

#### CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

Members of the Dennis Historical Society are hereby informed that the Annual Meeting and election of officers of the Society will be held on Monday, September 19 at 7:30 P.M. at Liberty Hall in South Dennis. Reports of committees will be heard, and the business meeting will be followed by a program featuring Jack Bragington-Smith, talking about old taverns. Refreshments will be served. You and your friends are most cordially invited to attend.

#### DREDGING IS A DRAG

The talk around town this summer has included, among other things, the slow progress of the dredging of Bass River. Winds and tides have driven sand into the channel, making it difficult for sizeable boats to make their way in or out of the river mouth. The towns of Yarmouth and Dennis have decided to dredge, but many obstacles to success have been encountered. This is by no means a new problem. The sandy bars off the south shore are constantly shifting and growing and have been since the earliest days of the English settlement. I have a letter written by Abner Crowell in 1814, in which he describes the problem of entering the river this way: "A stranger would be puzzled to get in with a long boat at high water, and a 12 foot Moses boat can't get over the bar light at low water, without the crew gets overboard and hauls her over by hand."

There have been numerous efforts to keep the channel open, the earliest that I know of was in the 1790's. Sylvanus Crowell attempted unsuccessfully to widen and deepen the natural channel. Failing this, he built a stone island pier to the east of the present river mouth, where vessels of large draft could off-load their cargoes, which would be barged up the river to the wharves, on flat bottomed scows. This served the port for some years, but drifting and silting continued. The most conspicuous effort to improve the port is now a well-known part of the West Dennis beach scenery. The stone breakwater a little distance off shore was built in 1837, when the channel was a good distance further east than it is today. It was an ambitious plan which included a lighthouse and quarters for the keeper. Most of the rocks were brought down the river from Dinah's Pond, just north of the Route 6 bridges. A 4½ inch hawser was stretched from the shore at the Eastern Point, so-called, at the river's mouth, all the way out to the work area, to help to pull the heavy scows out into the sound. But before the breakwater was completed, it could be seen that it would not succeed, as sand was building up on the inside of it. The lighthouse planned for it was never built, and a small building which stood on it for some years was set afire and burned in the late 1800's. The project was abandoned in its unfinished state, and today the breakwater is just a curiosity. Whether or not the dredging is completed this year, it is sure that man's battle with Dogfish Bar will not be over. (Editor's query--Does anyone know what a Moses boat is, or was?)

#### IT'S DENNIS FESTIVAL DAYS TIME AGAIN

For 25 years, the Dennis Chamber of Commerce has sponsored Dennis Festival Days during the last week of the official summer season. All types of activities are planned, designed to appeal to visitors and residents alike to show-case the attractions of our town. D.H.S. always plans to join in, with emphasis on our local history. This year's events which tell of our heritage are especially interesting, many planned in cooperation with the committees of the two historic centers. You should all certainly bring your family and friends to visit each of the two houses. Jericho House, on Trotting Park Road at Old Main Street, West Dennis, is open on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 2-4:30, as it is throughout the summer. A classic Full Cape, this lovely 1801 house has many interesting architectural features and is beautifully furnished. The Barn Museum on the grounds contains exhibits of early industries, home life of 100 years ago, antique tools, and the unique Driftwood Zoo. Special events during Festival Week will be a quilting bee on Wednesday and a quilt exhibit each day that the house is open. A Sea Chanty Sing-a-Long with D.H.S. President, Don Bacon, who has become well-known on the Cape for his songs and stories of sailing days, will be held Friday at 3 P.M. The Josiah Dennis Manse on Nobscusset Road at Whig Street, Dennis, is open 2-4 on Tuesday and Thursday, and will be through September. This delightful "Salt Box", or lean-to style house, built in 1736 for the town's first minister, is furnished appropriately for its period. On the grounds of the Manse stands the Old West Schoolhouse, housing a collection of early school books and furnishings. The Village Garden Club is holding an exhibit of flower arrangements on both Tuesday and Thursday. Nancy Symington will play old-fashioned games with the kids on the Manse lawn on Friday at 1 P.M. Our piece de resistance of the week, a talk by Bill Quinn of Orleans, entitled "Ship Wrecks of Cape Cod", will be given at Carleton Hall on Tuesday, at 8 P.M., August 30. Mr. Quinn, a former Life magazine photographer, gives a very professional, exciting talk, and we urge you all to attend. Admission is free, but we will accept a free-will offering to help with expenses. It will be a busy, but extremely interesting week for all.

CALENDAR

August 23 and August 31 Dennis in Slides and Sound, West Dennis Community Building 4 P.M.  
 August 26, 27 Overnight Bus Trip, Sturbridge and Tanglewood. Call Paula, 394-5739.  
 August 28-Sept. 5 Dennis Festival Days. See Article and get a program from your Post Office or Dennis Chamber of Commerce.  
 September 19 7:30 P.M. Liberty Hall, South Dennis. Annual Meeting and Election of Officers, Dennis Historical Society. Program: Jack Bragington-Smith, 'Taverns and Ordinaries of Old King's Highway'.

DUES ARE DUE.....

And Isabel Flynn, membership chairman, is ready and willing to receive them. Send \$4 for an individual, \$6 for a family, and please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Some of you who are receiving this letter are not presently members, but have been suggested as being interested. We would be most happy to have you join in our efforts to preserve and teach our town's interesting history. Just send your check to Mrs. Flynn and you will receive your monthly newsletter plus a special new members edition.

D. H. SEARS STORE

Our audio-visual team which goes around showing our slide show about Dennis to various groups has a lot of fun anticipating audience reaction. Certain segments of the show are met with different reactions, depending on age, orientation and familiarity of the viewer. One thing I have learned, I can always identify people in the audience who grew up in Dennis by the smiles and sounds of recognition when the old D.H. Sears store in East Dennis comes on to the screen. I'm sure that the smiles are in remembrance of the fabulous ice cream dispersed by Mr. Sears, although his store carried much much more than that. It was ice cream that got D.H. started in business. Home-made ice cream was a regular Sunday afternoon treat when David was a boy. It was cranked in the old-fashioned maker by his father until it was creamy smooth, then "ripened" wrapped in blankets, and served in glass dishes. In the summer of 1880, David and his cousin Will turned the family recipe into profit, selling their hand-cranked ice cream for 10¢ a glass in a building which was formerly a tinsmith's shop. In spite of the somewhat expensive price - a dime went a lot further in those days, when milk sold for 5¢ a quart - the boys made their financial venture pay. David went on to try other means of contributing financially to his family's finances. He tended store for Charlie Underwood in South Dennis, learning something about that business from a well-established store-keeper, and also delivered mail, and trucked seaweed to the farmers. In 1887, Prince M. Crowell, the grandson of Prince S. Crowell who helped finance the Shiverick's venture into ship building, purchased the store of Ellery Smalley and set David Henry Sears up in business. He arranged to repay Mr. Crowell as his business improved, and soon he was providing all that a general store in those days should provide - meat, dry goods, crackers, pickles and spices - and in addition, his already-famous ice cream. From that time on, D.H. Sears store was a landmark in East Dennis. At first located on the corner of South and School Street, after a disastrous fire it was relocated on School Street itself, as Mr. Sears overcame many obstacles to keep his small business going. Mr. Sears became famous for his home-made bread, and Saturday baked beans, both of which he prepared himself. But ice cream remained his real claim to fame. In early days it was delivered by a little donkey, pulling a wagon, in which it was packed with ice cut from Cedar Pond and stored in Sears' own ice house. For many years his helper drove the cart to the Barnstable County Fair with ice cream. After 1915, he delivered in a Ford run-about or a converted 1918 Cadillac, making stops as far away as Orleans, and as close as the Sign of the Motor Car Tea Room on Route 6A. Old-timers in East Dennis, however, do not remember Mr. Sears only because of his marvelous desserts. He was known to young and old as a warm and friendly man, always polite, and interested in one and all. Mr. Sears has been gone from East Dennis since 1952. His grandsons continued his ice cream business for a while, until the economy made it difficult to maintain the quality of the ingredients and still compete with the market. Today D.H. Sears Store, his friendly manner and his wonderful ice cream are but a nostalgic memory.

Dennis Historical Society  
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*Aug 8 3*

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