



### PORTRAIT OF MRS. CHASE

If you are a 10th generation Cape Codder, as I am, you have cousins all over the place who are also of the 10th generation, but far away from "home". One of my "Cousins" contacted me a while ago. He had been to Harvard, MA and had visited Fruitlands Museum, a fine collection of art and New England memorabilia. There he had seen a portrait which was labelled simply, "Portrait of Mrs. Chase of South Dennis, 1844", painted by the noted portrait artist of the period, William Matthew Pryor. As our Cousinship is through the Chase line, he wanted to know if I could tell him which Mrs. Chase this might be. I'm glad we're not related through the Nickerson family! A lot of Mrs. Nickersons lived in South Dennis around 1844. But the Chase family was not primarily of this village. The progenitor of that clan was an early inhabitant of Yarmouth, living near Cummaquid and having land in Simpkins Neck, which is the source of the name of Chase's Garden creek. He was William Chase, who had moved here with his family from Roxbury. In some records he is called a carpenter. In many entries in the Plymouth Colony records he is accused of being a troublemaker. In fact, although he was appointed to be the first constable of the new town, he was removed from that office after only a few months, because he had openly insulted the minister, something that was just not done in 1639. He seems to have lived for a time near Bass River, probably in the area now known as Mayfair, but succeeding generations lived in West Harwich and Dennis Port, between the Herring River and Swan Pond River. One or two branches lived in South Dennis and a few in West Dennis. Since Dennis Port was considered a part of South Dennis in 1844, it is possible that the portrait is a resident of that village. But I believe that it is of Molly Harden, the second wife of Samuel Chase, who lived in South Dennis on the east side of Bass River, just below High Bank Bridge. Samuel Chase was born in Harwich 20 November 1761, the son of Samuel and the seventh generation from the first William. He went to war in the Revolution and served with General Washington at Valley Forge. He married first Mary (called Polly) Nickerson, daughter of John and granddaughter of Eleazer "Church". Together they were the parents of 13 children before Polly died in 1837. Samuel was not content to live out his life alone, so, at the age of 71 he took for his second wife Molly Harden (sometimes written Harding), also of South Dennis, who was 35 when she became his bride in 1838. Samuel Chase was a wealthy man, and owned almost as much of the real estate in South Dennis as did his brothers-in-law, the Nickersons. He was most certainly in a position to have Mr. Pryor paint a likeness of his "beloved wife" in 1844, just after the birth of their youngest son, Samuel. Mrs. Chase is a pleasant looking woman, with a tidy cap on her head of dark curls, which were perhaps merely "fascinators". She has a semi-smile on her face, which may reflect her good financial prospects. For Samuel left a great deal of his vast estate to her, causing a family feud over the ability of her elderly husband to make a competent will when he died in 1848. However, the matter was settled peaceably, and Mrs. Chase married for a second time as his fourth wife, Capt. Caleb Bates Howes of West Dennis. They lived together in wedded bliss, and financial security, until Capt. Caleb died in 1884. It would be interesting to learn how Mrs. Chase of South Dennis happens to be in the collection of Fruitlands in Harvard. If you visit there, say hello to her. No doubt she would rather be in South Dennis again.

### 'T WAS A GRAND TIME AT THE MANSE

(This article should have been in last month's newsletter but we ran out of space. There's just so much to tell you!)

Reverend Josiah's old house never looked lovelier than it did at the Christmas Open House. Every nook and cranny was decorated with some bit (or copious amounts) of greenery. I'm sure Bathsheba would have been delighted to see her home looking so festive. She also would have been charmed by the music of Stephen Russell and Janice Gray. She might even have recognized some of the old songs. Even Josiah would have responded to the conviviality of the afternoon. It was especially nice to welcome so many young families. Please do come again.

Very special thanks to Susan Kelley and her decorating committee. Every time they top themselves--just can't wait to see what they'll do in 1994! Another special thanks to Gertrude Lailey and her committee for planning the event and for all the delicious refreshments.

### WE GATHERED TOGETHER....

The church suppers on January 30th were a grand success. The food was first rate in each and every church, church bells rang out across our Bicentennial Town at 6:00 P.M., at each church one of our esteemed Selectmen read our Proclamation of Incorporation (signed by Governor John Hancock with his distinctive signature), and fellow townspeople enjoyed being together on such a lovely occasion. A big round of applause goes to all the many volunteers involved, and a very special thanks to Mary Aseltine who coordinated this unique event in our Bicentennial Year.

### COMING ATTRACTIONS

Remember when they followed Movietone News--The Eyes and Ears of the World? Well, among our Coming Bicentennial Attractions are the "All You Can Eat" Pizza Party at Wixon School on February 10th. Tickets are available at Ezra Baker and Wixon Schools...A Presidential Buscapade on February 22nd sponsored by Bacon Tours. Call 394-5739 for info... In March the Dennis libraries will have special displays featuring Dennis history. If you have something of interest speak to your librarian. She might like to borrow it.

### CALENDAR

Feb. 10 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meeting at the Manse.  
Feb. 13 12 Noon Mid-Winter Festivity at Christine's, West Dennis.

### OUR BICENTENNIAL MID-WINTER FESTIVITY

This year's luncheon promises to be extra special--just like our year. We will be honoring Wilson Scofield for the many years he worked on our audio-visual programs. DHS is noted Cape-wide for the excellent quality of our productions--thanks to Wil! The Yankee Pedlar Chapter of the Questers will entertain us with some fashions from yesteryears. Some of the dresses are quite spectacular. Ticket sales have been brisk but Christine's new room will accommodate a lot of people and there will be room for everyone. Christine assures us they will be finished with their addition and waiting to serve us. Use your reservation form on January's newsletter or call Josh Crowell at 385-3689.

### DENNIS UNDER THE ELMS

Many of you may know where a house once called Elmwood stands on Old Main Street in West Dennis. You may know it as Col. Winship's house, or as Wytchmere Tavern. It is the large Victorian house with a big tower and a carriage house in back, a little west of Jericho on the opposite side of the street. Once upon a time a smaller house stood on that lot, the home of Captain William Evans and his family. Sylvanus Crowell Evans was one of his sons, and he was a person deeply interested in the town's history. He wrote articles and poetry, some of which was printed in local newspapers, and from them we have been able to reconstruct many West Dennis events and learn much about the village during his long life from 1857 to 1945. Captain Evans was a devoted family man, who loved his home and the beauty of gardens and trees. On one of his short periods ashore in the year 1866, he bought nine elm trees, and with the help of his young sons he planted them in front of the Evans home. The boys, Sylvanus relates in a short article written for the Yarmouth Register in 1938, didn't think much would come of their efforts. Although well rooted, they had but a few scraggly branches, hardly more than twigs. But they enjoyed the rare opportunity to spend some quality time with their seafaring father, so no complaints or critical comments reached his ears. Having set the trees out, the boys work had only just begun. Orders were that each tree must have at least two buckets of water every day except rainy spells. Now, that was no easy task, for the water must be pumped by hand and lugged a fair distance. But when a sea captain gives an order, he expects it to be obeyed. The boys made it their goal to have those saplings looking great by the time Father was home from sea again. And they did. The elms were thriving and well deserved to be called trees when the Evans place was sold to Col. Winship in 1893. The small house was moved and the Winships built the large house which stands there today, but the elms remained. Writing in 1938, Sylvanus said, "If there are nine finer elm trees on the lawn of any estate in the town of Dennis I know not where they are." Today none of the elms survives. Dutch elm disease has taken most of the Cape's elms, including many beautiful specimens which some of you may remember in other parts of town. But take heart, dear readers. The Elms will grow again. In 1987 and 1988, Dennis joined with other communities across the country in a celebration of the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. Sarah Kruger was our local chairman, you may remember, and several events and exhibits marked the year. One of the projects that was suggested was that communities order seedlings of a new, disease resistant strain of elm, the American Liberty Elm, and nurture these seedlings until they were large enough to plant around the town as a remembrance of the Constitutional celebration. So Sarah ordered some trees, and Olaf Kruger volunteered to care for them until big enough to move into permanent locations. (You did volunteer, didn't you Olaf?) Well, the time has come. With the cooperation of the Department of Public Works, and the supervision of Phyllis Horton and Joshua Crowell, twenty elm trees have been planted around the town. Their locations are: Dennis--2 at the Manse, 1 Training Field, 1 Dennis Highlands; East Dennis--2 James P. Howes Park, 1 Senior Center, 1 Wixon; South Dennis--3 Town Hall, 1 Library; Dennis Port--4 at Dennis Port Village Green; West Dennis--2 Jericho, 1 William Woods Playground, 1 Ezra Baker School. Now folks, Olaf has done his share of watering. (Two buckets a day times twenty trees since 1988--wow, that's a lot of buckets!) So if you are asked to water one of these trees through the spring and summer of this first critical year, please say yes. Sylvanus closes his article about the West Dennis trees: "There are times during the summer season when I stroll to walk under the shade of those beautiful trees and pause for a moment to review their life. My father and brother have passed on, but to me those trees are monuments to their names." Our new trees will be monuments to the names of all who have helped in any way to put elms back along the byways of Dennis.

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