



### HISTORY IN VERSE

I try to have some variety in the various articles in each Newsletter. Strangely enough, however, this month everything I have thought of to write about has a common theme - poetry. I have a growing collection of poems. The poetry in which I am most interested is written by and about Cape Codders. Perhaps we should call these poems "verses", for they don't always scan too well and are not particularly lyrical or romantic. However, they are interesting to me because they capture people and events in this town's past and give us a contemporary account of them. It has been suggested that poetry came easily to our ancestors because they were so accustomed to the rhythms of the sea. I have been told that Capt. Seth Crowell, Jr. composed poetry while beating around Cape Horn. Obed Shiverick, descendant of the ship builders, was well known as a poet and many of his verses are preserved by his family. An earlier poet describes for us the feelings of the townspeople upon the launching of the first ship from the Shiverick yard:

"This noble ship in her strength and pride,  
We greet and launch her in the tide."

His poem, published in the Yarmouth Register in 1850, is signed "H". Jacob Stone Howes, who was lighthouse keeper at Sandy Neck, also had many poems printed in The Register. One of them, written on his appointment to the keeper's post, includes a toast to his friends back in Nobscusset, and in 29 verses, he tells us what each of his former neighbors does to earn his living. Hiram paints, Nye kills cows, Dick drives the bread cart, Levi peddles eels and clams, while Jacob does nothing but tend the light.

My great grandfather, Freeman Gibbs Hall, turned out many poems for special occasions and on subjects of interest to the Lyceum, of which he was a devoted member. My favorite is his "genealogy verse", which traces his ancestry back to Old John Hall:

"Freeman Gibbs Hall, son of Freeman, who was son of Skipper Ned,  
His father's name was David, but he's been a long time dead."

Perhaps the most prolific of our town's poetic sons (and daughters, for we also have some lady poets of note) was Capt. Marcus Hall. His best-known poem relates the legend of Princess Scargo and her lake - would you believe in 38 four-line verses? Capt. Marcus had a nice sense of humor and the poem is lighthearted and fun to read - how the chieftain summoned his whole tribe to dig the pond for the princess' fish, how the squaws worked with clam shells, digging day and night, and finally how the princess places her perch in her new pond and watches them swim away.

"There they are, or their descendants,  
Swimming to this very day."

If any of you have poems written by these or other residents of the town, I would dearly love to have copies to add to my collection. Even allowing for "poetic license", they are interesting and tell us a lot about what was on people's minds in days gone by.

### AND HERE'S A POETESS

Just let me tell you quickly about a female poet, who was a social activist as well. She was Mrs. Jethro Baker, and in 1898 she wrote, read and had published a long poem which inspired local citizens to turn an overrun cow pasture into the attractive green that now surrounds Liberty Hall. Her poem is not only an interesting bit of salesmanship, it also relates some of the history of the busy corner of High Bank Road and Main Street, describing the district school that once stood on the triangle, the delivery of mail by stagecoach, and other facts about the village. Mrs. Baker made her point, and the village green was improved and has continued to be a focal point of the community. But let not Mrs. Baker's fame rest only on this plea for public involvement. She was best known for her commercial jingles which advertised special sales planned by her husband, who conducted business at a shop on the first floor of the present Liberty Hall. Her jingles, printed in ads in the Yarmouth Register, reflect marketing trends for the 1890's. Consider this:

"Wall paper from Peat's  
At Jethro Baker's find,  
In styles up to date,  
In no ways behind,  
For he's alive in 1905."

### A PRESENT DAY POET

Our October meeting will be held on the 30th at Carleton Hall, at 7:30 P.M., and will feature our favorite "Sound Man", Ben Thacher. I'm going to tell you something about Ben that you may not know. (I could tell you a lot of things about Ben that you don't know, but this I don't think he will mind.) Ben is a poet and he has written some rather nice poems about Dennis and Cape Cod. We can probably get him to recite one or two, as he tells us about "Old Sounds of Radio" at this meeting. Come and laugh with Ben and the rest of us - you won't be bored. Ben's poems aren't anywhere near as long as Capt. Hall's.

CALENDAR

Oct. 30 7:30 P.M. Carleton Hall. "Old Sounds of Radio".  
Ben Thacher.  
October 27, 1727 A great earthquake shook all of New England.  
October 31 See you at Scargo!

THE LITTLE GREEN SCHOOLHOUSE

'Much has been said of the Little Red Schoolhouse,  
But I best remember the one that was green,  
Standing back in a field, and the paths that led to it  
Are as plain to me now as a yesterdays scene.'

Time for a story about a woman who made her place in the history of our town. When psychologists released a study done of successful businessmen to determine what person, other than a parent, had had the most influence on their lives, it was no surprise to have a teacher mentioned most frequently. The woman I'm going to tell you about was a teacher and we know for a fact that she had a great influence on many of her students because they have told us so - and more importantly, they told her so as well. Miss Susan E. Hall was born in 1842, the daughter of Capt. Asa Hall and his wife, Susannah. She was one of their ten children, eight of whom were boys. She probably got her own education in the West Schoolhouse, now on the grounds of the Manse, and while still a teenager, she was given a position as a teacher in the West Dennis Academy, which stood on Pond Street, near the cemetery. From there she went on to become the teacher of the Little Green Schoolhouse, which served the children of the Crowell neighborhood of West Dennis (now Cove Road and Church Street). That district school has been carefully described by one of her pupils, Sylvanus C. Evans, who made a model of it, now on display in the Jericho Barn Museum. Although young, Miss Hall managed a school which the town report of 1866 tells us had 78 scholars, ten of whom were under age 5. She taught a six-month summer term and a three-month winter term, and she was paid \$23.31 per month. Miss Hall was such a fine teacher, that 60 years after their school days had ended, a group of her District #4 scholars celebrated her 88th birthday with her, recalling the school days they had shared. What teacher could not be pleased by such a tribute? The "students", now all over 70 years of age, presented Miss Hall with a gift and - you guessed it - a poem, written for the occasion by Sylvanus Evans. In his poem he describes the building, the subjects taught, the discipline, and his beloved teacher:

'There's one who survives round whom fond memories cluster.

We all loved her dearly and she loved us all.

As one of 'her boys' we've ever been greeted,

By youth's mentor and friend, Miss Susan E. Hall.'

And by the way, a poem was a most suitable tribute for Miss Hall, as she was the sister of our poet friend, Capt. Marcus Hall.

HALLOWE'EN IS COMING.....

....And those who attended our meeting during Festival Days know what neighborhoods to stay away from on that night. Kathy Swegart has talked to a lot of Cape Codders who have a "presence" in their homes, and she shared some interesting ghostly tales with us. After her presentation, many in the standing-room-only audience related personal experiences, some of which were chilling. Kathy began and ended her talk by asking who in the audience believed in ghosts. A great many who were there would probably agree with Samuel Johnson, who said, "All argument is against it, but all belief is for it!" For you scoffers, here's what Capt. Marcus says about the ghosts that haunt Scargo Lake:

"..... At the far side of the lake

Call gently, "Scargo! Scargo!"

And the echoes will awake."

Meet me at midnight, October 31, at the far side of the lake, if you dare.

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