The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society



Members and Guests attend Fall Events



From the Director/Curator

A utumnal Greetings! With the weather turning cooler and the faint smell of wood smoke in the air, we look back with gratitude on a

very successful summer season at the Chatham Historical Society/Atwood House Museum. Please join me in thanking all the fine volunteers for making this past season our best ever! The summer special exhibit entitled *Chatham's Attic* was well received and we heard much positive feedback! The children's programs were very popular and thoroughly enjoyed by the participants. The Jubilee 85 was also a great success, raising public awareness about the Atwood House Preservation Project and generating \$16,000 for the Restoration Fund.

As many of you may well know, the Atwood House faces significant restoration challenges, and we are running out of time! We have received many fine bids pertaining to the restoration of the Atwood House and the Executive Board will be voting on a course of action shortly. Perhaps the most compelling bid incorporates a suite of educational outreach activities including the construction and use of an 18th century saw pit, and hand hewing of some of the replacement timbers using a broad axe and adze. This is important, as we are not only restoring the Atwood House, but are training and inspiring the next generation of old house preservationists and aficionados.

The archiving and cataloguing of the Nickerson papers is one third completed, and Stephen Farrar is doing a magnificent job performing this valuable work. You will recall that the Society received a very generous grant from the CPC to properly document, archive and place online these wonderful materials on Chatham sea captains, seafaring, and Chatham history which were generously given to the Society by Gerry Nickerson and the late Joseph A. Nickerson, Jr.

The theme for next summer's special exhibit will focus on the China Trade -"From Chatham to China" which will be an experiential exhibit, starting in Chatham, then to Boston, down to the West Indies, around the horn, and finally, ending up in China and Japan. Special emphasis will be on acculturation, mobility, encounter and how Chatham sea captains contributed to what is currently termed globalism. The exhibit will include and incorporate interactive educational work stations, to enhance accessibility to curatorial themes, and to more fully explicate the resonance of key artifacts. It is my hope to broaden our educational offerings to include underserved factions within our community such as Special Needs students, home-schooling networks, and others.

As we look towards the holidays, we are eagerly anticipating this year's Festival of Trees, which is run by the Chatham Garden Club and will be on display at the Atwood House Museum November 27^{th} and 28^{th} , and December 4^{th} and 5^{th} - visit our website for times. Please accept my best wishes for an enjoyable fall season, and please plan to visit the Society to see all the wonderful exhibits, programs and events that we are currently offering.

Mark C. Wilkins Director/Curator

Cover photographs show members and visitors at a number of October events - the Fall Open House, a reception in the archives, and the lecture held at the Chatham Community Center.

Photo at left shows guests at the Archival Reception.

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The Chatham Yankee

iving in New England we cannot escape the ubiquitous, and dentured servants to work in both the Virginia and Massachusetts kee. But from where does this term originate, what does it really experience for these adventurers, as they basically had no idea mean and how has it changed over the centuries? The etymologi- what they were getting themselves into due to the preponderance cal origins of the word are German - the name Johann (John) has of grossly distorted maps, and propagandists who described a land two diminutive forms: "Hans" and "Yan." Like most nicknames of milk and honey just across the pond! In contrast, the immortal that become popular, each of these diminutives received an addi- Bard had this to say regarding the Atlantic experience: "When the tional diminutive ending, resulting in "Hanschen" and "Yanke." sea is. Hence! What care these roarers for the name of a king!"4 These names were preponderant in pre-Revolutionary German- During the 17th century, English culture and governance was de-American settlements, most notably among the Pennsylvania Ger- pendent upon order, social stratification and hierarchy;⁵ in stark mans.¹ Consistent with Germanic traditions, the Pennsylvania Ger- contrast, the organic, uncontrollable fury of the sea must have mans were musically inclined, so that when the recruiting for the been ideologically confounding indeed. The successful completion Continental and Revolutionary armies required many fife players, of one of these Atlantic voyages also must have served as a provithe Pennsylvania "Yankes" were in great demand. "Yanke dential validation of the chosen. Dudelpfeifer" ("Johnny Doodlepiper") became a figure in the War of Independence, emerging with the spelling "Yankee."² In the mor (salty talk) and deep sea voyages – undoubtedly the Atlantic words of early 20th century Harvard professor of Maritime Studies experience transformed this 'mixed stock of a new people' into, Samuel Eliot Morison, speaking on the subject in his book on importantly, a breed of people who made their living predomimaritime Massachusetts, he opined the following definition of the nantly from the sea. Interestingly, and underscoring this point, a Yankee:

"But the race was not Anglo-Saxon, or Irish. It was Yankee, a new Nordic amalgam of an English Puritan base; already in 1750 as different in its character and its dialect from the English as the Australians are today. A tough but nervous, tenacious but restless race; materially ambitious, yet prone to introspection, and subject to waves of religious emotion. Conservative in its ideas of property and religion, yet (in the 18th century) radical in business and government. A people with few social graces, yet capable of deep friendships and abiding loyalties; law-abiding yet individualistic, and impatient of restraint by government or regulation in business; ever attempting to repress certain traits of human nature, but finding an outlet in broad, crude humor and deep-sea voyages. A race whose typical member is eternally torn between a passion for righteousness and a desire to get on in the world. Religion and climate, soil and sea, here brewed of mixed stock a new people."³

Morison's 'Nordic amalgam of English Puritan base' that gave birth to the 'Yankee' beckons further investigation. The original Puritans who crossed the Atlantic during the Great Migration of the 1620s and 1630s were already a new class of people as they had a number of important qualities that manifested themselves in this new breed of citizen/colonists. Firstly, they were not satisfied with the English Reformation as such; they believed that they would go to America and build their 'shining city on a hill' which would not only serve as a quasi-utopian society of their own design, but also serve as a model of reform for mother England. The aptly named Separatists or 'Pilgrims' had removed themselves from England to Leyden before making their emblematic voyage aboard the *Mayflower*. Secondly, they had the visceral fortitude to make the voyage; by the time of the Great Migration, enough documentation of the hazards of Atlantic sea voyages had become somewhat preponderant in London, much to the chagrin of propagandists, mercantilists and entrepreneurs who needed hapless in-

Roehm, A. I. Peabody Journal of Education, Vol. 21, No. 3, An 1. Editorial Issue (Nov., 1943), p. 151.

3. Morison, Samuel E., The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1922. Pg. 22.

at times both derogatory and complimentary moniker of Yan- colonies. The sea voyage undoubtedly served as a transformative

Morison mentions that Yankees found an outlet in crude hu-Chatham minister wrote that the people of Chatham "pursued husbandry with little spirit...the people in general passing the flower of their lives at sea, which they do not quit until they are fifty years old, leaving at home nothing but old men and young boys to cultivate the ground."⁶ Finally, to contribute a third ingredient to the composition of the Yankee we must add the effect of these blue water voyages, which can be expressed as a global perspective on economics and culture - or at least a broader point of view than that attained locally. Somewhat paradoxically, this broader world perspective re-infused local attitudes and norms, be it ever so subtly or stridently - examples of which would certainly warrant further study! The Yankees of the 19th and early 20th century would morph away from strictly seafaring, with the rise of the railroads and decline of dependence on shipping only to facilitate domestic trade. However the Yankee archetype would not wane, and would come to reflect attitudes of thrift, tough bargaining doubtless a residue from global trading, and an austerity that could only be fully comprehended by those having been in peril on the sea, and lived to tell the tale.

As a final amusing anecdote about our Chatham Yankees of the 18th and 19th century, the minister from Chatham, from whom the aforementioned quotation originated, describes a typical Chatham bill of fare which is just too fascinating to ignore, interestingly, it is Morison who thanks the almighty for the tradition of having pie for breakfast:

"Breakfast: Tea or Coffee [infusion of international trade goods], brown bread (of home grown 'rye and injun') and salt or fresh fish. Dinner: one or more of the following dishes: roots and herbs, boiled slat meat, wild fowl in autumn, fresh fish, boiled or fried with pork, shellfish, boiled salt fish, Indian pudding, pork and beans. Supper: the same as breakfast, plus cheese, cakes, gingerbread, and pie. 'Some have pie for breakfast." Thank God for that!"7

- 4. Shakespeare, William. The Tempest. Act 1.1.15. The Norton Shakespeare. 2nd ed. S. Greenblatt et al. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008. p. 2746.
- Briggs, Asa. A Social History of England. New York: The Viking 5. Press. (1983). P.106.
- Morison, pg.146. 6.
- Morison, pg. 147. 7.

Ibid. 2.

News from the Archives

The latest collection to be processed in the archives is that of the Thomas McGrath Papers relating to the printing business he conducted in Chatham from the years 1948 to 1961. Geraldine M. Cox, an archival volunteer, worked with these papers for the last five summers that she spent here in Chatham. Through her efforts, researchers will now have another database to use to find out about life in Chatham during the 1940's through the early 1960's. The papers in the collection were donated many years ago by Thomas's wife, Virginia Harding McGrath. These papers round out other collections of the Harding family including Andrew Harding, Heman Harding, and Virginia Harding McGrath.

The following material is an excerpt from the Finding Aid developed by Geraldine; the entire aid will be placed on the Chatham Historical Website shortly so that it may be consulted by any individual with access to the Internet.

Biographical Information:

Thomas McGrath ran a printing business in Chatham from the late 1940's through the early 1960's. He was born August 31, 1887, in Roxbury, Massachusetts,¹ the first of nine children of Thomas J. McGrath, Sr. and Marion F. Cartwright McGrath.² Census records reveal that his father and an uncle were printers in Boston as early as 1880³ and that a younger

brother also became a printer.⁴ In 1910 he was living with his family in Boston, working as a salesman at a soda fountain.⁵

On January 5, 1917 he registered for the draft for World War I. His draft registration card states that he was 29 years old, working as a manager for the Dudley Amusement Company at 2220 Washington Street, Roxbury, Massachusetts. He was tall, of medium build, with blue eyes and black hair. He had previously served three years as a Private in the Coast [?] Artillery.⁶



Thomas McGrath with his

first wife, Gertrude

It appears that he was indeed drafted for the next record of his

life is his marriage on 22 May 1918 in Rochester, Monroe County, New York to Gertrude (Waters) Bowman. At this time

1. Ancestry .com. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917 – 1918. The Generations Network, Inc. 2005. 6 Aug 2009. <u>http://</u> www.ancestrylibrary.com

2. Virginia Harding Mc Grath Papers, 1920–1936. Marriage License, New York State Department of Health, 22 May 1918. The Chatham Historical Society, Chatham, Massachusetts.

3. Heritage Quest Online. 1999–2009. ProQuest LLC. 1880 United States Federal Census, Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts. Series T9, Roll 559, Page5. 5 Aug 2009. <u>http://www.heritagequestonline.com</u>

4. Ibid, 1920 United States Federal Census, Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts. Series T625, Roll 735, Page 31.

5.Ibid, 1910 United States Federal Census, Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts. Series T625, Roll 735, Page 231.

6. Ancestry.com, op. cit.

7. Virginia Harding McGrath Papers, op. cit.

his occupation was listed as soldier and his residence at the Aerial School, Kodak Park City. Gertrude was a widow and a musician in Syracuse, New York.⁷ Thomas was in the first class to be trained in aerial photography at Rochester and he served in the Mexican Border Incident and as a sergeant in the Army Signal Corps as an aerial photographer.⁸ By 1920 he and

Gertrude were living in Boston; he was working as a printer and she as a musician in a theater.⁹

The next documentation of the life of Tom McGrath is that of his second marriage on October 11, 1951, in Chatham, Massachusetts to Virginia Harding,¹⁰ daughter of a prominent Chatham family. There are job tickets from his Chatham printing business dating from 1948 so it is known that he was in Chatham at least by that year. What brought him to Chatham and what became of his first wife remain to be discovered. In 1952 town records indicate that his printing shop was



Thomas McGrath on the right

located on Main Street near the corner of Chatham Bars Avenue.¹¹ Later, perhaps near the end of his life when he was not well, the Virginia Harding McGrath papers (X. 7128.008) state that the printing business was run out of their home which was on Mill Pond Road.¹²

Most of the job tickets in the papers donated to the Chatham Historical Society date from the 1950's; only a few are dated from the 1960's; 1962 is the last date in the collection. Apparently he was not well for the next documented event is his death on January 13, 1963¹³ after a lengthy illness. From his obituary it is learned that he had previously worked as a theatrical manager, a newsreel cameraman, a news photographer, a newspaperman and a proofreader and that he was a member of the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans.¹⁴ He is buried with his second wife and her parents in Union Cemetery, Chatham, Massachusetts.¹⁵

Scope and Content:

The thirty-six boxes contain the business papers from Thomas McGrath's print shop which operated in Chatham from 1948 through 1962. The majority of the papers are job tickets

Cont. opposite at top of page

 "Deaths and Funerals." 15 Jan 1963. <u>Cape Cod Standard Times.</u> Falmouth Library (Oct 1866 – Present) on microfilm. Copy requested through Eldredge Public Library, Chatham, Massachusetts.
Heritage Quest Online, op. cit. 1920 United States Federal Census, Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts. Series T625, Roll 734, Page 218.
<u>Chatham Massachusetts Vital Records 1930 –1954</u>. Page 55. Eldredge Public Library, Genealogy Department. Chatham, Massachusetts.
<u>Annual Report of the Town Officers, Chatham, Massachusetts for the Year 1952</u>. Page 154, Article 56. The Chatham Historical Society, Chatham, Massachusetts.

12. Cape Cod Standard Times, op. cit.

13. <u>Chatham Massachusetts Vital Records 1955 – 1973</u>. Page 94. Eldredge Public Library, Genealogy Department. Chatham, Massachusetts.

14. Cape Cod Standard Times, op. cit.

15. <u>Gravestone Inscriptions – Chatham, Mass</u>. In the collection of the Chatham Historical Society.

for printing orders almost all of which contain samples of the printing job itself, along with notes for the type and style of printing, the size of the printing job and the price. In addition there are three ledger books containing accounts for the years 1948, 1949-1957, and 1957-1962. The job ticket envelopes are of interest for the wide range of Chatham and Cape Cod businesses, organizations, churches, and individuals who ordered items to be printed.

For example among the items he printed were:

Brochures for motels, cottage colonies, rooming houses, etc., many of which include photographs or drawings Restaurant menus

Advertisements for shops and other businesses: gifts, clothing, shoes, food, yarn shops; laundries, gas stations, garages, electricians, plumbers, oystermen, etc.

Clubs, organizations, and churches, such as the American Legion, Kiwanis, men's and women's clubs, garden clubs, sailing clubs, etc. ordered flyers for planned events (including old house tours,) meeting notices,

dues notices, rules and regulations, membership lists Orders by individuals such as business cards, stationery,

Christmas cards, letterheads, billheads, wedding invitations

Local towns, libraries, and schools ordered forms and flyers

In short, the collection provides a unique window on the activities of the Chatham community in a certain small period of time.

The original order for the job tickets has been preserved (mostly alphabetical order by name of the customer) and one of the original boxes in which they were filed has been saved as well. The last folder in the collection contains documents which were used as sources in writing the biography of Thomas McGrath.



Tomb stone of Thomas McGrath

The conclusion of the

single-afternoon

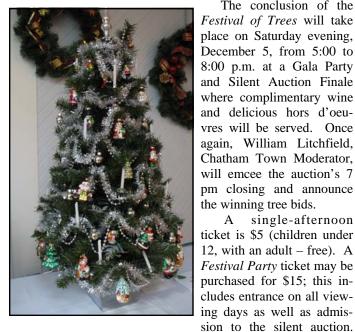
Festival of Trees **Preview & Holiday Browsing** Nov.27, 28 and Dec. 4, 5 - 1 to 4 p.m. Silent Auction & Gala Party Dec. 5 - 5 to 8 p.m.

For the fifth year, The Atwood House Museum will be the location for the Chatham Garden Club's Annual Festival of Trees, which will be celebrating its twelfth successful year. The festivities will begin the day after Thanksgiving when visitors will have the opportunity to place silent auction bids on exquisitely decorated trees created by talented Chatham Garden Club members. All of the trees promise to be unique in design and attendees will also have the opportunity to purchase festive

wreaths and smaller trees, or simply enjoy the beautifully adorned historic Atwood House Museum and Gift Shop.

The four-day Festival will begin with four afternoon dates -Nov. 27, 28, Dec. 4, and 5 - when the Atwood House will be open from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Visitors will have the chance to preview the array of designer tabletop trees, buy handcrafted holiday boutique items or simply browse the Museum and its Gift Shop. Complimentary cider and cookies will be served.





Tickets may be purchased at the door or by contacting Margaret Martin, Chatham Historical Society, 508-945-2493. For more information, call Bette Hahner, chairwoman, 508-945-9962. All proceeds will benefit local scholarships and town beautification projects, as well as historic preservation and educational outreach programs offered by the Chatham Historical Society.

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Shop Talk

The Atwood House Museum documents and reflects Chatham history through the centuries. It may be that we are on the edge of a new historical development. Call it what you will: sustainability, the green movement, buying locally. Whatever you call it, the need for better stewardship of our resources is global, yet the solution begins locally.

With that in mind, you may have noticed that the Museum Shop has shifted some of its buying efforts to locally produced products. With the wealth of artists and writers in the Chatham area community, we keep our eyes open for locally hand-made items and local authors who reflect the history and life experiences of our town or region.

Nearly everything in the Shop in some way reflects the galleries and collections of the Museum. What better way is there to reflect our community than through the eyes, words and hands of our local talent? We live in a beautiful place and want to give our visitors a chance to take home an affordable reflection of their experiences here in Chatham and at the Museum. If you are an artist of any medium, or writer, or know of one



On this page - a sampling of items available in the Museum Gift Shop

whose work you believe reflects Chatham and its environment, or the Museum's galleries, please contact us. (Dot buys the books, Barbara buys everything else).

You are invited to view the Museum's exhibits, and to enjoy special holiday events at the Museum, including the *Festival of Trees* (November 27 and 28, December 4 and 5), the Hearth Warming (December 12), First Night (December 31), and a year-end sale at the Museum Shop.

The holiday gift giving season will soon be upon us. Before the snow flies,



this would be a perfect time to view the Museum and include the Shop in your holiday shopping plans. We have unique, appealing and locally produced gifts that reflect the beauty and heritage of our community. We hope to see you again soon.

> Barbara Newberry (Shop Manager) Dot Gross (Book Buyer)

Fall Events Keep the Museum a Busy Place

S everal events during October provided museum members and guests a variety of activities. An Open House with refreshments and free admission on October 4 was the kickoff event. The following Friday from 5 to 7 pm invited guests chatted with Steven Farrar, the archivist who is organizing the Joseph A. Nickerson, Jr. papers, while enjoying wine, cheese and other snacks. This work is progressing at a steady pace.

October is National Archives Month and an Open House was held in the archives on Saturday, October 10 from 1 to 4 pm. Society archivist Mary Ann Gray was on hand to greet visitors and explain the many activities of the archives department.

On Sunday, October 11, the Atwood House Lecture Series continued with a lecture held at the Chatham Community Center because the Special Exhibit is occupying the main gallery of the museum where lectures are usually held. Author Diane Rapaport discussed some of the intriguing cases found in the colonial court records of New England which are featured in her latest book.

Looking ahead, the lectures scheduled for the second Sundays of November and January will increase our knowledge of the War of 1812, and of Weir Fishing. The November speaker is Museum Director and Curator Mark Wilkins; Shareen Davis will be the speaker in January. Lectures continue throughout the winter and begin at 2:00 pm.

Detailed information about the Festival of Trees, held on two weekends in November and December, is presented on page five of this Atwood Log.

A favorite seasonal event, the Annual Hearth Warming, will take place on Saturday, December 12. Holiday decorations and the fires in the fireplaces enhance the beauty of the Old House while the delicious smells of seasonal treats provide additional enjoyment of the occasion. This event is from 1:30 to 4:30 to coincide with town events on Chatham Stroll weekend.

For your shopping convenience, the Museum will also be open the Saturday before Christmas, December 19, from 1 to 4 pm.

The Atwood House Museum will also be open December 31 from 1 to 4 pm as part of the Chatham First Night festivities.



Speaker Diane Rapaport discusses her lecture topic with attendees after the event.



Festive seasonal decorations add to the charm of the Old House kitchen.

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.



From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Two months have passed since the Annual Meeting of the Chatham Historical Society and I am writing to acknowledge and thank each of you for your confidence and trust as

evidenced by my election as Chair of the Executive Board of Trustees. As you know, I am following the incredible 12 year tenure of Spencer Grey - surely his are large shoes for me to fill. I am very grateful to Spencer for his many years of service, his continued mentorship, and his ongoing commitment to the museum and its mission.

As a lasting tribute to Spencer, the Executive Board of Trustees has made the decision to rename the Museum's Maritime Gallery in Spencer's honor. The Maritime Gallery will now be known as the Spencer Y. Grey Maritime Gallery. The Board also elected Spencer as a Life member of the Chatham Historical Society in further recognition of his extraordinary contributions.

Let me also thank each of you for your continued enthusiastic support of our important work with your time, treasure and wisdom. It is critical that we continue to work together under the leadership of our excellent Executive Director and Curator Mark Wilkins, to make the CHS one of the premiere regional historical museums in New England if not the country. In that regard, I am pleased to report that the much needed restoration work on the old house has been authorized by the Executive Board to commence and will begin in January. Fund raising for this project is still underway and will require renewed support from all of us to reach our goal before the museum opens in June, 2010. By the way - if any of you have dreamed of volunteering for service at the Museum, now would be a perfect time to step forward. There are many opportunities to help - just get in touch with Mark at the Atwood House.

As many of you know, Reed Hertford, member of the Executive Committee and chair of the CHS Development Committee, suffered an unexpected illness in August. He is fortunately well on his way to recovery but needed to delegate his CHS responsibilities, including running the CHS Antique Sale, to others during his convalescence. I am happy to report that the Eleventh Annual Chatham Historical Society Antiques Sale, held on the weekend of September 18th and 19th, was a success thanks to the team of volunteers that rallied to the cause under the leadership of Spencer Grey. I would like to particularly recognize Linda Cebula, David Oakley, Betsey and Don Stevens, and Elaine and Jim McSweeney among many others for stepping forward in very significant ways to make this important fund raiser a successful event. I hope many of you were able to attend.

One last item - some of you may be reading this and realize that your CHS membership has lapsed. Let me encourage you to take advantage of the membership form here in the Log to renew at whatever level you can afford. Membership is the cornerstone of our efforts to serve the community so please renew and encourage others to join.

I remain very excited by the challenges ahead for the Chatham Historical Society and the opportunities we have to positively impact our community. Over time I hope to spend time with each of you, share perspective and learn directly how you believe the Chatham Historical Society can grow in stature and influence in our region. Please let me hear from you directly whenever the spirit moves you. Email jjking2@gmail.com, phone 508-945-4881.

Best wishes for the spectacular fall season, especially here on Cape Cod.

Sincerely yours, *John J. King II* Chairman, Executive Board of Trustees

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:

Benefactor	\$1000 or more
Patron	\$500 - \$999
Sponsoring	\$250 – \$499
Sustaining	\$150 – \$249
Contributing	\$75 - \$149
Family	\$35 - \$74
Single	\$25 - \$34

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Signature

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 026<u>33</u> NON-PROFIT US POSTAGE PAID CHATHAM MA PERMIT NO.11

On the Web: www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org

Mark Your Calendars Coming up at The Chatham Historical Society & Atwood House Museum

