

The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society



*What's Been Going On at
The Atwood House Museum?*



From the Director/Curator

Education and Entertainment in the American Museum

The evolution and development of Museums in the United States began, arguably, as an elitist enterprise for members of high society and haute couture. Political pressure (due to the tax-exempt status of museums) and a few socially conscious museum professionals would force museums over time to serve much broader constituencies or face gradual irrelevance and/or extinction. The history of American museum programmatic emphasis is characterized by a delicate balance between entertaining to insure attendance, and the education, erudition and aesthetic experience, that is considered by most to be the core purpose of museums. A primary method to insure heightened attendance has been to embrace, in varying degrees, the entertainment industry, including such things as circuses, concerts, and international expositions- in an effort to draw more people to museums. No sooner was this accomplished, museums were then harshly criticized for pandering to lewd and inappropriate entertainment mediums thereby diluting their value as bastions of culture and learning. However, Museums have seemingly always had to entertain first to get people in the door, and only after achieving this, are they able to educate.

Only a few historians have closely studied the history and evolution of American Museums. Nearly all of them were children of the post-1870s era, which witnessed great museum building and growth, and tended to view the past century of museum development with condescension; their assessment was derived from two opposing poles, that museums have modeled their ideologies in response to both scholarly and public uses.¹ The first public museum in the world was when the Louvre opened its doors to the masses in 1793,² in response to the new French Republic's ideological orientation that art belonged to the people. The writings of historian Joel Orosz describe a very different and interesting picture of early American museums. According to this historian, early American museums were founded 'out of the highest ideals for the new citizenry'- Du Simitiere's American Museum, Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum, and the Tammany Society's American Museum, were all established to promote intellectual and moral improvement.³ Orosz continued by stating that early museum proprietors were affluent, and that theirs was a didactic moralizing conception of education that sought to foster and inculcate 'respectable' ideals.⁴

To Peale, also a prominent artist, the museum represented the world in microcosm, and in his iteration of the world-order reigned supreme. Museums



*Charles Willson Peale
showcasing his
Philadelphia Museum*

¹Roberts, Lisa. From Knowledge to Narrative. Smithsonian Institute Press: Washington (1997). Pg. 21.

²Tomkins, Calvin. Merchants and Masterpieces, the Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. P. 269

³Roberts. Pg. 23.

⁴Ibid.

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From Chatham to China: Some Photo Details of the 2010 Exhibit



Visitors Studying Tools for Sailing a Ship



Chamber of Commerce Guests enjoy a preview of the 2010 Exhibit



The Canton Merchant's Stall



India Wharf in Boston



Inside the Cantonese market stall



Back in Chatham, visitors to the Levi Atwood Store consider the merchandise

2010 Annual Meeting of Members

Sunday, August 15, the Chatham Historical Society's Annual meeting will be held at 2 pm in the Mural Barn of the Society at 347 Stage Harbor Road, Chatham. There will be a short business meeting including election of officers and trustees, report of the Treasurer, and consideration of any others matters properly brought before the meeting.

Following the business meeting speaker Sarah Korjeff, historic preservation specialist at the Cape Cod Commission, will give a talk on "The Old Atwood House in the Context of Cape Cod Architecture."

Cont. from page 2

were a place in which people could study the perfection of the creator, social order, and civic responsibility.⁵ What came to be termed ‘entertainment’ in later years was born out of a resistance to these ideals. According to Orosz, the initial shift by museums to more popular forms of education was preceded by and mirrored changes in society that saw the collapse of social aristocratic order, and the rise of the middle class.⁶ Peale was the first to assert that museums must ‘amuse as well as instruct’ - However, what began as innocent ‘amusements’ became increasingly more tawdry and ghastly as museums competed to outdo one another- By the 1830s Peale’s museum featured one-man bands, trained dogs, ventriloquists, and the freaks of nature that rivaled the best circuses.⁷

Echoing this sentiment was the assertion that early American museums were amateurish and devoted to popular entertainment by George B. Goode. In his influential paper entitled: “Museum-History and Museums of History”, which Goode delivered to the American Historical Association in 1888- Goode indicted the early years of American museums as little more than a collection of frivolous freak shows more akin to circuses than to the European model of museums.⁸ Goode was influenced by Joseph Henry, the Smithsonian’s first secretary who saw the museum as a ‘handmaiden of science,’ which heavily influenced Goode to make his condemning assertions about early American museums.⁹

Occurring concurrently with Goode’s landmark paper on early American museums, the fledgling motion picture industry was just getting off the ground. Just as the French were the first to open their prestigious Louvre to the public thereby creating the first museum resembling the modern iteration, the Frenchman Louis Lumiere invented the first motion picture camera in 1895 - This has been credited by some as the birth of the motion picture industry.¹⁰ However, the American Edison Company successfully projected film in 1891, and produced the Vitascope motion film camera in 1896. Prior to this invention and meteoric rise in interest in films, Americans attended plays, opera, circuses and international expositions as a means of entertainment sought in the public arena - in fact, the interest in

‘curiosities’ was a mainstream fascination that preceded and set the stage for the seductive nature of the motion picture.

Englishman Bill Ricketts brought the first modern circus to the United States in 1793 in Philadelphia, and renowned entrepreneur P.T. Barnum made it his business to produce shows that would excite the imagination, fool the eye, and confound ones sensibilities.¹¹ Interestingly, Barnum’s show was entitled: “P.T. Barnum’s Museum, Menagerie and Circuses.” Re Barnum’s entrepreneurial success in America, Barnum biographer Neil Harris claimed that Barnum’s sensationalist shows served a very real need in America; the need to feel in control over nature- that through Barnum’s deliberate falsification of certain artifacts, enthusiasm was kindled among the public to discern the genuine article from the fakes. Harris posited that Barnum’s initial success was linked to a Jacksonian American populace, who rebelled against the elitism of Jefferson’s intellectual ideals.¹² These shows highlighted the unusual, and as such created a desire in the public for the ever more fantastic –something that continues to the present day.

An excellent example of embracing the entertainment industry in order to remedy sagging relevance and attendance in museums, was executed by Francis Henry Taylor - director of the Worcester Museum in Massachusetts. Upon taking the helm of this museum in the early 1930s, the first thing he did was to buy a movie projector and invited the public to the museum, to see nightly showings of documentaries, travelogues, and foreign films.¹³ This included the film *The Grand Illusion* which importantly could be seen at any commercial theater. Taylor thereby tempted an audience that perhaps would have never set foot in a museum to at least come see something they were going to see anyway, by establishing a commercial linkage in terms of venue, for a given commodity (film). Taylor was also an innovator with regard to museum education programs. With funding from the Carnegie Corpora-



*Entrepreneur
P. T. Barnum*



*Francis Henry Taylor,
innovator in museum
programming*

⁵Roberts, pg. 23.

⁶Roberts. Pg. 24.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Roberts. Pg. 21.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Cook, David. *A History of Narrative Film* (4th ed. ed.). W. W. Norton: New York (2004).

¹¹Moy, James. “Entertainments at John B. Rickett’s circus, 1793-1800” *Educational Theater Journal*. (xxx, May 2, 1978). Pgs. 186-202.

¹²Roberts, pg. 26.

¹³Tomkins, Calvin. *Merchants and Masterpieces, the Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. P. 269.

tion, Taylor developed a program of art education for public and private schools throughout New England – these included courses for university credit, circulating exhibitions keyed to high school curriculum, and much more.¹⁴ Taylor also placed texts (e.g. books, pamphlets and periodicals) that were germane to current exhibits in galleries and through clever marketing of exhibits, increased attendance dramatically. Many people nationwide felt that Taylor was developing an entirely new approach to the public.¹⁵ Taylor’s new ideology could be best summarized in his own words:

“We in the art museums of America have reached a point where we must make a choice of becoming either temples of learning and understanding...or of remaining merely hanging gardens for the perpetuation of the Babylonian pleasures of aestheticism and the secret sins of private archaeology.”¹⁶

By 1932, fifteen percent of United States museums offered educational programs; in addition, the professional journal *Museum News* (founded in 1924) of-



Metropolitan Museum of Art, Great Hall

ferred a growing body of writings devoted to educational topics.¹⁷ This new ideology resonated with museum professionals nationwide, so much so in fact that he (Taylor) was offered the directorship of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1939, in an effort to rejuvenate, and bring added relevancy to the institution.¹⁸ Without a doubt the exhibitions and programs of the Taylor era MET (post World War II) attracted people who would have never willingly set foot inside an art museum.¹⁹ An important result of this was to galvanized the pairing of education with the museum experience in the public sphere .

By the late 1930s, attendance in American art museums had stabilized, especially due to educational relevancy as described earlier by men such as Taylor. Educational efforts of museums largely helped craft their ‘market niche’ within the greater context of the growing tide of ‘cultural tourism’ that would become highly developed during the last half of the twentieth century.

Mark Wilkins

¹⁴Tomkins, pg. 270.

¹⁵Tomkins, pg. 271.

¹⁶Tomkins, pg. 272.

¹⁷Roberts. Pg. 33.

¹⁸Tomkins, pg. 274.

¹⁹Tomkins, pg. 291.

Renovation Work on the Old House



Fifth graders from Chatham Middle School viewing the saw pit at work

As of this writing, work on the restoration of the roof of the Atwood house is nearing completion. David Ottinger and his team of skilled and dedicated artisans have done a fabulous job restoring the gambrel roof of the old house, which gives this regional icon such a distinctive quality. Pictured at right are examples in microcosm of the approach we took in restoring the old house – removing only that which was absolutely necessary, and replacing it with timbers that were fashioned using mid-18th century house-building methodology.



New roof shingles replacing the old ones



Bents and girts



new scarf joint

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
___ Discoverer	250
___ Explorer	100
___ Family	50
___ Individual	25
___ Student Historian (to age 18)	10

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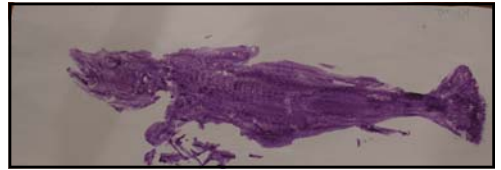
**Make checks payable to
 The Chatham Historical Society
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 The Chatham Historical Society
 PO Box 709
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If you have allowed your membership to lapse, please consider renewal now. If you are an active member perhaps you can think of someone to pass this along to who might be interested in becoming a member.

Children's Summer Programs

The fifth series of Monday morning programs for children began on July 5th and will continue for eight sessions through August 23rd. This year's programs address three topics.

Sessions one and two gave the children an opportunity to learn about the cod fish and its historic importance to the Cape Cod economy. Among the activities they participated in were cook-



A fish print by one of the students

ing codfish cakes, making a print of a codfish, and viewing a film about longline fishing. The Cape Cod Commercial Fisherman's Association allowed us to use some of their learning activities. The children especially enjoyed jigging for goldfish crackers in a sea of corn flakes.

Weeks three through eight (July 19th through August 9th) are about Chatham and the China Trade. Among the activities are the geography of China, Chinese inventions, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese lantern making, and cooking such foods as Chinese egg rolls and fried rice. Children will also have activities about life on a clipper ship and about trading at a treaty port.



Frying Egg Rolls



Sampling Chinese Egg Rolls

The final two weeks (August 16th and 23rd) children will learn about oysters. Activities will include an oyster hunt, oyster computer anatomy, oyster farming, some games about oysters, and oyster cookery.

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.

Summer Event

Special thanks go to RoseMarie McLoughlin and her committee for a beautiful first annual "Evening to Remember" under the tent at the museum on Saturday, July 17. Delicious refreshments were provided by Chatham Bars Inn and the bar by Wequassett Inn for this very well attended event. Proceeds from the event will support the programs of the Chatham Historical Society and the Atwood House Museum.

What's been Going on inside the Old Atwood House?

Beginning in "Margery's Kitchen," the only addition to the "mansion" built by Captain Joseph Atwood in 1752, visitors will be welcomed and have the opportunity to learn about the Chatham family who for five generations lived in this unique Cape Cod house.

The sea captain, a leading Chatham resident and a wealthy man, was familiar with European culture. Did his home reflect the eighteenth century English and continental style? Very likely - we know from the size and design of this house that he and his wife, Deborah Sears Atwood, were hospitable people, accustomed to entertaining.

We hope this interpretation, based on continuing research, will bring to life a mid-eighteenth century Cape Cod family. For their special help with this project our thanks go to Susan Collins, Barbara Hogan, and Overseer Linda Wiseman, as well as our talented volunteer staff.



New panel in Margery's kitchen showing the Atwood family genealogy

Mary Ann Fritsch, Chair Galleries and Display



Newly painted walls in the south parlor



New wallpaper in the Victorian Parlor



Rearranging mannequins in the Old House before dressing them for display

Shop Your Museum Shop!



- Books*
- Toys*
- Jewelry*
- Shells*
- Nautical Gifts*
- Oriental Items*

*Open 10 am to 4 pm, Tuesday through Saturday, July and August;
1 to 4 pm, Tuesday through Saturday, September and October*



Mother's rocking bench moved from Margery's kitchen into the original kitchen, with photo boards showing location of artifacts before this renovation

Mark Your Calendars

Coming up at The Chatham Historical Society & Atwood House Museum

Summer and Early Fall Events

Annual Meeting of Members

Sunday, August 15, 2010

2pm at The Atwood House Museum, 347 Stage Harbor Road, Chatham, MA 02633

Speaker: Sarah Korjett: *"The Old Atwood House in the Context of Cape Cod Architecture"*

Twelfth Annual Antique Show and Sale for Cape Cod

Saturday, September 25, 2010: 10 am to 4 pm

Sunday, September 26, 2010: 12 noon to 4 pm

At Chatham Elementary School, Depot Road, Chatham

Afternoons at the Atwood Lecture Series

Sunday, October 10, 2010

2 pm at Chatham Community Center, 709 Main Street, Chatham, MA 02633

Speaker: Stephen O'Neill: *"Pirates on Cape Cod and in New England"*



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