



### AN HERBAL CURE FOR WINTER

Today if you or I were to be making a trip we could pack a bag with our favorite outfits, a few toiletries, and our American Express card. Few of us travel in areas of the world where we can not easily obtain the necessities of life. Not so in 1635, when the Founders of this town left Europe for New England. They faced life in a wilderness, about which they knew little. It was important that they bring with them everything that the family would require. One of the very important things that the Goodwife packed carefully among her household goods was seeds. She must be certain that she could raise and have available the many herbs which she needed in the course of running her household. Some were medicinal, some for dyes, some to prevent diseases such as scurvy and gout. Darlene Beauvais, an Herbarist at Plimouth Plantation will tell us about these herbs and some which the colonists found native to New England, when she speaks to us at the West Dennis Community Building, Tuesday, January 12 at 7:30 P.M.

### LET'S GO SLEIGHING

Most of us become nostalgic when we think of "the Good Old Days", (whenever they were), but not many of us would trade our automatic washer for a washboard, or our kitchen range for a huge and hungry fireplace. However, there are some aspects of life in those olden days which really set my heart to thumping. One of these rises to the top of my mind annually, whenever snow begins to fall on old Cape Cod. One experience I would love to have is that of going on a sleigh ride. Wouldn't it be nice if, during one of those snow storms, which isn't supposed to happen on the Cape, we could let the snow accumulate on the streets until there was enough for sleighing? In some areas of the world the sleigh was a necessary form of transportation during long stretches of winter. That can hardly be said of Dennis. Only occasionally does a storm leave enough snow to interfere with normal modes of transportation for very long. When "horsepower" meant literally what it says, only a few essential people needed a sleigh here on the Cape, the doctor and the mail stage driver being two of them. Others kept sleighs purely for pleasure. In a day when people moved about at the fast walking pace of four miles per hour, what a thrill it must have been to fly over the snow as fast as a willing horse could trot. Young and old enjoyed the sport. The newspaper is filled with lamentations during those winters when sleighing could not be enjoyed for lack of snow. Oh, and the sound of sleighing! The bells on old Dobbin were there primarily for safety, to warn pedestrians that a fast moving sleigh was about to overtake them. No brakes--walkers beware! But the jingling of the bells and the rhythmic muffled thump of flying hooves added music to the joy of sleighing. As I research the town's history, I am always thrilled to come across some personal information about my own ancestors. One such item appeared in the South Dennis column of the Yarmouth Register in the mid-1880's. It concerned my great-great-grandmother, Thankful (Nickerson) Thacher. She was the widow of Capt. Lothrop Taylor Thacher, and she lived to be 95, "retaining her faculties", as her obituary states, until her death in 1888. The South Dennis correspondent was commenting on the recent snow and the number of sleighs seen on the village streets. Among them was that of Capt. Nickerson, and accompanying him was Mrs. Capt. Thacher, then in her 90's. According to the correspondent, she thoroughly enjoyed the outing. When the snow starts to fall, as it surely will in January and February, I will picture that frail little old lady under her fur robe, a sparkle in her dimming Cape Cod blue eyes, and a spot of pink glowing on her withering cheeks, as she enjoys for one more time the exhilaration of a sleigh ride. Snuggle over a little bit, please, Grandma Thankful, and allow your great-great-granddaughter to fly with you over the snow filled streets of our home town.

### MAKE YOUR RESERVATION EARLY!

Our Mid-Winter Festivity has been an annual event since first suggested by the late Mary Hood Hagler in 1978. This year we will meet at Christine's in West Dennis, for sociability at noon and luncheon at 1:00 P.M. The menu: Choice of Baked Schrod, Boneless Stuffed Chicken Supreme, or Yankee Pot Roast. Your luncheon will include an appetizer, vegetable, potato, rolls and butter, dessert and beverage and will cost \$10.50 per person, tax and tip included. A great assortment of Door Prizes will be awarded to some lucky people. Alan Cavanagh will give us a short talk which he has entitled "Abraham Lincoln; A Good Guy or a Bad Guy?" Alan has done some interesting research on this president and will share some of the little known facts that he has unearthed. Plan to join us by making a reservation using the form below.

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MID-WINTER FESTIVITY RESERVATIONS      FEB. 13      CHRISTINE'S - WEST DENNIS

Please make reservations for \_\_\_\_\_ people.

I enclose a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$10.50 per person)

Choice of entree: \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken      \_\_\_\_\_ Yankee Pot Roast      \_\_\_\_\_ Fish

Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope and send to: Mr. Joshua C Crowell

Box 963, Dennis, MA 02638

## CALENDAR

- Jan. 12 7:30 P.M. West Dennis Community Building Darlene Beauvais of Plimouth  
Plantation "Herbal Folklore and Uses"  
Jan 14 7:30 P.M. Board will meet with Sarah  
Feb. 6 200th Anniversary of the ratification of the new U.S. Constitution by  
Massachusetts  
Feb. 13 Mid-Winter Festivity Christine's in West Dennis. Sociability at 12 noon,  
lunch at 1 P.M. **RESERVATIONS NECESSARY**

### A MEMORIAL TO A VANISHED RACE

One of the least visited but most important historic sites in town is the Indian Burial Ground off Rt. 6A. We take our fifth grade children from the Wixon School on a tour of the town's historic sites in the spring, and this is a spot which always excites interest. We park the bus at the town landing for Scargo Lake, and walk the few hundred yards to the sign which points out the cemetery. Here, the children are instructed to walk "Indian style", one by one, trying not to make any sound as they go down the shaded pathway. Not easy for fifth graders to do! But they try. It's a very short walk until we reach the enclosed area. A granite post and rail fence, in some state of disrepair, I'm sorry to say, surrounds a small uneven plot of land. On the fence hangs a plaque which states: "Burying ground of the Nobscussett Indian Tribe, of which Mashantumpaine was chief." That's all there is. The children look around the pleasant, shaded area and that's just what they say, "Is that all there is?" But I know that it's coming, and so I'm ready. We sit on the ground, Indian style. (That's easier for fifth graders than it is for me!) Now they have some questions. Why are there no gravestones? Because the Indians did not use them. They had no written language so could not record names and dates of birth and death. Then how do we know that Indians are buried here? Of course we really don't know, but the evidence is certainly in favor of accepting this as fact. The Indian reserve, known as Indian Fields, stretched from Scargo Lake to the Bay. As the size of the tribe decreased, Mashantumpaine and his sons sold off various parcels of land to the English abutters, John Crowe and the Paddocks. This particular parcel has no recorded transfer. Also, bear in mind that native Americans inhabited this land for 10,000 years before the Europeans "discovered" this golden peninsular. We know that the Wampanoags buried their dead, and so there must be thousands of burial grounds covering many acres of Cape Cod. Still, some local historians wonder if this particular plot might not have been the family graveyard for first generations of the Crowell family. I tend to favor the Indian claim. If this had been the resting place of the Crowells, I think it would still have been in the family tradition in 1829, which is the year that town meeting voted to fence in "the Indian Burial Ground near Scargo Lake". Now comes the hard question. If there were so many Indians here for so many thousands of years, why aren't there any today? And the sobering answer--These simple, intelligent people could not survive the cultural shock placed upon them by the English settlers. They were killed by the white man's diseases, corrupted by the white man's liquor and greed. Instead of living with nature in harmony, the white men encouraged the natives to live in the European manner--but instead, they died. By 1797, no Nobscussetts were left to cultivate the Indian Fields, and "The Indian Lands on calm Bass River are empty, now," as Walter Morley has so poignantly written. The fifth graders and their teacher discuss the Indian lifestyle, and we reach the conclusion that no one could live on Cape Cod today as the natives did 350 years ago, anyway. All dwellings must have heat, light, and running water--or no occupancy permit can be issued. All children must attend school. No hunting, except in season. Game is scarce because of a decrease in habitat. Wild berries and grapes are hard to find. A culture has also disappeared. This is why I tell the children that the Indian Burying Ground is one of our most important historical sites. It is the town's only monument to a vanished race--a race which occupied this land in affluence and peace for 10,000 years--a race that the culture of which we are a part destroyed in about 150 years. Can we learn something from this? I hope the fifth graders do.

Dennis Historical Society  
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