

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER  
February, 1979

How Blows the Wind?

Check your weather vane, says Marilyn Strauss--as New Englanders have done since 1654 or earlier. Mrs. Strauss proceeded to trace the history of weather vanes from the 4th century to the present and showed the group gathered at Carleton Hall on January 10 her extensive collection of weather vane replicas. A most enjoyable evening in our continuing series of programs of historic interest.

Trivia question--Do you know what weather vane flies atop Carleton Hall itself? Mrs. Strauss knows and so do those who attended the program. Check next time you ride by.

Dennis--An All-America Town

Remember the excitement of the competition and the great feeling of pride when our town was named an All-America Town in 1978? The committee who worked so hard for this designation remembers, and they want this feeling of pride in Dennis to continue. They think they have found a good way to do this. With the balance left from the money donated by Dennis citizens to pay their expenses to Denver for the contest, they have started a scholarship fund. An award will be presented to a Dennis Senior at D-Y Regional or Cape Cod Technical High School who submits the best essay on "How to Keep Dennis an All-American Town." Their aim is to present the award annually, of a prize of at least \$100. To make it even more significant the fund will be called the Henry C. Boles All-America Award Scholarship Fund--for it was largely at the urging of former Selectman Boles that the committee was formed to seek the award for Dennis. Also, the committee feels that Mr. Boles represents the spirit of dedication and willingness to serve that exemplifies the good citizen of an All-America Town.

At a recent DHS board meeting, it was voted to contribute to this fund, as pride in our town is certainly one of the things our Historical Society wishes to encourage. Individuals may also contribute by sending a check (which is tax deductible) to Mr. Theodore Nelson at Town Hall.

West Dennis Community Building

Continuing in our effort to have something for everybody, we have scheduled another afternoon program for March 28th at 1 P.M. at the West Dennis Community Building. More about the program (a very interesting one) next month. This is about the hall itself, which old-timers remember as the West Dennis School House. In the 1860's five of these schools were built; one in each village. East Dennis school stood next to Worden Hall. South Dennis between Goose Bay Lane and Farm Lane. The Dennis school was where the northside fire station now stands. The school in Dennisport was destroyed by fire in 1929 and stood on Depot Street. All of the buildings ceased to be schools about 1930 when the Dennis Consolidated School was built on land given to the town for that purpose by Ezra Howes Baker. That school, greatly enlarged from the original 8 grade building, is now known as the Ezra H. Baker School.

Of the 1860 school buildings only the one in West Dennis survives. It was saved from demolition and restored due to the efforts of interested citizens in 1952 and is now one of our most-used and versatile town owned meeting places. Notice the bell, by the way, hung in the interesting bell tower. It is all that survives of the South Dennis school.

Booklet in the Offing

The Executive Board has been discussing the feasibility of publishing a booklet containing pictures of Dennis in years gone by. While we are studying the cost, etc., we would like to know who has pictures that might be of interest. Pictures of activities, or showing people are of special interest. If you have some pictures, we ask if you would list them according to subject and send your name and phone number to D.H.S., Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660, Attn. Nancy Flinkstrom. Please do not send the pictures at this time. This will be a long time in the planning, but we will keep you posted. (P.S. If you want to help, please let us know.)

Local History in Our Schools

The Education Committee held a meeting in cooperation with Mr. Walter Morley, Principal, and the third and fourth grade teachers at the Ezra H. Baker School to examine the present field trips to our historic centers held each spring. The teachers felt that the children gained a great deal from these trips. We saw slides of the Falmouth program, which gave us some ideas on improving ours here in Dennis, shown by Mr. Dudley Hallett of Falmouth. Next week a small group will go to observe the program in action that is sponsored by the Braintree Historical Society. Our aim is not to change an already good experience, but to improve and expand it if we can. One way is to provide the children with caps, aprons, etc. typical of the period of the house which they are visiting--they can wear these during their visit. Anyone interested in any aspect of this program please call Paula Bacon, 394-5739, or Marge Hardy, 394-6310.

### February Calendar

- Feb. 6 10 AM, Meeting of Education Committee with people interested in local history in the schools.
- Feb. 17 12 noon, Social Hour, 1 PM luncheon. Talk by Mr. Walter Morley, Principal of Ezra H. Baker School, introduced by Mrs. Anson Howes. Red Pheasant Inn, Rt 6A, Dennis
- Feb. 20 Regular Board Meeting
- Mar. 15 7:30 PM, "Geology of Cape Cod", Mr. Donald Eldredge, V.I.C. Hall, Dennisport
- Mar. 28 1 PM, "Trap fishing and the Rose Dorothea", slides by Mr. Cyril Patrick, West Dennis Community Building

### Mid-Winter Festivity

Tickets are going fast for the Mid-Winter Festivity on February 17 at the Red Pheasant Inn. In addition to a fine luncheon, those who attend will be treated to a short talk by Mr. Walter Morley who will be introduced by Mrs. Anson Howes. They will tell us about the Nobscussett Inn and Camp Dennis which have occupied the same site at the end of Nobscussett Road at different times in the history of Dennis. If you have not made a reservation, please send your check for \$6. per person and a return envelope to: Mr. Joshua Crowell, Box 963, Dennis, MA 02638. Social hour at 12, Luncheon at 1 PM.

### 1978-79 Dues are Due

To date 311 individuals have paid dues for this year--some of you have not gotten to it yet--but please hurry. There are many advantages to being a dues-paying member. One is that your name will be carried on our mailing list to receive the newsletter and other mailings. Another is that members are given first choice for the limited number of tickets at the Annual Birthday celebration luncheon and other affairs where a limit must be placed. Also, your dues pay for our programs, which are open to the public and help us in our efforts to preserve and teach the history of Dennis. Please send dues if you haven't already to: Elinor Slade, Membership Chairman, Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660.

### Streets of Our Town

A recent survey of cities and towns indicated that the most used name for a street in various towns and cities of the U.S. was Maple Street. I cannot find Maple listed as one of the streets of Dennis. There are other trees, Silver Leaf, Hickory, Elm, as well as two Pine Streets and two Pine Roads. But a street named for a tree with some historical significance is Sassafras Road off Scargo Hill Rd. in Dennis. Sassafras Bark and roots were among the first cash crops sent from Cape Cod to England. Bartholomew Gosnold, who gave Cape Cod its name, gathered loads of Sassafras to take back to England on his exploratory trip around the Cape in 1602. Sassafras was highly regarded as a medicine used as a spring tonic and was made into a tea and given to chimney sweeps to soothe their throats after their sooty days work. I don't know of a sassafras tree on Sassafras Road, but a fine stand of it grows in South Dennis. It makes a tasty soothing tea, and the tree can be identified by its "mitten" shaped leaves in summer.

An early account of Gosnold's journey says that sassafras brought 3 shillings per pound to the importers--and this means 336 British pounds per long ton--a remarkably profitable plant product for those times. You can have some free--by digging a small sassafras root from the trees which grow along the streets of our town.

Dennis Historical Society  
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