



#### MID-WINTER FESTIVITY - MADE YOUR RESERVATIONS YET?

We are in for a very special time this month when we meet for what has become a traditional way to brighten up the dark days of February. Our speaker will be one of our own members, and this has become a favorite type of program. The Rev. Mr. Joshua Crowell, a.k.a. Jay, has as his title, "Characters I Have Known and Savored." Jay has been collecting stories of his ancestors and neighbors for many years, and has a definite knack for retelling them. Don't miss this chance to hear about some of Dennis' legendary characters. For menu and reservation details, see the January issue.

#### WOMEN AND THE SEA

"This is the land where women mated,  
Then gave their men to the sea - and waited."

Ruth Ann Baker's experience with the harshness of the sea began with her marriage in 1834, but she was already well acquainted with life's vicissitudes. Born in West Dennis in 1813, she was the youngest of the 6 children of Reliance (Chase) and Crowell Baker. The family was left motherless when Ruthie was only 4, leaving Julia Ann and Pauline, the eldest girls, in charge of the children. Then, as she approached her 9th birthday, her father also died - "without a moment's warning", says the church record. How the 6 children were supported after their father's death I do not know, but it was the custom for orphaned children to be indentured until they married or became 21. The evidence is that Ruth went to live in a family in Dennis, for she married a boy from that village. It was not common in the early days for a northsider to marry a southsider, for, as the late Nathan Crowell used to say, "The courtin' range was small." Ruth Ann's husband was Joshua Hurd Howes, son of Capt. Zacharia Howes and a member of a thoroughly sea-going family. Among Ruth's new in-laws were 8 Master Mariners, besides her husband. Two of Ruth's sisters also married sea captains, and so their lives were dominated by the moods and seasons of the sea. Ruth began her married life happily. Within a few years time Capt. Joshua could boast of two fine sons, whose future career was never in doubt. Joshua became part owner of the schooner Belle, and was engaged in coastal trade along the Atlantic seaboard. His long absences caused his family much concern. Ruth was often called upon to comfort other women in the family as tragedy after tragedy reduced them to grief. Her own sister Julia Ann was left a widow with 4 children when her husband Capt. Levi Crowell was drowned in a fall from his vessel in Bass River. Sister-in-law Betsey's husband, Samuel Shiverick, was lost at sea. Both Joshua's brother William and his sister Mercy's husband Daniel Howes died of the dreaded Yellow Fever while at sea. Does this not seem more than one family should have to bear? But Ruth Ann's own personal tragedy was yet to come. It was April, 1840. The back of winter was broken and the coasters were at their trade. Both Joshua and his brother Zachariah Jr. were sailing their schooners along the east coast, looking for cargo and markets. On the 13th of that month a vicious storm occurred. Capt. Zachariah was far enough north to escape unhurt, and sailed to southern ports, his cargo safe and his heart happy. As he neared Long Island Sound, the crew spotted a schooner which had not been so lucky. Filling with water and demasted, she had been abandoned by her crew. Capt. Zachariah boarded her to try to identify the vessel. Upon entering the cabin, he found his brother's watch. It was the schooner Belle. No trace of her crew was every found. Zachariah had the heavy duty of informing his mother and Ruth Ann of but one more tragic loss. Incredibly, after due time from mourning, Ruth Ann remarried- another Master Mariner, Capt. Luther Child of West Dennis. Two of her sons, Joshua Hurd Howes Jr. and Aberdeen Child, became sea captains. Son William Howes emigrated to Australia, where you can still find Howes families in the Adelaide phone book. All of this seemed to have strengthened Ruth Ann, for she lived to be 86.

#### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE NEEDED

I told you last time that I was to be relieved of some of the duties of putting the monthly newsletter together. Well, I was being an optimist! It seems that in order for this to happen, we will need some volunteers from among you to help. Most particularly we need someone with a typewriter and typing skills, and someone who will gather up the bits of news of past and future events, acquisitions etc. and arrange them for the printer. Dee Moore has already come forward, Bill and Isabel Flynn will continue folding and mailing, and Sarah Kruger turns out the labels on her computer. Phyllis Horton will resume typing the final copy when she returns from Florida. Can you fill in any of the blanks? Please join the newsletter committee!

I have a typewriter \_\_\_\_\_ I can type \_\_\_\_\_ I will gather the news \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to D.H.S. P.O. Box 607 South Dennis, MA 02660

## CALENDAR

- Feb 7 7:30 P.M. Board meets with Nancy and Dick Howes
- Feb 10 Noon Gather at Christine's, West Dennis for social hour, followed by Luncheon at 1 P.M. and talk by Jay Crowell - "Characters I Have Known and Savored"

### EAST DENNIS CHURCH CELEBRATES 175 YEARS

One of the door prizes which some lucky person will win at the Mid-Winter Festivity will be a cup plate issued in honor of the 175th anniversary of the founding of the East Dennis Church. To understand the significance of this anniversary in the history of the town, remember that, although the founders of New England came here to be free to worship God as they thought fit and proper, they had no intention of establishing freedom of religion for all. The Puritan Congregational Church was the only church in this town until after Massachusetts took steps to separate church from state in 1811, excepting only the Society of Friends, which we will deal with in a separate article. Harwich, however, had religious differences as early as 1757 when a Baptist Society was formed, followed by a Methodist Society in 1797. Although the Orthodox ministers preached against these schisms within their parishes, both the Baptists and the Methodists drew followers from Yarmouth and Dennis. These Cape Methodists belonged to the Methodist Episcopal denomination, founded in England by the Wesley brothers when their attempt to modify the teachings of the Church of England were rebuffed. Some of the new adherents still held firm to the principle of congregational polity that marked the orthodox church, and did not care for the concept of Bishops who had their jurisdiction over the local church. A reform movement which began in New England at that time encouraged the new Methodists to withdraw from the Methodist Episcopal Church and form what was called the Reformed Methodist Society of Dennis and West Brewster. Thus in 1814, the congregation which was the foundation upon which the East Dennis Community Church has stood for 175 years came in to being. At first meeting in members homes, in 1821 the decision to build a meeting house was made. The site of the first house is marked today by the Red Top Burying Ground on Stony Brook Road, West Brewster. The building has since been moved to East Dennis, where it is today the home of D.H.S. member Grace Nyberg. Next time I will tell you the history of the Reformed Methodist Society of Dennis and Brewster, and of the subsequent history of their first building known as The Red Top Church.

### NEWSLETTER INDEXING CONTINUES

Harold Merriam is continuing the immense job of indexing the volumes of our D.H.S. newsletter. The index will be in three parts - by person, by subject, and by title. This will be a very useful tool for anyone who wishes to research any of the subjects that have been written about in the twelve years our newsletter has been published. This is probably a good time to remind you that back copies of the newsletter can be obtained at a cost of 25 cents per copy. Send your request to D.H.S. Box 607 So. Dennis MA 02660. Don't forget to thank Harold for this good job when you see him next.

### RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Our president Nancy Howes will be telling us about some interesting acquisitions at the February luncheon. One of the most recent and exciting additions to our collection which we have acquired through the help of Heritage Plantation will be on display. Must be seen to be appreciated! One more reason to attend the Luncheon on February 10 at Christine's.

Dennis Historical Society  
P.O. Box 607  
South Dennis, MA 02660

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