

Compiled and edited by Nancy Thacher Reid

THE ANNUAL FESTIVITY WAS FUN

Although the day was dreary, the company was in good spirits and all appeared to enjoy themselves. Bob Thacher sang old favorites delivered in a highly personalized style and responded to requests. Joshua Crowell won the trivia quiz and went home with a genuine George Washington's Birthday pie. The patriotic floral arrangement on the head table was courtesy of the Flower and Fern in West Dennis and we are grateful for that. Also grateful thanks are due to that indefatigable couple, Bill (or is it Bob?) and Jean Taylor who just keep on arranging great times for us all. Didn't you love those hand made candy favors? Thanks also to our creative president and his family for the program menus, so appropriate to the day. By the way, the only trivia question that Josh missed was this: Francis Baker was an early settler of our town. Where in Dennis is a monument to the memory of this founding father? Do you know the answer?

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

We all learned a great deal from producing our first media show for D.H.S. One thing that I learned is how different it is to write a script to be accompanied by pictures rather than a newsletter paragraph without illustrations. The picture is an extension of the words, illustrating them, and at the same time telling more than the words alone could say. Still, as I see the slide show over and over again, I see pictures about which I could write at least a thousand words, identifying people and places, and explaining why this picture is perfect to accompany this particular point. However, that would certainly draw out our 31 minute and 17 second production until it became far too lengthy and probably very boring! No, I guess we should leave the wedding of words and pictures just the way they are. But we do often have questions which show that people are paying close attention and seek further information about the script. Recently, at the conclusion of one of the showings at the Nathaniel H. Wixon Middle School, Miss Melia, the assistant principal, asked if there were any questions. One alert young man asked where Nobscusset Harbor was -- and a good question that is. Sesuit Harbor, though small, is recognizable as a harbor today, but Nobscusset Harbor was not a natural refuge and today is no harbor at all. It's official story begins in 1814, although no doubt small wharfs and private landings were there before that time. In February 1814 the General Court granted the Nobscusset Point Pier Co. permission to build a pier of stone and timber, extending 600 feet eastward from Nobscusset Point in Dennis. To locate this long-vanished man-made harbor, drive to the end of Corporation Road, and look out to the stone breakwater which now guards a bathing beach. Orin, John Jr., Daniel and Zenas Howes and Henry Hall, the incorporators, were being somewhat optimistic in their plan, for the War of 1812 was still causing problems for American shipping. In May of 1814, probably before the pier was even finished, the British extended their blockade to all of New England, and Cape people remained in port, except for a few daring fishermen, until the treaty was signed that December. (Perhaps that's why Henry Hall got into cranberries.) After the war, the village which previously had had "no convenient harbor," came alive with fishing boats and coasters. The packet to Boston, Sloop Sally and later the schooner North, took many a deep water mariner on the first leg of an around the world voyage. Coasters carried salt and fish to Boston markets. The harbor had become so busy that in 1851 Uriah Howes and others gained permission to add another pier and improve facilities to accommodate more and larger vessels. This is the time when a number of Irish families appear in the town, the men having so recently escaped from famine, sometimes with the help of Cape sea captains, working on the construction of this great pier. Isaac Freeman Hall has left a description of horse teams and ox carts hauling lumber and stone down what was then called Wharf Road, now Corporation, in honor of the enterprising Nobscusset Point Pier Corporation which built Nobscusset Harbor for the benefit of our town. Of course, as with all maritime enterprises, business declined as the railroad and steam vessels took over transportation. In 1873 the corporation dissolved, leaving the harbor to the small fishing fleet. How long the piers remained I do not know. So there's the thousand words about one of the pictures in our slide show "Dennis." Thanks go to the young man who asked the question, and thanks also to Rick Howard for the lively picture he created for us of busy Nobscusset Harbor in its heyday.

DENNIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL HAVE A CUP PLATE

One of the exciting announcements that was made by President Don Bacon at the luncheon at the Columns in February was that the design for the Pairpont cup plate for the Dennis Historical Society was completed. A drawing of the design which features the town seal, was displayed. The graceful arrangement of seal, ropes and chain made a most attractive plate, and those who collect these small plates will be very anxious for an announcement of its production. Jean Dunham, Gertrude Lally and Eleanor Crowell, all collectors and experts on these collectibles, have been the steering committee for this project, and the design is by artist Nina Sutton. Of course it will still be some time before the plate is ready for distribution, but be assured that it will be lovely when done.

CALENDAR

March 17 Evacuation Day. On this date in 1776, the British were forced to evacuate Boston by Gen. Washington and his troops. The password for the day was "Saint Patrick"

March 23, 7:30 P.M. V.I.C. Hall, Depot Street, Dennisport. Talk by Robert Barlow on the Life Saving Service, "You Have To Go Out"

Coming in May - Nature-History walk on the Indian Lands Conservation Area

THE STORY OF THE LIFE SAVING SERVICE

Mr. Robert J. G. Barlow is presently serving our town as Math-Science coordinator of the D-Y Regional School District, but he will draw from his previous experience serving in the National Park Service as an interpreter at the Nauset Coast Guard Station, when he speaks to us on March 23. While on this assignment, Bob did research on the Life Saving Service, so important to shipping especially before the opening of the Cape Cod Canal. He had the opportunity to interview former Coast Guardsmen and to read some of the diaries describing some rescues and some failures. Mr. B. will relate some of these stories and give us a portrayal of the challenges presented to the surfman who was assigned to this station. This promises to be an exciting and informative evening for all who have an interest in sea stories. We hope you will join us to hear about this demanding, but essential service. That's March 23, 7:30, V.I.C. Hall, Depot Street, Dennisport. If any of you need directions to find this hall, call Pres. Bacon, 394-5739 or Phyllis Horton, 394-0017.

WOMEN WHO WENT TO SEA

There are two women who went to sea under very different circumstances in this tale - two women who were born and raised half a world apart, but whose lives became forever entwined. The first is a Cape Cod girl, born here and raised to be the wife of a shipmaster. She was Mrs. Alpheus Baker, of South Dennis, and when her husband, who was at one time master of the Bark C. C. Leary, suggested that she join him for a journey which included ports in the Orient, she willingly assented. Many of her friends and neighbors had visited these foreign ports and had brought back examples of the fine arts of China and Japan, and stories of an exotic society. The vessel made a fairly routine passage, and eventually put in at Hong Kong, where Capt. Baker went about the business of buying and selling cargo. It was while at this exciting international port that Mrs. Baker gave birth to a son. It was customary for Captain's wives in foreign ports to have a nursemaid to assist with their young ones, so Mrs. Baker found a Chinese "Amah" to care for her new baby. Apparently she was very fortunate in her choice, a young Chinese woman who spoke little English, but who loved and cared tenderly for the young son. So attached did the two women become that, when the cargo was loaded, Mrs. Baker convinced the young Amah to sail with them to the United States. Thus the Chinese girl became the second woman who went to sea with Capt. Baker. I will finish her story next time.

APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

And the Board of D.H.S. is trying to guess just when these flowers will be in bloom. For the program in May is to be a Nature and History walk at the Indian Lands. When we say flowers, we don't mean those tiny fragrant trailing arbutus, which can be found some years as early as Patriots Day, which is commonly called the May-flower. We mean the Orchid of the north, the Indian's Moccasin flower, which we call the Lady Slipper. This beautiful flower grows in great profusion on the Indian Lands, and it is worth the walk to see them alone. But the Indian Lands have many more interesting things to observe including clues to the presence of the pre-historic residents of our town. We will ask a naturalist and an expert on our Indian history to accompany us on what will be a pleasant walk for all. Watch for the date (the Lady's Slippers generally blossom in late May), dust off your walking shoes and take a leisurely stroll with us on one of the few remaining unspoiled pieces of land in our town.

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