



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or pjhowes@verizon.net

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Two short letter excerpts illuminating how differently the world was viewed 151 years ago:

Letter to Miss Susan F. Baker, South Dennis*

Amherst Roads Janth 12/62

Dear & Beloved Sister

Knowing letters from me wer gladly received by you although they contained nothing new or interesting. thought I would pen a line just to let you know that we had arrived here & wer all well. We arrived yesterday after a long tedious passage of sixty days.

Tedious did I say age & anxious beyond the power of my thoughts to convey to paper, what with light winds calms gales of wind tides Setting us upon unexplored Shores whare dangers stared us in the face in evry direction; but we have been fortunate enough to escape them. Our orders fortunatly we here for us to proceed up the river to Maulmain. as it is not laid down¹ on the mapes I think you will not know whare to look for it. Amherst is situated at the mouth of the Maulmain River which emptys in to the gulf of Mastaban at its head; The Gulf of Mastaban is to the Eastward of the Andaman Islands & to the west of Birmah. Maulmain is twenty four miles up the River. The only exports from there are Timber & Rice are in hopes we shall be able to load with Rice though it is very uncertain

Januaryth 27

A long interval has intervned Since writing the preceeding page; in the mean time have got to the town of Maulmain & to day are to commence loading with rice. yesterday paid a visit to the Shore whare ther are a few bamboo huts & a great many Pagodas or temples of worship for the Budda whare there idols are which number over one hundred in one building of all ages and Sizes. I also visited there place for burning there dead which they were preparing for the ceramony; not knowing how long Should have to wait for it to come off did not Stop though I Should much like to have Seen it. there are quite a number of Missionarys here wheather they, do any good or not I am unable to Saye.

By the way while lying to anchor part way down the river Saw quite an interesting Spectacle, which was no less than a flock or drove whichever you may term them of what do you think? Elephants no; but Monkeys though they might have been mistaken by Some for Elephant they wer So large; without exaggerating the thing Some of them wer as large as a good sized calf four or five weeks old. They are called in this Country Baboons and what Olany used to call in his Geography Ourange Outang I Should Judge there was about one hundred on the banks with in gun shot of us. Isaac was rather down in the mouth because he could not go ashore to chase them. Elephants are as plenty here as Horses are at home I told Isaac¹ the other day he must get a little one about as big as a kitten to carry home to Hulda. Say he is a going to which no doubt he will when he finds one of that dimensions. It is astonishing what knowing things Elephants are: the do most of the work on timber here they will take up a log of Timber on their tusk and walk away & put it upon the pile, that would take forty men to do.

(Excerpt)

Alpheus Baker

*Dennis Source Records Volume 2: Annals of South Dennis

¹ Siblings, Isaac & Huldah Downs

Excerpt from a letter to Susan Baker Tuesday May 19 (1863)

A wet rainy day with light baffling breezes. How true the Saying that time flies. There are Some things that do not move So fast as True, one of them is the good Ship Ilam[sic, Alarm] on board of which I am constantly reminded of the Sluggard. The motto here [??]I head quarters Seems to be Slow and Shure and the Slowness with which we which we proceed is truly Horriable.

The Island of Hong Kong is Small but a few miles around it the City beign Situated on the North Side completely land locked. The City is at the Base of a high Mountain as the population has increased has been built up the Slope of the Sides untill it is quite a picturesque place it is an English place Still the most of the inhabatents are Chineses, the Sight of which to Some of our Cape folks would be quite a wonder. The poorer class espicaly those who have dealings on the watter live in boats = or rather Sanpans as they are called in Chinese. The weoman corroborate with the men in working the boats in fact Seem to have the most to Say. They are beasties of ugliness though. amongst the higher classes there are (page] There are Some quite good looking.

Your Affec^t Brother Alpheus Baker Jr.

Burton Derick

Why Harry Holl Missed Dinner A Yarn Of Artists On The Deep

Harry Holl welshed on a specially prepared Greek dinner last week and he didn't even tell his hostess. For the Dennis potter, who is a model of politeness such a thing could happen only under extraordinary circumstances.

Last Friday Mr. Holl and his employee, sculptor and painter John Nelson, filled in for crewmen aboard the commercial fishing boat *Bearcat* out of Chathamport. Mr. Holl had gone with Skipper Sten H. Carlson many times before. For Mr. Nelson this was his first trip aboard *Bearcat*.

They left at 2 am, arrived in the vicinity of the Texas Tower, about 40 miles east of Cape Cod, at dawn. They jigged about 10 boxes of cod by noon, when it grew rough and they headed for home.

About 2 pm with a northeaster kicking up a sea *Bearcat* engine began heating up. Mr. Carlson called the nearest fishing boat, which they had passed a short time before to prepare to tow. Although they tried to cool the engine with their drinking water, it became too hot and locked up. The fishing boat missed them in what were by then towering seas.

Drifting in the rising storm, Carlson called Chatham Coast Guard. Their 44 ft. cutter was busy shepherding craft across the shoal into Chatham. Woods Hole dispatched the *General Green*, an 82 footer.

Carlson, Nelson and Holl drifted, constantly radioing their position, until midnight. A Coast Guard plane circled them, advised them to anchor because they were nearing Nantucket Shoals. The seas were now running 9-12 ft., and anchoring was no simple matter. A crewman left the cabin housing only with a lifeline around his waist and another man paying out line.

By the time the anchor was down, they had drifted over the rip and into the channel. All three were violently seasick. They had no drinking water. Beer bottles broke in their hands as they were hurled about. They were unable to eat, after 24 hours at sea. They battened down and prepared to ride it out.

At 3 am the *General Green* reported she was standing by 10 miles away it was too rough to attempt a tow. The crew of the *Bearcat* decided she could never reach them in time if the *Bearcat* started breaking up. They attempted to prepare the rubber raft for launching. It was stowed in a box on the cabin roof. But two men, clinging to the cabin while lying prone, found they could do nothing with the raft. They left it there.

Saturday afternoon the *General Green* was called off on another mission ordered the smaller Chatham boat to take over, the Chatham craft headed out into heavy seas about 3 pm, arrived on the scene

after dusk. The men on the *Bearcat* could catch glimpses of the Chatham boat when both craft rode a crest simultaneously. But the Chatham boat could not find the *Bearcat*. The seas blocked radar sighting. They were being hit by wind-driven hail. The tide had changed, swinging the *Bearcat* side to the swells. The crew doubted she could take such punishment. Then the *General Green* returned.

The big Woods Hole boat, with its higher radar led the Chatham boat to *Bearcat*. The Chatham boat tried to pick up *Bearcat's* anchor line but it was too rough for maneuvering at such close quarters. They hatched a plan whereby *Bearcat* would cut her anchor rope and while she drifted, *General Green* would shoot her a line and take her in tow.

Carlson, Holl and Nelson had now been at sea, almost without eating and soaking wet all the time, for more than 40 hours. The question arose whether they had the strength to make fast. The *General Green* fired its lead line and the crew of three hauled in 100 feet to get to a one inch line. After hauling 100 ft. of one inch line they had the heavy five inch hawser and even heavier shackle which they had to make fast to the bow. It required an hour of exhausting work.

The Greek dinner? Harry missed two dinners, but Friday night the radio got the message through. By Saturday transmissions were too weak to be picked up. The *Bearcat* could hear, but she couldn't speak.

The worst pounding came during the tow at eight knots. The master of the *General Green* heard an explosion over the radio after one huge swell.

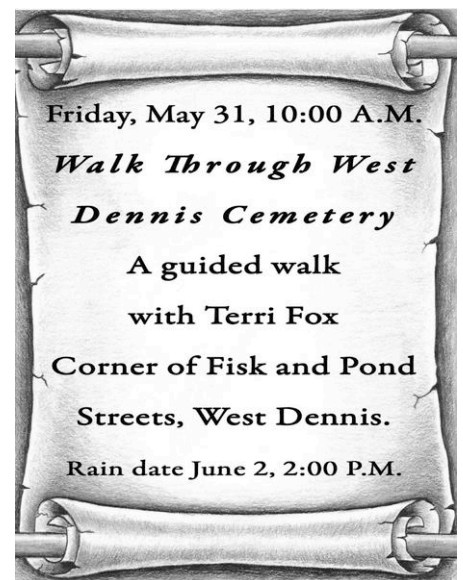
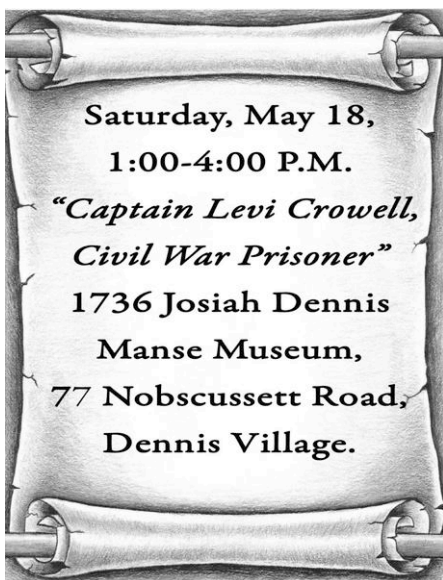
"What was that?" he radioed. "Is the damage serious?"

"Not serious," replied Mr. Carlson. "One of the crew just went through the bunk." When the *Bearcat* dropped from under Harry Holl, he came down so hard he broke the one-inch plank bunk.

After switching tows the Chatham boat brought *Bearcat* into Wychmere Harbor at 4:30 am, after more than 50 hours at sea.

Although all veterans of commercial fishing, they were an unusual, and shaken crew, Capt. Carlson, still in his twenties is a Fulbright scholar and, between trips, a writer. His standby crewmen, young artists both, are ready to go again as soon as the pine woods on shore stop rocking."

Reprinted from The Dennis-Yarmouth Register, May 3, 1963



Kap'n Kezzie's Komments

A tortoise doesn't run and does nothing, yet it lives for 450 years.
And you tell me to exercise?? I don't think so.

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Bits “n Pieces - May 1963 - from The Dennis-Yarmouth Register Issue Cited:

5/03 *Pampering clams for profit “Four years ago Cultured Clam Corp. & Aquacultural Research dug two pools on the Chase Garden Creek side of the Chapin Beach...and began raising soft shell clams in the pools under controlled conditions. This summer it will move into a big building nearly completed.”

* Sent in by the Falmouth Enterprise: Timely warning from Dennis Port: “It is unfortunate for the Dennis Port motel operator that when she chose to cancel the reservation of a would-be-guest, who turned out to be a Negro, she picked upon an assistant district attorney of the County of New York.”

5/10 * “Dennis purchased a fire pumper truck from Maxim Motor Co. this week for \$15,600. Maxim’s was the second highest bid, but the pump came nearest to the type the Fire Dept. wanted...Selectman David B. Lane explained.”

*Gladys Kelley of West Dennis reported: “Miss Polly Thacher was crowned Queen of the Junior Prom at the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School on Friday evening.”

5/17 *Ina Howes reported: “Joel Crowell spent the weekend in Boston visiting his brother, Jay Crowell.

Events from other sources:

5/12 Race riot in Birmingham, Alabama

5/16 Last project Mercury flight, L. Gordon Cooper in Faith 7 completed 22 orbits.

5/15 Peter, Paul and Mary win their 1st Grammy for “If I Had a Hammer.”

5/22 Mickey Mantle hits a ball off Yankee Stadium façade.

Born in 1963:

5/25 Mike Myers – “Austin Powers”

5/31 Hugh Dillon – “Flashpoint”

Edited by: June Howes