



THE INDIAN LANDS PAST

A large and enthusiastic crowd gathered at the West Dennis Community building on the 19th of April to hear archaeologist Mark Horvath tell of his discoveries and examination of pre-historic sites along the Bass River, both in Yarmouth and Dennis. Mr. Horvath has investigated nearly 100 sites which have revealed great knowledge of the Native American culture which existed here for thousands of years. There was a great deal of interaction between Mark and his audience. Mark is the only archaeologist to our knowledge who has reported his findings along the river to the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Digs continue on Bass River, and Mark would be glad to have assistance. If you are interested in helping with a dig, call him and volunteer your time. He generally works on weekends. Call 394-4335.

INDIAN LANDS PRESENT

It's Lady Slipper time again! We judge the date for the walks by the fact the "orchids of the north" almost invariably bloom on Memorial Day Weekend. Come walk with us this year. DHS will sponsor a walk on Saturday, June 6 meeting at 9:30 A.M. in the Town Office parking lot, and as usual we will be guided by Dr. Norton Nickerson. Please call the Conservation Commission office, 760-6123 if you plan to attend. A second walk will be sponsored by APCC on Sunday at 10 A.M. Those of you who heard Mark Horvath's talk will have a new prospective as you look at today's beauty and remember the ancient past.

A MESSAGE FROM THE WEST DENNIS COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE

As you know, the Selectmen have appointed a committee to oversee the restoration and preservation of the West Dennis Community Building. That committee has asked us to give you this message: "The West Dennis Community Building Restoration Committee respectfully requests your support of an article in the Town Warrant for the Meeting to be held on May 5, 1998. The approval of this article will begin the restoration and renovation of the 1867 West Dennis Graded School, located on School Street."

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Last month's trivia question was "Where is Finnegan's Meadow?". A few people told me they knew. The answer is-- in Dennis Port, on Lower County Road near the Harwich border. The Playland Pitch and Putt Golf course is on the site. Phyllis will tell us what she knows about the meadow and how it got its name next time. This month's trivia question: We've been talking a lot in recent issues about Uncle Barney's Road in West Dennis. Who was Uncle Barney?

EZRA BAKER SCHOOL FIELD TRIP TIME AGAIN

Nancy Howes is busily scurrying around trying to fill the schedule for helpers at the annual field trips by third grade children to the Manse. This is one of the most important events of the year for DHS, as we play host to about 200 children, their teachers and chaperones. Are you interested in helping? Or thinking about helping next year, maybe? You are very welcome to attend one of the days when the children are there to observe and find out for yourself how much fun "school days" can be.

LET'S DO LUNCH!

We will be celebrating the town's 205th birthday in our usual grand style, but this year at a different place, the Scargo Cafe in Dennis. A reservation form for your convenience is below. This year we will have a special guest, Jonathan Brewster, son of Elder Brewster of Plymouth and he will bring us news of the doings in that town. Jonathan was not a Mayflower passenger, although his parents were. He came on the ship Fortune in 1621. But as the son of the new plantations religious leader, he is a prominent man in the Old Colony of which Old Yarmouth and therefore the Town of Dennis, was a part for many years. Jonathan will talk to us in two parts: first in his interpretive role and second with an explanation of the research and training which Plymouth Plantation staff must undergo in order to portray our early ancestors. You'll like this program. Space is limited so make your reservations early.. The menu is soup, choice of scrod or chicken, beverage, rolls and, of course, birthday cake for dessert.

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205th Town Birthday Luncheon June 13 Scargo Cafe

Please make reservations for \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$14. per person)  
(tax and gratuity incl.)

Choice of entree: Broiled Cape Scrod \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken Francaise \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose self-addressed stamped envelope and mail to:

Lura Crowell P.O. Box 216 East Dennis MA 02641

## CALENDAR

- May 3 1 to 4 Open House at all of our Village Libraries.  
May 5 7 P.M. 1998 Annual Town Meeting, Wixon Middle School  
May 13 7:30 Board meets at Jericho  
May 9 1 to 4 "Making a Net" demonstration at the Manse  
( Rain Date May 16)  
May 9--17 Cape Maritime Week  
May 12--21 Annual third grade School Trips to the Manse  
May 16 All day Maritime symposium, Tara Hotel Hyannis

### COMING ATTRACTIONS-- MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- June 5 9:30 A.M. Indian Lands Lady Slipper Walk, DHS  
June 6 10 A.M. Indians Land Lady Slipper Walk, APCC  
June 13 noon Annual Birthday Luncheon , Scargo Cafe .See article page 1  
June 13--21 Cape Heritage Week

### MAKING --AND USING--A NET

There's an old Cape Cod saying which my dad used often: "There's more than one way to skin an eel!" That's true, but if you want to skin an eel, call me and I'll tell you how. Right now, I want to make a slight change in the old adage and say, "There's more than one way to catch a fish." That depends, of course, on the kind of fish you want to catch. For a flounder, or flatfish, just drop a line with a baited hook and sinker over the High Bank bridge. If you can find a place where its legal, a dip net will catch a lot of herring (alewives). For cod, try "wrinkles" or chunks of skate on a heavy hook.

Yet another very ancient way to catch fish is to trap them. The Native Americans built traps of tree branches, reeds and vines, mainly in the streams and rivers. The English colonists also built traps using small tree trunks or branches and nets of heavy string or rope. They were called weirs in New England, from an Old English word meaning "to dam up." The weirs were set out in the streams where herring and shad swam up to fresh water to spawn in the spring. In the 19th century weirs were commonly placed on the ends of the flats in Cape Cod Bay. They were tended at low tide by driving out with a work horse or yoke of oxen pulling a heavy cart into which the trapped fish were pitched. More recently, and especially since the introduction of gas powered boats, the weirs have been placed in deeper water. Today you can see a typical weir which has been set up off to the left of West Dennis Beach.

The poles for the weirs are set out about mid-March, embedded deeply into the sand. A net is stretched from pole to pole, weighted at the bottom. The "leader" is a straight line of poles with net attached which extends about 100 feet from the end of a shoal into deeper water, where the "heart" is located. The "mouth" of the trap is a narrow opening into the oval "bowl". The weir works because fish have a natural instinct to head for deeper water when they meet an obstacle, in this case the "header." When they follow this instinct, they swim straight into the "mouth" of the trap from which most never emerge. Various kinds of fish are caught in the weirs--from scup to mackerel to squid. But woe unto the weir fisherman whose traps lure a "horse Mackerel", or tuna fish, for he will find his nets a shamble and his poles dislodged by the huge fish's efforts to escape.

On May 9th, Burton N. Derick will be presenter of a program entitled " Making a Fish Net" at the Manse, in celebration of Cape Maritime Week. Burt knows of which he speaks, having set out weirs and mended nets with his grandfather, Nathaniel Hawes Wixon. Come and hear about nets and weirs from an expert as we celebrate the Cape's maritime heritage. Rain date is May 16. For a complete program for Maritime Week and other Heritage Cape Cod events, stop at the Chamber of Commerce.

Dennis Historical Society  
P. O. Box 607  
South Dennis, MA 02660-0607

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