



"YOU HAVE TO GO OUT....."

The evening of September 12th found a nice group of DHS people assembled for our Annual Meeting and election of officers. Re-elected were: President Nancy Howes, Vice-President Gertrude Lailey, Treasurer Joshua Crowell, and Recording Secretary Phyllis Horton--all old hands with DHS. The one bright new face is our Corresponding Secretary Lura Crowell. She and her husband, Seth, (a native son who went out to find fame and fortune in the Springfield area) have retired to the old family homestead/farm on Sesuit Neck Road, East Dennis. Lu is so full of enthusiasm it's a treat to be around her. Look for her at the next DHS meeting--you can't miss that smile! Introduce yourself--you'll be glad you did. Welcome aboard, Lu!

Our program was from the Cape Cod National Seashore--four short programs about Cape Cod and the U. S. Life Saving Service. The 17 and 1800's and early 1900's were certainly dangerous times along our coast. Many ships came aground before the Cape Cod Canal was built, and the U.S.L.S.S. saved many lives through their heroic efforts. Their motto was: "You have to go out, but you don't have to come back."--an adage that proved true on several occasions. They were a courageous beginning for our present-day Coast Guard.

THE CIVIL WAR

As we go to press, I hope that many of you are glued to your TV screen enjoying the epic presentation on PBS documenting the great Civil War which our nation endured 125 years ago. I very rarely recommend TV watching--(with the exception of Jessica Fletcher or Sherlock Holmes)--but the PBS 5-part production which depends for its documentation on dairies, letters and photographs has really caught my attention. The production puts the viewer into the minds and bodies of the principal actors--the men who fought, the families who waited, and the unfortunate individuals who were destined to assume the awesome responsibility of making the decisions. I am also excited by the program because, as the events are related, I can localize what appears on the screen knowing of the involvement of our own Dennis men and boys in the incidents being portrayed. Before the attack on Fort Sumner, it was plain that opinion of the citizens of the town of Dennis was divided regarding the subject of the Southern institution of slavery. Let me hasten to say that I know of no one living in Dennis in the 1860's who approved of slavery, even though many of their ancestors had owned slaves in previous generations. The dividing lines were drawn on how the evil should be corrected. Many thought that eventually slavery would topple of its own weight. They favored a patient waiting until that time, in the interest of preserving the Union. Others had become fired by the message of the Abolitionists who had frequently spoken at Carleton Hall, the Academy at South Dennis and at open meetings all over the Cape, to advocate emancipation, regardless of how it effected the economy of the South or the state of the Union. But when the flag of our country was lowered over Fort Sumpter, all difference of opinion vanished. Dennis did its part in providing the men and provisions needed to persue the struggle, and eventual victory, even though the duration and ferocity of the conflict was greatly underestimated. As the scenes unfold, the names of natives of our town who participated come to mind. There were 13 men from our town in the Massachusetts 5th Regiment which drilled and dawdled near Washington in the opening days of the war before making a stab at the Rebels in the battles of Antietam, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. When their 90 days enlistment was ended all of them reenlisted, and did not return home until July of 1863, when they were given a hero's welcome and escorted to their homes by a parade of carriages with Kimball Howes Esq. as marshall. Capt. Frederick Nickerson piloted the tugboat which pulled the ironclad Monitor to Hampton Roads, where its historic battle with the Merrimac, re-christened Virginia, occured. Dennis Captains were challenged by the Confederate Privateers as they attempted to keep the Union troops supplied. Capt. Benjamin Parker Howes lost the challenge, and watched helplessly as the Rebels burned his ship, the beautiful Southern Cross. Capt. Joseph Robbins beat the challenge when his fishing vessel, Sch. Diadem was boarded by the crew of the Confederate vessel Tallahassee, by proving that he was fishing legally in international waters. Capt. Thomas Prince Howes transported horses and troops to New Orleans on the Ship Black Prince, while Capt. Silvanus Nickerson was pressed into service as master of a gunboat on the Mississippi. Back on the land, men who had enlisted from this town served in many of the gruesome battles in the march through Virginia. Nine of them in the 58th Regiment moved unter Grant in the horror of battles such as that fought at Cold Harbor. Some were lucky. Private Harvey F. Howes returned to marry his childhood sweetheart, Mercy Caroline Howes. Others were not so lucky. Hiram H. Hall of Dennis and Ansel L. Studley of West Dennis returned home to die of their wounds. Amos Wixon, Amos Rider, Kelley Chase, JR., and Stephen R. Howes never returned. War is hell. A volume could be written about the experiences of the men who were natives of this town in the great War between the States. If you have any information about the service of Dennis men in this war, either at sea or with the Union troops, will you send it to D.H.S. P.O. Box 607, South Dennis 02660? We are anxious to include every bit of information that can be collected in the library of Dennis history which is developing at the Josiah Dennis Manse, and also to make the forthcoming history of the town reflect as accurately as possible what happened to our people, no only in this great war, but in all of their activities over the 351 years since the European settlement was planted here.

CALENDAR

- Oct. 6, 7, 8 9 AM-4 PM Cape Cod Chapter of the Embroiderer's Guild Exhibit at Josiah Dennis Manse
- Oct. 10 7:00 PM Board meets with Nancy
- Oct. 14 2:00 PM A Nature Walk at Chapin Beach, Dennis with Natural Resources Officer George McDonald. Meet at the parking lot

BACK TO SCHOOL TIME

This year is the first one in over 30 years when my husband and I have not had the joy of sending a child of ours to school. Hurray, hurray! The last of our five children has graduated from college and we now have the vicarious pleasure of watching them do the back-to-school shopping for their own kids. All of our children have had an education beyond high school, but that's not unusual. Think of all the people you know who have a college degree. I know many of you have struggled as we have to get your children an education so that they could find the jobs they want. In colonial days, young people never had to look forward to finding a job--not as we think of a job today, with benefits of health insurance, paid vacations and sick days and retirement plans. All a man needed was a piece of land adequate for him to raise the food and raw materials for clothing that his family needed. The labor of his hands did the rest. But the value of an education was recognized. For the times and the needs of the population, our town fathers were notably conscientious about providing instruction to the children and youth. They appropriated money for a school teacher, who was hired to teach reading writing and cyphering. In the first century of our history, the school master travelled around the town, spending time in each neighborhood to teach these three essentials to those who could be spared from chores. Some of these men appear to have been well educated themselves, but it was not until 1710 that our local children were taught by a man who had a college degree. He was Stephen Jaques, a young man from Newbury, MA, who the town hired to teach children that year. His efforts obviously met with approval, for the following year he was rehired, to perform the same tasks and in addition to keep a grammar school to teach Latin, "provided he may be obtained for the lease or price which we gave him for his last years schooling". Poor Mr. Jaques had no teacher's union behind him to negotiate for better terms, so he accepted the town's proposal and it would appear from subsequent history that he was an inspiring and dedicated teacher. From the founding of the town until 1710 when Mr. Jaques appeared as teacher, not one young man from Yarmouth had attended college. But of the generation of youngsters taught by Mr. Jaques, four Yarmouth boys went to Harvard College and were graduated, with both Bachelors and Masters degrees. Mr. Jaques began their education with the elementary reading, writing and cyphering, then was able to encourage the boys and their parents to continue their studies. In order to enter Harvard at that time a young man must be proficient in Latin and Greek. Mr. Jaques began their training and after his marriage to Thankful Taylor, one of the young ladies of this town, he returned with his bride to his native town. He turned their education over to the minister of Yarmouth at that time, Daniel Greenleaf, who also came from Newbury and was a graduate of Harvard. The boys lived with the Greenleaf family and did chores in exchange for their education. Can you imagine the talk around town when it became known that these local boys were going away to school? What a lot of preparation was done by the sisters and mother of Edward Sturgis, Barnabas Taylor, David Hall, and Samuel Sturgis, to outfit the youngsters as befitted college students. And how anxiously Mr. Greenleaf must have labored to prepare these country lads to compete academically with city youngsters, many of whom had prepared at the Boston Latin School, rather than at the side of a country school teacher and parson. The first to graduate was Barnabas Taylor, class of 1721, followed by Edward Sturgis 1723, David Hall 1724, and Samuel Sturgis 1725. How I would love to know how many friends and neighbors attended the commencements and whether Mr. Jaques or Mr. Greenleaf shared in the triumph of the happy occasion. These young men went on to careers as teachers and ministers and did not return to their native town, but I am sure the parents of long ago felt the same sense of pride and relief that each of us has felt when the long and expensive process of educating our young has been completed.

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