

#### JACK FROST WAS HERE...

But no damage was reported. On the contrary, reports have it that all enjoyed his visit and gave him a warm welcome. It was a privilege to have so renowned an author-illustrator speak to the D.H.S. and we thank Mr. Frost for the opportunity to meet and visit with him.

#### THE WORLD OF WORK -- 1840

Our November program will feature a film made at beautiful Sturbridge Village, which tells of the world of work in a rural central Massachusetts town in the 1840's. Some of our members will contrast this with the World of Work in the coastal town of Dennis during the same period. You will see some similarities and many differences. Sturbridge is one of my favorite places. If it is one of yours, or even if you have never visited this fine living museum of life in the early days of our republic, you are sure to learn a great deal about everyday life in early 19th century America. The program will be presented at the West Dennis Community Building at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, November 17.

#### ANOTHER INTERESTING OLD PLACE NAME

There is an area of our town, a quiet village by the sea, that has a most unlikely historical nickname. A cluster of old houses, circa 1820, interspersed with newer houses (1890-1920) is discovered as one drives eastward along the section of Lower County Road between the Lighthouse Road and the bridge across Swan Pond River. On early maps, this settlement is called South Village. In fact today a street in this area is called South Village Road. But a tradition which reaches back to the mid- to late 1800's names this village "Battle Town". Now, as most of you know, no historic military battles have ever been conducted on our native soil, and the few naval encounters which have occurred up and down the Cape can hardly be categorized as battles. The name "Battle Town" has a different origin and here is its story. The South Village was settled early by residents who had decided to earn their living by fishing. There are certain drawbacks due to inclement weather and sea conditions, and the fish themselves are capricious - sometimes here, sometimes there, sometimes nowhere to be found. But, within a population where choices of occupations are limited to those which are connected with the sea, some will see some advantages to fishing. First of all, much can be accomplished by tending weirs near shore. Secondly, even if one opts to make voyages to the fishing grounds off shore, the season is limited, and much of the year can be spent at home. Consider the life of the merchantman or the whaler, who may be at sea for a period of years. For home-loving folks like Cape Codders, the few months of a cod fishing season are by far the preferred option, even if less profitable. So the South Village men pursued fishing, although some of their sons went before the mast on deep water voyages to learn the art of sailing. Meanwhile, the Main Street mariners opted for the moneyed profession of the merchant marine. It is hard to say who was the first to become jealous of whom. Suffice it to say that a certain antagonism grew up between the uptown Master Mariners' sons and the South Village fishermen's sons. It became a weekend sport for the sons of Blue Water captains to saunter in a group down to South Village, to taunt the sons of the fishing captains, ending in a battle of fisticuffs. The fishermen were apparently ready and willing, and although there are no records to prove who beat whom most frequently, the custom prevailed long enough to give the village its nickname, "Battle Town".

#### TIMELY TRIVIA

Last month I gave you a health hint from the writing of Lydia Maria Child. (I hope someone tried it. I would like to know if it works!) Mrs. Child was an extraordinary woman. Born in 1802, she was the first U.S. woman newspaper correspondent, an active anti-slavery exponent, and one of the country's leading women authors. Her modesty prevented her from becoming as well known as other New England women writers of her era, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Julia Ward Howe. But one piece of her work is familiar to us all and often comes to mind at this harvest season of the year. Mrs. Child is the author of the verse which is associated with New England Thanksgiving, the one that begins, "Over the river and through the woods, to grandmother's house we go." Let's hope that there will not be any snow for the horse to trek through as the annual trip to grandmother's house, apartment or condominium is made this November. And have a nice Thanksgiving.

#### BARNSTABLE COUNTY NEARS ITS THREE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY

At a recent workshop at the Community College, we were reminded that the tercentenary of Barnstable County will occur in 1985. With this as impetus, it was decided to hold a Cape and Island area meeting of all the interested historical organizations in these areas, to help celebrate this 300th anniversary and hopefully, to lead to the formation of an association for the mutual benefit of all the local societies. The first meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 17, at the Falmouth Historical Society, at 2:00 P.M. and a representative of D.H.S. will be there. We will report to you on this meeting.

## CALENDAR

November 8 7:30 P.M. Pres. Bacon's home Executive Board Meeting  
November 17 7:30 P.M. West Dennis Community Building  
The World of Work - Sturbridge and  
Dennis, 1840  
December 12 3-5 Josiah Dennis Manse Christmas Open House  
Also of interest to our members: Dec. 8 Bus Tour to Concord for an Old Concord Christmas  
Nov. 29 Christmas trip to CapriLand  
Call 394-5739 for details

### CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE AT THE MANSE

This year's D.H.S. Christmas Open House will be held at the Josiah Dennis Manse from 3-5 P.M. on Sunday, December 12. The Manse will be decorated by a committee led again by Susan Kelley, whose love for the simplicity of this 1736 home is always reflected in the tasteful decorations she creates. There will be seasonal music, refreshments, carols to sing and a good time for all. Please come and bring your friends.

### AND IT'S TIME TO THINK ABOUT CHRISTMAS GIVING

And why not think about giving a gift which reflects your interest in local history? For young people, Scuttle Watch is a novel about life in Dennis in the late 1800's, and is well loved by all who read it. The Story of Two Houses tells the history of our two historic centers, the Manse and Jericho House. Master Mariners of Dennis gives the lives and times of a few of our local sea captains, and They Built Clipper Ships in Their Back Yard tells the story of the Shivericks who built the ships they captained. There are also tiles depicting the Shiverick Ships, and a tile which illustrates the early Salt Works, invented by Sleepy John Sears. All are reasonably priced and will be available at the November meeting of the Society.

### FINE CHAMPAGNE TO LAUNCH A BEAUTIFUL SHIP(MODEL)

The Board is grateful to the House Committee of the Josiah Dennis Manse for allowing us to hold a Champagne Party for those who bought shares to enable us to buy the model of the Belle of the West, thought to have been the most beautiful of the Shiverick ships. The idea of selling shares was as successful for us as it was for the Shivericks. The "Launching Party" will be held on October 31, and all who bought a share are invited. If you did not buy a share, well, maybe we'll do it again and you can come next time!

### THE OBSERVATORY AT SCARGO

One of the most recognizable structures in Dennis is the Observatory on the summit of Scargo Hill. In my family, the familiar stone tower is referred to, punningly, as the "high point" of a visit to the Cape, and guests are invariably treated to the spectacular view and a retelling of the legend of Princess Scargo. Did you know that the present structure is the third to stand on this site? The first was built in 1874, when a group of Dennis residents organized the Observatory Association. They secured gifts of labor, material and money and built a wooden tower for a cost of \$519. Admissions to climb the tower was 5¢ and at the top was placed a telescope, given by the Hon. Francis Bassett. It was said to be so powerful that on a clear day one could read the time from the clock on the top of High Pole Hill in Provincetown, and see Nantucket to the south. A remarkable telescope, indeed! During the summer of 1875, between 1,500 and 1,600 people made the climb. Messrs. Lord and Crowell built a refreshment stand nearby, and the hill became a popular place for outings. But, alas, a February gale in 1876 flattened the structure. What happened to the telescope, I do not know. It was immediately decided to raise the money to rebuild, and I will tell you about the second tower another time.

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