

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
December, 1978

Deck the Halls

On Advent Sunday, December 3, the public is invited to attend an Advent Open House at the Josiah Dennis Manse from 3-6 PM. The house will be festively decorated by a committee headed by Susan Kelley, assisted by Nancy Flinkstrom and Jean McMurtry. Refreshments will be served and at 4 PM, the Chamber Singers of the Cape Cod Community College Chorus will sing traditional music, under the leadership of Professor Robert Kidd. This is an excellent acappella group, so you will have an opportunity to hear beautiful music, feast your eyes on our beautiful historic house in Christmas dress, and enjoy a social afternoon-- please come and bring your friends.

A Family Reunion

Louise Kelley and Pauline Derrick answered questions on tracing Cape ancestors for an interested group of would-be genealogists at Jericho House on November 8. When the group was queried as to the Cape families they represented, it turned out we were all cousins! A lot of good information was exchanged and we thank these two ladies as well as Parm Fitch who kindly let us hold the workshop at Jericho House. Don't forget, cousins, we would like a copy of your research for the Josiah Dennis Manse Library.

Mr. Baxter--Return Engagement

An afternoon program at West Dennis Community Building proved to be a great success--many who do not like to come out in the evening were able to see a repeat of Ferd Baxter's program "Dennis--Remember When?" We hope to schedule other programs in the afternoon from time to time, in addition to the annual luncheons in mid-winter and in June. In the meantime, thanks to Mr. Baxter for his return engagement, much enjoyed.

Think Snow

"Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh"

The question is often asked by off-Cape visitors--"Well, it's lovely here, but what do you do in the winter time?" Our ancestors improved their time in the winter by enjoying ice skating, ice boating and fishing, and riding in "open sleighs". Mr. Everett Durgin of Trotting Park Antiques has given us the following information about the sleighs on exhibit at Jericho Barn Museum.

Jericho Barn Museum exhibits varied styles of Pung and Sleighs of yesteryear. The first sleigh is a pung, a low bed sled with boxlike body on runners, drawn by one horse and used to carry light loads. This pung was a gift of Robert Stone.

The second sleigh on exhibit also a pung, was drawn by two horses. It was owned by Southworth H. Nye, who was born in Sandwich in 1848, came to Dennis in 1867 and conducted a meat business as well as a slaughter house. This pung was no doubt used for the delivery of heavy loads, probably whole or half animals. It is equipped with three removable seats, and could have been used for passenger hauling to social gatherings as well. Mr. Swift bought his meats from Mr. Nye to inaugurate his meat packing business. The third sleigh in the collection is an elegant sleigh used for special occasions when the craftsmanship of the maker was meant to be shown. It has a beautiful swan dasher, with decorative panelling and strapping on the body. A plate attached says "H.F.Bates, Haverhill St. Boston". These two sleighs were the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard S. Hall.

Another unusual sleigh is the most recent acquisition, purchased from the gift from the Dennis Historical Society Memorial Fund, recently voted to each of the Historic Centers. The sleigh was formerly owned by Captain Dan Hedges (about 1850) who lived at 45 Sea Street, East Dennis. Showing imagination on the part of the maker, it uses the single runner of the pung with a specialized body. We believe this was used by the Captain to transport hardware, supplies, and his personal gear to and from his ship.

Another sleigh that shows ingenious treatment has runners that are made of delicate steel rod. With the elimination of wood it gave less resistance to snow and ice. This is the first sleigh acquired by the Jericho Barn Museum, and if raced against the others, would certainly be the winner--the best for "dashing through the snow."

Wouldn't it be nice if for just one snowy day every winter, the sound of automobiles, trucks and snowmobiles might be completely silenced, to be replaced by the gentle clop-clop of horses hooves on snow packed streets and the jingle of bells on the horse-drawn sleighs?

Thank you, Mr. Durgin, for this interesting information.

CALENDAR

Nov. 29 1:30 PM "Dennis--Remember When?" Slides by Mr. Ferd Baxter
West Dennis Community Building
Dec. 3 3-6 PM Christmas Open House, Josiah Dennis Manse.
4-4:30 PM Music by Chamber Singers of the Cape Cod Community College,
Josiah Dennis Manse
Jan. 10 7:30 PM Weather Vanes, Marilyn Strauss, Carleton Hall
Feb. 15 12 noon Mid-Winter Festivity. Luncheon at 1 PM, Program
March 15 7:30 PM "Geology of Cape Cod" Mr. Donald Eldridge, V.I.C. Hall,
Dennisport

Address Correction Requested

If you have your mail delivered to a Post Office box, you may not get your mail regularly from us. Substitute postal workers do not know who are box holders. So if we are using your street address and not your box number, please let us know. Drop us a note--Box 607, South Dennis, or call 398-9942. Thank you.

Streets of Our Town

With all the talk about the uncertainties of the mail getting through, we should pause and consider the good old days when mail was often delivered by travelers or merchants or passed from sea captain to captain at sea and often arrived after the sender was safely home. Before the days of regular postal carriers, mail arrived and departed with the Packet Ship that plied between the Cape's bayside landings and Boston. Two of the streets of Dennis commemorate this era--Black Ball Hill Road and Signal Hill Road off Rt. 6A in Dennis. It seems that the arrival of the Packet was heralded by the raising of a signal flag on a high pole atop Signal Hill. This signal was spotted from the top windows of Judah Baker's Mill which stood at the end of Pinefield Lane in South Dennis and a flag was raised there also. Whether there was an intermediate signal point I have not discovered. At any rate, those expecting mail, packages, or visitors would proceed to the Bayside to meet the packet.

The day before the Packet was returning to Boston, a black ball or barrel was raised to the top of the pole. Thus passengers, mail, and freight could be brought to the packet landing in time for its departure. The schedule depended upon wind and weather, and also to some extent on the freight and passengers booked.

It would be fun to see if a signal could be transmitted between these two points today. At any rate, that is the story behind the names of these two Streets of Our Town.

Looking Ahead

The January Program meeting will be held at Carleton Hall, Dennis, at 7:30 PM on January 10. Marilyn Strauss of Barnstable will show her extensive collection of replicas of antique weather vanes. In February we will have our Mid-Winter Festivity in Dennis on Saturday, February 15. Social hour begins at 12 noon and luncheon will be served at 1 PM. Following the luncheon, we will hear something about the history of this our oldest village. In March we will hear Don Eldridge speak on Cape Cod Geology at V.I.C. Hall in Dennisport, Thursday, March 15. Be sure to circle these dates now, as no one can predict when the next mail will get to you!

Dennis Historical Society
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