### DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## CAPT'N JUDAH

Harwich Independent February 1,1911. "News was received Sunday night from Capt. Judah E. Nickerson, who was picked up in a dory with the two men who had been drifting since they abandoned their barge on Thursday night in the fierce blizzard. No particulars as yet about their fearful exposure to the severe wintery elements during all that time, but we feel to rejoice with his parents and young wife that he is safe. In the great November gale of 1898 his older brother, Daniel J. was lost, and the few days suspense when it was feared Capt. Judah had met with a like fate, was terrible to the fond parents. The news comes like a great cry of joy to this whole community."

We can well imagine the fear and suspense of the parents. Their older son, Daniel, was first mate on the <u>Schooner James B. Pace</u> when it collided with the <u>Schooner Howard H.</u> Hanscom off Montauk Point, NY during the Portland Gale. The crew members, all from south side families, were found by a diving team the following year with many still tied to the masts as they had done to keep from going overboard.

The Nickerson boys were sons of Daniel and Medora (Long) Nickerson of Dennis Port. Their father was captain of a fishing boat and the boys just naturally went to sea at an early age. Judah went on summer voyages to the Bay of Chaleur, north of Prince Edward Island, during school vacations. He also went anchor dragging with his father, which seems to have been a profitable business. Judah quit high school after two years but instead of taking to the sea he went to New Bedford as skipper of a trolly car. He had been there earlier and was enchanted by the new electric lights that were being installed around the city. Every boy has to have his time in the city but after a short while he came home to go fishing again.

The next call to go venturing was to New York City where he signed on an ocean-going tugboat that towed coal from Brunswick, GA to the Erie Railroad depot at Erie Basin off Perth Amboy, NJ. It was in New Jersey that he met Miss Clara Viguier and immediately fell in love. It took three long years before Judah could convince Clara and her parents that he would make a good husband. Clara's father owned a leather shop in lower Jersey City where every shop owner lived above his shop. The night Clara finally agreed to be his wife he bundled her up, they went out in the cold and woke up the nearest jeweler to come down stairs and open his shop so Judah could buy an engagement ring. He wanted to seal the bargain before she changed her mind! They were married June 30, 1909 and came by way of the Old Fall River Line to Dennis Port for their honeymoon. Lester Edwards remembered when they got off the stage in front of the Ginn Block. He was very impressed that her parasol matched her dress and was surprised that Judah had found such a "lady".

By 1914 Judah had left the dirty, hard work of coal barging behind and became a Cape Cod Canal pilot—another job fraught with danger. The early canal was nothing like the modern day one. That one was dangerous with swift currents and huge rocks intermittently along the edge of the canal that trapped sand and built up into sand bars with each change of the tide. One needed to be clairvoyant to operate as a canal pilot in those years.

In the 1920's Judah moved on to Newport, RI where the cream of America's wealth lived "in season" and had yachts that needed competent captains. He spent a number of summer years in Newport and winters in New Jersey with local barging where he was home every night. Miss Clara insisted! Along the way Clara and Judah had two children--Pauline, known to many Dennis parents and students as Mrs. Kennedy--and Warren.

They eventually moved back to Dennis Port where they maintained a group of cottages. Capt'n Judah went back to piloting in the new and improved Cape Cod Canal during World War II. Judah and Miss Clara were my neighbors after I married and moved to Gage's Lane. The first time my oldest son, Michael, was missing at age  $2\frac{1}{2}$  I did all but call out the Marines. After that I walked across the field and would always find Mike engaged in some kind of activity with Captain Judah. He seemed drawn to Judah like a magnet and Judah would be telling him a tale or showing him how something worked.

In his later years Judah was the pilot on the Hyannis-Nantucket steamship MV Kateri-Tek. He was fond of saying, "I like my job on the Kateri-Tek so much I hate to take Mr. Gelinas' money." On August 3, 1959 Captain Judah Eldredge Nickerson died at the wheel of the MV Kateri-Tek having just cleared Cottage City (Oak Bluffs) bound for Hyannis--at the age of 81! What better way to go for an old man of the sea?

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MID-WINTER LUNCHEON RESERVATION	FEBRUARY 15 CHE	RISTINE'S RESTAURANT	
Please make reservations for peo	ople. I enclose a check	for \$(\$1 (tax and gratuit	2.50 each) y included)
	th Stuffing and Giblet (	<del></del>	
Baked Stuffed Sc	ole		
Please enclose a self-addressed, stamp	ped envelope and send to	o: Mr. Joshua Crowel P.O. Box 963	1

Dennis, MA 02638

#### CALENDAR

Feb. 2 Ground Hog Day. Will he see his shadow. How will our winter go?

Feb. 12 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meets at Jericho.

Feb. 15 12 noon Mid-Winter Festivity at Christine's See related article and reservation form.

#### COME MEET OUR AUTHOR

It's time once again for the annual Mid-Winter Festivity to chase away the wintry blues that set in about mid-February. We have a sure fire rememdy for that cabin fever. Come to Christine's Restaurant in West Dennis for luncheon at 12:00 noon on February 15 and meet our own Nancy Thacher Reid author of "Dennis, Cape Cod: From Firstcomers to Newcomers 1639-1993". If those sparkling blue eyes and delightful wit don't chase Old Man Winter into a corner--nothing will! Nancy is our guest speaker and she will have some stories about her book that aren't in the book. For any who are interested you will be able to purchase this wonderful book on Dennis history at the luncheon. For those who already have your book and would like Nancy to sign it, bring it along--she'll be happy to øblige. Altho--she said today she made out a check to cash for a little pocket money and realized afterwards she'd made it out to Nancy Thacher Reid!--then wondered if the bank would honor it. Obviously she's signed her name a few dozen times. New habits become ingrained so easily! Please find the reservation form on other side, call a friend to join you, and come to Christine's for a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

# AN EAST DENNIS POOL ROOM

How many of you ever knew there was a pool room in East Dennis—and that the building is still standing? This particular pool room was privately owned by Mr. Alfred Carlow who had a boarding house on Sesuit Neck down near the Shiverick Shipyard when the yard was in operation. The principal boarders were single men who came primarily 'from away' to work at the shipyard. One of the main attractions was a pool room. The barn behind the house had an attached three-sided wagon shed as did many barns in that time. However, there was a second story, with an outside stairway, over the wagon shed. That was the location of the pool room. This, no doubt, was a popular spot with the young sports in town while the shipyard was in full swing. The good Methodist folk of East Dennis were outraged at this den of iniquity in their midst. Surely it was the subject of several Sunday morning sermons and many a mother's admonitions.

The second owner of this house was J. Wallace Smalley, son of James Anthony Smalley of cranberry fame. J. Wallace bought the house some years after the shipyard closed for use as his private home. On rainy days when it was uncomfortable to work outside Mr. David Shiverick would walk down to Wallace's and engage him in a lively "fight-to-the-finish" game of pool. The stuff of which great storieswere told while waiting for the mail to be sorted. A number of years later Wallace sold his house and moved up to Main Street—and took his pool room with him! Undoubtedly the games continued in the new location—perhaps with an audience, as the pool room was now across the street from the post office.

Since Wallace Smalley's demise the property containing the pool room has passed through various owners. It would be interesting to know what became of the pool table and accessories—or even if they are still in that little East Dennis pool room?

## DENNIS HISTORY

Nancy Reid's book on the history of Dennis has been "selling like hotcakes". The Marketing Committee: Joan Martin, Kitty McNamara, and Jim Coogan have certainly been busy dispensing books with some assistance from Josh Crowell, Phyllis Horton, and Susan Kelley working in the mail room. This history has been mailed from Maine to Florida to California and many points in between--plus--Canada! Everyone involved has been pleased with the book's reception--but how could it miss?--a great subject, a great author, and a great presentation! They are available at the town libraries, the Dennis Town Clerk's office, or write to Dennis History, P.O. Box 1793, Dennis, MA 02638 for more information.

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