



A FEW MORE RUMRUNNERS

The Prohibition article in last months newsletter struck a responsive chord in quite a few people. Thanks for the kind words--and even a call from Florida! As promised, here are the rest of the stories.

The first one is about the Ginn family of Dennis Port/West Harwich. Dr. David Ginn was allowed, during Prohibition, to dispense alcoholic beverages from his drug store for medicinal purposes. On a number of occasions he appeared before the Judge at Second District Court in Harwich to answer charges that he had been dispensing at a faster rate than could be expected even if the entire population took to their beds. He always paid his fine and evidently continued to do business as usual. His son, Dr. Richard Ginn the local dentist, used some variety of liquor as a rinse after pulling a tooth--a practice todays dentist would strenuously object to. One patient requested a little bit of his rinse to take home--"just in case she had trouble afterwards". He said, "Now, Mrs. Lilla, you just go home and get some off your pantry shelf", knowing very well that this pillar of the Baptist Church had some "medicinal" mouth wash to use in an emergency.

Pauline Wixon Derick said her father, Than, used to tell of a "molasses house" down at The Guzzle. Molasses is used to make rum and that would have been a good place to make it. For the uninitiated--the Guzzle was an open stream that ran from the Plashes in Dennis Port down to the shore just east of Glendon Road Beach. It's all filled in now and built on. Pauline is not sure what era her father was talking about. We had Prohibition of one sort or another over a number of years.

Another story is about a local fisherman on his way home from the river who was stopped by a State Policeman. The policeman inspected the contents of the truck and, pointing towards his car, said, "Put it right in there. My trunk is open." The fisherman went home with an empty truck and no citation was issued.

My family has it's own Prohibition story. One afternoon my mother took me and my sister Mary to her mothers for the monthly meeting of the Martha Richards Society, a Baptist Church ladies organization strongly in favor of Prohibition. When we returned home Mother was surprised to find the front door locked and all the shades pulled down at 4:00 P.M.--especially since our front door was never locked and our shades were never drawn. She knocked on the door and father opened it very carefully. It seems that he and his friend Al Francis--a long time Acme Laundry delivery man--were concocting a batch of bootleg liquor in Mother's kitchen. She asked them why on earth they were doing it and they replied, "Well, to make money. Everybody's doing it." Mother didn't hesitate to let them know that #1--pulling the shades in the middle of the day was a sure sign that something unusual was going on, #2--neither of them knew the first thing about making anything, and #3--they had until noon tomorrow to replace her linoleum covered counters that had holes eaten in them by their concoction! I don't know what happened to the home brew.

Dennis Village was the locale of a number of clandestine events during these years. Here's a vignette from those shady days (or rather, nights). This took place at the Nobscussett Hotel--Dennis' contribution to the Grand Hotels of Cape Cod. Sitting high on Nobscussett Bluff it was a commanding presence overlooking Cape Cod Bay. On certain nights lanterns were hoisted above the hotel with the aid of box kites as a signal that "the coast was clear". Kegs were floated in and retrieved from the surf. It seems fairly certain that it was intended for their guests, but also possible that some of it found its way to other locations--you know, just being the neighborly sort of thing to do.

In that same era the State Police appeared before the Dennis Selectmen and announced they had discovered the Wytchmere Tavern in West Dennis serving liquor--and what did they intend to do about it? The selectmen replied, "We didn't find it, you did, so what are you going to do about it?" We have not been able to find out how that event was settled. If any of you readers know, please write me a note at Box 607, South Dennis, MA 02660 and I'll include it in a future newsletter. We'd love to know the outcome.

I would be remiss if I left you thinking that Dennis was full of law breakers from shore to shore. The majority of our citizens worked hard to earn a meager living from the land or sea. Prohibition for them was not frosting on the cake it was butter on the bread. They were no better or worse than the neighbors in any other Cape town, but looking back they surely created a colorful chapter in our history.

THANKS, NORTH!

About 90 members and friends met at Carleton Hall to hear North Cairn talk about her love affair with Monomoy Island. The word pictures she painted were powerful enough to make us all wish we had been there. Added to that were 80 spectacular pictures taken by Cape Cod Times photographer Ron Schloerb. Ron went over there "for 3 or 4 days to take 50 pictures". 1500 shots later North asked him how much longer he might need to be there, and he said that perhaps 50 more shots might wrap it up. No doubt Ron felt the same magical spell of Monomoy we all would feel.

NEW MEMBER LIST

A hearty welcome to Nancy D. Adams, Richard Adami, Marilyn McClune, Beverly Alexander, Mr. and Mrs. James J. Coogan, Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Alan Foster, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Paige, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Jahnke, Richard Roy, Charlotte G. Spotts and Helen M. Riffelmachel. Welcome back to Grace Nyberg and Mr. and Mrs. George Snow. Here's a reminder from Isabelle to please keep her up to date on your address. Let her know when you are leaving for the winter and what your new mailing address will be.

CALENDAR

Nov. 9 7:30 P.M. DHS Board meets at Jericho.
Nov. 24 Wishing a bountiful Thanksgiving Day to all.
Dec. 11 2-4 P.M. Annual Christmas Open House at Jericho. See article below.

THE PATTERN IS BROKEN

The DHS Annual Christmas Open House has been held alternately at Josiah Dennis Manse and Jericho Historical Center over the years. This would have been our year at the Manse but due to construction there we'll be going to Jericho again this year for our Col. Negus Punch and camaraderie. Susan Kelley and her fellow-decorators will be presented with a challenge--to move their thinking from the 1700's into the 1800's. Stop by to see how well they made the transition. Sample some of the delicious refreshments from your DHS Board and listen to the seasonal offerings of Stephen Russell and Janice Gray on December 11 from 2-4 P.M. See you there!

JOSIAH'S CHIMNEY

Restoration work has begun on the Josiah Dennis Manse chimney. A number of years ago some work was done under the house that disturbed the earth near the base of the chimney. This, plus gravity, and disintegrating 1736 mortar has caused our old chimney to sag--sort of like happens to us as we get into these Golden Years! In an effort to prevent a disaster we petitioned the Annual Town Meeting this year for \$10,000.00 for necessary repairs. It was so voted and On The Level, a Hyannis company specializing in restoration work was given the bid. The valuables, breakables, and delicacies have been safely stored away and the furniture is out of the way and covered with cloth and plastic to prevent damage from dust, light, and other disturbances which could occur during this type of operation. We have tried to take every precaution with the Manse's treasures so the house will look as nice as ever next summer and will be a whole lot safer. Pictures and slides are being taken of the work as it progresses and we'll keep you up to date on the restoration.

...AND JOSIAH'S CHAIR

In an effort to make the Manse furnishings a bit more reflective of the 1736 period we have researched Reverend Dennis' will and inventory with the intention of having replicas of his estate back in the house. One noticeable item missing was a Great Chair. Every man of stature in those times had a Great Chair as a symbol of his standing in the community. DHS commissioned William Roth of Yarmouth Port to make one for the Manse. It has been completed by him, sent to New Hampshire for a rush seat, and is now in Josh Crowell's dining room acquiring some "age". The chair itself certainly looks ancient but the rush is new and when Henry Kelley received it from Mr. Roth it came with instructions to 'keep it in the sun to darken the rush'. We certainly don't want it at the Manse under present conditions and Josh has extra space in his dining room where it will get sun most of the day. This will make a grand addition to our collection.

OUR POST CARD COLLECTION

During Dennis Festival Days Josh Crowell and I presented a program featuring some post cards from the extensive DHS collection. We borrowed a special projector to show them but were disappointed in the quality of the picture on the screen. We thought a good solution would be to have slides taken of the cards. New board member Jim Coogan, a teacher at Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School, enlisted some interested volunteers at the school and we have just received the first lot of 36 slides. They can be shown on our own projector and will give a much better picture. This will be an ongoing project until a good selection of our cards have been done. Thanks to Jim and his friends!

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

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