



THE ELIZABETH B AND COLUMBUS JONES

One of the most colorful chapters in our town's history was played at Sesuet Harbor in the days of ship building at the Shiverick Shipyard. D.H.S. is very much aware of the general interest in the golden days of sail and we have a slide presentation which we show often for groups about town and elsewhere which tells the story. Most of the interest is in the 8 great clipper ships which came off the ways there. But as we gather more information we have found some interesting stories which center around some of the smaller Shiverick-built vessels. One of these was named Elizabeth B. She was a schooner of just under 100 tons measurement, owned by Captain Almorán Bacon and others of Barnstable. Under his command, she had several adventures not the least of which was a trip around Cape Horn in search of gold. Failing to find pay dirt, the Barnstable men returned to the Cape in 1851, and Captain Almorán employed her in the business of coasting. Much of the time, the Elizabeth B carried building stone from the Quincy quarries to Philadelphia and points south. He also carried lumber and any other freight which would bring him profit. Capt. Almorán was well-known among sailing interests and well-liked by his neighbors. But our story today finds Almorán Bacon and the Shiverick schooner Elizabeth B embroiled in an affair which divided the community--in deed, the whole of the Cape, and very possibly New England. In September of 1859 there arrived in Lewis Bay the brig Rolerson, commanded by her First Mate Mr. Orlando. As soon as she was at anchor, Mr. Orlando left the vessel and hastily contacted her owners and her Captain. The reason for his haste was that in the course of the voyage from Florida Orlando had discovered that a fugitive slave was hidden aboard. Mr. Orlando might not have been adverse to assisting a man to freedom, but having inadvertently discovered the fugitive's presence, he now faced a dilemma as to how he should proceed. He was very much aware that his livelihood and that of his owners depended upon good relationships with the slave holders of the Southern states with whom most of their business was done. At his meeting with his Captain and owners, it was decided that the man, Columbus Jones by name, should be taken back to the South and returned to his "owner". It so happened that the schooner Elizabeth B was about to leave Hyannis, headed for Philadelphia with a load of stone, and Captain Bacon was persuaded to extend his journey somewhat in order to return the fugitive to Charleston. And so it was that Hyannis was treated to the heartrending sight of seeing the proud schooner Elizabeth B sail out of the harbor with the unfortunate man Columbus Jones chained to the capstan, doomed to be returned to a living hell.

Of course, the Abolitionists were outraged. Massachusetts had already legislated an act which declared any man who came to Massachusetts was free. Even Unionists were moved, and apologetic, trying to express excuses for this kidnapping in the fact that Columbus had in fact never set foot on Massachusetts soil. There is no doubt that the whole experience had a profound effect on public opinion about slavery, among those who favored its immediate abolition and also among those who held the opinion that the evil should be allowed to fall of its own weight. Those who had had a part in returning the man to the South were indicted and a trial was scheduled. The Yarmouth Register roared in outrage, demanding conviction of the owners and all involved, but the Barnstable Patriot claimed that they were only acting as agents for the so-called owner, and that Columbus Jones had never made that step to freedom by landing on the soil of Massachusetts. While the controversy continued, the principles moved forward in the flow of history. It is very likely that Columbus Jones, whose fate is not recorded never fully appreciated the effect his martyrdom had on the people who debated his treatment. The fate of the Elizabeth B is not known to me, but Capt. Almorán Bacon met with an unfortunate early death in an accident at Philadelphia, while unloading a cargo of stone. On the 12th of April 1861, South Carolina began the great War Between the States by firing on the American Flag at Fort Sumter. In May of that year the Dennis Special Town Meeting unanimously accepted a resolution in support of the government and the President in defending the Union. From that time forward, the town and its citizens joined the rest of the county and the state in whole hearted support of the effort to keep the Union free of slavery forever. The return of the man named Columbus Jones to slavery aboard the schooner Elizabeth B may have played a small part in convincing those who wavered on the rightness of the cause.

MORE ON SHIVERICK SHIPYARD

As many of you know, the maritime history of Dennis is quite extensive. Our small beginning at showing the story of our partnership with the sea has been the Maritime Room at the Josiah Dennis Manse. Before the room was completed two years ago it was quite evident that it was too small for the material we already had on hand. Now a major change is under way at the Manse. The summer kitchen is being completely renovated and will become the new Maritime Room, hopefully to be completed in time for the town's bicentennial in 1993. One of the more interesting projects is a diorama of the Shiverick Shipyard at Sesuet Harbor. John Burton will build it, but the best research he, John Gill, Joshua Crowell, Henry Kelly II, and Bob Eldred have come up with to date still has a few fuzzy areas. They would appreciate hearing from anyone with any Shiverick Shipyard information. You may have the missing link! Call Josh at 385-3689 or Henry at 385-3300.

CALENDAR

- Nov. 28 Over the river and through the woods....wishing a bounteous Thanksgiving Day to one and all.
- Dec. 8 2-4 P.M. Christmas Open House at Jericho Historical Center. Decorations by the West Dennis Garden Club, and the Questers will be our hostesses in costumes of the Jericho era. See next month's newsletter for details.

A MYSTERY IS SOLVED

A thousand thanks to our new Life Member and historic researcher Jim Carr! You may remember that in the September newsletter we thanked Alison Stone Kennedy and Sheila Stone Hawes for the gift of the Stone Family Bible. They did not know the history of the Bible and even with further research--neither did we. Well...Jim must have been intrigued with the story because he found the answer. It was from the Correspondence of the Register, Dennis, Mass. July 2nd, 1856 and printed in the Yarmouth Register of 4 July, 1856. It seems that "on Friday evening last, the sons of Capt. Thomas Hall and Mr. Sirenas Hall left their homes with the intention of bathing, and chose the dock in preference to the open Bay, for this purpose. Having sported in the water for a time, Luther Hall lost his hold upon an oar which had been the means of buoying him up; he struggled to keep his head above water, but his efforts were fruitless. He sank to the bottom, and his young friend, Sirenas M. Hall, dived to bring him to the surface again. The drowning boy grasped him tightly, and he was unable to effect this purpose. Among some boys, was one, John M. Stone, across whose mind the thought flashed that they were drowning. He at once threw from his head his cap, and dashed boldly into the water. For a moment he was lost to sight, but soon he appeared with the objects of his search. Other help was at hand, and they were soon brought to shore. One was helpless and the other nearly so. Means were at once employed by Captain Cotell and others, to resuscitate the boy Luther, and at length they were rejoiced to see signs of life returning.

I am happy to say that both the boys are now doing well, and would to God there were always a John Murray Stone at hand under such circumstances, or one like him. There would be fewer mothers to mourn the loss of their children by drowning.

Appropriate notice has been taken of the youth, who rendered himself so useful. Mr. Eastwood brought the propriety of giving a public expression of appreciation of this act before his people, on Sabbath last, who responded in the most cordial manner to the appeal made, and in a few days, our citizens will have set their seal of approval in a tangible form upon the well done deed.

Septimus"

CELEBRATION 200

I'm sure you are all aware that a somewhat large and very dedicated committee of your fellow citizens are now meeting every month to plan the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the incorporation of Dennis in the year 1993. Beginning this month I thought we should update you with "Bicentennial Bits" of progress of the planning committee.

The Committee has designated the Dorothy Perkins Rose as the official flower for our Anniversary year, and many bushes have already been placed at town-owned properties. The committee also wants to encourage homeowners to brighten their yards with this old-fashioned beauty. We have ours already started, through the kindness of my friend, Virginia Van Vorst. This rambler rose is familiar to all and is easily grown in our seaside climate. It was developed in 1901 from a Japanese stock named rosea wichuraiana. The Dorothy Perkins itself is a pink double blossom creeper, but its sister flowers are the Excelsa, a bright red, and the Evangeline which can be white or pink. I know not for what lovely lady the rose is named, nor who first propagated it, but perhaps some of you rose growers can help me out. At any rate we are hoping that many of you will wish to help us fill the town with old-fashioned roses for the celebration year. Craig's Nursery tells me that they are best planted in early spring, and if you wish to buy from him, he offers a discount if you order now. The rose can be purchased at most of the nurseries in town or can be ordered by mail. The important thing is to get one in this spring, so you will have blossoms in 1993.

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

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