

189 YEARS OLD--AND COUNTING

The annual celebration of the anniversary of the town's incorporation was held in the Dennis Yacht Club and the theme of the day was our maritime heritage, especially the historic Shiverick Shipyard which once flourished on the banks of Sesuit Harbor. May I just say that the Shivericks didn't have anywhere near the trouble launching their huge clipper ships as the committee had launching this party! But all went well, thanks to super-human efforts on the part of Bill and Jean Taylor and others. Thanks also to Mary Aseltine, Florence Bennett, and Barbara Eastman, and to John Burt, Jr. for sharing their knowledge of the Shiverick story. Please note that we have only eleven more years before the bicentennial of the town. Already we are looking for ideas to make that a truly memorable occasion.

KEEPING A LOG

One of the most precious relics of our part in the maritime history of our nation is the log book and journal kept by Captain Joshua Sears, on his voyage as master of the Ship Wild Hunter, a Shiverick clipper. The log is well preserved and owned now by Capt. Sears' descendants. Unlike Capt. William Frederick Howes, master of the Belle of the West, Capt. Joshua was not a patient man. He was known as a driver, and would pile on the sail to make the fastest speed. Often seasick, always homesick, he made reflective and eloquent entries into his log over and above the reports of wind, weather, and position. This gives me a nice lead into telling those of you who are landlubbers why the record kept by mariners at sea is called the log. There is a very simple, old navigational device known properly as the log chip and line, which measures the speed at which a sailing vessel is travelling. The line is knotted at intervals of 47 feet 3 inches, and rolled on a reel. The log, weighted and shaped like a quarter circle, is attached to the end of the line. Periodically the log is tossed over the stern and allowed to drag in the water for exactly 28 seconds. The number of knots dragged off the reel in that time is the number of nautical miles per hour that the vessel is travelling. This works due to the fact that the ratio of distance (47' 3" to a nautical mile) is the same as the ratio of time (28 seconds to 1 hour). The speed of the vessel is checked periodically and recorded in the "Log Book" along with other observations to help the Captain and mate determine position. From this you can easily see how the words "log" and "logging" have worked their way into our everyday vocabulary.

ANOTHER FINE GIFT FROM THE QUESTERS

Mrs. John G. Baker, outgoing president of the Yankee Pedlar Chapter 811 of Questers, Inc., announces that a grant of \$304.00 has been given by the National headquarters to be used at the Old West Schoolhouse in Dennis for preservation and education purposes. Previously the Yankee Pedlars had given a Seth Thomas schoolhouse clock, circa 1875, which is presently hanging in the school building. We are grateful to the Questers for their continued interest in historic preservation in the town. You will remember that the Questers have also prepared a map locating the various burying grounds in the town, very helpful for those people doing genealogical research on Dennis families. We have talked about the possibility of several educational programs for the schoolhouse, and this grant will certainly help to make them a reality.

THE SHOW WITHOUT A NAME

As our media show nears completion, we are still without a name for the title slide. Maybe we need a "Name That Media Show" contest! You will have a chance to view our efforts on July 21 when we present the premiere viewing at the West Dennis Community Building. Please come and bring a friend.

SCHOOLHOUSE DEDICATED

On a gorgeous day last weekend, the 1770 Old West Schoolhouse on the grounds of the Josiah Dennis Manse was formally opened to the public and may be visited on Tues. or Thurs. afternoons from 2 to 4 throughout the summer. Joshua Crowl presided, citing the devoted work of Wilson Scofield and his committee in completing the restoration. Nancy Reid gave a brief history of the period when the school was in use, and Dr. Robert McGurdy of Bridgewater State Teachers College gave a few remarks. Our president, Don Bacon presented Mrs. Maree Galvin, president of the Manse Committee with a date board, and the affair concluded with refreshments.

TILES AVAILABLE

Those of you who collect tiles will be interested to know that there are two new Historic Dennis tiles which will soon be available. One depicts the town seal and the other is a line sketch of Liberty Hall. Each tile costs \$5 and will be available at the Clam Bake sponsored by the Old South Dennis Village Association on July 25. Details next time.

CALENDAR

Throughout July and August:

Jericho House is open Wed., Fri., and Sat. 2 to 4:30 p.m.
Josiah Dennis Manse is open Tues. and Thurs. 2 to 4 p.m.

July 21, 7:30 and 8:30 p.m.:

Premiere showing of the new slide show presenting the history of Dennis, at the West Dennis Community Building.

August 19:

Bus trip to Museum of Fine Arts for "New England Begins" exhibit.
\$18.50 includes Boston Harbor cruise. Call Paula, 394-5739.

August 29 - Sept 6:

Dennis Festival Days

September 13:

Annual Meeting and election of officers. Dues are due. Watch for an announcement on the visit of Rescue 36500 to Sesuit Harbor.

THE MOSQUITOES ARE COMING

The prophets of doom and gloom are determined to ruin everybody's anticipation of those lazy, hazy summer days. First, they predicted that millions of acres of trees would be decimated by those voracious gypsy moth caterpillars. Now we have been told that this summer we will see our area plagued by such a vast number of mosquitoes as is hard to imagine. (Quick, Henry, the Flit!) Unlike the gypsy moth, (a newcomer to New England) the mosquito is a native pest, complained about by the early English settlers. Rev. Francis Higginson, in writing around 1630 of the richness of New England, sets forth in quaint terms some of the drawbacks to life here as well. Among these is mosquitoes. "Now, I will tell you of some discommodities that are here to be found," says the Reverend gentleman. "First, in summer season. . . we are troubled much with little flies called mosquitoes." Fortunately, the breed of mosquitoes most prevalent in New England is only discommodious and not harmful, at least to humans. More tropical climates can have severe health problems when mosquitoes of certain varieties are numerous. Among these is the disease known as Yellow Fever. It was described and named by early explorers and settlers, but its cause remained a mystery for centuries. In 1881 a Cuban physician suggested that the mosquito might be the carrier. The heroic efforts of Dr. Walter Reed and his commission proved this to be true, and Gen. William Crawford Gorgas, army surgeon and sanitarian, took steps to control the deadly insect, not only in Cuba, but in Panama as well, allowing the Path between the two oceans to be built at last. The conquering of Yellow Fever benefited the Cape in two ways, for although the disease was never epidemic here, it claimed the lives of many of Cape Cod's young men who sailed in the West India trade. In the Quaker cemetery in South Yarmouth is a marker to the memory of Isaiah Crowell Jr., aged 33 years, who died in Havana of Yellow Fever in 1838 and is buried "in the Roman cemetery there." In South Dennis, another memorial to a victim of this disease, George Eng's Thacher, Jr. who also died in Havana, in 1878. Both men were Master Mariners and the sons of Master Mariners. So it was not only the dangers of the sea itself that anxious families had to fear. The trip around the horn was one of the passages most dangerous to make, and the building of the canal, although late in our maritime history, eliminated this most hazardous route. As you sit and swat this summer, be grateful that our mosquitoes are only a nuisance.

IS THIS YOUR FIRST NEWSLETTER?

That may be because July and August are our Membership drive months. Someone has told us that you might be interested in becoming a member. If so, you may do so by sending dues to Elinor Slade, Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660 in the amount of \$3. individual, or \$5. family. You will thus become a member until Sept. 1983. Membership includes a monthly newsletter. Those of you who are already members, please also pay your dues, including a self-addressed stamped envelope. You will save us a lot in postage, and we thank you.

Dennis Historical Society
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