

WINTER 2011

The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society





From the Director/Curator

Alice Stallknecht –A Product of her Times

When one hears the name Alice Stallknecht, depending on who you are, all sorts of images flood the mind – of course the iconic images currently housed in AHM’s appropriately named Mural Barn come to mind, also perhaps the thought of Alice and her husband living and painting in the relatively quiet surroundings of 1930s and 40s Chatham—seemingly her panoptic murals emerging from the crucible of small town New England. However, this is too simple to be true - perhaps one view of her that warrants further investigation and scholarship would be her role as both a product and reflection of the times in which she lived.

Stallknecht’s evolution as an artist was influenced by numerous people and contexts. Her early tutelage by Daniel Beard regarding the plight of the working class would plant deep-rooted seeds that would see fruition in her “Each man to his Trade” mural.¹ She was also undoubtedly influenced by E.H. Blashfield, Violet Oakley, and numerous others (figs. 1 & 2), and I would argue, became convinced of the power and impact that (narrative) murals could have on a given audience. Stallknecht’s mentor E. H. Blashfield stated regarding mural painting that “there was no greater art form to which an artist could aspire.”² It is no accident, too, that many of these mural artists’ works would decorate civic buildings – helping to underscore and undergird the didactic mural narrative as an important tool to explaining and contextualizing our (distinctly American) democracy, values, and ethos. The role of muralist as an instrument of national identity was further reinforced by FDR’s Works Progress Administration that actually paid artists to decorate public spaces, thus galvanizing and validating the artist as an integral and valued member of American society. During the 1930s America was in trouble – the Great Depression and the New Deal occurred symbiotically, with economic recovery the illusory goal.³ Only the Second World War would provide the context in which America could recover economically. Interestingly, during the 1930s and early 1940s Stallknecht had



*Fig. 1 The Festival of Spring
Edwin H. Blashfield - circa 1890*

Cont’d on opposite page



Fig. 2 Mural in PA State Capitol, Violet Oakley, executed during the 1920s

¹Ingrid A. Steffensen and Patricia Likos Ricci. “Alice Stallknecht: Every Woman to Her Trade.” *Woman’s Art Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Autumn, 2005 - Winter, 2006), p. 14

²Steffensen & Likos, p. 15.

³David M. Kennedy. *Freedom from Fear*. New York, Oxford University Press:1999

Chatham Historical Society

Executive Board

Chairman

John J. King II

Vice Chairman

Norman Pacun

Secretary

Phyllis C. Freeman

Treasurer

Linda Cebula

Executive Director

Mark Wilkins

Trustees

Stephanie Bartlett

Reed Hertford

Paul R. Mangelinkx

Cynthia B. McCue

RoseMarie McLoughlin

Virginia T. Nickerson

Alan T. Sachtleben

Deborah Swenson

E. B. Wilson

Nancy B. Yeaw

Andrew Young

Operating Board

Executive Director/Curator

Mark Wilkins

Archives

Mary Ann Gray

Buildings & Grounds

Wayne Jostrand

Costumes & Textiles

Janet Marjolle

Education

Richard Curcio

Galleries & Displays

Mary Ann Fritsch

Hospitality

Cindy Knight

Marketing & Public Relations

Membership

Sue Halligan

Museum Shop

Barbara Newberry

Programs

Publications & Library

Volunteers

Carol Kolb

Board of Overseers

Sally Ackerman

Compton Allyn

Richard Batchelder, Jr.

Tamara Bazzle

Edward C. Collins, II

Bernard Cornwell

Carolyn Yeaw Coursen

Stephen S. Daniel

Robert C. Eldred

Charles Fleischmann, III

William G. Litchfield

Walter J. Meier

Joshua A. Nickerson, Jr.

David R. Oakley

Phyllis Nickerson Power

Norman S. Portenoy

Mark Simonitsch

Linda Wiseman

Administrator/Newsletter Editor

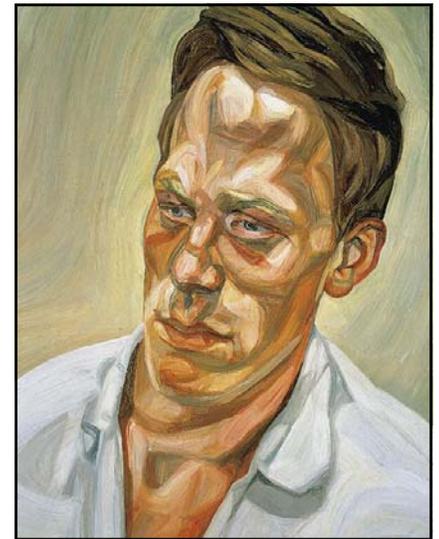
Margaret L. Martin

Cont'd from page 2

her own theory as to what undergirded American democracy – in short; religion. However, even this ideology was not without its influences – J. S. Sargent's epic mural entitled *Triumph of Religion* (see fig. 3) must have had an impact on Stallknecht (if not stylistically then at least in terms of content and medium) - as did her travels in Europe; by her own admission she was no stranger to the religiosity of Byzantine mosaics.⁴ As astutely mentioned by William Agee, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, her style bore important similarities to the German Expressionists of the 1920s, such as Oskar Kokoschka, George Grosz, Carl Hofer and Otto Dix.⁵ Interestingly, the influence of Stallknecht may have been felt by such contemporary painters as Lucian Freud (fig. 4), whose style is somewhat reminiscent and displays similar expressive handling of musculature and dissonance of color. Finally, regarding her emphasis on the primacy of religion, it is easy to see how she reached this conclusion – with what would become the modern welfare state in its infancy by the mid 1930s, and industrial capitalism seen as exploitative to the American worker, what then would people turn to as a unifying factor for our democracy? Religion, democracy and decent work for all of America's people were core values of Stallknecht and her art and of the American people – then and now.



Fig. 3 Dogma of the Redemption: Trinity; Crucifix and Frieze of Angels. Installed 1903 J.S.Sargent. (Triumph of Religion refers to the group of murals as a whole).



**Fig. 4 Lucian Freud
A Painter - 1962**

⁴Steffensen & Likos, p. 15.

⁵Agee, Goodrich, Wight, Mongan & Forsyth, *A New England Town: A Portrait by Alice Stallknecht (1880-1973)*. Houston; The Museum of Fine Arts, 1977. p. 3.

**Mark C. Wilkins,
Executive Director/Curator**

2011 Winter and Spring Lectures

Among the myriad of activities available to the winter resident and visitor to Chatham is the Atwood House Museum lecture series. These lectures are held, usually, on the second Sunday of the month at 2:00 pm. This winter and spring they will be in the Mural Barn here at the Museum. Lectures are scheduled for February 13, March 13, April 10, May 15, and June 12. The May lecture is the third Sunday to avoid interference with Mother's Day activities.

The February 13 lecture will be presented by Peter Arenstam, the Maritime Artisans Manager at Plimoth Plantation. His talk will cover the building and sailing of the reproduction ship, "Mayflower II", from England to America in 1957. He will also talk about what is going on with the ship this winter and in the time leading up to 2020.



**Peter Arenstam with the
"Mayflower II" in the background**

The March lecture will be presented by Stephen O'Neill called "A Proper Farewell: Aspects of 19th Century Mourning". In April, Museum Director/Curator Mark Wilkins will present a lecture about clipper ships entitled "The Rise and Fall of the Ameri-

can Clipper Ship". Society archivist Mary Ann Gray will speak about Chatham businesses in May in a lecture entitled "Open for Business". Director Mark Wilkins will provide another talk in June which will relate to an addition to the current special exhibition on the China Trade, highlighting trade with Japan. The title of this lecture is "Japanese and American Acculturation during the 19th century".

As always, the lecture committee has assembled a varied and interesting group of programs for the enjoyment of Cape Cod residents and visitors. We hope that you will take advantage of these programs as often as your schedule and interest allow. The lectures continue to be offered free; however, donations are always welcome to offset expenses. The museum shop will be open before and after each lecture for your shopping pleasure.



**Painting in the museum's collection
of clipper ship "Wild Rover"**

Sign Up for the October China Tour Now

Reservations are continuing to be taken for the China Tour arranged by the Chatham Historical Society in coordination with Viking River Cruises. The tour will begin with two nights in Shanghai, and continue for six days on the Yangtze River, one night in Xian, and then on to Beijing for three nights. The twelve day tour entitled "The Imperial Jewels of China" begins October 9, 2011. This tour includes the Great Wall and the Terra Cotta Army, both UNESCO Sites, a Shanghai/Bund tour, the Shanghai Museum, the Shiboazhai Temple, Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, Peking Opera, Shanghai Acrobatic Troupe revue, scenic cruising in the Three Gorges, a visit to a special school for children, and more. National Geographic Society rates this tour as the fourth best river cruise in the world.



Performance by Chinese Acrobats

It is possible to extend your journey for an interesting and exciting four nights in Hong Kong and Guilin. Viking personnel can assist with travel arrangements to China.

Our ship for the six days on the Yangtze River will be the Viking Emerald, a brand new ship being launched this spring, featuring balconies with all staterooms, European cuisine, lectures and programs on Chinese culture and history, and up-to-date technology - all to enhance the edification and enjoyment of the cruise. The ship's staff all speak identifiable English. Accommodations have been reserved for up to forty-four people and will be assigned on a first come-first served basis.

The idea of a trip to this burgeoning economic power house with its historical sites and ancient antiquities was generated as a result of the museum's outstanding "Chatham to China" special exhibit continuing in the Oscar Nickerson Gallery for the 2011 season. The China trade era was very much a part of the historical marine tradition in Chatham as reflected in the collection of the Atwood House Museum. A portion of the cruise fare will benefit the Chatham Historical Society. We invite you to take advantage of this special opportunity to learn more about this interesting and changing major world country.

For further information, please call the Society at 508-945-2493. You will be referred to the expert travel agent ably assisting the Society with arrangements.



View of Shanghai



Children's Flute Class



Beijing Street Scene

Colonial Camp



Mob Cap such as this might be made during the camp

This June, the Historical Society will offer a four day colonial activity experience at the close of the school year. The camp will run for four days from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM. The planned activities are designed for children between the ages of 9 and 12 years. Participants will spend time carrying out activities that would have been part of life during the early years of the family occupying the Atwood House. These activities will include learning about the herbs in our herb garden, dyeing yarn and then weaving with the yarn, constructing a mob cap and a simple apron, making ink and using a quill pen, learning about the use of trees for making ship masts, and preparing a drum such as would have been used in the militia. Attendees will have an opportunity to choose what they wish to do from the available activities on the first day of camp. It is hoped that those who attend will be able to join the Historical Society's entry in the Fourth of July Parade. The fee for the camp, including a snack, is yet to be determined. Check the web site and the next Atwood Log for more details as they are developed.



The Crowell Sailor's Valentine

Among the prized treasures found in the Atwood House Museum is the Sailor's Valentine, pictured on the cover of this issue of the *Atwood Log*. Brought to Chatham from the West Indies by Captain John Crowell (1814-1864) who captained the Brig Boston and probably shared ownership of the ship with his brother Captain David Howes Crowell (1820-1920), the Sailor's Valentine was given to the Museum by his grandson, John H. Crowell.

Throughout the 19th century, these exquisite hand crafted "shell mosaics" were popular souvenirs brought home to wives and sweethearts upon the return of sailors from their long journeys. Most of the shell work was done in Barbados using native shells. Sailors would place an order during a stopover while sailing south and pick up the completed gift on the return trip.

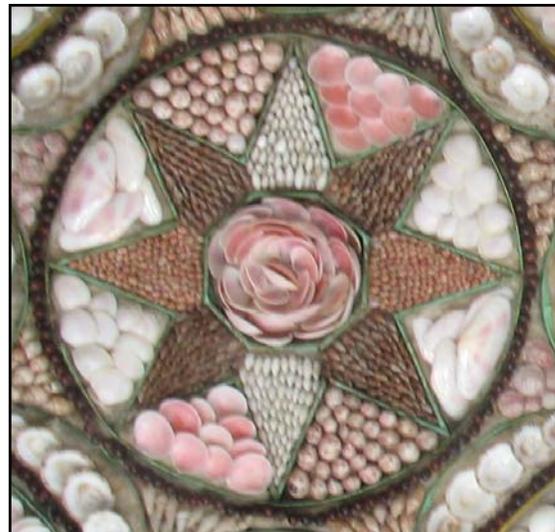
The Museum's Sailor's Valentine is considered to be rare and especially desirable because of its large double hinged wooden boxes, mostly made of rosewood, its unusual floral shell pattern on one side, and its known Chatham based and documented provenance.

Over time it became clear that the shells needed cleaning and the patterns realigned in the original designs. The Museum was most fortunate to find Sandi Blanda, a skilled professional who took an interest in restoring the shell work. Each individual shell was washed twice, broken ones replaced with the same species, and the patterns reestablished

as before. Ms. Blanda photographed each step of the process and left the Museum a report of her findings along with copies of the photographs. We are most grateful for the delicate care she has given to this beautiful highlight of the Museum's collections.

The Sailor's Valentine is now back in its case in the Spencer Y. Grey Maritime Gallery awaiting your inspection.

Cynthia McCue



Detail of the Crowell Sailor's Valentine

Winter Vacation Classes at the Atwood House

The Chatham Historical Society will be offering a condensed version of the 2010 **Monday Mornings at the Museum** classes for Elementary Students during this February School Vacation. The classes will run for three consecutive mornings from 10 am until noon.

The dates and topics are:

Tuesday, February 22 Chatham and the Cod Fish
Wednesday, February 23 History of Oysters
Thursday, February 24 Chatham and the China Trade

These mini-courses will elicit the best learning activities from the extended subjects offered during the summer of 2010. With Chatham and the Cod Fish, students will learn about the Life Cycle of the Cod Fish and its history of plenty to the scarcity of today. To help students understand the impact of the Cod Fish, they will play the gold fish cracker, straw and corn flake game. The aim of the game is to learn about scarcity. Some other activities are drawing the Life Cycle of the Cod Fish and examining, then cooking, and sampling salted Cod Fish. Many of the activities used in the class were developed by the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association.

The next offering deals with the History of the Oyster and is replete with hands on activities. Students will be given oysters to examine, draw, describe and place in a pile for others to identify based on the given descriptions. Like the Cod Fish, the Life Cycle of the Oyster needs to be understood by the students. Demonstrations on oyster shucking

and the making of Oysters Casino may turn a few students into devoted oyster lovers.

The final area of study concerns Chatham's Connection with China. They will play a To Tell the Truth Game on Confucius, make an examination of the decisions reached by Captain Isaac H. White, and listen to the reading of a Chinese Folk Tale on Cold Foods followed by the sampling of Tea Eggs. Other activities are designed to replicate



Children working on projects last summer

a Chatham boy's experience on a Clipper Ship headed for China. Most important, students are to search and find specific artifacts displayed in the Atwood House Museum's China Trade Exhibit.

Parents may register their student by calling Margaret Martin at the Atwood House Museum. The number is 508-945-2493. The fee for each class is \$5. Additional information will be made available by calling or e-mailing Richard Curcio at 508-945-3080 or scchatham@comcast.net. For planning purposes we are requesting that reservations be made on or before February 16 at 1:00 pm by calling the museum phone number above.

Planning Begins for Monday Mornings at the Museum Children's Summer Program 2011

During the months of July and August the Chatham Historical Society will again offer eight Monday morning educational programs for children. The first topic for the 2011 **Monday Mornings at the Museum** program (weeks 1, 2, 3) will cover Chatham's favorite son, Neesima Shimeter and 19th century Samurai Japan. Topic number two (weeks 4 and 5) will discuss the cranberry and its influence on Chatham and Cape Cod. Finally, myths and facts of the Great White Shark (weeks 6, 7, 8) are scheduled to be the last offerings for the summer of 2011.

The program will be taught by two retired educators with assistance from museum interns and adult volunteers. Importantly, the curriculum focus and teaching methodology are dedicated to reaching different ages and ability levels. This will be accomplished by using art projects, learning games, cooking lessons, computer on-line resources, small group work, and individualization. A primary goal is to teach Chatham history through the use of applicable resources from the Atwood House Museum. To do all this effectively, the stu-

dents will be challenged with appropriate age level activities by practicing cooperative learning skills in a relaxed, yet highly structured environment. Further, creating a fun based learning instruction helps to guarantee a student stress free experience.

There will be new classmates to meet; while some are year round residents, many are summer children coming from metropolitan cities and western states. In the past, contributing to the summer program's richness and its unique learning environment, there have also been students hailing from foreign countries. Most assuredly, all students will smile and learn with and from their new friends. At the end of each class, exiting students will leave with completed projects ranging from shark masks and origami samurai hats to cranberry muffins and much more. Additional **Monday Mornings at the Museum** details will be forthcoming during the month of May. In the meantime, questions may be directed to Richard Curcio, Educational Coordinator, by e-mailing him at scchatham@comcast.net.

From the Archives - The Society's Library

An amazing process is occurring in the library of the Chatham Historical Society. Susan Bauer with the help of Jean Young is cataloging the books using the Dewey Decimal System, the same system used by the Eldredge Public Library. The purpose of this activity is to make using the library much easier to those researchers who are at the museum with the ultimate goal of placing the records on the internet, thus making them available to a much wider audience. As the books are cataloged, we are taking care to use preservation techniques for those books that have been identified as rare or valuable to the history of Chatham. While the collection is not large, in terms of volumes, it is growing slowly, The collection policy is to acquire books related to the items in the collection, the exhibits, preservation and conservation methods, museum procedures and practices, as well as books about Chatham and by Chatham authors. Each time a request is granted to an author to use material and photographs from the collection, the author signs an agreement to give one copy of his or her book to the library. The number of volumes added in this manner is also increasing. If you would like to use the library (it is non-circulating) for research, please contact the museum for an appointment.

Mary Ann Gray, Archivist



Photos from Children's Summer programs 2010



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 _____

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.

347 Stage Harbor Road
PO Box 709
Chatham, MA 02633



NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE PAID
CHATHAM MA
PERMIT NO. 11

Mark Your Calendars

Coming up at The Chatham Historical Society & Atwood House Museum

Afternoons at the Atwood Lecture Series

Lectures for Winter and Spring 2011
2 pm at The Atwood House Museum

Sunday, February 13, 2011

Speaker: Peter Arenstam
"Mayflower II"

Sunday, March 13, 2011

Speaker: Stephen O'Neill
"A Proper Farewell: Aspects of 19th Century Mourning"

Sunday, April 10

Speaker: Mark Wilkins
"The Rise and Fall of the American Clipper Ship"

Sunday, May 15

Speaker: Mary Ann Gray
"Open for Business"

Other Events

Saturday, February 12, 2011

Valentine's Day Tea, 2 - 5 pm

Children's Programs to be held during February School Vacation Week, see details inside

