

SUMMER 2008

The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society



Chatham Lighthouse 1808 - 2008



From the President

Tempus fugit! It seems that we just finished the last issue of the Log! By the time this new issue reaches you, some unusual events involving the Society will have taken place.

The visit of the reproduction catboat, the *Sarah*, is due the week of June 30th. Built by members of the Hyannis Maritime Museum last year, the *Sarah* will be able to pick up lucky ticket holders at the Town dock in Stage Harbor, courtesy of the Harbormaster, for about an hour's sail, weather permitting. Young people in the sailing classes at Stage Harbor Yacht Club will also have an opportunity to experience a sail in the catboat, a model widely used by Cape fisherman in years past. Some say the catboat was first developed in the Cape area by the Crosby family.

Stage Harbor also figures in an unusual happening planned by the Delegation to New England from Quebec. Founded by Champlain in 1608, Quebec is celebrating its 400th anniversary. On July 21st, a group of dignitaries and Franco-Americans will have a ceremony at the site of the Champlain monument. In the afternoon, the group is expected at the Atwood House Museum for a conference and tour of the Museum. The officials will include the Consul General of France, the Consul General of Canada, and the Delegate to New England from Quebec.

I am pleased to report that there have been many kudos for our Special Exhibit, American Antique Wicker. Visitors recognize the exceptional quality of the rare and unusual furniture and accessories now gracing our main gallery as well as some of the side galleries and even two rooms in the Old House. Cape Cod Life magazine has an excellent feature article with many photographs in its July issue. Debra Lawless wrote a fine piece for a recent issue of the Chronicle. With the text provided by exhibit owners Kathleen and Thomas Tetro of Harwichport and Sheffield, where they have a shop, Corner House Antiques, a brochure has been produced giving background and history of the wicker industry. You may pick up this free handout when you visit this summer. American Antique Wicker will be on display until November first.

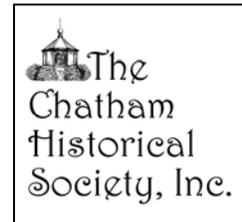
Another gratifying complement is the selection of the Atwood House Museum for the silver medal for museums on the lower Cape. The award is the result of a "favorites" poll conducted by Cape Cod Life magazine and published with a list in the June issue. The gold went to Cape Cod Museum of Natural History – quite understandable! Even there the Society has a presence with the loan of Frederick Wight's painting of Henry Beston for the season.

The volunteers and staff look forward to seeing you at the Museum this summer. With some sprucing up – repair of rugs, improved signage, repairs to the Nick camp and more – we continue to make progress. Please come see!

Cynthia B. McCue

New Chatham Historical Society Sign

Have you noticed the new sign identifying the Society as the organization that owns and operates the Atwood House Museum? It is subtle and, we think, graceful and elegant in its place at the front of the Special Exhibit Gallery. Mary Ann Fritsch conceived the idea, Garry Gates refined the design, Dwight Myer applied the paint, and Chatham Sign Company employed digital cutting methods and, on ladders, mounted the completed sign. Thank you to everyone involved!



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Chatham Light 1808 - 2008

After two centuries of continuous service in three different towers, Chatham Light will turn 200 on October 7, 2008. Many other lighthouses have been turned into homes or other landmarks whereas Chatham Light has continued to provide aid to all those seeking to navigate the often treacherous waters off the elbow of Cape Cod.

Three sets of twin lights were constructed over the two hundred years. The first was made of wood in an octagonal shape forty feet high with six oil lamps sending out a fixed beam of light. By 1841, the wood towers, decayed and unstable, were replaced with white painted brick towers that housed nine oil lamps with larger fourteen inch reflectors. In 1857, a new multi-prismatic lens, invented by French physicist Augustin Jean Fresnel (1788-1827), was installed in the brick towers, vastly increasing the distance by which the light beam could be seen at sea. Storms and erosion of the coast led to the construction of the third set of twin lights much further back from the edge of the bluff in 1877, using the Fresnel lenses from the brick towers. By 1881, both of the brick towers had been claimed by the sea.

The twin lights became one light in 1923 when the North tower was moved to Eastham to become Nauset Light, replacing three small lights known as the Three Sisters, still found in Eastham but removed from the

coast. The South tower remains today on the same site known as James Head. It has been operated by the U.S. Coast Guard since 1939, the year World War II began. Several improvements have been made to the light now revolving with two flashes every ten



Ruins of the second set of lights

seconds. In 1969 the lantern room with its Fresnel lens was replaced by a larger lantern room and updated lighting technology. The smaller lantern room and its Fresnel lens were transported to the grounds of the Chatham Historical Society where the

light continues to emit a two flash signal whenever the museum is open. Once widely in use, very few of the famous Fresnel lenses are still in operation in the United States. On a beautiful sunny and windy day at the Coast Guard Station, once on Morris Island but now next to the lighthouse, an outdoor ceremony was held June 21st to mark the opening cele-

bration of Chatham Light's anniversary. Officers from the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and the President of the Chatham Historical Society spoke briefly on the significance of the occasion before adjourning to the station for birthday cake and coffee.

In observance of the closing of the season of celebration, a special program and lecture will be held on Sunday, October 5, 2008, at 2:00 pm at Chatham's new Community Center. Guest speaker and author Jeremy D'Entremont will talk about Chatham Light and other lighthouses. This event is open to the public and free to all.

Special displays have been arranged by members of the Society in the Eldredge Library and the Town Hall. The display cases at the Library contain many postcards of the Chatham lighthouses, a painting by Harold Dunbar, lighthouse models and doll furniture made from cigar boxes by Captain Josiah Hardy, Lighthouse Keeper ap-

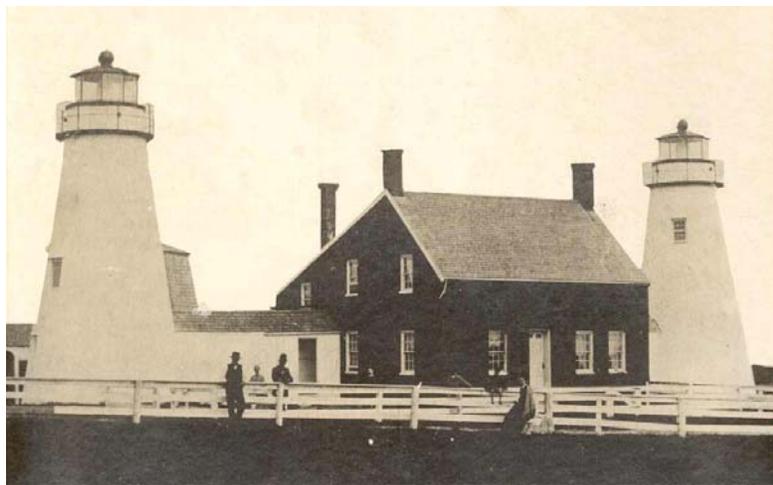
pointed in 1872. At the Town Hall one may find newspaper articles, photographs, and documents from the Society's archives, and a painting of the lighthouse and village done from memory by H. Gould. While viewing the lantern room on the Society's grounds, you will find an excellent leaflet prepared by Mary Ann Gray that gives more detailed information about Chatham Light. Children attending the August 25th Monday morning camp session will learn more about lighthouses from former teacher and principal Richard Curcio. In the museum shop, there are books about lighthouses for all ages as well as a variety of beautifully designed Chatham lighthouse models for gifts or your own enjoyment.

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The lighthouse complex in the 1920s



The second set of lighthouses, of brick. One of the original wooden lighthouses is partially in view.



Ruins of the brick lighthouses looking out toward the water

This is the year of Chatham Light!

Up Coming Lectures

Once again Priscilla Dalrymple and her committee have assembled a varied and fascinating series of lectures for your enjoyment as well as your edification. Programs are scheduled for the August Annual Meeting, October, November and on into next year.

If you have ever wondered about the beginnings of automobile use on Cape Cod, be sure to attend the Annual Meeting on Sunday, August 17, when Stephen Hatch, Assistant Curator of History at Heritage Museums and Gardens and Curator of the Automobile Collection, will present a lecture entitled "*The Automobile Comes to Chatham*". This will be an illustrated talk about the earliest days of automobiles on Cape Cod, using pictures from many of the Cape towns. Travel back with us to the days of dusters and goggles, ten mile per hour speed limits, and when high performance meant a one-cylinder engine with a tiller for steering! There is no charge and everyone is welcome. Light refreshments will be served.



An early motor vehicle decorated for a parade

Sunday, October 12, author Jim Coogan will recreate the Cape Cod that nurtured the writing of that "Prolific Pencil," Joseph C. Lincoln. The focus of the program will be on Lincoln's early years growing up in Brewster and the locus and characters that became part of his image of Cape Cod. Using slides to illustrate his talk, Mr. Coogan will present us with "*Joe Lincoln's Cape Cod*".

Our November program, on Sunday, November 9, will be presented by Dan Haff who has spent "30 years of fun and frustration with old time pieces". He will describe to us the "*American Clock Industry: 1800 to World War II*", commenting on clocks in the museum's collection and his own. Mr. Haff is the current President of the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors.

The Annual Meeting and the October lecture will both be held at the new Community Center on Main Street in Chatham. Since the special exhibit will have closed, the November lecture will be back in the Atwood House on Stage Harbor Road. All lectures are at 2:00 pm.

2008 Monday Children's Programs

This summer's Monday program for children began on July 7th with a program about going to sea. The children learned what it was like to be a cabin boy aboard a sailing ship and created their own "scrimshaw" on a candle to take home.

The programs will continue on Monday mornings through August 25th. For information on the remaining programs and to enroll your child or grandchild, call the Chatham Historical Society at 508- 945-2493. The programs are for children ages 7 through 12.

Found in the archives:

That Dear Old Chatham

**New Yorker Former Cape Codder,
Loves It, but Has No Illusions**

To the Editor of The New York Times:

I write in reply to the letter of Harold Dunbar of Chatham, Mass., who complains that "the average New Yorker could neither understand nor believe Cape Cod." As a former Summer resident of Chatham who is also an average New Yorker, I resent Mr. Dunbar's assertion.

I used to live on the hilltop at Ryder's Cove, where Captain Nickerson (progenitor of fifty thousand Nickersons in America), who bought the place from the Indians, lies buried with the thousands of Indians who haggled with him over the price of the town of Chatham, which he founded. But the city of Chatham sold my property at tax sale and I had to move away.

As I hold the tax bill before me, I notice that the tax rate is \$25.30 on \$1,000 and not \$20 as stated by Mr. Dunbar, and that the furniture was taxed as well, bringing the rate up to \$28. This, despite the 81 per cent Republican vote, is still a pretty high tax rate.

And it may well be that no automobile was ever stolen in Chatham, but my rowboats certainly had a habit of disappearing and walking over dry land in an incredible fashion.

As Slim, the owner of a garage on the Chathamport Road, used to say, "T'ain't for nothing that we natives, strictly among ourselves, call this here town Cheatham, for we've got two months to make enough to last us all Winter."

Yes, dear old Chatham, the erstwhile Port Fortune of Samuel de Champlain, the haven of pirates, still runs true to its pirate lore. We New Yorkers love it and understand it only too well.

Gustave B. Garfield

New York, Jan. 19, 1939.

As many of you know, Sabin "Slim" Hutchings was chosen by Alice Stallknecht to be the model for her paintings of the Christ figure in the murals now in the Society's Mural Barn. It is said that she selected Slim for his appearance, not only for his personality or character!

Children working on ideas for their scrimshaw candles.



Two Twenty-Somethings Score

The Society has been blest this summer with the presence of two young people volunteering their time and talents for the benefit of the organization. Each has taken on responsibilities for projects to be completed before they are back to college and off to a new job and career.

Aaron Ristino, a history and education major at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, MA, began in May researching information about the *Red Cloud* to be featured as the second ship in the new Wendy Wade Costello Gallery located in the hall on the lower level. Working under the supervision of Archivist Mary Ann Gray, Aaron uncovered the material he used to write the text for the explanatory panels accompanying the map featuring the *Red Cloud* voyage. He will receive college credit for this work. Should you come to the museum on Saturday or Thursday evening, you may meet Aaron as he also is donating his time as a docent during some of those days.

A magna cum laude graduate of Tufts University, Rachel Geylin found out about us by Googling volunteer opportunities in Chatham. Her experience includes work in various media, a good background for the projects she has undertaken. In addition to preparing press releases and an advertisement for the local media, she is exploring establishing a contact with staff of the Boston Globe. Further, she is reviewing web sites with the goal of placing the Society and Museum on appropriate listings. Nancy Yeaw is Rachel's contact from the Society. Come September, Rachel leaves the Society and her summer job at Goodies to teach English at the primary or secondary level somewhere in Spain.

Rachel and Aaron, well done. Thank you and best wishes for whatever lies ahead this year and in the years to come.

SHOP YOUR MUSEUM SHOP



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TOYS, GIFTS & MORE.**

10% MEMBER DISCOUNT



**CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOOKS BY MAIL:
WWW.CHATHAMHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG**

Tenth Annual Antique Show and Sale

Preparations for the Society's annual antiques sale—to be held September 13th and 14th—are under way to make this year's sale an event worthy of its tenth anniversary status. At least 800 guests and 30 dealers—with a wide range of antiques—are expected to attend. Admission is being held at last year's \$6.00 bargain price. One ticket will be valid for both days, as well as for admission to the Atwood House Museum. Count on coming and bringing friends and relatives.

Rest assured that this will not be "just another antiques sale". Two special events will be held on Sunday. Gerry Nickerson will be signing the book she and her late husband, Joe Nickerson, wrote about Chatham sea captains, and a silent auction is scheduled. The silent auction is particularly where members of the Society come in: we are hoping that — between now and August 22nd — you will

drop off at the lower level accessed by the driveway (or call 508 945-2493 to make special arrangements) those items (not only antiques) you have that you believe might be attractive and saleable in a silent auction. We are looking to the auction and members' donations of items to contribute significantly to this important fundraising event. One of CHS' largest special activities, the proceeds help meet the costs of the museum's exhibits, children's programs, and essential operating costs and thus benefit Society members and museum visitors.

So plan to come, bring neighbors and guests, donate items for the silent auction, as well as the museum table, and (ultimately) become a financial sponsor of this event.

Reed Hertford

Chairman of the Antique Show and Sale



From the Chairman

Because I recently have completed ten years of active involvement with the Society, it seemed appropriate to review the events and the changes that have occurred since 1998.

I began by reading the minutes of the Executive Board minutes during 1998, where I was reminded of how relatively small and low key everything was. Except for about four lectures between October and April, there was very little activity at the museum other than guided tours three afternoons a week between mid-June and mid-September. There were about 1000 visitors that year, mostly during the summer, while in 2007 we had more than 3700, mainly between May and December. Today opening time has been expanded through October, and instead of three afternoons a week, the museum now is open five afternoons, while in July and August it is open all day and Thursday evenings, 6 - 8 pm.

The operating budget for 1997 totaled \$50,035, while in 2007 it was \$143,390. Dues receipts for 1997 were \$7,945, but in 2007 dues receipts amounted to \$59,481. Other figures that reflect our growth are utilities, which in 1997 cost \$5,170, while in 2007 they were \$11,541. Insurance in 1997 cost \$2,678, but in 2007 that amount was \$8,494.

Of course we now have many expenses that did not even exist in 1998, such as computer and internet costs, archival materials, and the Atwood Log. While some of the difference in operating costs is attributable to inflation, much is the result of the expansion of our plant and our operations.

Outside of the summer season in 1998, there was very little activity at the museum. It was rare to find anyone working there, except for the president, who usually stopped by most days to open the mail. For an hour or two on Tuesday afternoons the curator would come in and make a few entries in the accession book.

But in 1998 there were a few seeds planted that ultimately led to growth and expansion. At this time the Society had about \$140,000 in certificates of deposit that were earning only a modest return. Consequently we opened a brokerage account with Fidelity Investments and began moving money into the account as the CD's matured. A year later that account had a balance of \$276,043. We began work on the Museum Assessment Program, which culminated in the spring of 1999 with the recommendation that we form a long range planning committee if we were to have a vigorous, forward looking organization. We created our web site, and we bought a computer to replace the old one that apparently had nothing on it and that no one ever used. Even more important, it was decided to begin an inventory of the collection, a task undertaken by Dwight and Florine Myer and Rosalie Moretti.

But it was not until a morning in 1999, however, when Mary Ann Gray appeared on our doorstep that serious cataloging of the collection began. That day she was given two shopping bags of records of two families in Chatham to organize and catalogue, and when she had completed that task, she began going through a vast amount of material scattered throughout the museum that never had been properly filed or cataloged. Shortly before her arrival we had bought the Past Perfect Museum Program and began to use it for cataloging the collection. A year later we acquired a second computer so that Mary Ann and Florine would each have one for

entering items into the program. Today some 7000 photographs have been entered in our computer system, and there are easily 400 boxes of archival material in the storeroom, the contents of which also are recorded in the computer.

In September of 1999, the Long Range Planning Committee began meeting every two weeks. Norman Pacun, David Oakley, Nancy Yeaw, and Jan Nickerson had been recruited to serve on this committee, along with several members of the Executive Board. By February of 2000, the Planning Committee made its first report to the Board with the recommendation that we hire architect Edward C. Collins (Ned) to create plans that would reflect the needs of the Society and the Museum that had been envisioned by those who were involved with archival work and museum space. Mary Ann Gray calculated the number of archival containers we could expect to have and extrapolated from that the storage space necessary. Others expressed the need for a special exhibit gallery that could double as a meeting room and a new gallery for an exhibit on the history of commercial fishing.

Between 2000 and 2003 David Oakley and Jan Nickerson successfully conducted the capital fund drive; and with the cooperation of John Meister, we were prepared for groundbreaking on November 21, 2003. Construction continued over the next two years, with most work completed in time for reopening in early June of 2005.

The official reopening events took place on June 24th, with an invitational reception for donors under a large tent in the parking area of the museum. We proudly showed off a sparkling renewed and expanded museum, which had been completed on time and within budget. In 2006 we received a bequest from the estate of Ted Norman of 1.2 million dollars that helped create an endowment fund of half a million more than proposed in our capital fund drive.

The result of these nearly ten years of planning, fundraising, and construction is one of the finest history museums in the area that is the envy of just about every other historical society on the Cape. We now have not only spacious and well-lighted galleries, including one available for meetings and lectures and for annual special exhibits, but we also have greatly expanded and improved working areas. Where we had one computer in 1998, we now have nine that are networked and connected to the Past Perfect Program. Formerly we had one aged copy machine, but now we have a smaller one for most tasks and a large and versatile copier that is capable of performing the necessary archival work and of publishing many of our fliers and brochures. Thanks to the efforts of David Oakley, the names and addresses of all members are in the computer, making it possible to track dues payments and to generate letters to them. There are four computers devoted exclusively to archival work, and on most Tuesdays and Thursdays they are all in use. The antique clothing and textile collection is housed in its own storage and work area and much of it has been cataloged. The research room is used frequently by members and guests, and the archival storage room, though spacious, is filling up rapidly.

Continued on page 7

From the Archives:

*Food for thought: "Why does history matter? Daniel Boorstin put it very well 'Trying to plan for the future without a sense of the past is like trying to plant cut flowers.'"*¹

It may seem a long time until October, as you read this Log in July, but before we know, the fall season will start here in Chatham. Fall brings fewer visitors, hopefully more spare time, and the start of new program schedules in the community. The Society of American Archivists has designated this October as **American Archives Month**. To help celebrate this month, the Chatham Historical Society Archives will be offering a second series of programs on preserving your personal papers. Two sessions will be scheduled for Wednesday evenings in October.

Aside from offering programs such as those described above, it is also the intent to keep you informed about the mission of the archives. In the course of Chatham's daily life, individuals, organizations and government entities create and keep information about their activities. While the CHS archives are not the official keeper of the town government records, many of the town committees generate items that have public distribution. CHS acquires these documents, generally as gifts from individuals, but may also purchase items from sources such as rare book dealers, antique stores, and the Internet. Local organizations may also re-

quest that the Society store their papers if they do not have an adequate repository of their own.

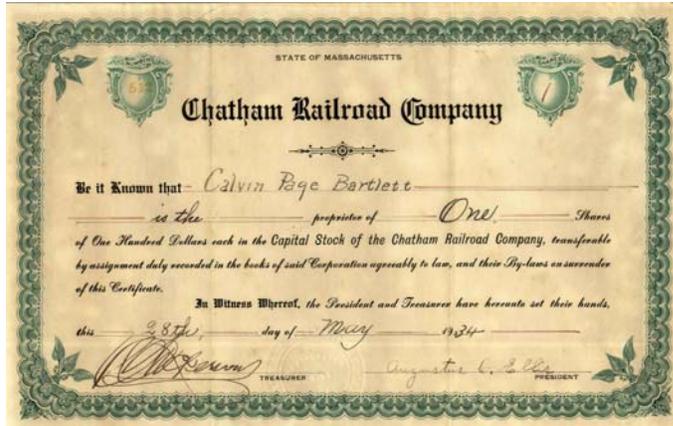
The task of the archivist is to assess, collect, organize, preserve, maintain control of and provide access to the portions of this information that have lasting value. Archivists keep records that have value as reliable memories of the past, and they help visitors find and understand the information they need in those records. Thus, the CHS archives can be seen as one of the keepers of Chatham's collective memory.

The records and the places in which they are stored are referred to as the "Archives." Archival records may take many forms, including correspondence, diaries, financial and legal documents, photographs, video or sound recordings as well as electronic records. In addition, pertinent newspaper clippings, photocopied onto archival safe paper, are also collected and stored.

CHS's archives are organized to assist both the person seeking information about his or her ancestors and the individual trying to ferret out the historical evidence available about history of the town of Chatham. All of the records are being cataloged in a computer program called Past Perfect, especially designed for use by museums. This program will allow

individuals to search for their particular interests. If you wish to use the archives, it is suggested that you call and make an appointment to ensure that someone will be available to assist you.

Mary Ann Gray, Archivist



Sample from the archives of Chatham Railroad Company Stock

¹"History in Danger", *Parade*, June 22, 2008, p. 11.

Continued from page 6

Most important in all of these changes is the tremendous increase in activity at the museum throughout the year. Where in 1998 it was rare to find anyone at the museum when it was not open, now the parking lot is nearly filled with cars on most days throughout the year. In short, The Atwood House Museum bustles with the activity of a growing number of volunteers performing all necessary tasks. Among those is the publication of scholarly historical works, and in 2007 we published the long-awaited history of commercial fishing in the area, *Beyond the Bar*, written by Robert Carlisle.

Continuity of these activities is assured by the presence of our most able administrator, Margaret Martin, five mornings a week and of our dedicated president, Cynthia McCue, who oversees operations almost full time.

But we do not intend to rest here. In 2006 we formed a long range Strategic Planning Committee that is formulating plans for better ways to fulfill our mission in future years.

Finally, we currently are seeking new and creative ways to increase our annual income so that we soon will be able to hire professional help to assist us in doing an even better job. Clearly The Chatham Historical Society has become a vibrant and forward-looking organization that is recognized for its excellence throughout the region.

Spencer Y. Grey



Education Coordinator Richard Curcio and children from the Summer program studying sailing terms

Mission Statement

The mission of the Chatham Historical Society is to inform and educate present and future generations about the history and culture of Chatham and vicinity by collecting and preserving records of earlier generations, and by exhibiting and interpreting art, artifacts, archives, and places of historical interest.

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

Annual Meeting of the Chatham Historical Society: Sunday, August 17, 2 pm At the Community Center

Speaker: Stephen Hatch "*The Automobile Comes to
Chatham*", Admission Free

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

Tenth Annual Chatham Historical Society Antiques Sale for Cape Cod

Saturday, September 13, 10 am to 5 pm and
Sunday, September 14, 12 noon to 4 pm

At the Chatham Elementary School on Depot Road,
Admission Fee \$6

Event will include a Silent Auction and a book signing by Gerry Nickerson of "*Chatham's Sea
Captains in the Age of Sail*" on Sunday

Afternoons at the Atwood Lecture Series

Sunday, October 12, 2008 Jim Coogan: "Joe Lincoln's Cape Cod"

Lecture at the Chatham Community Center Donations Welcome

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

Lecture at The Atwood House Museum Donations Welcome

All lectures take place at 2 pm



The Museum Shop is open whenever the museum is open