

Levi Atwood

by **Spencer Grey**

One morning in January 1839, fifteen-year-old Levi Atwood and his cousin Joseph, who had spent the night, arose early in his family's house on Atwood Street (now Stage Harbor Road), scratched around among the coals in the kitchen fireplace and made up a fire. Next they went to the barn, foddered the cattle with salt hay, and then went over to the cedar swamp to cut ice for them to drink. Returning to the house, they made their breakfast before setting off to school. Along the way they stopped for a moment to slide down the hill behind their Uncle Elnathan Mayo's house, before going to Joseph's house to turn out his father's cattle and fodder them. Then they crossed the street to the Atwood School, where class had just begun.

Levi clearly was attentive to his studies, for nine years later in 1848 he taught the winter term of the school in Chatham's District 4. In its report for that year the school committee noted that in his class of 43 students "... good order was maintained and school appears to have been commendably still, studious, and profitable. It is to be regretted that the ill health of the teacher cut short the term two weeks."

The following year he opened the Atwood Store in a barn on the corner of Pond Street (now Stage Harbor

Road) and Cedar Street. In 1850 he married a fellow teacher, Phoebe Mason, and built a house next to his store. The Atwood Store carried about anything one could need, including groceries, hardware, farmers' tools, paper hangings, carpets, clocks, boots, paints and much more. An advertisement in the Barnstable Patriot on June 17, 1862 refers to it as "Chatham Cheap Store," and claims that Levi Atwood's store has the exclusive right to sell THE ONE DIME COFFEE in Chatham. In 1899



**AT THE
ATWOOD HOUSE**

Levi's son, L. Sidney Atwood, moved the store to Main Street, and there it expanded and prospered until Levi's grandson, L. Sidney Atwood, his wife, Gladys, and their son, Wallace, closed the door for the last time in

1964.

During his life, Levi was one of the most notable citizens of Chatham, serving on the school committee beginning in 1856, establishing and editing the Chatham Monitor in 1879, serving as town clerk and treasurer from 1874 to 1876, and as chairman of the board of assessors in 1876. In addition to operating his store and serving in all of those town capacities, he was a deacon, superintendent of the Congregational Sabbath schools, and a member of the choir for 50 years. He died quietly in his sleep in 1898.