

AUTUMN 2007

The Atwood Log



The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society



From the President

October, 2007

For the past six weeks since the Annual Meeting August 19, 2007, it has been my pleasure to serve the Society as President. Some of the highlights of that short time follow, as well as a brief mention of projects and concerns ahead.

The Special Exhibit on the Chatham Naval Air Station during the First World War and the NC4 Transatlantic Flight received high praise from our many visitors. A recent surprising and most welcome addition to the artifacts loaned by many individuals was an airplane strut possibly from the actual NC4 seaplane. The fabric-covered strut returned to Chatham via Wisconsin with a retired pilot now residing in Chatham. It had come into his family by purchase at auction.

The second year of summer programs on Mondays for children ages seven through twelve attracted more than 150 enthusiastic young learners. The topics introduced included archeology, navigation by the stars, seashells, and stories from the Wampanoag tribe. With museum exploration and craft projects to show proud parents, a good time was had by all.

Elsewhere in this issue are articles about a new donation of three paintings by Frederick Wight, and an exciting new project involving maps and sea charts owned by the museum. Another new addition to visitor experience, an audio tour using cell phone technology, also is highlighted.

The Storage Room renovation will go forward the first of next year. Meanwhile, the Old House will be examined by preservation experts for any possible structural or other needs besides replacement of the roof which is known to be nearing the end of its useful life.

Please view the holiday schedule of new exhibits and festive events, and I hope that you will join in celebrating the remainder of this year at the Atwood House Museum.

With best wishes to you and yours this season and in the New Year,

Cynthia B. McCue

Children's Summer Program



Children in the Chatham Historical Society Summer program learning about shells and navigation

Thanks to Volunteers

The Atwood House Museum has officially closed for the season. Many visitors have come through the doors from Germany, England and Ireland, Harwich, and Brewster. It was always a joy to see how pleased they were with the exhibits and the friendly docents. The historical society is made up of volunteers at all levels and the successful year was made possible through the many hours donated by board members, committee members and volunteers in the gift shop and museum areas. Members of the historical society can be proud of being part of such a vital and interesting organization.

Thanks to all those who gave so much of their time. More volunteers are always needed so if you are not an active participant, consider joining the volunteer staff next season and sharing your interest in our history with others.

Betsey Stevens



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The tree on our cover was created for the 2006 Festival of Trees by Jan Lewyn

Frederick Wight: Capturing Chatham's People

Frederick S. Wight was not born in Chatham, but he and his family played a major role in its arts community over five decades. Today, the family retains a unique place in the Atwood House Museum's collection and archives.



Frederick S. Wight (1902 - 1986)

His mother was Alice Stallknecht, perhaps the Chatham Historical Society's most visible artist because of her three major works exhibited in the Mural Barn and the 2003 Special Exhibit and Conference, "Beneath the Surface: The Art of Alice Stallknecht." A Johns Hopkins professor, his father, Carol Wight, was the catalyst for the family's move to Chatham in 1910. He wrote poetry, prose and plays. However, Frederick Wight is famous in his own right!

"Frederick Wight was a modernist poly-



The Selectmen by Frederick Wight shows Edward Small, Edwin Eldredge and Willard Nickerson, who served from 1942 – 1944 in that capacity. The painting will go on loan to the Town Hall this winter.

math," says Ray Zone of *ArtScene*. "A champion of 20th century art as well as a traditional painter of portraits and landscapes, Wight had a diverse career as novelist and art critic, art educator, curator and for two decades, from 1953 to 1973, director of the art gallery at the University of California in Los Angeles." Upon his retirement, the gallery was renamed the Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, and he was able to focus solely on his painting.

These later paintings are quite different from those we know here in Chatham – as different as Picasso's blue period is from his cubist offerings. Zone describes Wight as "a gifted painter." Louis Stern Fine Arts in West Hollywood CA represents his estate. Of this gallery display Zone says, "The works on view . . . are large, highly individual landscapes of Southern California that both reflect the plangent lighting of the areas as well as the artist's individual reading of the geography." Zone notes that Wight has been called a "luminist" painter. "There is some accuracy in such a designation," he admits, "not for the degree of realism but for his formal use of light and aerial perspective." [To see some of Wight's California paintings, go to www.louissternfinearts.com.]

After graduating from Chatham High School at age 15, Wight attended the University of Virginia, completing his studies in 1923. After graduation, he traveled to Paris to pursue art studies at the Academie Julian. In 1925, he returned to Cape Cod where he painted portraits during most of the year, visiting Virginia and Georgia during the winter. The Greenville County SC Art Museum has a trio of paintings depicting inhabitants of Augusta GA in the Depression years.

During this period Erskine Caldwell, Jacques Lipchitz and Edward Seidel Canby were subjects of his portraits. Many of the other portraits painted during this time were of Chatham sea captains and men involved with Chatham's daily life – including the Nickerson Gallery's seven sea captains and the sailmaker's portrait. The fishing gallery displays more of Wight's portraits, including fishermen repairing nets and fisherman Leon Long.

This past summer, Stephen and Mary Beth Daniel gifted the Chatham Historical Society with three paintings by Frederick Wight. According to Stephen Daniel,



Man at Freezer Plant by Frederick Wight depicts the facility on the Stage Harbor wharf circa 1942. Can anyone identify this man?

Wight's art is most appropriate to the society's mission, chronicling Chatham's people and their professions with historic accuracy. The painting at the old freezer plant on Stage Harbor, currently hanging in the Fishing Gallery, and that of Captain Alexander Hunter with Augustus and Elmer Ellis are similar in feeling to his portraits of other sea captains and that of Leon Long. "The Selectmen," however, pays homage to his mother's unique technique of positioning a portrait with "talismans" of the trade. This painting will hang in the Chatham Town Hall at the donors' request and with the current Selectmen's wholehearted approval. Watch for it this winter!

While society members are familiar with Wight's early painting, few know of his novels. They were written during the Depression and include *The Chronicle of Aaron Kane*, *South*, (both illustrated with paintings by the author), *Inner Harbor* and *Youth in Trust*.

As a museum director, Wight mounted many important shows and numerous traveling exhibits. His extensive art-related writings include monographs on many artists, among them Hans Hoffman, Jose Clemente Orozco and Goya.

A *Times* magazine article in September 1956 reviewing a new Wight one-man show at the Pasadena Art Museum noted: "Wight feels embarrassed by his varied successes. 'I don't kid myself,' he says in his customary murmur, squinting as if at a disappearing bird. 'This showing all over the country, or flying all over creation, is not a virtue. It's a symptom of still being too many things to too many relations.' It is also, like Wight's painting," the *Times* reviewer noted, "a running struggle to seize man's brief 'adventure in time'."

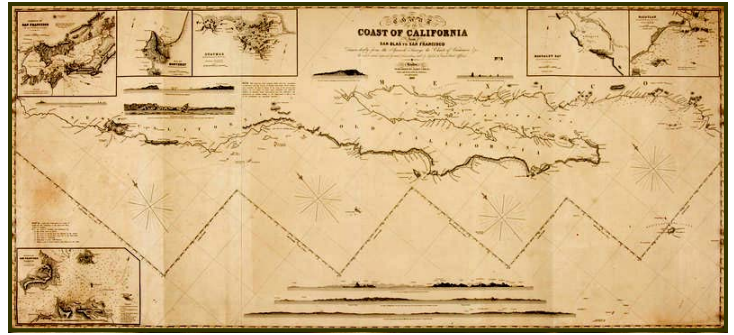
Janet M. Daly

From the Archives:

It is rare that working in the archives can be said to be exciting. Ask the volunteers who faithfully come each week to unfold, remove paper clips and staples from old store receipts, clip items from old newspapers or type into the museum catalog descriptions of Victorian scrapbooks. But exciting it was, this summer when the task of cleaning and storing our marine charts led to the discovery of a special blue back chart.

For some time, Bill Horrocks had been faithfully vacuuming each of our charts and maps in order to store those that will fit into our new map cases. The question remained as to how to store the rest. Archival tubes seemed to be the best choice, but how many would we need and how much would they cost? An inventory determined we had approximately 114 sea charts, most of which will not fit into the map cases.

Our computer records indicated that the Imray Company in London had published 24 of the charts and the Internet also indicated that Imray charts were commanding a good price on the auction block. In fact one such chart entitled "Chart of the Coast of California from San Blas to San Francisco" was listed by Dorothy Sloan Rare Books in its catalog with an estimated auction amount of \$7,500 to \$15,000. The name of the chart rang a bell, and in our collection, we found that indeed we did have a copy with the same title and all of its illustrations matched the one illustrated on the Internet. The only difference was that our chart had pencil indications of a ship's course and some notations that indicated the length of the journey along with what we believed was the name of the ship. An inquiry to the auction house indicated that their chart had sold for \$7,500, and the correspondent further indicated that our chart with its annotations would appear to be more interesting than the one they had sold.



Imray Blue Back Chart of the Coast of California from San Blas to San Francisco published in 1849

It took a magnifying glass and some help from the Internet before we determined that the name of the ship was the *Revere* that sailed from Boston in 1853 under the command of Charles W. Hamilton whom we were later to confirm was from Chatham. We also were able to obtain a book entitled *The Ship Revere 1849-1883* by Madeline Rowse Gleason that contained excerpts from a journal of a passenger on that ship detailing the voyage. A little more searching turned up the fact that Hamilton's log of the voyage is now housed at the Mystic Marine Museum.

Spurred on by our success, we are now beginning the process of photographing the collection, purchasing the tubing to store the large charts, and developing a small rotating archival exhibition of the charts. Who says that archival collections can't be exciting? Are there more treasures in the chart collection? Watch the *Log* for future findings.

Mary Ann Gray

The Sea Captains Speak

The Portrait Gallery has a new audio system, installed this summer, that presents the Captains as if speaking to the listener, using cell phone technology. The cell phone user dials a central phone number, and then selects an extension number to access a particular Captain and his story. The cell phone program works in the museum and from home, twenty-four hours every day. This system, *Guide by Cell*, developed by a California company, is a rapidly growing business used nationally by many museums, libraries, parks, walking trails, colleges and universities.

Museum volunteer Priscilla Dalrymple initiated the concept of listening to the Captains present stories about their lives. She recruited former society president, historian, and author Joe Nickerson to read, using as script portions of the text from *Home on the Rolling Deep*, a society publication compiled by Marcia Monbleau.

Audio devices have become an integral part of museum operations, allowing the listener to control the choice of access and time limits in relation to interest. From an economic perspective, the technology allows an unlimited number of extensions off the one phone number at the same cost.

A handy list is available at the museum coordinating extension numbers with Captains' names. This program is one place in which cell phones are welcome in the museum.



Museum guest using cell phone information line

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

The society and museum are in need of volunteers to fill vacant slots on the Operating Board: Membership, Special Exhibits, Programs, and Administration and Operations. Previous chairpersons of these departments have resigned after years of dedicated and productive service. Grateful thanks go especially to Karen and Ron Nickerson for their work on Membership and to Reggie Nickerson for his work on Special Exhibits. Our hope is that some of you will step forward and give your time and abilities to assist the society and its museum in carrying out its vital mission. If interested, please leave your name and a number where you can be reached with Margaret Martin at 508-945-2493. "Many hands make light work."



*Della Robbia Tree
designed by Jan Lewyn*

Festival of Trees Opens Friday, November 23

For the third year, the Atwood House Museum will be the site of the Chatham Garden Club's *Annual Festival of Trees*, which will be celebrating its tenth year. Opening 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 seasonal wreaths and centerpieces, all designed by Garden Club members.

The 4-day *Festival* will begin with three afternoon dates -- Nov. 23, 24, and 30 -- when the Atwood House will be open from 2 to 4 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. 1, from 5 to 8 pm. Complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. William Litchfield, Chatham town moderator, will again 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 Gala Party ticket costs \$15 and 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, chairman, 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.

GIFT SHOPPING

As we celebrate the success of the third summer in the shop, we eagerly anticipate this holiday season. The *Festival of Trees* and *Hearth Warming* events bring much excitement, interest and subsequent sales to the shop.

We are ready for the season of giving. Ornaments, glass trees, Christmas jewelry, and special holiday cards have been most popular. Cape Cod motif ties, brass compasses, tide clocks, nautical stationary and key chains are wonderful ideas for the men in your life. New jewelry items, purses, shawls, guest soaps and painted boxes are just a few of the suggestions for the ladies.

Books are always appropriate gifts! Dot Gross, our new and knowledgeable book



buyer has many suggestions: check out the newest book from Rob Carlisle, *Beyond the Bar; The Perilous*

Journey, a history of Chatham's fishing industry and our rich maritime heritage. Other great holiday gift ideas for family and friends include stocking stuffer books for kids, and some hard-to-find Old Cape Cod classics such as Joseph Lincoln's *Cap'n Eri* (the basis of the 2007 movie *Chatham*, featuring Miss Julie Harris, David Carradine and others) and *Christmas Days*, a wonderfully nostalgic remembrance of Christmas on Cape Cod with a ship master's family in the mid 1800's.



Best wishes for a joyous holiday season! Remember your museum shop when looking for gifts for those special people in your life.

Barbara Newberry

Update:

Special Appeal Reaches more than 60% of Goal!

Members' support for the Special Appeal to raise \$30,000 to modernize and update our existing storage facility beneath the Mural Barn has been most generous. As we go to press, \$18,790 has been received – over 60% of our goal – but we do need your help in reaching our objective.

Plans call for beginning this major project after the New Year. The storage area must be completely cleared out, old storage systems and shelving removed, the entire space sealed and painted before the fine arts storage systems, costume drawer files and shelving can be installed. Then volunteers will be engaged in bringing all our treasures back and placing them in an organized manner. It will take months!

The total project, designed to protect and conserve our paintings, furnishings, ship models and other artifacts from Chatham's past, will cost almost \$60,000. So there is still time to join your fellow society members in contributing to our Special Appeal.

Thank you for your generosity. *Janet M. Daly*

Please detach and return to Chatham Historical Society, P.O. Box 381, Chatham MA 02633

I/we want to save our special museum treasures and donate to the Special Appeal to modernize and upgrade our storage facilities.

____ Enclosed is my/our check for \$ _____ made out to the **Chatham Historical Society**.

____ Please charge my credit card \$ _____, (Card # _____ - _____ - _____ - _____, Exp. date: _____)

Please circle one: Visa MasterCard

Name:

Address:

THANK YOU!



From the Chairman

The year 2005 brought major changes to The Atwood House Museum; 2006 was highlighted by our first truly professional special exhibit; but in 2007 we have had major changes in personnel among those most responsible for operating the society and the museum.

After a year of outstanding leadership as President, Janet Daly chose to retire to allow more time for her other activities and interests. During her tenure in that position, Janet displayed remarkable vigor, enthusiasm, and professionalism. Besides bringing increased order and structure to the Operating Board, she inspired its members to make important and very welcome improvements to nearly all of the galleries and displays in the museum. Of particular note was the total redecoration and reorganization in the Durand Room, resulting in greatly enhanced displays. The displays in the Joseph Lincoln Gallery and the Maritime Gallery were also refreshed and improved. The vitality and innovation that marked her presidency were evident also in displays beyond The Atwood House Museum, such as in the Town Hall, the Eldredge Public Library, and the museum bulletin board outside the CVS Store. Clearly she brought so many improvements to the society and the museum that her presidency will long be remembered. Although no longer President, Janet continues to serve the society in many ways, but most notably as Director of the Special Appeal for 2007.

Another loss to retirement was that of Karl Fehrle, our Treasurer for the past seven years. At a time when the finances of the society became increasingly complex because of the growth resulting from our Capital Campaign, Karl brought unprecedented order and accuracy to keeping the records and producing the reports. For the first time, all income and expenses were maintained in great detail, yet in a way that those reading the Treasurer's Reports were able to comprehend them with ease. These changes could not have been effected without Karl's considerable skill, experience, and dedication. In spite of the demands of his position on his time and patience, Karl remained constantly available, cheerful, and smiling throughout those years of great service to The Chatham Historical Society. While we will miss his services as Treasurer, he and his wife, Dotte, promise to remain active in all of our activities.

We are fortunate, however, in having a highly qualified new President in the person of Cynthia McCue. Beginning her work for the society as the book buyer for the museum gift shop, Cynthia soon branched out to a much more active role in the museum, first as curator of our collection of 19th century transfer ware, which she documented and reorganized. This year she played a significant role in reorganizing and cataloging the shell and glass collections in the Durand Room. In the latter capacity she assisted with the photographing and cataloging of each of the hundreds of shells, of the sandwich glass collection, and of the Crowell Bird collection. Once that was accomplished, professional signage was made that identifies clearly every item in those collections for those interested in learning more about them.

With a background in library services and her interest in museum operations, Cynthia brings to the office of the President all the necessary skills and talents. In the short time since she took over she has shown quiet but effective managerial qualities that promise to make her a truly inspiring leader of the Operating Board, one who always is cheerful, accommodating, and available.

We were equally fortunate in acquiring the services of Linda Cebula as our new Treasurer. As a CPA who continues her active accounting career, she is like a dream come true in her willingness to take on all of the time-consuming responsibilities of her position with the historical society. Because of her talents, Linda was able to take over from Karl Fehrle after only a few meetings with him, and she already shows an amazing depth of knowledge about the finances of the organization. In spite of many other commitments, including membership on the Harwich Finance Committee, Linda has proven to be very much on top of the job. Moreover she performs it in such a relaxed and pleasant manner that everyone finds her a cooperative and entirely delightful addition to our leadership. The Chatham Historical Society is indeed fortunate in having so many qualified and hard working people willing to volunteer in these and the myriad other positions that are essential to the operation of the society and of the museum.

Spencer Y. Grey

Sundays at The Atwood:

Lecture Series for Winter 2008

Once again the lecture committee is presenting a varied series of lectures for our enjoyment and education during this fall and winter.

On November 11, 2007 the lecture, "*Filming 'Chatham'*", presented by director Dan Adams, will tell you everything you wanted to know about the challenges, pitfalls and pleasures of making a period movie. Mr. Adams will offer highlights about making this movie on Cape Cod, based on famous Chatham author Joseph Lincoln's 1904 best-selling novel, "*Cap'n Eri*".

January 13, 2008 Coastal geologist Dr. Graham Geise of the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies and geographic information specialist Mark Adams of the Cape Cod National Seashore will provide us with a Power Point overview titled "*The Chatham Break and the Dynamics of Barrier Beaches*".

February 10, 2008, we will enjoy "*Cape Cod Humor*", presented by Noel Beyle. Mr. Beyle will explore what makes us laugh, with a look at different types of regional humor, and the subjects treated.



Filming "Chatham", a scene at the Captain Bangs Hallet House in YarmouthPort



Dates to Remember . . .

Holiday Calendar

The Atwood House Museum is celebrating the holiday season with familiar yearly festivities and new merry happenings for the enjoyment of all. Why not take note of the following events and place the dates on your calendar now.

Sunday, November 11, 2 pm. Lecture by Daniel Adams, producer of the movie "Chatham".

Friday, November 23, 2-4pm Festival of Trees Opening, annual exhibition and silent auction by the Chatham Garden Club.

Saturday, November 24 and Friday, November 30, 2-4pm Festival of Trees viewing and bidding

Saturday, December 1, 5-8pm Festival of Trees Finale with announcement of auction winners and wine reception

Saturday, December 8, 1:30-4:30 pm Annual Hearth Warming Open House and Opening of the Winter Exhibit. Please consider bringing non-member guests.

Saturdays, December 15 and 22, 1-4pm Museum and museum shop open

Monday, December 31, 1-4 pm First Night Opening

December-January Chatham Public Schools Students' Exhibition of projects based on the Chatham Naval Air Station and NC4 Transatlantic Flight summer 2007 Special Exhibit at the museum. Recognition ceremony and reception.

For further information, please call the museum at 508 -945-2493, Mon-Fri, 9-1.



The Annual Hearth Warming, a favorite December event

WANT ADS Personnel

Wanted: Individuals who would like to assist in scanning some of the original documents in the archival collection on Tuesdays or Thursdays. Minimal computer experience is helpful, but we will be happy to train willing workers. Please contact Margaret Martin at 945-2493, Monday through Friday, 9 am to 1 pm.

Writers Wanted: Individuals who find research and writing brochures for our visitors something they would like to try. Some writing experience helpful, but coaching will be gladly given. Hours your own. Computer is necessary and internet capabilities greatly assist delivery of material. If you are interested, please E-mail <chathamhistoricalsociety@verizon.net>

Handy Person Wanted: Do you like to work around the house, are familiar with "honey do lists," then you may be able to help around the museum. Some jobs include moving shelves for a display, touching up some chipped woodwork. Please leave your name with Margaret Martin, 508-945-2493, and a number where you can be reached.

Wintry Scenes and Students Creativity

Children have always loved snow, haven't they? This December, after the *Festival of Trees*, projects completed by students from grade two through high school will hang in the Special Exhibit Gallery along with paintings of winter scenes from the museum's own collection.

Developed with the Chatham Schools, the themes for the second year of this program are based on this past summer's special exhibit on the Chatham Naval Air Station and the NC-4 Trans-Atlantic Flight.

The paintings are by Chatham artists of yore and have not been exhibited recently. They and the students' projects may be seen at the Annual Hearth Warming and other Saturday afternoons in December. Check the calendar on this page for dates and times. A celebration of participation and a reception will be held for the students on a date to be announced.

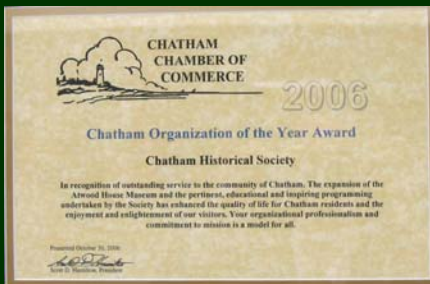
The Brick Program

The opportunity to purchase bricks for permanent installation in the front walk leading to the Atwood House Museum entrance remains open. Although many bricks engraved with personally selected wording are in place, there is room for more on the walkways and around the herb garden. With the holiday season coming, a brick of remembrance or tribute would be a thoughtful gift renewable each time one visits the museum.

Recently a new shipment of bricks arrived and will be put in place as soon as possible. If you would like more information, or an order form, please call the society at 508-945-2493 or email: chathamhistoricalsociety@verizon.net.

Our 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.

347 Stage Harbor Road
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 - Free lecture Series

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

Sunday, November 11, 2007

Daniel Adams: Filming "Chatham" - Highlights of making the movie based on the Joseph Lincoln novel, *Cap'n Eri*

Sunday, January 13, 2008

Graham Giese and Mark Adams: The Chatham Break and Coastal Mapping

Sunday, February 10, 2008

Noel Beyle: Cape Cod Humor



OTHER EVENTS

Friday and Saturday, November 23 and 24, Friday, November 30

Festival of Trees: In partnership with the Chatham Garden Club, 2 to 4 pm

Saturday, December 1

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

Saturday, December 8,

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

Saturdays, December 15 and 22

Chatham Holiday Exhibit, 1 to 4 pm *Admission Free*

Monday, December 31, First Night

Chatham Holiday Exhibit, 1 to 4 pm

The Museum Shop is open whenever the museum is open