

The Atwood Log

SPRING 2015



The Quarterly Newsletter of
The Chatham Historical Society



From the Interim Director

Greetings to all. I hope you are thriving in the late spring sunshine and warmth. After the past winter we surely deserve good weather. Despite water leaks under doors, rough and inadequate parking, piles of snow on the roofs, etc., the Atwood House has survived in good shape and is preparing for visitors.

New exhibits include the China trade in the sailing ship era, a maritime collection sparked by the Pendleton episode in Chatham waters, two original charts from our digitized map collection, and many of our sea captain portraits painted by Frederick Wight, son of Alice Stallknecht whose work is hung in the mural barn. In the Old House you will find a collection of bonnets and accessories from the nineteenth century. Do come and enjoy these new exhibits and bring your relatives and friends.

This summer a new program for elementary age children will be offered on four Mondays, July 20th and 27th, and August 3rd and 10th on the museum grounds. Sharks and (separately!) cooking will be featured in artwork, games, experiments, etc. For further information and costs please call the museum at 508-945-2493. This program is being planned by Alison Karr.

The fact that I am still serving as Interim Executive Director indicates that the search for a new Executive Director is still ongoing. Perhaps by the time you read this issue of the Log a new person will be on board. I know you all will welcome him or her into the Chatham Historical Society with warmth and sincerity.

Cynthia McCue
Interim Executive Director



Common Blue Violet

Marcia Norman prints and note-cards available in the museum

In addition to the Marcia Norman prints and note cards new in the shop for the 2015 season, there are numerous other items for adults and children. Look over the new additions to the book selections, too. You are sure to find something for yourself or as a gift for family or a friend.

Chatham Historical Society

Executive Board

Chairman
Stephen J. Burlingame
Vice Chairman
Stephen S. Daniel
Secretary
Stephanie Bartlett
Treasurer
Linda Cebula

Trustees

Richard Batchelder, Jr.
Judi Clifford
Richard H. Evans
Cynthia B. McCue
RoseMarie McLoughlin
Virginia T. Nickerson
Norman Sacun
Alan T. Sachtleben
Angie Simonds
Craig Vokey
Nancy B. Yeaw
Andrew Young

Operating Board

Interim Director
Cynthia McCue
Archives Chairman
Mary Ann Gray
Buildings & Grounds Chairman
Wayne Jostrand
Costumes & Textiles Chairman
Janet Marjollet
Display Coordinator
Mary Ann Fritsch
Docent Volunteer Coordinator
Carol Kolb
Hospitality Chairman

Museum Shop Manager
Barbara Newberry
Publications & Shop Books
Dot Gross
Technology and Information
Ron Clark

Board of Overseers

Sally Ackerman
Tamara Bazzle
Bernard Cornwell
Carolyn Yeaw Coursen
Robert C. Eldred
Spencer Y. Grey
William G. Litchfield
Walter J. Meier
Joshua A. Nickerson, Jr.
David R. Oakley
Winifred Portenoy
Phyllis Nickerson Power
Christopher Rhinesmith
Christopher Seufert
Mark Simonitsch
Linda Wiseman

Administrator/Newsletter Editor
Margaret L. Martin

At the Atwood: Summer 2015 Exhibits

On a calm summer's day at high tide, face the Atlantic from the vantage point of Chatham's often-photographed Coast Guard Station. This idyllic view reveals no hint of the treacherous Chatham bars and their power to change lives and history. From the turning back of the *Mayflower* from its original destination of the mouth of the Hudson River to providing the setting for the most daring sea rescue in the history of the U.S. Coast Guard, the waters around Chatham have demanded split-second decisions and courageous actions. The Chatham Historical Society celebrates these in its new exhibits at the Atwood this summer.

A special exhibit commemorates the heroic rescue of the crew of the *Pendleton* by the four men from the Chatham Lifeboat Station whose efforts have been chronicled in *The Finest Hours* by Michael J. Tougias and Casey Sherman and in the Disney film of the same name to be released in January of 2016. Our exhibit has been made possible by the contributions of Chief Robert Goley, Officer in Charge at the Chatham Coast Guard Station, and Don St. Pierre, who has intimate knowledge of the restored 36-foot lifeboat "36383" which he helps to maintain in Orleans' Rock Harbor. On Sunday, August 16, 2015, CHS will sponsor a lecture by author Mike Tougias titled "The Finest Hours: the Book, the Movie, and Leadership/Decision Making during the Rescue."

Long-time CHS members will be happy to learn that Frederick Stallknecht Wight's eight sea captains have returned to hang now on the walls of the Main/Lecture Gallery. As the artist painted the stories of each of these captains, many of whose careers began in



Model of CG36500 motor lifeboat used in the *Pendleton* rescue, on loan from the Chatham Coast Guard Station

the mid-nineteenth century, were recorded by the artist's mother, Alice Stallknecht Wight. Alice was taking time out from painting the murals that now hang in our own Mural Barn. These stories, which are collected in the CHS publication *A Home on the Rolling Deep*, would provide some interesting summer reading. In her introduction to this book, Marcia Monbleau writes: "In the early 1930's, Frederick Wight, an artist who had grown up in Chatham, set out to fulfill a longstanding ambition. 'I painted people,' he said some years later, 'and I had a hankering to paint sea captains—had a great admiration for them. In my recollection, sea captains were either large and husky or small and Napoleonic. The little ones had mutinies, but they always won or they wouldn't have been around to be painted at a later date. If you think about it, it's an experience no one has on the planet anymore—being completely on his own in charge of men on a ship.'"

Many Chatham sea captains, including some of those painted by Wight, engaged in the profitable China Trade. Early in the history of the Chatham Historical Society, Josephine Atkins donated the items amassed from this trade and known as the "Atkins-Kent" collection. When Josephine's mother died in 1888, her sea captain father asked Almena Kent and her sea captain husband James Kent to become her guardians. Their stories and others are recounted in another CHS publication: *Chatham Sea Captains in the Age of Sail* by Joseph A. Nickerson and Geraldine D. Nickerson.

The collection will be displayed this summer in the Spencer Y. Grey Gallery next to the Joseph Lincoln Gallery. Included in the collection are an extensive display of Rose Medallion china, paintings of the Kent family, and a unique painting of a house known as the "Atkins-Kent" home that still sits on Old Harbor Road. Captain Kent took a pencil drawing of the house to Chinese artists who usually painted only portraits. This painting is one of only two or three known Chinese paintings of homes. Some of the clothing donated by Josephine Atkins-Kent will be on view in our Old House. Rounding out the display in the China trade collection is the painting of the *Wild Rover*. The story of Joseph Hardy Neesima, the stowaway who yearned to study Christianity and later returned to Japan to found Doshisha University, has been a perennial favorite for museum visitors.



Examples from the Rose Medallion collection on display in the Spencer Y. Grey Maritime Gallery

Visit the Atwood House Museum this summer. Experience

the stories of daring men (and some wives) who faced the dangers of the sea. In the introduction to *Chatham Sea Captains in the Age of Sail*, Spencer Y. Grey writes, "We become acquainted with not only the grueling labors and hardships faced by those who ply the seas, but also with the ingenuity and courage required of them. Moreover we come to understand the involvement of their families, whether waiting patiently—yet often fearfully—at home, or bracing the seas to be at the side of their men."

Mary Ann Fritsch and Carol Kolb

Cover Photo:

Selection of hats and bonnets from the Atkins-Kent Memorial Collection in the Textile Department. Other accessories also from the textile collection of the Chatham Historical Society. These items will be on display for the 2015 season in the music room of the Old House.

CAPTAIN TAYLOR'S JOURNAL

It was my first day at work. I rang the doorbell and a nice lady greeted me, introduced herself, and led me down into the archives. I wondered why one is never led up into the archives. In a short time and my orientation complete, I was officially an Atwood volunteer.

Early on I was given a small to medium size book about an inch thick, and asked to find out: who wrote it; why was it written; and what did it say. I find old books fascinating, even more so, if there's some historical puzzle to unravel, and this one seemed to be just that. The hard cover displayed a unique artful, repeating, twirled design on front and back. It appeared to be in fairly good condition; yet, I opened it carefully to assure myself it could sustain normal handling. I expected to see print, but surprisingly, there was none, rather it was an ink-pen manuscript all in superbly written cursive, one could even describe as calligraphy, with neither title nor page numbers.

The first recorded date 25 March, 1862 caught my eye. I conducted a brief page scan of the contents and determined it was a type of diary composed by one Simeon N. Taylor, written in preparation of, and while embarked on the STEAMSHIP MISSISSIPPI. It became important to note that this document was not the Ship's Log but the Captain's personal journal recording his sailing orders from the ships owners, his financial responsibilities, and events necessary to record for his superiors over time. Having just praised the Captain's penmanship, I soon found it difficult to read. The reasons were many: his use of flourishing capital letters closely resembling one another; some vowels not clear as the ink would fill in the voids; and use of time period words and sentence structure unfamiliar to me but common 150 years ago, among other reasons. Over time, words, style recognition and translation became easier as each entry told his story.

First, a bit of this man's history:

Born in 1826, Simeon N. Taylor was one of John Taylor Jr's four sons, who comprised a veritable royal dynasty of Chatham sea captains. He was bright, resourceful amusing, outspoken, clearheaded, loving, and knew his craft to a marked degree in a business full of superlatively qualified peers. His first years at sea were not auspicious. Simeon learned the coasting business on the barks ELLA and RADIANT before he got his master's ticket at an early age. In 1855, he was in command of the bark LACONIA, trying in vain to make money carrying coal and pig iron from Philadelphia to Boston.

His first big break came when Howes & Co. gave him command of the ELLA that was in the Mediterranean fruit trade. Two more years passed during which time he commanded the brig GRANADA also in the fruit trade. In 1858, still master of

the Granada, he sailed to Bangkok-- his first voyage to South-east Asia leaving New York in June with 5 passengers and a cargo of heavy machinery.¹

It was here in S.E. Asia that he now sailed regular packet runs between Shanghai and Nagasaki, for well over a year. Early in 1862 the firm Olyphant & Co. of N.Y. chartered the Granada and its master for challenging yet successful river runs. Subsequent business with Olyphant brought the Captain back to N.Y. to superintend building of a new steamship. Later during the construction schedule the Company asked Capt. Taylor to go to Montevideo, Uruguay, in the spring of 1862. There, he was to take command of another steamer, the MISSISSIPPI, and proceed to Shanghai, China and then return to put the finishing touches to the new vessel in New York.

At this point Capt. Taylor begins his journal entries to document his orders, activities and accounting responsibilities. This journal is catalogued and held in the Atwood Archives and referenced in the writing of this article. The following narratives and events are

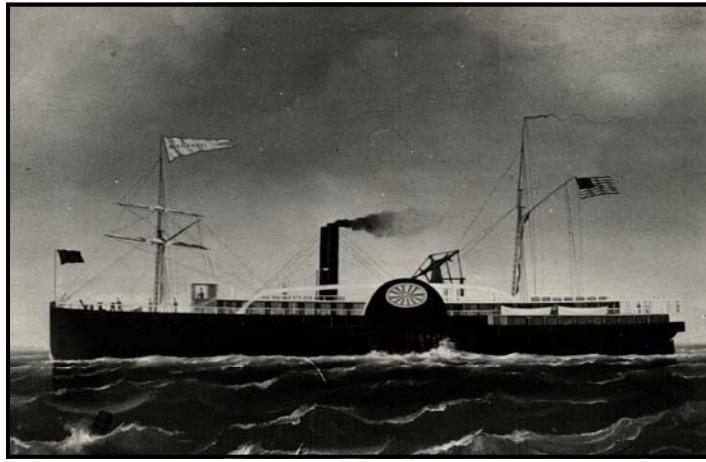
taken from this personal journal and paraphrased for brevity:

On March 25, 1862, Oliphant & Co. states: You are to take command of the MISSISSIPPI, and transit to China. You have authorization and use of 5,000 lbs sterling to be used in transit to China. After transfer of command, inventory all supplies and proceed to Mauritius without stopping at the Cape of Good Hope and proceed to Hong Kong.....I have now only to wish you a pleasant passage.

After 63 days passage from N.Y., Capt. Taylor, with his pregnant wife "Hitty" and 13 year old daughter Emma who will accompany him to China, arrive Montevideo mid June. Following lengthy and additional outfitting, inspection and inventory, the Capt. makes a rather prophetic statement in his journal:

MISSISSIPPI is a well constructed boat and for a few trifling exceptions in perfect order, and in ordinary weather might safely be taken to China. In his final entry, on August 11, 1862, the Master says: After settling all accounts, I shall go to sea early in the morning.

Abruptly, this ends the Captain's journal entries for the



The MISSISSIPPI, courtesy of the Mariner's Museum, Newport News, VA



Simeon and Hitty Taylor

1. Ward, Geoffrey C. THE CIVIL WAR: an illustrated history. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. N.Y. 1990

MISSISSIPPI. His next recorded event is nearly two years later on May 27, 1864, on the next page following his last MISSISSIPPI entry! Why this long hiatus?

Further research for this article revealed that the NEW YORK TIMES reported on Oct. 22, 1862 " Marine Disaster; LOSS OF THE STEAMSHIP MISSISSIPPI OFFICERS AND CREW SAVED..... 18 days from Montevideo for China..... in a fierce August storm all had to abandon ship. Passengers and crew were transferred to the British brig MINSTREL and the Swedish bark PRINS OSCAR."

Sailor's lore declares it is an unlucky thing to change the name of a ship. When the Steam Ship was acquired by Olyphant & Co. of N.Y., this Canadian ship CANADA, was renamed the MISSISSIPPI. After the sinking and rescue, Captain Taylor and family finally made it back to N.Y., November 1862.

Meanwhile, the new steamer, construction now complete in the port of N.Y., was launched in Sept. 1863 and christened KIN KIANG. It would soon set an easterly course for China, with Simeon Taylor in command. While many business plans for seaborne commerce and trade were in progress, the on going tragedy of the Civil War continued to unfold and the negative effects became very real to commercial vessels sailing the Atlantic.

Underway to Hong Kong, Capt. Taylor, having been tipped off, was keeping a sharp lookout for the infamous Confederate raider (pirate ship) ALABAMA. After stopping for coal at port Loando, west coast of Africa, and while entering Port Cape Town on March 25th 1864, the Capt. again records in his journal the following:

It is well we came in under a good head of steam or I might've had to send unpleasant news from this port Cape Town. As we came within sight of shipping I noticed a steamer that was getting up steam and before we reached our anchorage he came along side and proved to be the pirate ship ALABAMA. We were within 3 NM of the coast; he did not deem it advisable to molest us. We will get coal as soon as possible and go to sea and keep a sharp eye look out for him as I should not be surprised if he is lurking somewhere in the vicinity. If we do meet him he will have to sail faster than the KIN KIANG if he expects to capture her.

As history shows:

Farther out to sea, the war was going badly for the South, as well. The ALABAMA, commanded by Raphael Semmes, was the most successful of all the Confederate commerce raiders. In

three years, and 75,000 miles of steady prowling from Singapore to South America, she had seized and sunk sixty-five Union merchant vessels. In June, the U.S.S. Kearsage caught up with her in the English Channel seven miles off Cherbourg, France, and opened fire. After a furiously long battle, the Confederate ship was sunk at last.²

The KIN KIANG now departs Cape Town on the 31st of March enroute to Port Louis, Mauritius, arriving April 13th. It is here that the Capt. loads the ship quite heavy with coal as to reach Singapore without any intermediate ports. On April 30th 1864 he makes his last journal entry:

I am happy to announce safe arrival here (Singapore) after passage of 15½ days from Mauritius. We loaded coal last night and now have enough to reach all the way to Hong Kong. We have used all the economy possible in our purchases, which we have made as favorable as could be, and I trust all we have done will meet with your approbation.

It is now half past 12 o'clock and the mail pilot is about ready to leave so I must close.

*Resp. Your Obedient Servant,
S.N. Taylor*

The Capt. continued to run the Kin Kiang as a river packet between Shanghai and Hankow until the fall of 1865 when Olyphant & Co. sold the Kin Kiang to Russell & Co.

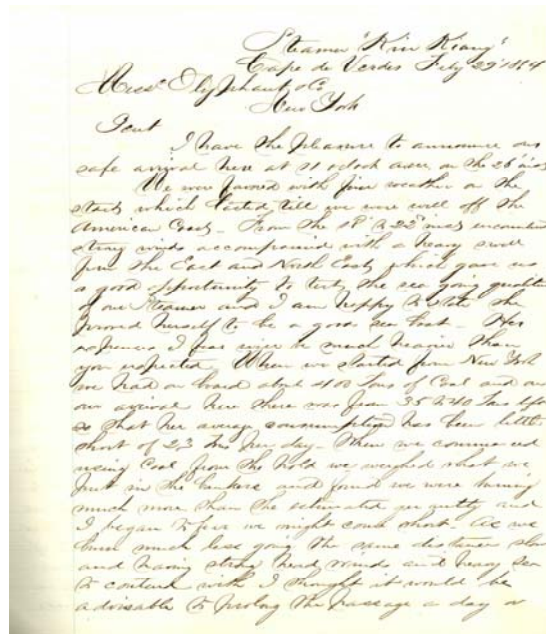
In April 1866, at the age of 40, Captain Taylor resigned his command of the Kin Kiang and took passage for home. Thus ended the sea exploits of Simeon N. Taylor. He was to enter the retail business as successful shopkeeper selling furniture in Roxbury, Ma. and would soon move his family from Chatham to a new home in Brookline.

Later it is told that he expanded a retail business selling salted cod to the Midwest. However nothing more is told of his life for the next two decades.

After 50 years of marriage to his dear Hitty, Captain Taylor died Nov.8, 1898, of heart disease, and is buried in People's Cemetery, Chatham, MA.

CDR Don Broderick, USN (Ret.)

A page from Simeon Taylor's journal, followed by a condensed transliteration of this entry



Steamer "Kin Kiang"
Cape de Verdes

Feb.29,1864
To: Mssrs. Olyphant N.Y.

We were favored with fine weather which lasted until we were well off the American coast. We then encountered strong winds and heavy swells. After a while I began to fear we were we were using much more coal than usual and feared we might come short having strong head winds and heavy seas. I thought it advisable to prolong the passage a day or two (slow up) rather than run risk of running out of coal before reaching port. We carry the average of 15lbs of steam at 9 kts.

We had good dispatch here and commenced coal on Saturday morning. We will sail tomorrow morning after settling accounts.

2. Nickerson, Joseph A., Jr. Chatham sea captains in the age of sail The History Press Charleston, SC 2008

SUMMER WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN, 2015

The Atwood House Museum will offer 4 workshops for children ages 6-12 this summer. Each workshop will combine local maritime and natural history with hands - on activities and fun!

WORKSHOP SERIES 1: CHATHAM SEA CAPTAINS Mondays, July 20 and 27

We will look at Chatham men who plied the seven seas. What kinds of skills did they need? What kinds of adventures did they have? What were the wooden sailing ships like? We will look at museum artifacts, hear some stories from local sea captains, and even do some cooking.

The July 20 program will focus on seamen's skills like how to tie important knots, or use music to keep workers together.

The July 27 program will focus on the China trade—why sea captains would risk sailing to the opposite end of the earth.



WORKSHOP SERIES 2: SHARKS!

Mondays, August 3 and 10

Learn more about Chatham's favorite apex predator! There are dozens of kinds of sharks — which ones can be found here around Cape Cod? How is shark anatomy different from that of other sea animals (or *you*)? We will examine shark behavior, and develop a set of good safety practices for swimmers and surfers.

The August 3 program will focus on shark anatomy — what makes a shark a shark. We will examine a real (little) shark up close.

The August 10 program will focus on different types of sharks, and their behavior. Do we need to be afraid of all sharks? Also, what poses risks to sharks here and worldwide?

Workshops will run from 9 AM to 12 PM each day. Children need basic learning skills: listening, following directions, and working in cooperative groups. Many activities will be age-adjusted. Snacks will be provided; if children have food allergies they must bring their own snack (and parents must advise the staff).

Cost for each class is \$20 per student or \$35 for two family members.

SAVE THE DATE

*The Chatham Historical Society's
Annual Summer Celebration*

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

Saturday, July 25, 2015

5:00 to 7:00

Cocktails and Hors d'oeuvres

**Please join us as we present our annual
"Bringing History to Life" award**

INVITATION TO FOLLOW

A Tribute to Station Chatham

The year 2015 marks one hundred years of the Coast Guard in Chatham. Through all those years the members of the crew of Station Chatham have kept our light houses operating, our waters safe, and most of all have watched over “those in peril on the sea.”

Whether responding to a cry for help from a pleasure boat or from a fishing boat in trouble or rescuing the crew from a sinking tanker, they are consistently dedicated and professional in their work.

But while fulfilling their missions they have conducted themselves as concerned members of our community by making every effort to keep the station and its grounds in keeping with Chatham’s historic image, including most recently by working with the town Historical Commission to ensure that the CG44301 will be displayed appropriately on their grounds.

The Chatham Historical Society commends the crews of Station Chatham, both past and present, for maintaining these high standards while so successfully fulfilling their mission.



Chief Robert Goley, Officer in Charge, Chatham Coast Guard Station, receiving the above tribute certificate from Cynthia McCue (left) and Spencer Grey (right) after his lecture at the museum on April 26, 2015

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.

Join Us !

Chatham Historical Society members receive free admission to The Atwood House Museum, 10% off Museum Shop purchases, and a complimentary subscription to our newsletter. Our members play a vital role in helping to preserve the rich history and culture of Chatham and the surrounding region. Many members cherish volunteer opportunities at the Museum

Membership Categories

___ Captain Atwood Circle	\$1000 +
___ Heritage Society	\$ 500 - 999
___ Discoverer	\$ 250 - 499
___ Explorer	\$ 100 - 249
___ Family	\$ 50 - 99
___ Individual	\$ 25 - 49
___ Student Historian (to age 18)	\$ 10

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Method of Payment

Check

Visa

MasterCard

Credit Card # _____

Exp. date _____

Security Code _____


Signature _____

**Make checks payable to
 The Chatham Historical Society
 and mail with this form to:
 The Chatham Historical Society
 PO Box 709
 Chatham MA 02633**

If you have allowed your membership to lapse, please consider renewal now. If you are an active member perhaps you can think of someone to pass this along to who might be interested in becoming a member.

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

347 Stage Harbor Road
PO Box 709
Chatham, MA 02633


The Chatham
Historical
Society, Inc.

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE PAID
ORLEANS MA
02653
PERMIT NO. 11

Mark Your Calendars Coming up at THE ATWOOD HOUSE MUSEUM

At the Atwood -

Programs are 2:00 pm at the Atwood House Museum

May 10, 2015 - *History of the Life Saving Service*
Speaker: Richard Ryder

June 21, 2015 - *Life at the North Beach Camps*
Speakers: JAN Nickerson and Don St. Pierre

Opening Day: June 20, 2015

Evening to Remember: July 25, 2015

