



### IT WAS A REAL NICE MID-WINTER FESTIVITY

Among our most popular activities is the February tradition of meeting for lunch. This year's get-together just escaped cancellation on account of February blizzards. But a very fine group crowded Christine's in West Dennis for an afternoon which featured excellent food, outstanding entertainment by the Mostly Medieval Carollers, and the usual fashionable, literate and scintillating company always found at D.H.S. meetings. Door prizes were won by Richard Hall, Mary Chapman, Helen Wick, Maree Galvin, Helen Miller, Doris Baines, and Barbara Albret. Thanks to go Gertrude Lailey, Bill and Jean Taylor, Christmas Tree Shop, Christine's, Purity Supreme, Positively Depot, and Harney's, who graciously donated the prizes.

Special guests were Mr. and Mrs. Peter Robideau, the managers of Basketville on Route 28 in West Dennis. They were presented with a certificate of appreciation for their efforts in preserving the 1892 home of Dr. Horatio S. Kelley, Jr., incorporating that house as part of their business, and using the style of the house as inspiration for the design of the whole complex. Sarah Kruger presented the certificate on behalf of the Dennis Historical Commission. Thanks are also due to the town's planning board for encouraging the owners to save the old building.

### NEXT MONTH - DISCOVER EAGLE POND

I have no idea how the pond got its name. Does anyone out there know? I do know it is a fairly large pond, close to the Harwich border, which until recently was known mostly to fishermen. Over the past few years a very attractive convalescent and retirement home has been built near its banks. Trouble is, unless you are a fisherman, you probably still can't find it. But we have been invited to hold our March meeting there, on Sunday, March 15 at 2 P.M. and I want to be sure that you don't miss this excellent program. Joseph Nickerson of Chatham will speak about the Birds of Monomoy, and he brings to us the knowledge he has gained from a lifetime of experience studying the wildlife of Chatham. (Oh, Joe, I don't think that came out exactly the way I meant it to.) Howsomever, I'm sure you won't want to miss his talk and you will have a real treat in visiting Dennis' first-class nursing home. Now - how to get there. In South Dennis, get onto the Great Western Road, which leads to Harwich Center. Turn left at the intersection with Depot Street, just past the Pease Boat Yard on the left. Proceed about .3 miles until you come to the old Baptist cemetery, again on the left. Immediately after the cemetery, turn left. Press on down this road, and just when you think you've made a wrong turn (.7 miles), you will come to the very attractive residence known as Eagle Pond Nursing Home. See you there.

### THE WEARING OF THE GREEN

"Everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day", the old saying goes. Those Cape Codders who descend from David O'Kelia, AKA David Kelley, can certainly claim a little genuine Irish blood. But this St. Patrick's Day tale has nothing to do with our own Cape Cod Irish - it is about a son of Dennis whose name was Daniel N. Sears. If you have read Trinity by Leon Uris, you have an unforgettable picture in your mind of the horrors perpetrated by the potato blight among the Irish tenant farmers in the 1840's. International crises were not topmost on the minds of New Englanders of those days, but somehow the plight of the common people of Ireland struck a chord of response in the collective New England breast. A group which was called The New England Committee for the Relief of the Distressed Poor of Ireland and Scotland began a campaign, decidedly successful, to raise funds for provisions to be transported to Ireland. They were fortunate to enlist the support of Captain Robert Bennett Forbes. At 43 years of age, Capt. Forbes was among Boston's most illustrious men. Samuel Eliot Morison states that he was "the most attractive personality of any Boston merchants of his generations". In addition to his seamanship, he was inventive, creative, and a noted humanitarian. His signature led the petition made by the relief committee to secure the loan of a U.S. warship for the purpose of delivering needed food to the suffering Irish. Congress granted that request, and the U.S.S. Jamestown was delivered to Boston port in March of 1847. Loading began, appropriately, on March 17, and on the 28th the Jamestown, under Capt. Forbes' command, sailed for Cork harbor, reaching its destination in the short time of 15 days and 3 hours. Daniel N. Sears, son of Grafton and his wife Sarah (Nickerson), was a seaman before the mast on this historic voyage. I am sure he had many stories to tell upon his return to Dennis. Captain Forbes and his ship were greeted by the Mayor of Dublin and were given the key to the city. The people of County Cork also prepared a plaque which thanked the officers and men of the Jamestown and the people of New England for their desperately needed contributions of food. No ticker tape parades, no Nobel prizes - only the sincere thanks of a starving people was the reward of officers and crew alike.

The Jamestown returned to Boston and the report of the captain encouraged the committee to dispatch four more sailing ships and two steamers, as well as a steamer from New York. Many a family in Ireland was sustained by these gifts, and it is also likely that a number of Irish immigrants returned on these relief vessels, to try their success in the New World. So, a young seaman from our town played a small but vital role in a world-wide drama, which began in Boston on St. Patrick's Day, 1847.

CALENDAR

March 15 2:00 P.M. Eagle Pond Nursing Home. 'The Birds of Monomoy', Joseph Nickerson. Genealogical "Short Subject"

March 24 7:30 P.M. Board meets at Phyllis'.

April 2 10:00 A.M. Cape and Islands Historical Association at Mashpee.

April 16 7:30 P.M. Want to go? Call Phyllis Horton, 394-0017. Carleton Hall. William A. Congalton, Tea Taster.

THE BLIZZARDS OF 1987

What a lot of snow we've had on Cape Cod this past February! We lost our electricity at supper time on Monday, February 9, and woke up to a mighty cold house on Tuesday morning. We're lucky to have a small Franklin-type stove in our kitchen, and our stove is outfitted with a small crane, so I was able to get my early cup of coffee and keep hot chocolate ready for my snow-shovelling friend. But, you know, that's about all I could do - no vacuuming, no washing, no baking - as we sat and waited the return of our seemingly indispensable friend and servant, electricity. We listened to the battery radio, hearing cancellation lists of businesses, court, schools and meetings, everything paralyzed by the drifts of snow. But lest I should feel sorry for myself, snug beside my fire, I sipped my coffee and thought about other generations of Cape Codders and how the great snow storms of other years affected their lives. The two storms of February, 1987, don't even compare to the monumental snowfall of the winter of 1717-1718. I tried to picture a typical household in our town during that great snow, to imagine how a family might have coped in that day. Samuel and Elizabeth Baker lived in a small house on what is now Center Street during that winter. Married in 1702, they had seven children, ranging from Mary, aged 14, to the twins, Samuel and Elizabeth, just turned 2. Mistress Baker was expecting her eighth child in August. No doubt she rose early, as usual on the day in February when the snow began. Her first duty was to revive her fire in the keeping room, where coals had been "kept" by careful banking. My little stove sprang into life with the help of yesterday's newspaper and safety matches. But without matches or paper, Elizabeth Baker must carefully add shavings and dry twigs to the precious glowing coals - enough to start a blaze, but not too fast lest the coals lose the oxygen needed to ignite them. By now, perhaps Samuel was up and dressing and had noticed the snow through the oiled paper which covered their windows. Not blest with a portable radio and having heard no storm advisories from Dick Albert, Samuel must sum up for himself what steps he should take to provide for his family and farm animals during the storm. There is no worry about whether school will keep or not. If the original "squadron school" schedule is still being followed, Mr. Jaquish, the schoolmaster for the whole town, is not due to be in this neighborhood until June. The daily family ritual would vary but little because of the snowy day. Mother would spin or weave. Little Fear, aged 4, would be learning to knit mittens and socks, taught by big sister Catherine, already accomplished in these skills at age 9. Mary would attend to the twins, and help with the meals, while the men folks tended the livestock and kept a supply of wood and water available. A few days of snow would bother them not at all. But how dismayed the Baker family must have been when the snow continued to fall. On and on it fell, until 21 days in succession had gone by with little letup. The settlers all over New England were to suffer greatly with this storm. Cattle were lost. Wolves came close to the homesteads, devouring any livestock they found trapped in snowdrifts. Wood ran out in many homes and the furniture was burned to keep the family alive. I don't know what particular vicissitudes this Baker family had to tell their neighbors about when they finally were free to move about their village again. But I'm sure that my brief huddling beside my Franklin stove was small hardship compared to the experience of being snowbound for 21 days with seven small children in a tiny, poorly heated half house, in the winter of 1718.

JERICO BARN PREPARING FOR SPRING

It's time to think spring at our Historic Centers. John Woods, chairman of the Barn at Jericho, is looking for volunteers to clean and inventory the Barn, and help to set up a special exhibit for this season. Can you help? Call John at 394-1706 and give him your name and phone number, and you will be called when a spring cleaning date is set.

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