

AUTUMN 2008

The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society





From the Executive Director

Yes, it's a new title but the same old person. The change is due to a modification in the governance structure, a reference to which you will find in Spencer Grey's column - From the Chairman.

With our regular open season ended for 2008 and a busy two months ahead, there is much to be pleased about and more to do for this Society and Museum. We have made progress on many fronts, some planned and some not planned but necessary.

The Nickerson Camp, rescued from North Beach in 1991, has had some rotted boards replaced along the base, the sides re-shingled, and the wood trim scraped and repainted. The outhouse next door also has been scraped and repainted on the outside and cleaned out on the inside so that it may be opened for those who want to see it, such as the children who can hardly imagine using such a facility.

A small plot of land near the lower level entrance I called the "weed patch", left to its own devices after the renovation a few years ago, finally has been planted with hydrangeas and lavender bushes. Our two dogwoods planted by the Friends of Trees in memory of Ann Rogers suffered from early summer drought. One of those trees is scheduled to be replaced by the Friends of Trees this fall.

Our Special Exhibit, "American Antique Wicker", has garnered kudos from many who have seen the display of over one hundred pieces of furniture and accessories arranged in the main gallery as well as the side galleries and rooms in the Old House. The quality of this exhibit sets a high standard for those of the future. We are fortunate to have been loaned this collection owned by Kathleen and Thomas Tetro of Harwichport, Mass. and Corner House Antiques of Sheffield, Mass. Next year our Special Exhibit will be "Chatham's Attic."

Several welcome additions to our collections have come from donations and from purchase, especially for the costume, doll, and archive collections. This issue of the Log features a brief introduction to the excellent work being done on our old dolls and those newly acquired, but still "old". See also information about other acquisitions in these pages.

The care of our collections is receiving renewed attention with the completion of the renovation of the lower level storage room, and the organization of the attic storage areas. The new open rolling stacks upon which our paintings hang allow visual review of the condition of each work. As a result, oils are being cleaned and restored; watercolors and drawings are being re-matted and backed with acid free materials. In the archives department, important Town papers burned in a fire in 1919 are being photocopied for use and the fragile originals, no longer to be handled, will be stored in climate controlled conditions. Our Annual Appeal this year will focus on the need to continue this essential effort to conserve materials entrusted to our keeping.

Virtually all of the work of the Society is accomplished by a dedicated and talented corps of volunteers. Volunteerism has been the tradition here for over eighty years. Look how far we have come! Won't you consider joining this very special group? There is much more to be done, and we need you!

Come celebrate a good thing in our lives at the Annual Hearth Warming on Saturday, December 13th from 1:30 to 4:30 in the afternoon. Introduce a guest to our wonderful Museum. Enjoy old friends and new, hot cider, yummy sweets, and a fire in three hearths (carefully monitored). If you miss this traditional Open House, another opportunity to warm yourself by the hearth comes on December 31st from 1 to 4 pm.

Best wishes to you and yours for a Happy Holiday season
and a more prosperous year in 2009.

- Cynthia B. McCue

Mission Statement

The mission of the Chatham Historical Society is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, decorative arts, artifacts, archives, and places of historical interest relating to the history of Chatham and vicinity; and in so doing provide a record of the cultures and the people of our past and thereby inform and educate succeeding generations.

Cover Photo: Dolls in the collection with Lanie Fritsch and Amalia Marjolle, granddaughters of Society volunteers Mary Ann Fritsch and Janet Marjolle



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Eclectic Additions to an Eclectic Collection

One never knows what donations will arrive on the doorstep of the Society. These past few weeks have seen a variety of items such as the welcome sign from Camp Avalon, ladies fashions dating from the Civil War era to the 1920s, and a large transfer ware soup tureen.

Camp Avalon was located on Nickerson Neck overlooking Crow's Pond. Founded as a sailing camp for girls by Ruth P. Gilmore in 1929, the camp operated for almost sixty years. Susan Mueller, now of South Carolina, fondly remembers her summers at the camp and shipped the sign back to Chatham.

The two piece gray silk gown, dating to the Civil War era, was brought in by Anne Shattuck Bigelow in September along with two elegant lace gowns from 1900 – 1920, slips, shoes, gloves, a christening dress, and other clothing found in a Chatham home formerly owned by ancestors of the Bigelow, Shattuck, and Yeaw families.

The brown and white shell patterned soup tureen was made in England on June 22, 1872 by L.F.B. & Sons. This example of transfer ware, in excellent condition, once belonged to Mrs. Harold L. Clark of "The Sliding Door" antique shop in South Harwich and was given to Eleanor and David Oakley who gave it to the Museum. A display of our transfer ware collection may be seen in the Lincoln Room.

All the way from Texas came a package of spools of thread sent by Mary E. Davis who had noted our sewing machine, displayed in the hallway between the Old House and the Durand Room, was made by the same company that produced the thread, Wilcox & Gibbs Sewing Machine Co. of New York.

A lovely floral watercolor, painted by artist Constance Alley French, was donated to the Museum by Holly Cabot of Chatham. The painting belonged to Holly's mother who purchased it from her artist friend. In our archives there are several unframed watercolors of scenes around Chatham painted by Ms. French who now lives in Vermont.

These are some of the welcome surprise gifts we experienced this summer. For other recent acquisitions, see also the doll and the dancing man articles.



Transfer ware soup tureen



Civil War era dress with lace scarf



Camp Avalon sign



Sewing machine and thread



Coral resembling a specimen on display in the Durand Room

Also found this summer was a large specimen of coral that had washed up on the Pleasant Bay beach near Chatham resident Lee Fuller's home. Not a native of this cold Atlantic water, how did this coral end up on this shore? Perhaps a relic from a North Beach camp that succumbed to the sea? Does anyone have a clue?



Camp Avalon winter office sign

Bowls and More: Shop Talk

We recently introduced an Atwood House bowl into the shop! The original earthenware (a synonym for pottery) bowl was created by Wm. Young & Sons, Trenton, N.J. This firm made Rockingham and common yellow ware, white ware and cream colored earthenware. William Young noted that his firm was the first to produce the cream colored earthenware. This useful and attractive bowl, dated 1850 - 1856, would have been kept in the original Atwood family pantry. Susan Dimm Williams' Barn Hill Pottery has beautifully reproduced pieces to be sold in our gift shop. The bowls, labeled to reflect their history, are both dishwasher and microwave safe, perfect for home use and gift giving.



Reproduction bowl based on Atwood House artifact

With the holiday season soon to be upon us, remember that your museum shop has many gift and book ideas. "Chatham Sea Captains" by Joseph & Geraldine Nickerson, "Chatham at its Best", photographs by Jennifer Eldredge Stello, along with many other wonderful books, are still available. Children's books, games and toys make wonderful gifts. Ties, shawls, compasses, key chains, paperweights, purses, placemats, tiles and fun jewelry are a few of the other great gift ideas! Hand embroidered felt holiday ornaments are newly available. All profits from the shop sales go directly to support the operations of this museum!

Do you have any used Joseph C. Lincoln books to donate to the shop? Our stock is getting depleted. If you have any copies to donate, please drop them off at the museum or call the museum at 508-945-2493.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday,

Barbara Newberry

Do You Recognize This Wedding Gown?



Recently rediscovered wedding gown

Circa early 1900s, this is a beautiful silk gown with a high neckline and lace inserts over a full lace bodice. Many rows of hand corded ruching define the lower bodice and extend down the dress to create a softly gathered skirt. The upper arms have puffed sleeves with a triple fall ending in a fitted forearm. A lace fan accompanies this gown. If any one has information regarding this gown, please notify the Chatham Historical Society.

Correction: The bookmark produced in connection with the Chatham Lighthouse 200th Anniversary stated that Angeline Nickerson was the first woman lighthouse keeper in Massachusetts. There were female lighthouse keepers in earlier times in other Massachusetts towns.

Lighthouse Stories

As the summer season waned and the nip in the air commenced, lighthouse lovers and history buffs gathered at the Chatham Community Center on Sunday, October 5th to recognize the long life and continuous service of Chatham Light. Writer and photographer Jeremy D'Entremont shared his extensive knowledge about lighthouses acquired throughout twenty years of travel and investigation. Whereas many of the more than 150 lighthouses on Cape Cod and around New England have shut down, been sold to private owners, or been lost to the ravages of time and the sea, Chatham Light continues to send out its beacon to guide sailors through the dangerous waters around the elbow of the Cape. This final celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of Chatham Light, first inaugurated on October 7, 1808 by the signature of Thomas Jefferson, closed with a birthday cake depicting a facsimile of the 1877 lantern room now resting on the grounds of the Chatham Historical Society. The excellent and astounding eleven foot model of Chatham Light, made by Chatham resident Richard Clifford for the First Night committee's float in the 2008 Fourth of July parade, was transported in a pickup truck to the Community Center and erected in the lobby for the occasion.



Speaker Jeremy D'Entremont and Executive Director Cynthia McCue in front of the Chatham Light model at the Anniversary celebration

Dolls in the Museum Collection

Recent Additions and Old Favorites

The museum is most fortunate to have volunteer Donna Jordan on our Costumes and Textiles committee. Donna is very knowledgeable about dolls, their identification, valuation, repair, and costuming. She comes from a family who enjoyed doing crafts. For years her mother ran a table for a church fair offering "Ginny" dolls dressed in international costumes by members of the church. Her father, who enjoyed woodworking, made doll houses and doll furniture for Donna and other family members.

When Donna inherited a couple of dolls, she became more interested in pursuing a doll collection. Attending auctions she found the bidding too high but flea markets sometimes had affordable prices. These dolls usually had some defect so Donna set to work learning on the job, finding ways to make repairs and restore the dolls to their best possible condition.



A Staffordshire doll named "Emeline", from the 1850s

A member of the Doll Artisan's Guild, whose special interest is porcelain dolls, Donna has been coming to the Cape for vacations for forty years. The Jordans made Chatham their permanent home full time seven years ago.

Of the work being done on the Atwood House Museum's doll collection, Donna writes: "Recently we have been looking at our doll collection, many of which are just now being catalogued. Of course we have been admiring them as we unwrap each one. We have found a hand-made cloth doll with a letter written many years ago to the child who was to receive it. There are Early American papier-maché headed dolls made in the 1850s under the first U.S. patent for a doll head. There are dolls with wax over composition heads and an American metal head doll. We have German-made porcelain headed dolls, one of which is named "Ruth". There are a few intriguing mystery dolls whose history has yet to be solved.

The condition of our dolls varies from good to well-used and even some damage. There is horse hair and sawdust peeking out of openings in seams of cloth and leather bodies that were packed over 150 years ago. We see clever repairs made to stop a child's tears years ago.

This week we received a "new" old doll found in a Chatham attic. She belonged to two sisters nearly one hundred years ago and was found by the granddaughter of one of the owners. We are the lucky recipients of those treasured playthings too loved (or too important) to be discarded. There are still dolls waiting in a sea captain's chest at the Atwood House for us to come for them. We look forward to even more exciting finds to come!"

The collecting of dolls is reported to be the second largest collecting activity in the United States, exceeded only by the collecting of stamps. You will have the opportunity to see some of these wonderful dolls in our Special Exhibit next summer, titled "Chatham's Attic".



Volunteer Donna Jordan refurbishing a doll from the collection

The Dancing Sailor who "Can Do"

This wooden dancing sailor was made by Arthur E. Edwards, owner of the Shavings Shop once located on Old Harbor Road, especially for a Chatham or Cape Cod carpenter in 1937. Complete with its hammer that when stroked causes the figure to dance, the toy will join other dancing men made by Edwards (but missing the hammer section) in the Lincoln gallery. Named "Can Do", it was purchased at a recent auction. We would like to learn more about this new acquisition, and are hoping the family of the carpenter will share the story. Please?



*Dancing Men made by Arthur E. Edwards
above - complete figure and mechanism,
below - figures missing mechanism to make them dance*



Chatham Garden Club Eleventh Annual Festival of Trees

**Trees Preview & Holiday Browsing
Nov. 28, 29, and Dec. 5 – 2 to 4 p.m.**

Silent Auction & Gala Party Dec. 6 – 5 to 8 p.m.

For the fourth year, the Atwood House Museum will be the site of the Chatham Garden Club's *Annual Festival of Trees*, which will be celebrating its eleventh year. Opening the day after Thanksgiving, this traditional, local fund-raiser will feature a Silent Auction of brightly lit, ornamentally themed tabletop trees, as well as the sale of decorated seasonal wreaths and smaller trees, all designed by Garden Club members.

The 4-day *Festival* will begin with three afternoon dates - Nov. 28, 29, and Dec. 5 - when the Atwood House will be open from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Visitors can preview the auction items, purchase holiday decorations, and browse the Museum and its Gift Shop. Complimentary cider and cookies will be served.

A Gala Party and Silent Auction Finale will conclude the *Festival of Trees* on Saturday evening, Dec. 6, from 5:00 to 8:00 pm. Complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. William Litchfield, Chatham town moderator, again will emcee the auction's 7 p.m. closing and announce the winning tree bids.

A single-afternoon ticket costs \$5 (children under 12, with an adult - free). The Party ticket is \$15 but also includes admission to all the afternoon dates. Tickets may be purchased at the door or by contacting Margaret Martin, Chatham Historical Society, 508-945-2493. For more information, call Mary Ann Gray, co-chairwoman, 508-945-7015. Proceeds will benefit the Chatham Garden Club's town beautification and scholarship programs as well as the Chatham Historical Society's many preservation and education programs.



Alice Duthie adds final decorations to her Window Box Tree



A unique and beautiful indoor Christmas wreath with miniatures, made by Judy Doe

Antique Show Follow up

On a perfectly dreary weekend September 13 and 14, the Tenth Annual Antique Show and Sale produced the best results yet for the Society, thanks to the wonderful support of the sponsors, the thirty-five dealers filling the allotted space at the Chatham Elementary School, the steady flow of visitors, the newly added feature of a silent auction in addition to the museum table of donated and de-accessioned items, and the weather. Chaired by Reed Hertford, the committee did a great job planning and executing all the tasks essential for a successful event. The dealers were pleased by all the thought and care given to their comfort over the two day show.

The Antique Show is our most important annual fund-raising effort aside from membership dues. With ever increasing operating costs, due to our expanded size, scope of activities, and rising costs of basic services, the Society needs to increase its income in order to sustain and improve efforts to meet the goals of our mission to preserve, exhibit, interpret and educate for the benefit of current and future generations. (The complete Mission Statement is printed on page two.)

There are many ways to help the Society meet its financial needs. Some are listed below for your consideration.

Membership: The Chatham Historical Society, while a private non-profit organization, exists for the benefit of all Chatham residents and others with connections or interests in Chatham. Please tell your friends who are not members about the fine work the Society is doing and encourage them to join. Benefits include free admission to the Museum and its exhibits,

four yearly issues of our newsletter "The Atwood Log", a ten percent discount in the Museum Shop, and opportunities for volunteering. Perhaps you would consider raising the level of your membership.

Annual Appeal: The specific focus of the Annual Appeal may change from year to year with the general purpose of funding an activity or project not covered in the annual budget. Last year the goal was to renovate our inefficient and inadequate storage room. That goal has been accomplished. The Annual Appeal this year is to continue a recently begun effort to restore and conserve our paintings and other artifacts, and to add to our acquisition fund. Shortly, if you have not already, you will receive more information about supporting the Annual Appeal.

Brick program: Bricks for placement in the brick walk near the museum entrance, with lettering of your choice, may be custom ordered at \$100.00 each, \$150.00 for location in the herb garden area. These bricks make a meaningful special gift of memorial or thanksgiving remembrance, or an excellent holiday gift for someone who does not need any more possessions.

We appreciate your generous support and thoughtful consideration of the Society and its museum in the past. As we move forward in these uncertain times, we hope you will continue to consider the needs of the Society and contribute in whichever ways are possible. As a private non-profit organization, all gifts to the Society are deductible as provided in Federal law and the laws of some states. Thank you.



From the Chairman

At its July meeting the Executive Board voted to accept the recommendation of the Governance and Nominating Committee and make funds available to hire a part-time Executive Director of the Society. It was immediately clear to the Board that the most obvious and best qualified candidate for the position was the current President, Cynthia McCue. After reviewing the job description for the position, Cynthia agreed to accept the appointment, even though it adds somewhat to the responsibilities and duties that she had been performing as the volunteer President. The Executive Director now has assumed some of the powers formerly held by the Chairman, but those should not add significantly to the time required of her. In particular, the Executive Director becomes the Chief Executive Officer, leaving the Chairman to focus primarily on overseeing the operations of the Executive Board. In the short time that she has held this new position, Cynthia clearly has shown that the confidence of the Board in appointing her was not misplaced. When the financial position of the Society makes it feasible, we expect to hire a full time Executive Director, as the operations of the Society and its Atwood House Museum continue to expand. In the meantime, with a strong leader and a dedicated group of volunteers, the museum continues to flourish and the activities offered to members and others are more numerous and varied than ever before.

As has been reported previously in the *Log*, in the fall of 2007 we engaged preservation consultants to assess the condition of the Old Atwood House and to recommend whatever

repairs are necessary to maintain the core of our museum. After a thorough examination of the house from foundation to rooftop, they presented us with an extensive list of work that should be accomplished over the next five years and that most likely will cost around \$300,000. Such a high estimate of likely costs results from the fact that preservation of one of the very few buildings on the Cape that is virtually unchanged since its construction in the mid-eighteenth century requires the careful attention of experts who can achieve the goals while preserving as much as possible of the original fabric.

Of immediate concern is the roof, as it has become so weakened over the years that it might not be able to support the weight of a very heavy snowfall. Because the cost of doing all of the necessary work to strengthen and re-shingle the entire roof would be close to \$100,000, we are in the process of seeking grants to cover part of the expense, but the rest will have to be raised through our own fundraising efforts. In the meantime, we are taking the precaution of having the preservationists accomplish temporary strengthening that they believe will make the roof safe for a year or two. That work is scheduled for early November.

In assessing the needs of the house, it was discovered that over the years it has settled to the point where some of the supporting beams are sitting on the ground, making it necessary to excavate under them and to replace those that are not sound. Work also is needed on many of the windows and on much of the masonry, including the fireplaces and the central chimney.

What is most important in all this, however, is that we are making every effort to be sure the house that Joseph Atwood built in 1752, the gem of our collection, will receive the care it deserves.

Wish List

Personnel

A person who is knowledgeable about bottles to review the bottles in the museum collection.

A person who is knowledgeable about toy trucks to review recent donations to the museum.

Objects

Computer to replace an older model.

One or more sponsors for "The Atwood Log".

Extension of brick walk from the "new" kitchen to the Nick Camp.

New light weight tables to replace existing tables that are heavy and difficult to move around.

Children's step for use in the Durrant Room.

A portable vacuum with a long arm to reach ceilings and rafters.

Lectures Series: November and January

The lecture committee has been scheduling programs for the fall and winter 2008 - 2009 season, looking for topics to appeal to a wide range of interests. Lectures are Sundays at the Atwood House Museum at 2:00 pm. Donations are welcome.

On the 9th of November, Dan Haff, antique dealer and clock specialist, will present a talk entitled *The American Clock Industry - 1800 to World War I*. Mr. Haff will entertain us with stories about the "visionaries, craftsmen, industrial leaders, and scoundrels of America's horological past," and show examples of clocks from these time periods, including ones belonging to the Society.

In the new year, on January 11th, Bill Sargent will look at how global warming, sea level rise, and hurricanes are likely to impact Chatham and Cape Cod in a lecture entitled *Sea Level Rise: The Chatham Story*.

Lectures scheduled in February, March, April, and May will be announced at a later date.



Mantle clock used in the Atwood House during the occupancy of Margery Atwood

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PO Box 381
Chatham, MA 02633

On the Web: www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org

Mark Your Calendars

Coming up at The Chatham Historical Society & Atwood House Museum

Afternoons at the Atwood Lecture Series

All lectures take place at 2 pm at The Atwood House Museum, 347 Stage Harbor Road. Donations appreciated.

Sunday, November 9, 2008 Dan Haff: "The American Clock Industry: 1800 to World War I"

Sunday, January 11, 2009 Bill Sargent: "Sea Level Rise: The Chatham Story"

Sunday, February 8, 2009 Lecture to be announced

OTHER EVENTS

Friday and Saturday, November 28 and 29, Friday, December 5

Festival of Trees: Trees Preview & Holiday Browsing,

In partnership with the Chatham Garden Club, 2 to 4 pm

Saturday, December 6

Festival of Trees: Reception and Silent Auction, 5 to 8 pm

Saturday, December 13,

Annual Hearth Warming: 1:30 to 4:30 pm, *Admission free*

Saturday, December 20

Open House 1 to 4 pm *Admission free*

Wednesday, December 31, First Night

Open House 1 to 4 pm *Admission free*

The Museum Shop is open whenever the museum is open

