



DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Lots of activity to report in the membership department this month. New Life Members (who will never have to remember to pay their dues again!) are: Alice M. Burton; John A. Burton; Larry F. Ellis; Roland W. Kelley; and Elizabeth H. Wentworth.

Other new members are: (Family) Mr. and Mrs. Paul San Clemente; Mr. and Mrs. James C. Hay; Helen M. and Jeanette Wickstrom. (Individual) Shirley B. Gifford; June E. Levitt; Gilbert S. Kelley; Jim Miller; Royal L. Goheen; Norma F. Monbouquette; Terrill Ann Fox; and Thomas S. Kelley. Welcome all! We hope to greet you at the Annual Meeting on September 20. Our business meetings are usually short, and the program is excellent.

Membership chairperson Isabelle Flynn also tells us that dues have been coming in at a rapid rate. Congratulation, you guys! If you are among the few who have procrastinated, bring your dues with you to the Annual Meeting.

{To longtime members: if you know any of these new members, please call and invite them to come with you on September 20th at 2:30 P.M., West Dennis Community Building. Don't forget to tell them how good the refreshments always are.}

DHS RECALL

There's a computer in our future!! We're looking forward to being able to record a full inventory of DHS property--books, photographs, files, furniture, etc. You name it, we'll have a system to inventory it! If any of you have been caretaking or storing items for us, this is the time to return them to the Manse or Jericho. Call Kitty McNamara at 394-6144 if you have questions or want to arrange a pick-up. (From Lu)

CRANBERRY MOMENT

The really exciting time for cranberry growers is fast approaching--harvest. It is not only a busy time for the growers, but it is also one of the most picturesque times of the year for those of us who are observers. In the early days of the industry the berries were picked by hand. Families would pick together, fighting mosquitoes, briars and poison ivy as they worked their way from one "shore" of the bog to the other. When berries were "brought ashore", that is carried over the ditch which surrounds each bog, the tallyman would record the amount picked by each person and a credit would be recorded in the tallybook. At the end of picking season, the pickers were paid. Cranberries were so important to the economy, it was regularly voted not to open schools until October, so the youngsters could pick with their parents, and often with grandparents.

No machinery company produced any tools for cranberry growers until very recently. Every bog owner created the equipment that was appropriate for his own bogs. Sanders, cultivators and rakes were made and repaired in the owners shop. In 1887, a man named Daniel Lumbert invented a "snap machine", a snap scoop which was improved upon by Benjamin Bee, a noted inventor from our neighbor town of Harwich. There were numerous patents recorded for cranberry harvesting tools, but few made any money from their patents, as growers continued to make their own tools. Wooden scoops appeared in our area about 1890., copied from those used in Maine to pick blueberries. The collections at Jericho and the Brooks Museum in Harwich illustrate the wide variety in style of these common work tools. Women and children continued to pick by hand, however. A skilled picker could hope to fill his or her six-quart pail in fifteen minutes.

Now of course, no one picks by hand anymore, or uses a wooden scoop, except for a magazine holder. Mechanical pickers, like the Darlington picker, were introduced on a large scale in the 1950's. William Ernest Crowell is believed to have been the first grower to use these machines in Dennis.

Then came the next innovation in crop gathering --water harvesting. In the mid-1960's, this method of harvesting had become sufficiently refined to be useful to growers on the Cape, whose ancient bogs are much less regular in size and topography than newer bogs in Wisconsin and New Jersey. At present 65% of Massachusetts cranberries are harvested in this manner. The bog is flooded, and a machine with rotating beaters is driven across row by row, beating the berries from the vines. The berries float to the surface of the water, and are corralled by wooden booms and brought ashore. The berries are then carried by conveyor belts to waiting trucks, which deliver them to the processing centers. Berries that are water picked are not suitable for fresh sale, and thus we owe the addition of many new cranberry products to this method of picking. But those of us who are fortunate enough to be here in harvest receive another great blessing from this new way of harvesting--the colorful display which makes the autumn glory of the leaves in the mountains seem pale. Please, go bog-watching this month!

CALENDAR

Sept. 9 7:00 P.M. Josiah Dennis Manse Meeting of DHIS Board

Sept. 15 Primary Election Don't fail to vote!

Sept. 20 2:30 P.M. West Dennis Community Building
ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM

"Captain Peter H. Crowell, Portrait of a Master Mariner, 1837-1923"

presented by his two great-granddaughters, Nancy Crotoia and Sylvia Homer

Don't Miss It!

Please Note: Josiah Dennis Manse will be open during September on Tuesday from 10 to noon
and on Thursday from 2-4 P.M.

COMING IN OCTOBER

Oct. 18 2 P.M. Pathway Walk, led by George MacDonald. Flax Pond

SPEAKING OF FISHING.....

.....as we were during Maritime Week in May, I am of the opinion that those of us who are blest with residency on this beautiful peninsula should, from time to time, contemplate the significance of the fish whose name we bear in the economic development of New England. Do you know how our cape got its name? Bartholomew Gosnold was an early explorer of the New England coast. As explorers are wont to do, he wished to bestow European names on native shores, and the beautiful cape which he beheld was not exempt. In a very, VERY long poem, written by Benjamin Drew, the story is told. Here's part of that poem

"I'll christen that there sandy shore
From the first fish I take:--
Tautog or toadfish, cusk or cod,
Horse mackerel or hake.....
Old Neptune heard the promise made,
Down dove the water God--
He scared the meaner fish away,
And hooked the MIGHTY COD.
Quick, Gosnold hauled--"Cape--Cape-- Cape Cod!"
"Cape Cod," the crew cried louder:
"Here, steward! take the fish below,
and give the boys a chowder."

Gosnold's choice was prophetic, if apocryphal. The mighty cod was for many years an economic boon to this peninsula and to all of New England. Many wealthy families were proud to be labelled the "Codfish Aristocracy." And, in 1784, the Great and General Court of the Commonwealth paid official tribute to "the beef of the sea," and the part it played in the development of our region and our new nation. Rep. John Rowe presented to the Massachusetts House of Representatives a resolution, that a carved codfish be permanently displayed over the Speakers desk, in tribute to the great benefit which this fabulous fish was to the people of the Commonwealth. the Sacred Cod now hangs at the rear of the chamber, between the columns which separate the floor from the visitors gallery.

Locally, the cod fishery was of great value. From Cape Cod it was possible to make day trips to local fishing grounds where cod fish could be caught and brought back fresh, rather than salted down to be dried. There's a story told about a fishing trip made by Captain Howes, so successful that he loaded codfish into a wheelbarrow and sent his young son around the neighborhood, telling him to get whatever he could for the bounty. So young Joseph Howes, anxious to complete the job and get home for his own bowl of chowder, hawked through the Hall neighborhood near the wharf, shouting, "Fresh cod for sale, 5 cents a fish!" He made several sales to the Halls, ever ready for a good buy. But as he made his way towards the Howes neighborhood, a slamming door was followed by the appearance of Mrs. Abner Howes at her gate. "Boy," she shouted, "haven't your parents taught you anything about respect? NEVER sell a cod fish for less than ten cents!" Bought any cod lately? Talk about respect!

Trivia Question: In what direction does the Sacred Cod face as it hangs in our statehouse?

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