

FESTIVITY TIME IS HERE!

The menu sounds great - A buffet with beef burgundy, finnan haddie, chicken crepes, vegetables, potatoes, salads, fruit medley pastries and a beverage, for \$7.00 including tax and gratuity. For entertainment, Bob Thacher, guitarist and vocalist, will "croon" (as they used to say in my youth) some old favorites from the romantic 30's and 40's. All this and a chance to match wits with fellow members on a trivia quiz about Dennis history (no dates, I promise!). A prize will be given for the best answers. Time and place - the Columns in West Dennis on Saturday, February 19, 12 noon - and you can be there by making a reservation with Joshua Crowell, Box 963, Dennis, MA 02638, with a check for \$7.00 per person and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. We'll miss you if you don't come - and you will miss a nice time.

WHEN DENNIS WAS VIRGIN FOREST

The native Americans who occupied the area pre-historically lived in a veritable paradise. Tall white pines and huge oaks forested the area. Oysters the size of small lobsters lay in beds along the bay, and fish and berries were everywhere in abundance. The Late Woodland Indians who met the European explorers were members of an affluent society, well-fed, well-clothed, and secure. Their contact with the Europeans had less than happy results. Fred Dunford fascinated a fine audience at the Jericho House on January 19 with his perceptive comments on the earliest native society and the reasons for its demise. If you missed this exceptional program, do try to hear Fred speak at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History sometime. His approach is scholarly, yet refreshingly enthusiastic and he relates his scientific findings as a professional archeologist to historic records and background information in a way which makes the early Cape Cod Indian's society a culture which we can come to know and appreciate. We thank him for an excellent presentation.

THE JOURNEYS OF THE BELLE OF THE WEST

Our beautiful model, of which so many of us are shareholders, sails around town with the regularity of old time packets, most recently docking at the Bass River Savings Bank in Dennisport. She will soon go into dry dock for a brief overhaul by her builder, Mr. James White, then set sail for the Dennis Senior Citizens Center. By the way, all ye with artistic bent, we need a tasteful, artistic sign to accompany our vessel on her voyages, so that people can understand her significance. Any volunteers?

SCARGO OBSERVATORY PART IV: THE TOWER OF STONE

At the time of the fire which destroyed the second wooden tower atop Scargo Hill in 1900, the property was no longer owned by the Observatory Association which had been organized in 1874. It had been sold to the Tobey family in 1890 and was a part of the elaborate complex which made up the Nobscusset House Summer Resort. The Nobscusset House itself stood at the end of what is now Nobscusset Road. Four and one-half stories high, it was surrounded by outbuildings - a stable, billiard room, bowling alley, entertainment hall, pavillion and two twelve-room cottages. Later a nine-hole golf course was added. To this resort came wealthy families, mostly from the Chicago area, where some members of the Dennis Tobey family now lived and were prominent in business circles. To this extensive plant had been added the modest tower at Scargo, with its spectacular view. Now, the village awaited Mr. Tobey's decision to rebuild. And in the interim there appears in Dennis an interesting and somewhat mysterious character. He is called 'Mr. Murphy' and he boards at the home of Fred Gage. Early in the year he is mentioned in the local newspaper column, decorating the Nobscusset Social Club. He seems to be a regular member of the group which meets around the stove at the Post Office waiting for the mail. Then in April it is announced that Mr. Murphy has the contract to build the new tower of stone. The cobblestones to be used will be furnished by H. Edmond Sears. Work began on the 7th of May and Mr. Murphy had two masons and their helpers to assist him in constructing the 30 foot tower, with 'windows and look-outs at proper places.' The work must have been completed before August, for during that month Mr. Murphy is reported to be building a stone wall around the Bleak House property and later the same month, in front of Fred Gage's house (now Johnson's, at the end of Corporation Road, on Route 6A). He remained in town for a while, repairing chimneys and fireplaces, then no more record of him have I found. I certainly would like to know more about the mysterious Mr. Murphy, who seems to have disappeared from Dennis leaving his artistic stone work as his only memorial, especially the 'unique and pretty building' on Scargo Hill.
*Quotes are from the Yarmouth Register, 1900.

HEALTHFUL HINT FROM HISTORY

From the Yarmouth Register, 29 May, 1857 - Once a week is often enough for a decent white man to wash himself all over. Assemble your equipment in a room with a temperature not below 70 degrees - soap, warm water and a hog's hair brush. Your bath should be taken early in the morning. It is very dangerous to bathe soon after a meal. No man should take a bath at the close of the day, except upon the advice of his physician!
(Editor's note: What about us girls? N.T.R.)

CALENDAR

Feb. 15 3 P.M. Slide show, 'Dennis', Wixon Middle School. Open to the public.
Feb. 19 12 noon Mid-Winter Festivity at the Columns - see first article.
March 23 7:30 P.M. V.I.C. Hall - 'You Have to Go Out, But You Don't Have to Come Back'. The story of the Life Saving Service, Robert Barlow.

Also of interest to our members - the following bus trips:

March 2 Tour of the Lower Cape with Bob Prescott
March 10 Historic Providence
April 18-22 Colonial Williamsburg
Call Paula at 394-5739 for details.

'YOU HAVE TO GO OUT.....

....But you don't have to come back." This is the motto and the philosophy of the Life Saving Service of the U.S. Coast Guard. At our March meeting we will hear what this actually means to a Life Saver, from someone who has been there. Mr. Robert Barlow, former member of the Life Savers of the Coast Guard, and presently Math/Science Co-ordinator of the D.Y. Regional School System, will speak to us on March 23 at V.I.C. Hall at 7:30 P.M. More about his subject next time, but be sure to save the date.

THE WRECK OF THE SCHOONER ALMIRA

Cape Codders knew of the need for a life saving service long before it became an official government agency. In early days, hardly a family had escaped the tragedy of loss of life on the sea. For this reason, in every sea-side village on the Cape, amateur life savers were prepared with a small boat, ropes, oars and anchors to do whatever they could for any vessel seen to be in distress along its shores. Dennis was no exception. Our history is dotted with successes and failures in valiant efforts to rescue those in peril along our coast. One such effort was on behalf of the crew of the schooner Almira. She was a small two-masted vessel engaged in the wood trade. On January, 1826, she left Sandwich for Boston, loaded with wood, under Capt. Josiah Ellis, with his son, Josiah Jr. and John Smith as crew. After a few hours of middling winds, the Almira found herself in an ever-increasing gale out of the north, a wind which whipped the sea into a froth and sent salt spray flying over the vessel. Soon the masts, sails and ropes were coated with ice. The small crew tried to keep control of their schooner, but to no avail. Gradually she was driven closer to the Cape's north shore. Once a huge wave broke over the bow, running down the deck and flooding the tiny cabin, making it impossible for the crew to keep a fire burning. At length the Almira came to rest on the outer bar of the Dennis shore. They were promptly spotted by the villagers, but weather conditions being what they were, it was impossible to try to take them off. The volunteers from Dennis did get close enough to the vessel to shout to the men and encourage them to try to stay warm enough to stay alive, but they were for a time powerless to rescue the crew. When at last they could reach the vessel, they found the Captain and Mr. Smith were already frozen to death. But the younger Ellis still showed signs of life. He was carried back to the village, and in the nearest house was wrapped in warm blankets and slowly thawed back to life. This was but one young life rescued from certain death by the efforts of those who, untrained and poorly equipped, still knew that you have to go out---and try.

SCHEDULED SHOWINGS OF 'DENNIS'

With Wil Scofield's return from a South Pacific vacation, our media crew is back to full force. It looks as if they will be kept busy, for our production of 'Dennis' is still in demand. On Tuesday, February 15, it will be shown to the students and faculty at the Nathaniel H. Wixon Middle School. Then at 3 P.M. it will be shown to the public in the Middle School auditorium. All are welcome and please bring along anyone you know who has not seen our lively slide and sound show depicting the history of our town. In addition to this showing, through the considerable efforts of Ann Guilliani, there is an exhibit of art and photos expanding upon the subjects dealt with. This alone is worth a trip to the Middle School, anytime this month when school is in session. The media show will also be shown at the annual meeting of the O.S.D.V.A. at Liberty Hall, March 6 and at the Boat Owners Association, at the Lower Deck, February 18.

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