

THEY JUST DON'T MAKE WINTERS LIKE THEY USED TO

Yarmouth Register, 1 Feb., 1879: "For the last week Fresh Pond has presented a beautiful sight to see, from the little boy to the grey haired sire on the ice....."

26 January, 1901: "Wixon's Ice House (Fresh Pond) is filled with ice."

9 February, 1901: "Luther B. Crowell is having his ice house (Kelley's Pond) filled with 5" ice."

BUT: 4 February, 1984: Rain and temperature in the 40's.

11 February, 1984: Ditto.

18 February, 1984: The same.

We sure had a lot of fun planning for a winter carnival which would revive the sport of ice boating on Scargo Lake, but weather did not cooperate. Our plans, including a figure skating exhibit by the Yarmouth Ice Club, will be "put on ice" so to speak until next year. An article on the business of ice farming which appeared in the Register in 1877 said, "Farmers should gather ice in December, in case there is no more." Perhaps the same should apply to our Winter Carnival.

LUNCHEON WAS NICE, THOUGH

The weather was wet and almost springlike for our Mid-Winter Luncheon at the Brass Kettle. Door prizes were won by Eleanor Hall, Isabel and Bill Flynn, Irene Domican and Helen Lockhart. Virginia Van Vorst talked a bit about the efforts of the South Side Civic and Business Association to revitalize the south side of town. Nancy Reid told a little about the history of the buildings which now form the Brass Kettle Restaurant. The original building, the present tavern room, was a 3/4 Cape built by Job Kelley in 1819 and is probably the oldest structure still standing in the business district of Main Street. The room where we had our meal was built in 1938 and served as the Dennis Port Post Office until about 1957. A special menu, which was provided as a souvenir, depicting the Post Office about 1940, was prepared by Gail Hart. The climax of the afternoon was the introduction of D.H.S.'s first cup plate, a very lovely rendering of the Town Seal in a clear lead glass. The first plate, beautifully framed by Ron Lindholm of Cape Cod Picture Framing of Dennis, was presented to Elinor Slade, Town Clerk, to be displayed at Town Hall. You may buy cup plates by mail, by sending a check for \$7 plus mailing cost of \$1.50 to Joshua Crowell, P.O. Box 963, Dennis, MA 02638, or by contacting Josh or Elinor directly. They will also be on sale at all D.H.S. functions. Later in the year, the cup plate will be available in teal and light amber.

AMONG OUR NEW MEMBERS.....

....are Mr. and Mrs. Allan S. Young, Mrs. Roberta Bratti, Mr. and Mrs. Mahlon Chase, Mr. and Mrs. Phil Lukens, and Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Commander. Try to speak to these new members and make them welcome.

THE SOUTH DENNIS ACADEMY

I promised to tell you something about Academy Hill in South Dennis, where Janice and Alfred Kelley now live. It's a modest hill, by most standards, but sizeable for the south side of the Cape. It rises between two cedar swamps and looks down upon a neighborhood of homes built for the most part by generations of Nickersons. The present dwelling house which tops the hill is relatively new, having been built by William Dean Preston in the 1940's. It is the building which stood there 150 years ago which gives the hill its name. I would like to be able to tell you its entire history, but so far I have only glimpses which reveal that it stood there as early as 1831, when Polly Dillingham Foster, later Mrs. Prince S. Crowell, boarded in South Dennis and attended South Dennis Seminary. I have a later description of the building, and its location, written by a student for the Academic Quarterly, a four-page newspaper published by the South Dennis Academy in 1857. And Isaac Freeman Hall writes that he was school master in the South Dennis Academy the year before the Graded School was built in that village, which was 1867. The school also had a bell tower, in which it is said a bell hung which came from a Cambridge nunnery. That in itself would be an interesting story, but so far unrevealed. Actual facts such as the exact date it was built, and what became of it when it ceased to be used, are still a mystery. But the name Academy Hill is well documented on deeds of adjacent property, references to the school in reports of the school committees, and by local tradition. I would greatly appreciate hearing from anyone who can shed any light on the history of this spot and the schools which once stood on the hilltop.

PIERCES BECOME LIFE MEMBERS

We have recently received a generous gift from Byron and Helen Pierce, part of which is an outright donation, and the remainder for two life memberships in Dennis Historical Society. We are most happy to have Byron and Helen as life members. They have both contributed a great deal of time and energy toward achieving the purposes of this organization. Byron was president during the re-organization years, when tax-exempt, non-profit status was finalized and many programs undertaken, not the least of which was the publishing of a monthly newsletter. Helen has been an energetic and willing member of the Manse Committee for many years, is hostess at special events and serves on the acquisition committee. It would be difficult to list this genial couple's many accomplishments on behalf of Dennis history. Let it suffice to say that we are grateful and honored to welcome them into life membership.

CALENDAR

March 1 7:30 P.M. Executive Board Jericho House
March 17, 1856 Ship Kit Carson launched at Sesuit Harbor
March 25 3:00 P.M. Carleton Hall "Dennis Village Memory Day"
April 29 3:00 P.M. West Dennis Community Building "West Dennis Memory Day"
May National Historic Preservation Month

THE LEGEND OF CAPTAIN PADDOCK AND CROOK JAW, CONTINUED

You remember that Captain Paddock, upon being swallowed by the whale known as Crook Jaw, had met up with a beautiful maiden, who claimed to have won him in a game with the Devil.

Meanwhile, the whale boat crew was rescued, and sadly reported the loss of the Captain. But, when morning came, Handkerchief Shoal rippled as the arms of Capt. Paddock came swimming up from the deep. Wearily, he climbed aboard, and, saying nothing, he retired to his cabin to sleep. When he awoke at nightfall, he mused about the past day's encounter. Now, whatever qualities the Captain possessed, he was gentleman enough, with a gentleman's conscience. But he found he could ease this conscience somewhat, by allowing as how either that green-eyed girl had not spent her entire life in the whale's belly, or else he was not the first seaman to enter the gaping mouth of Crook Jaw. So, as night fell, the Captain again plunged into the water and was seen no more until daylight. This nightly activity continued with no time spent pursuing whales, until the Mate reminded the Captain that it was time to refit, and reluctantly, he ordered that they should sail home to Sesuit. On the next voyage, the Captain's peculiar behavior continued until the next refitting time, when the vessel once again returned clean. The Captain began to lose his usual good color and vigor, so while home on the next refitting, the Mate decided something drastic should be done. He conferred with Ichabod's young wife, a handsome and resourceful woman, and before the vessel left, Mrs. Paddock presented the Captain with a shiny new harpoon. This embarrassed him somewhat, for it reminded him of his transgressions, and also of his long-neglected duties as a whaling Captain. He was even more disquieted when his wife insisted that her father accompany him on his new voyage. A few days out, off Monomoy, Crook Jaw appeared. The father-in-law marvelled at the size of the critter and urged Ichabod to over the boats and pursue him. Knowing how tough the old critter's hide was, Ichabod obliged the old man and lowered the boats. Old Crook Jaw regarded the Captain as a friend by this time, and imagine his surprise when Ichabod let fly his brand new harpoon, which struck him and held fast. After a certain amount of thrashing and churning, the old beast died, and a saddened Capt. Paddock hauled him along side to be cut up. And there, inside of the whale's belly, where Capt. Paddock had spent so many idyllic nights, was found nothing except a bit of seaweed, bleached to the color of Eastham corn, two plum-colored shells, and two round sea squalls of emerald green. It is doubtful that Goodwife Paddock ever confessed that the harpoon she had presented to her husband was made of pure silver, the only metal that can pierce the heart of a witch.

MEMORY DAYS CONTINUE

We will meet at Carleton Hall on Sunday, March 25, at 3 P.M. to look back at the good old days in Dennis Village. Whether you have stories to tell or would just like to listen, you are most welcome. Please pass the word along, especially to long-time residents of the village, for it is their reminiscence which we are anxious to record. Josh and Elinor Crowell and Dick and Nancy Howes will be in charge.

DOINGS OF THE BOARD

We are considering the several good logo designs which we received, looking at them for their appropriateness, easy recognition, and adaptability for stationery, publicity and other uses. Most of the designs were on view at the luncheon....The Board has voted to offer a \$100 scholarship to a teacher from Dennis' schools who will attend a course in teaching local history to be held at Sturbridge....We have signed up to have a display about Dennis history in Doric Hall at the State House, February 1985....Our bike tours have been edited and printed in the new Dennis Chamber of Commerce booklet for summer 1984....Membership Chairman Isabel Flynn has reproduced a letter of welcome to be distributed to newcomers via the Welcome Wagon lady, which includes information about joining D.H.S.....Field trips by the school children are being planned for June.

Dennis Historical Society
P.O. Box 607
South Dennis, MA 02660

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization U. S. POSTAGE PAID Permit No. 2 So. Dennis, MA 02660
--