



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter January 2024

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As is our January custom, there will be no Board Meeting this month.

Please send information & stories for the newsletter to Dave Talbott at the DHS Website email address: info@dennishistoricalsociety.org

Happy New Year!

What better way for an editor to begin the first newsletter of the new year than with fresh, original and timely copy! I was thrilled last November when I received an email from longtime Dennis Historical Society member Jack Sheedy with the offer of an article for the newsletter! Jack is the author/co-author of eight books, including *Dennis Journal* and *Cape Cod Collected*, and has written hundreds of newspaper articles about Cape Cod history. He has appeared on HGTV and NPR radio, speaking on the subject of local history and folklore, and now his work is appearing in our January Newsletter...how lucky can we get!

Scargo, Skates, and Hockey Sticks

Cape Cod is dotted with hundreds of fresh water ponds, lakes, and hidden kettle holes. In olden days, cold winter nights beneath frigid starlit skies froze inland waters to produce thick ice surfaces. These conditions brought crews out to cut blocks from the ice sheets, to be stored away in icehouses for use during warmer months. Frozen ice surfaces also brought out skaters, and hockey players.

Old issues of local newspapers published accounts of skating parties, ice boating activities, and even some hockey matches. For instance, the January 5, 1884 Yarmouth Register mentioned that Scargo Lake had frozen over to the joy of locals boys who skated and launched their boats to skim over the smooth icy surface.

An early mention of hockey being played on Cape Cod included the following in the December 27, 1890 Register, from an article titled "Skating by Moonlight," which referenced activities in Yarmouth upon a Saturday evening beneath the glow of a full moon, including: "... a full complement of young men, who, with skates and hockeys, were enjoying the invigorating sport of skating, on Long pond." The January 7, 1893 issue of the same newspaper referred to "many enjoyable skating parties" and "many hot games of hockey" being played on Dennis Pond in Yarmouth.



Skating on Scargo Lake, February 4, 1945

DHS Digital Archive



Ice boating on Scargo Lake, DHS Digital Archive

Scargo Lake was a popular spot for ice activities well into the 20th century. The January 6, 1934 newspaper mentioned that "perfect skating" was being enjoyed on the lake, and the February 24th issue from that same winter reported that more than 100 people, including some from neighboring towns, participated in skating and ice boating activities on Scargo the previous Sunday.

Occasionally, results of hockey games held at area ponds were reported within the pages of the local newspaper. According to the February 6, 1941 Harwich Independent newspaper, as appearing in its South Dennis village news column, "The Boy Scout Troop No. 75 of this village defeated Dennisport Troop No. 74 in an ice hockey game played last Wednesday 20-0." Apparently, back in the good old days, there wasn't a no slaughter rule.

Ice skating was not only popular at area ponds and lakes, but could also be quite dangerous. A February 4, 1955 Register article titled "Skating on Scargo" detailed various injuries suffered upon one Sunday on the lake, including a

broken collarbone during a hockey game, a black eye, a head injury requiring five stitches, another head injury with a cut near an eye, and a broken pair of eyeglasses.

A day earlier, the February 3, 1955 Central Cape Press published a front-page photo of activity on Long Pond in Harwich, indicating that during the previous weekend the frozen body of water was the scene of ice hockey, ice fishing, and ice boating. In total, some 150 people skated at the pond on that particular Sunday.

The newspaper also reported that a piper cub airplane made a landing on the ice surface. Talk about a “too many men on the ice” penalty!

Thank you Jack!

I'm Dreaming –

When one is far from home, even the simplest recollections can precipitate a flood of fond memories. This is particularly true in time of war! The following essay, 4096 in the DHS Digital Archive was written by Robert Crowell Taylor. (1911–1996). The essay was purportedly written in 1944, while Bob was serving during WWII. Details of where are unknown. My attention to the essay was drawn by board member Bo Durst. Bob was the brother of Bo's mother and Bo's favorite uncle. As editor, I have taken the liberty of deleting the last paragraph. You can read it by entering Essay 4096 in the search box in the Digital Archive and clicking on tab 4. In my opinion, it didn't fit with this nostalgic look back in time!

I picture myself walking up the beach road at East Dennis on a hot afternoon in July or August. I am clad in only a pair of trunks, sneakers and have just spent all afternoon fooling around on the beach. I have reached the turn in the road by the old Cold Storage (the wooden one which burnt down), and as I look back, I see the tide still running out through the little channel by the small jetty. There is little wind, and the Bay seems still with only a few ripples at the water's edge. Going a little farther, the wind seems to blow from the south from the direction of the South Dennis Hill, and as I look in that direction, I see small clouds accumulating in the distance. The air is still, and there is only the sound of a few birds who sit on the telephone wires or some animals in the bushes. (Can you picture it?) As I reach the foot of the hill, I hear the only too familiar sound of the bell in the church tower as it rings five o'clock. Ascending the hill now, I look back toward the Bay and see the water streaked with different shades of blue, and far out on the horizon stands the Provincetown Monument. Then, nearing the top of the hill, I see Sellick over to the right working on something behind his barn, and at that very moment, Rea comes out of the side door to empty the garbage or take in some clothing from the line.... Then, I reach the top of the hill, turn to the left going down the road past Mrs. Morrison's and under the shade of the trees. My body is hot and burnt from the rays of the sun, and I have a terrible empty feeling in my stomach, as if to designate that supper time was soon at hand. Upon reaching the back field, I turn and head for the house. Already, the wind is blowing stronger from the south, and the hissing sound of automobiles on the King's Highway reaches my ear. The field is alive with small buzzing (probably those of bees), and it isn't long before I reach the yard, pass under the arbor and out on the shady side of the house, where I hear the distinct sound of birds singing and chirping in the trees. (Can you picture it?) Then more familiar scenes – wet bathing suits on the lawn having been thrown out the window, a car in the driveway, and on the other side of the house, the folks sitting on the porch, Dear Mildred in the kitchen preparing supper, which I can't wait to eat, Grandma Crowell at her desk, or running around with a screw driver in her hand and Minnie digging in the garden.



DH Sears Store, DHS Digital Archive

Then a short walk to DH's for ice cream, filled cookies or lemon meringue pie. And the never to be forgotten slam of the screen door at the store. Why don't other screen doors sound the same? (Can you hear it?) Then, I start back from the store, and the sun is over and above Edmond's house. It's warm and quiet, and I say to myself, why can't this go on forever? Then there is the dampness in the air which comes at sundown and the smell of ocean, the marshes and the fields all blended together. The sound again of the cars speeding on the main road, and as I look to the south over the Punkhorn Hills, I see the fog gathering and gradually coming in. And then the mornings, when the birds are singing their heads off in the trees, the sun shining through the trees over and

beyond Uncle Thomas' house and the wet dew on the grass. Then the slam of the door in the reception room, it too had a slam of its own, until modern design crept in and put a baffle on it. The sound of someone opening the barn door,

and a car being rolled out to sun. Familiar voices in the yard and while in the yard on the sunny side, the sound of the flushing of the toilet in the upstairs bathroom (Can you hear it?) Then the beach, the sand, the jetty, the flats, the wood ticks, the barnacles, the clams, the mackerel, the sea itself, and the sun which burns the fair and tans the dark. Then too, there are the people of East Dennis who can never be forgotten. All the days are not fair, and there are those that are rainy, drizzly; there are northeast storms, only too familiar to us all, which blend into a place we call Cape Cod, a place we can't forget, a place I long to return to – may it never change. I don't know what it is, but although much of my time was spent at Orleans, I don't have the same feeling for Orleans as I have for East Dennis.



Journey's End, 32 Center Street, East Dennis, DHS Digital Archive

And now I look forward to the day when we can all go back together - Mother and Dad, Barb and Frank, the kids, and who knows, by that time, I may have a Sally or a Betty or ever an Agent and some small fry to join the throng at Journey's End with baked beans, frankforts, ice cream, lemon pie and Aunt Minnie eating some horrible concoction of her own or hinting that the last frankfort looks awfully good.

Thank you Robert Crowell Taylor and thank you Bo!

Ed. note – Bob was right about a Sally or a Betty. After returning to East Dennis, he married in 1946,

The Next Generation

It doesn't seem to matter whether it's a church, fraternal lodge, historical society or any organization in which growing and retaining membership determines its future, sometimes that future can look pretty grim! The summer of 2023 had a wonderful exception and with permission, I am pleased to share this one.

When I responded with a welcome email to a new Family Membership which came into our website, I received the following reply - *Thanks, Dave! My son Benjamin is very interested in colonial history and so enjoyed his visit back in time at Josiah Dennis Manse. I'm sure we'll be back plenty of times (probably today) and so we wanted to purchase a membership.* Accompanying the email were these pictures, converted to black and white for the newsletter.



Benjamin and his Father



In the Children's Room



Keeping Room with Docents Diane Rochelle & Terri Fox

And return they did, at least twice more before the season was over! On one of their visits late in the summer, father and son returned in uniform and treated the docents and guests who were lucky enough to be visiting the Manse that day to a demonstration of colonial style marching/drilling! It was memorable enough to prompt a letter from the Manse Committee's Corresponding Secretary saying in part – *The reenactment you and your father put on was a very special treat and memory for those of us who were at the Manse during your last visit. We hope to see you again in 2024.*

It's a start! Let's hope that Benjamin will stay as enthused about history as he is today. As I responded to another email - *It is terrific that Benjamin is so interested in colonial history! The next couple of years leading up to the celebration of our 250th anniversary should be amazing for him! Since he is so interested, I have attached a few more newsletters.*

🎉 Here's hoping that 2024 is a great one for all of us!! 🎉

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2023

DHS Annual Appeal

You should all have received your Society's 2023 Annual Appeal letter asking for support for wish list items for each of our three museums and the Pauline Wixon Derick Library

Please give generously! Your contribution will greatly assist all of our of volunteers in fulfilling our Mission Statement:

To Preserve, Protect & Promote the the History of Dennis, Massachusetts

If you have already given
Thank you!

Looking for a Special Present?

Have you visited the DHS online Bookstore?

Type www.dennishistoricalsociety.org in your browser and then click on Bookstore.

You will find a great selection of what might be the perfect gift for a birthday, graduation, or to tuck away for the next holiday season.

Highly recommended is *Dennis, Cape Cod*, the definitive volume of Dennis History!

