the cranberries from a local bog, as seen through the eyes of young boys. It conveys a sense of excitement, competition, and a feeling of accomplishment that somehow seems lost in our mechanized age.

HELPFUL HEALTHFUL HINT FROM HISTORY

This is absolutely the last word about cranberries, at least for this edition. Here is a use for our local fruit which may not have occurred to you.

"A corn may be extracted from the foot by binding on half a raw cranberry, with the cut side of the fruit upon the foot. I have known a very old and troublesome corn drawn out in this way in the course of a few nights."

from The American Frugal Housewife written in 1833 by Lydia Maria Child

ATTENTION BELLE OF THE WEST SHAREHOLDERS

D.H.S. is planning a Launching Party in your honor. Details to follow.
Josiah Dennis Manse, October 31, 2 P.M.

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