

DOWN DENNISPORT LANES IN MEMORY

"The growth of the southern side of the Cape for the last few years would astonish anyone not acquainted with the facts." No, that is not a quote from The Register's Dennis reporter, Gary Ghioto, in 1983. It is from an article in the Yarmouth Register of July 4th, 1850. The reporter goes on to tell of the changes along the waterfront, especially in Dennis and Harwich. The area at that time was still known as Crocker's Neck, but it was fast becoming the commercial center for the two towns. "Near the Shad Hole, so-called... three new wharves are in operation or being constructed. The number of fishing vessels has trebled." These were great days for the town's south side port. Well, the memories of those present at our Dennisport Memory Day on October 30 didn't go back quite that far, though some remembered when the remains of at least one of these 600 foot wharves could still be seen. It was a great afternoon of nostalgia, stories and a real sense of neighborhood as newcomers learned from oldcomers, and long-time neighbors reminisced. Ben Thacher recorded the remarks, and all were given a map drawn by Betty (Dean) Holmes showing Main Street as she remembered it from the thirties. Ed Chase led the trip along memory lane, and allowed all to look at some of his extensive collection of pictures and post cards from the past. And a good many life-long residents of the village were on hand. Refreshments were served by Annabelle Bragg and Pauline Kennedy.

The Register article of July, 1850 concludes: "almost all the way from Hyannis to Chatham gives evidence of thrift, prosperity and successful business operations." In 1983, a group of concerned citizens has formed to try to uphold the quality of the business community and neighborhoods of the South Side. One of their major projects is to try to replace the decrepit cement sidewalks with brick. If you would like to buy a brick, you can make a contribution at any Dennisport merchant.

COMING IN NOVEMBER - EAST DENNIS MEMORY DAY

The next Memory Day will be held at the Jacob Sears Memorial Library in East Dennis on Sunday, November 20 at 3 P.M. We hope to hear from long-time residents of both necks of land that surround Sesuit Harbor. If you know anyone who should be there, please ask them. And do come yourself.

A NOBSCUSSET LEGEND

When I told you a while ago about the origin of the name Horsefoot Cove, I was speaking of an ancient place name which has remained the same for centuries, although its origin has become obscure. This is not true of many places in the town. Many names have been replaced with altogether new ones, and in looking over old deeds and records, one must puzzle out such locations as Goshen, Fox Hill and Griffith's Island. Other place names have been corrupted and modernized and are somewhat easier to decipher - as Follins Pond, originally Folland's Pond, named for William Folland who homesteaded there. Another example is Setucket, sometimes Satucket, Sautucket, Seatucket or Saytucket in old records, all corruptions of Sauquatuckett or Sawahquatooke, the Indian name for what we now call Stoney Brook. So it is difficult to know if one is trying to define an ancient place name whose meaning is lost, a corruption, or a modern name. In my collection of old poems, I have an example of a name which combines all of the above. The poem, "A Nobscusset Legend", was written by Capt. Marcus Hall, perhaps about 1890. Outside of Nobscusset Point, off the end of Corporation Road, is a rock known to present-day sailors as Jackass Rock. One conjures up the picture of a frightened animal, surrounded by water as the tide rises, (or perhaps an inexperienced sailor, high and dry with a stove-in bow). But the old poem tells a different story and gives the rock a different name. It tells of a shipwrecked mariner, a foreigner, who drifted ashore at Nobscusset "clinging to a broken yard," many years ago. He refused the hospitality of the local folks, and happy to be alive, he built himself a house of driftwood and lived as a beachcomber, taking his food as a gift from the bay, and learning skills from the local Indians. He was known as Jack Sias, and was an accepted part of the shore scene for several years. But one day he was missed, and for several days not seen. A youngster out picking up Horsefeet to use for fertilizer in the garden, discovered Jack's basket with bait and hooks upon the top of the rock guarding the entrance to what was then Nobscusset Harbor. Speculation was high as to what might have happened, until an Indian, fishing off shore, caught a giant "squid-hound" (Bluefish?) who had a hook and line in his mouth. Pulling in the line, he found it tied to the big toe of Jack Sias' body. It was surmised that Jack had been fishing, tied the line to his toe to catch a nap, and was pulled from his rock by the giant fish. Capt. Marcus concludes by saying that the rock "has always borne his name, Jack Sias' Rock." But today it is called Jackass Rock. Mr. Dean Sears remembers it as Jack's Rock, when as a boy he fished there. Mr. William Ernest Crowell, who remembers Capt. Hall, recalls that Jack 'siah was the name, and it was a nickname for John Josiah. Both think Jack was a foreigner, but possibly an Indian. Now, Capt. Marcus was known as a local historian, but also remembered as a good story teller, so his "legend" may be just that. Can anyone shed any further light on this tale?

CALENDAR

- Nov. 16 Historical Society Board meeting, Nancy Reid's house, 7:30
- Nov. 20 East Dennis Memory Day, Jacob Sears Memorial Hall, 3 P.M.
- Dec. 4 Christmas at Jericho. Annual Open House, all welcome

THINK ICE

The Board has received a great suggestion from a member who thinks it would be fun to have an iceboat race on Scargo Lake. Ice boating was a favorite winter sport, years ago, and the Board had a great time discussing the possibility. I am telling you this on a lovely Indian Summer day because the idea depends upon weather, and will have to be scheduled when we have some clue that the lake will be safe. So, be forewarned. We will have a winter carnival sometime. Date, time and other particulars to be announced. Just sharpen up your skates, dig out that old iceboat, or get busy and make one, so that, at the drop of a hat you can be ready to race, or just to watch while D.H.S. enjoys an old-fashioned winter day.

THE CAPE AND ISLANDS AREA ASSOCIATION OF HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS

This is a long name, for a new organization of area historians, which has met several times over the past year, and recently met at Carleton Hall. The group exchanges ideas and sponsors programs of mutual interest to all historical societies on the Cape and Islands. The program which we sponsored centered upon school outreach, and we were proud to present our school field trips in detail, in the hopes that other societies could learn from our success. Refreshments were served following the meeting at the Josiah Dennis Manse. Thanks to Maree Galvin, Chris Harriman, Lena Anderson, Josh and Eleanor Crowell and Mim Sard for their help.

THE BOOK OF THE SEVEN SEAS

People in all ages have had a fascination with the sea. Perhaps it is from a genetic memory, for life on this planet began in the sea. When the ancient people of the Western World gained enough security to begin tentatively to explore their surroundings, they decided that most of the world was land, with seas to cross from one land mass to another. In their voyages they identified seven large bodies of water, and since seven is a mystical number, the superstitious mariners settled upon these Seven Seas as the major waterways of their planet. They were: The Mediterranean, Red Sea, China Sea, West African Sea, East African Sea, Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. Then came such courageous navigators as Christopher Columbus and his like. They proved the ancients wrong, and came to realize that there was much more water than land in our world. They found it was possible to sail from sea to sea to sea, and thus to circle the globe and return to their place of departure. So the idea of but seven seas became obsolete and remained that way for several centuries. Then, enter Rudyard Kipling, who, in the year 1896 selected the romantic phrase from antiquity as the title to a book of verse. At this distance in time it is hard for us to realize the tremendous popularity of this man. So great was his influence that his revival of the term The Seven Seas sent geographers to work to divide the oceans of the world into seven. The list as modern geographers have drawn it is of oceans: North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Artic, Antarctic, and Indian. So now you can name the Seven Seas, even if you never get to sail them. (Ed. Note--The winner of our prize, which turned out to be a TCR 80 16K Color Computer, was our son, Peter Reid, who spent a whole evening with his head in the encyclopedia, and submitted several wrong entries before coming up with the correct list. To all you unsuccessful contestants, better luck next time.)

CHRISTMAS AT JERICHO

December 4 will see the lovely full Cape known as Jericho House alive with Christmas Spirit. Ann Chalmers and Hazel Newcomb of the Jericho committee will decorate and there will be seasonal music, including carol singing, fine refreshments and a steaming bowl of Negus. We hope that you will be there to start off the Christmas Season with friends and neighbors. Open House will be from 4-6 P.M. Circle the date now, as it is early in the month and newsletters do not always arrive on time.

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