



### REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

A sincere round of applause for outgoing President Sarah Kruger was led by newly-elected President Nancy Howes at the D.H.S. Annual Meeting held at the Senior Center on September 19th. Other new officers include Susan Kelley and Susan Olsen as Board members. Additional members are to be appointed to the Dennis Historical Commission, the Manse Committee and the Jericho Committee, as provided in our By-Laws. The gratitude of the membership goes to all our officers, past and present, who have kept Dennis's Historical Society among the most active on the Cape. It is the aim of the present leadership to involve more of the membership in our activities. If you are asked to help, please say yes!

### FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

But first, to the membership chairman....Isabelle Flynn, with a strong assist from Bill, continues to do a very efficient job of keeping track of our membership, in addition to the very tedious job of addressing, sorting, and mailing the newsletter to over 400 members and friends. When you send in your dues, add a word of thanks to Isabelle and Bill. Now from the membership chairman....From time to time we let the members know who has recently joined our society. Your editor has been very much in remiss in including the good news of added members. Please accept my apologies, as I now include the names of new members who have joined us over the past several months.

Rev. and Mrs. Joshue L. Crowell, Mr. and Mrs. Willis Booth, Mr. and Mrs. Steven Ginsberg, Mr. and Mrs. George Hempstead, Barbara Olsen, Mr. and Mrs. Chester Savery, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Swain, Mr. and Mrs. George Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Stone, Mr. and Mrs. James Mullen, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Spiller, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Upton, June Becker, Ann Stout, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Hopewell, Mr. and Mrs. Goerge Nolte, Mr. and Mrs. Don Berry, Mr. and Mrs. Sumner Perlman, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ball, Sandra Carlson, Ann Chalmers, Beth Coulsey, The Rev. Charles F. Ehly, Frederick Elbe, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pratt, Nancy Tuirek, Shari Worthington, Karen Ross, and Life Member Paul McGuire. Welcome! Some of these new members are already active in preserving and teaching the town's history, and by joining our membership, all have expressed an interest in learning. Welcome these new members when you see them.

### THE OTHER RIVER

If you tell people who know anything about New England that you live on "The Cape", most will correctly assume that you mean Cape Cod. But my Aunt Laura, who lives in East Gloucester, always reminds us that Massachusetts has two Capes guarding her shores--the right arm of Cape Cod extending out into the ocean, and the left rocky fist of Cape Ann ready to defend her. Our in-family name for Capes is "The Cape" and "The Other Cape". Similarly, Dennis residents need to be reminded that there are two rivers which bring benefit to this town. Bass River is probably to be called "The River" and lovely little Swan Pond River "The Other River". Recently "The Other River" has been receiving some of the attention which she richly deserves, as town officials and citizens express concern about pollution and the future life of this important stream. Like the two Massachusetts capes, the two Dennis rivers are vastly different, both in size and personality. Bass River is bold, with a strong current, strong tidals pools, and numerous bays and coves along its six plus miles. Swan Pond River is smaller, curving gently through its two to three miles of marshes to its picturesque pond, with islands of upland, which were once leased by the town as pasture land. The settlers of this town who came here to farm must have been delighted to discover these rivers lined with marsh, for they provided a bountiful source of fodder for the cattle. Interestingly, there were two Swan Ponds in Old Yarmouth--the easter Swan Pond being that which now separates Dennis Port from South Dennis, and the wester Swan Pond being that at the head of Parker's River, dividing South Yarmouth from West Yarmouth. The swans for which the ponds were named were not the ornamental park swans which have now become naturalized here. They were the smaller Whistling swans, now rare, but in colonial days a very common spring and fall migrant on these protected bodies of water. The Dennis (easter) Swan Pond and River were the boundary of common land called variously Crook's Neck, Crooked Neck, or Crocker's Neck. There are several divisions of this common land on record, which shows the value that the early settlers set on the marshes and cedar swamps which line her banks. Many of the lots in the divisions are called by name, as Burgesses Marsh, Mirey Meadows, and Hedge's Cedar Swamp. The upland on the banks of the pond at the head of the river was early inhabited by the Chase family and probably the Gage family. Below the bridge, where Clancy's now stands was Baker land. Further down, on the west side of the river lived a branch of the Baxter family. The rest of the land was valued for hay and cedar. Unlike Bass River, I can find no evidence of Swan River as a harbor. A wharf was built to the west of the river mouth, the home for a sizeable fishing fleet. In the 1830's salt works lined the west bank of the river, near the mouth. Bridges crossed the stream in early days. A foot bridge over which hay was carried is mentioned, where Upper County Road now crosses the river, in the proprietors records before 1717. In 1837 a second bridge was in existence a little north of the present Route 28 bridge. In 1849 Nathan Fisk received permission to build another bridge about where the present Lower County Road passes over the river. The fact that it was to be only eight feet above ordinary high water indicates that the river was not used as a harbor. The town is now faced with several important decisions about "The Other River". It is polluted to the point where shellfishing is forbidden. Is the cause human habitats, water fowl, poor outflow? "The Other River" has been an important part of our town's history. Those of us who are interested in the past should also be interested in the future of "The Other River".

## CALENDAR

- Nov. 1 7:30 P.M. East Dennis Library, Jacob Sears Memorial Building. "Crimson Harvest" a video on the Cranberry Industry with speaker R. Lincoln Thacher Refreshments
- Nov. 14 7:30 P.M. Board meets with Nancy Howes
- Dec. 3 3-5 P.M. Christmas Open House Jericho House
- Dec. 7 Cape and Islands Historical Association Meeting

### CRANBERRY HENRY

Organizing the town's history is made somewhat difficult by the fact that many names are duplicated, not only from generation to generation, but also within a generation. Dozens of Joseph Howes', any number of Susan Bakers and even three contemporary Eleazer Nickersons parade through the pages of our history. In most instances it takes some thorough detective work to establish which individual was involved with what event. To help me keep my people straight, I sometimes give them nicknames. Their families and contemporaries often did the same. For example, the three E. Nickersons were known as "Bridge" Eleazer, "Brook" Eleazer, and "Church" Eleazer, nicknamed by their dwellings place. In my file there are several Henry Halls--One I call "Lubra" Henry, One "Shipwreck" Henry, and the one I want to tell you about today is "Cranberry" Henry. He was born in Dennis in 1761 and was a mariner by trade. During the trouble with France and England which led to the War of 1812, Henry's schooner was waiting out the Embargo with the rest of the Dennis fleet, moored in the old Peat Hole with a "Madison's night-cap" over the mast. Like his neighbors, Henry was also a farmer, so he was able to sustain his family through these lean years, and improve his time catching up with some of the chores which were neglected while he was at sea. Among those chores was cutting some good fire wood to age to the proper dryness. One fine fall day, as Henry looked around his place, he noticed a stand of pine and oak on a knoll which stood between the Bay and the wild cranberry patch where his family gathered their crop of that native fruit. While his wife and children harvested the wild berries, Henry cut the wood from that bluff thinking he had done a good days work. But during the winter the winds blew out of the northwest and northeast, as they are wont to do, and the sand from that denuded knoll blew over the north half of the wild cranberry patch. Well, Henry thought, we'll just have to look around for another swamp where the cranberries grow. But in the fall of that year, as berries ripened, the Halls noticed that the vines on the north, which had been covered with sand, were producing more and larger berries than those not covered by sand on the south side of the swamp. Strange, but Henry was duly grateful for what the Lord provided. The Halls were even more impressed when, in the following year, the sanded part of the bog produced even more fruit. Henry began to wonder if maybe the sand was actually the cause of this bumper crop, so he decided to spread sand on the south half. And--you guessed it--Lo and behold, the south half of the swamp also became more prolific. Henry's ecological mistake had opened the door to methods of cultivating this wild and tasty fruit. Harwich folks will tell you that the cultivation of cranberries as a commercial crop began in their town, but there is no question about the fact that "Cranberry" Henry made the initial discovery that cultivation was a possibility. To find out why sand helps cranberries grow, ask Link at our next meeting, Nov. 1.

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CRANBERRIES?

Probably not as much as you think! Visitors to the Cape are surprised and fascinated with cranberry culture. Please be at our November meeting so that you can tell your visitors all about this unique form of agriculture. You can also test our board members favorite cranberry recipes, as refreshments will be served and you can be sure they will be appropriate to the evening's theme. Guests most welcome. See you at the Jacob Sears Memorial Library on Nov. 1st at 7:30 P.M.

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