



ATWOOD LOG

FALL/WINTER 2017/2018



THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY



From the Executive Director

Greetings,

With the arrival of Fall, you would think that the Museum is slowing down, right? Hardly!

Your Museum is open year-round. At times, there are more people in the Museum in the middle of winter than on a sunny day in the summer. How is this possible?

Our Archives, Research, Costumes & Textiles, Administration, Membership, Development, Lecture Committee and Exhibit Planning teams work all year long. You can contact us by email at info@chathamhistorical.org, access our contact page on our website at www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org, or stop in for more information on how you can access these departments, volunteer, or participate in the many activities that the Museum has to offer. In addition to the many activities, we also host special events, lectures, and offer space rental for functions. Whether you want to use our library or archives for research, donate items, or learn about how to get more involved, we are interested in hearing from you.

Are you aware that we offer private tours throughout the year? Private tours are available for groups including schools, seniors, reunions, and those with special interests by making reservations in advance. Whether you want to conduct a class or host a unique function in a gallery, the Museum staff and team of volunteers remain accessible and enthusiastic about accommodating requests.

This winter, we plan to update some of our permanent exhibits and design one or two new ones for you to enjoy. Restoration work on the foundation of the Old House has begun and, at the same time, we are developing a new website.

Our 2017 season is filled with successes thanks to your generous support and involvement. Thank you for being a part of the Chatham Historical Society and the Atwood House & Museum.

Danielle



DOUBLE TAKE

Historical & Current Panoramic Photographs of Chatham



New exhibit offers “Double Take” on Chatham, then and now

Thanks to an incredible attic find, visitors to the Atwood House & Museum will be able to see panoramic views of Chatham as it was in the early 1900s next to the same views today and compare just how much things have changed – or not.

A preview of “Double Take: Historical & Current Panoramic Photographs of Chatham” was the result of a year of curating a remarkable collection of negatives and then taking pictures of the same views by Museum Archivist Jean Young and her husband, Andy Young. A “sneak preview” of the exhibit was held Oct. 7- 8, and visitors were able to see selected images. They were also encouraged to share their own reminiscences and thoughts on comment sheets near each display. The full exhibit will open in Spring 2018.

The glass and acetate negatives were discovered in a box in the attic of the Mayflower Shop at the center of town by its previous owners, William and Jacqueline Cotter. They are believed to be a remnant of the Mayflower Studio, operated at the same location by photographers Charles Smallhoff

(Continued on page 14)

Life As It Was

By Janet Marjollet
Costumes & Textiles

In 1656, William Nickerson, a tailor from England, purchased territory here in the Monomoyick land on what is now called Ryder's Cove, then called Monomoit. William, his wife, Anne Busby Nickerson, and their large family settled here in 1664.

By 1682, he purchased 4,000 acres from the sachem Mattaquason. Monomoit was given the English name Chatham, and was incorporated as a town in 1712.

During the early years, life was a daily struggle. The colonists were taught how to survive by the native Wampanoag people. The settlers learned which berries to gather and the best way to plant, corn, beans, potatoes and squash in the new environment. The Wampanoag also taught them how to harvest shellfish. The early settlers built shelters and cleared the land for planting flax. These first comers brought animals with them; a cow for providing milk and, after churning, butter and cheese; and sheep, which enabled them to use the wool necessary to weave the cloth for the harsh winters they endured. Cooking utensils and a plentiful supply of soap were among the prized possessions the early settlers brought with them. After a few years, the colonists made soap from the wood ash and cooking grease of their homesteading activities, and from the large supply of tallow and lard they had on hand after the fall butchering of the animals they used for food.



The mainstays of these early settlers were family life, religion, and education. Women spent long hours weaving the flax fibers into linen thread and preparing the wool from the sheep before it could be spun into coverlets, blankets, and clothing. The children were educated in the homes.

The first Congregational church was started by William Nickerson in 1690.

Seven of William's children built dwellings on the land he gave them. By 1800, 90 percent of the population was related to William Nickerson and today he is the progenitor of many thousands of descendants.

Thank You to our Major Supporters:

Cape Cod Five Cents Savings Bank, Chatham Jewelers Inc.,
Chatham Squire, The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation,
Kemper Family Foundations, and Wequassett Resort and Golf Club

OH... THAT'S A GUY THING !

By Don Broderick
Archives

It's really interesting, even intriguing, how *things* (they are called gifts if we want them, or other unusual words, if we don't) end up in a museum. Viewing these potential donations is usually pre-arranged by a phone call. The caller indicates they have a number of things that might be of historical interest to us. To the potential donor, everything has sentimental value... "We are moving and want to donate our items. Would you be interested in examining some of our special belongings?"

Then, there are potential presenters who cut to the chase and invite us to go through their attic because "we must sell the house."

On a certain day by appointment, it could be a small box truck backing down to our lower level driveway where a couple of dusty donators begin eagerly unloading corrugated boxes filled with items for us to examine. Another day it could be a lone, teary-eyed generous visitor at the upper level entrance carrying treasured photograph albums from decades back, of all scenes Chatham.

But this day was *my lucky day!* A phone call came in from Chatham Ford. *WHAT?! WHY?!* "We have a motor here you may be interested in -- we think it was used to inflate blimps." I could hardly believe my ears! A jolt of adrenaline shot through me. A sense of urgency swept over me. *I've got to get there before somebody else snags this treasure! It's only about a minute and half down the road but I didn't have a second to lose.*

Tires smoking, I jerk to a stop in the Ford dealer parking lot. Good, I don't see anyone else here as I prayed the pump was still here. Rae, the general manager, led me to a very distant, dark, dusty room saying "It's been here for about 70 years, and you're just in time. We were going to get rid of it."

I was about to come face to face with one of the holy grails of early Naval aviation!

I quickly checked the manufacturer's specification placard on this beauty. YES! It had been delivered to the Chatham Naval Air Station in 1918,



Hydrogen pump used to inflate blimps at the Chatham Naval Air Station during WWI.

Photo by Don Broderick

(Continued on page 15)

Mariner Oscar Nickerson recounts blizzard at sea

By Jean Young
Archives

Before founding Nickerson Lumber Company – now known as Mid-Cape Home Centers – Oscar Nickerson was a mariner. He first went to sea in 1886 at the age of 20. In March, 1888, he was serving on a schooner that sailed into a three-day blizzard, injuring him and tearing the boat apart. The following is his account of the experience in a letter written to his mother.

A dutiful son writes his mother...

New York March 18, 1888 (Sunday)

Dear Mother,

We arrived here last night and I telegraphed you.

We lost all of our sails and flooded the cabin, stove (the) engine room, broke our gaffs and booms, lost both boats, and one anchor, and 100 fathoms of chain (that chain that father thought so large, parted like a pipe stem). I have just come from the hospital where we have put a man with his head split open, when [he] was thrown over the wheel last Monday night and has been unconscious since, no chance (of saving) his life the doctor says.

I suppose father would like the details. We left the Capes of Delaware Saturday morning and had light easterly winds until Sunday noon when it began to storm. At dark, Sunday we tacked off of Shinnecock, (Long Island) and at 10 PM hove to under reefs, wind East North East. Monday morning the wind backed around to the North and increased to a hurricane with sleet, at 10AM our sails (let go) for about an hour the noise was terrible (with) the shrieking of wind to go for and tearing of sails that was [sic] new and of the heaviest of [the lines?] knotted itself into a thousand knots. At 11:00 we let our anchor go, she came head to it and made two of three plunges and parted. We were at the mercy of the waves. About this time a huge wave swept over us (I was clinging to the fore stay) and when it left us I saw the Capt. [Captain] about 30 feet from the side of the vessel clinging to the end of a rope. We managed to get him in after he was washed against the vessels side three or four times, and got him below half dead. Then I got a hawser over the stern [stern] and tried to [scud?]. Our wheel was almost useless. We had stove our mid-ship house and began to make (take on) water.

(Continued on next page)



Oscar Nickerson's house on Old Harbor Road.

Photo from Chatham Historical Society Archives

(Continued from previous page)

At about 3 PM, I was standing on the cabin when I was washed forward and back against the spanker mast and had to go below. The crew now had charge of the deck and they worked like heroes. They were Nova Scotia fishermen and the best men I ever saw. Just after dark, one of the men that was lashed to the wheel, shouted "for God's sake, come [??].

I dragged myself into the aft compartment and found that one of the men had been thrown over the wheel and split his head open. By this time everything was ice and we had to leave/loosen the wheel. Washed about Monday night and Tuesday night it (the waves) moderated and then the sea wasn't nearly as bad. Wednesday morning (we) made what sail we could with our spare sails and headed to the West, had contrary winds, nearly all our provisions and water were spoilt. At noon Friday met the Lightship off the Delaware. But could not get in (to the harbor) there as the wind was West.

Saturday noon took a tug off Barnegat and at nine PM anchored here and thanked God to have spared our lives.

(Your) loving son O.C.N.,
I shall tow to Boston.

(From "Days to Remember" by Joshua Atkins Nickerson, available at the Atwood House Gift Shop.

"By far the most thrilling were his stories of his own experiences during

(Continued on page 10)

CALENDAR

Lecture Series 2017–2018

November 12, 2017

Geology of Cape Cod
Speaker: John Ciborowski

January 21, 2018

Whaling in the Age of Sailing
Speaker: Curtis Martin

February 18, 2018

I Am of Cape Cod
Speaker: John Whelan & Kim Roderiques

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Creative Wining at the Atwood

Explore your creative side and enjoy
an evening of fun while painting
wine glasses for the holidays.

Thursday, November 16th

6:00 - 8:00 pm *



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Valentine's Day Tea

Back by Popular Demand!

Check our website for details

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OF EVENTS

Holidays
at the Atwood

ay - Saturday
er 9th - 23rd
Museum will be open
public to celebrate
holiday season
website for special events
amhistoricalsociety.org

**Grub with
the Grinch**
Saturday,
December 9th



Breakfast 9:00 - 11:00 am*



**Santa's
Workshop**
Saturday,
December 9th
1:00 - 4:00 pm*

Evening with the Authors
Friday, December 15th

5:00 - 7:00 pm *

Book Signing with 7 Local Authors

Wine & Appetizers

Gift Shop will be Open

FREE Gift Wrapping

For tickets, email
museumevents@gmail.com

Joseph C. Lincoln's Christmas Days
Book reading in three acts

Wednesday, December 20th

5:00 - 6:00 pm*



(Continued from page 7)

the great March Blizzard of 1888. His ship was off the coast of Long Island when the storm stuck, in company of about 100 other sailing ships. It was several days later that they found themselves wallowing almost helplessly on the edge of the Gulf Stream, but at least in warmer weather. Meantime several other ships had foundered.

As for their ship, every bulkhead stove and the deckhouse, booms and gaffs were smashed; their boats and anchor with 100 fathoms of chain were lost. The only dry space was right up in the bow below the deck and here the injured men huddled. Every man in the crew went to the hospital on Staten Island when they finally reached port.

Father, a young mate, has been smashed against a mast, suffering cracked ribs. He was the only man aboard without frozen toes, even though he showed us where he had bits of frozen bone removed from the tips of two fingers. The reason his toes were spared was because they rationed out a bottle of rum for each man at one point, having no fire or warm food for two days. The others used the rum in the obvious way. But Dad said he poured half of his bottle down inside each of his boots, thus saving his toes from freezing.

At one point in the storm, the captain was washed overboard by a huge sea but managed to grab the end of a rope. After banging a couple of times against the ship's side, he was washed back onto the deck where they grabbed him and got him below, half dead but still alive and able to recover.

After father was smashed against the spanker mast, he too had to stay below. Just after dark, he dragged himself on deck to see what all the commotion was about. Two brothers had been lashed to the wheel to try and hold her on some sort of course, scudding before the storm with a heavy hauser trailing over the stern. A huge sea hit them from astern, spinning the wheel out of their hands. One of the men was thrown over the wheel and suffered a broken shoulder. The other was thrown under the wheel and the spokes tore through the side of his head. He later died in a hospital.

When they finally made it to Staten Island Hospital, they entered through a snow drift so high it seemed to be a tunnel. That was the blizzard of '88, when several people died from exposure while lost in the storm on the streets of midtown Manhattan."

Biography

Oscar Clinton Nickerson was born in Chatham in 1865 or 1866. He went to sea when he was 13 years old and was quickly recognized by ships' owners as being an able master. He captained a number of ships, including the *Abel W. Parker*. The Atwood House Museum has a ship model of the *Parker*.

He married Eglantine Young in 1889 and had two children. He retired from the sea in 1894 and bought the Kelley & Eldridge Lumber Company, which later became the Nickerson Lumber Company.

Norm Pacun retires

After 14 years of valued service, Norm Pacun has retired from the Board of Trustees.

Norm's knowledge and experience as an attorney has helped the Chatham Historical Society apply for Community Preservation Grants for the renovation of the Old House in 2006 and the current restoration of its foundation. He also negotiated and helped write the contracts for the work.

An advocate for Chatham's historic architecture, Norm was instrumental in the formation of the town's Historic Preservation Committee and the Historic Business District Commission. He continues to appear before both of these boards to offer his views on the demolition or renovation plans of historic structures.

Thank you, Norm, for your hard work for the Society!

Volunteer Social at Port Royal

Thank you to Board Chair Ginny Nickerson and her sister Suzanna for the use of their historic home. The gathering was attended by staff, board members, and, of course, our wonderfully dedicated volunteers. Everyone celebrated a successful season at the Atwood House & Museum.



Kathryn Manson, Janet Marjolle, Bob Ralls, Betsey Stevens and Florence Seldin admiring one of the many beautiful rooms at Port Royal.

A Special Opportunity to Add to your Chatham Book Collection:

**SALE: 20% discount for members
Until January 1, 2018**



**BEYOND THE BAR: The Perilous Journey—
Three Centuries of Fishing in Chatham, MA**
by Robert S. Carlisle.

Published by Chatham Historical Society 2007
Softcover: \$29.95: Hardcover: \$39.95
(Sale prices \$23.96 and \$31.96!)

Reaching back across three centuries, this book traces growth, change and ever-larger challenges facing the commercial fishing industry in Chatham. Through that span of time, Chatham has become one of the most important fishing sites in all of New England. Although published in 2007

and although the fishing industry faces new challenges this book remains highly relevant and instructive. Beautifully written and illustrated!

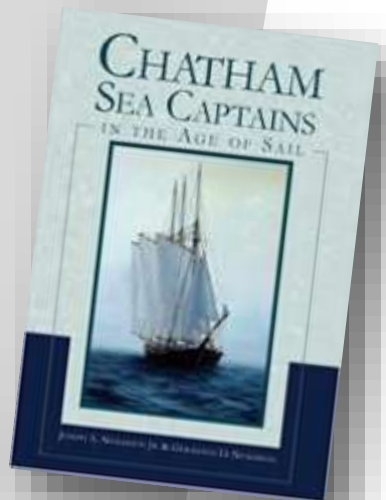
CHATHAM SEA CAPTAINS in the AGE of SAIL

**by: Joseph A. Nickerson and
Geraldine D. Nickerson.**

Published by History Press

Softcover: \$21.99

(Sale price \$17.59!)

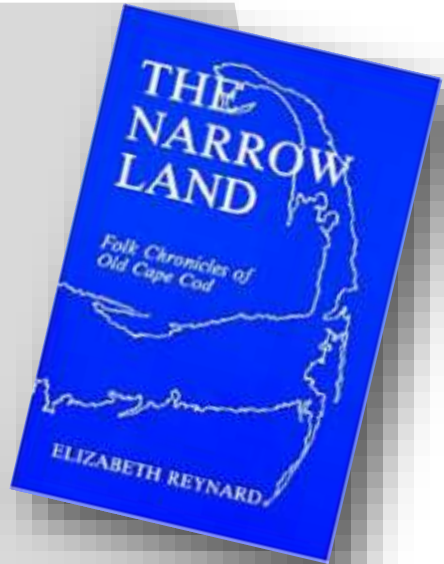


This book chronicles the lives and adventures of 25 men who traveled the seas from the 18th-20th centuries starting with Joseph Atwood (1720-1794) and concluding with Joseph Harding (1850-1928). Joseph Nickerson had a treasure trove of documents related to the history of Chatham and after years of reviewing, selecting, and organizing the result is this lively, readable, and fascinating account of the experiences of some of the sea captains.

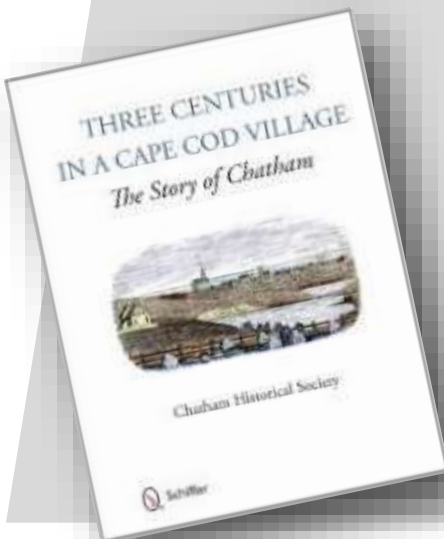
Joseph Nickerson had a treasure trove of documents related to the history of Chatham and after years of reviewing, selecting, and organizing the result is this lively, readable, and fascinating account of the experiences of some of the sea captains.

**THE NARROWLAND:
Folk Tales of Cape Cod
by: Elizabeth Reynard
Published by
Chatham Historical Society
Softcover: \$12.50
(Sale price \$10!)**

Reynard gathered from innumerable sources - historical, antiquarian and oral - to form a treasure chest of stories. The book includes tales of Norsemen, Native-American legends, sea yarns and ghost stories. This edition is the 4th printing of Ms. Reynard's work which first appeared in 1934.



**THREE CENTURIES IN A CAPE COD VILLAGE:
The Story of Chatham
By: The Chatham Historical Society
Published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd.
Hardcover: \$39.95
(Sale price \$31.96!)**



Written in concurrence with Chatham's 300th anniversary, this first complete history, compiled by seven local authors, tells the stories of our town: the settlement of William and Anne Nickerson, who purchased the land from the Monomoyicks; urbane Native American Squanto and his mysterious death; Dr. Lord, who lost a terrible battle with smallpox; Chatham's 19th century sea captains; and the two young boys who spotted a German spy near the Coast Guard headquarters during World War II. Learn how Chatham morphed from a hard-scrabble fishing village to an exclusive summer destination.

(Continued from page 3)

and Harold Sawyer, both known for taking local photographs that were used for post-cards in the early 1900s.

The collection was given to the museum by Christine Padgett, a granddaughter of the Cotters, as a memorial to her grandparents.

All told, the collection includes 30 glass plates and 62 acetate negatives, ranging in size from 3 by 4 inches and 62 panoramas, generally measuring 3.5 by 11.5 inches. The panoramas are mostly views of Chatham, with a few of Harwich or other Cape Cod towns. Thirty-eight of the pano-



Jean and Andy Young.



Debbie Swenson and Anne LeClaire discuss one of seven prints on display during the Double Take Sneak Preview.

ramas have been scanned for the archives and digitally restored for printing.

On display at the preview were seven mounted prints next to current views photographed during the past year by Andy Young: of Stage Harbor, the Twin Lights and the Old Village, the Twin Lights and the Overlook, Little and Big Mill Ponds, Oyster River; a Mitchell River view to the east, and a Mitchell River view to the west. The prints are available for sale through the administration office.

For details on the exhibit, visit www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org.



Betsy Evans, John King and Linda Cebula take a moment to chat during the evening's festivities.

(Continued from page 5)

just after we entered WWI.

I asked Rae if I needed to post a guard on this treasure and she happily assured me it was not necessary. At 350 pounds, this motor was not going to go anywhere today. I quickly returned to the Atwood to report my invaluable find to Danielle, our Executive Director. "Don, this is a guy thing," she said. "What in the world would we do with a monster motor?"

I quickly described all the exalted aviation benefits this pump would provide for our "Chatham in the Military" exhibit. Even the curiosity factor of a young visitor would be piqued. "What in the world is THAT thing?"

I believe the only possible reason our Director relented was not wanting to see a grown man cry. After lovingly removing nearly 100 years of dust and sprucing 'her' up, my endearing "little" motor/pump that was once used to inflate the B-class blimp (which guarded our shores) with hydrogen gas, was ready to be debuted in our new exhibit.

Yes, this is the very same flammable hydrogen gas that mysteriously exploded the German dirigible *Hindenburg* in a fiery disaster at Lakehurst, New Jersey, in 1937.

Thanks to our Director, this pump is now one of the centerpieces of our 2017 "Chatham in the Military" exhibit.

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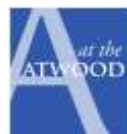
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