

Autumn 2011

The Atwood Log



The Quarterly Newsletter
of
The Chatham Historical Society



From the Director/Curator

Retrospection, Contemplation and Farewell

With the crisp tang of fall in the air, and my departure from the role of Director and Curator of the Atwood House Museum imminent, it is a time for reflection and assessment. We have accomplished much over the last two and one half years – the restoration of the Atwood House, the China Trade exhibit, the birth of our experiential ‘*bringing history to life*’ weekends. However, perhaps more significantly, I look back upon the last few years and contemplate friendships forged, and a heightened sense of community that we have built at the Museum. We reached out – to families, to children and to new factions within our community. We struck a chord with our memorial exhibit honoring and celebrating the life and art of Bob Clem – however perhaps more significantly, we brought people in our region together, and made the museum an epicenter for community, culture and remembrance – for things that are now ineluctably locked into time.

It has been my singular privilege and pleasure to serve the public and to uphold and foster the best ideals of our humble museum. It has also been an honor serving with the dedicated and talented volunteers, staff and Board of Trustees and I believe we have accomplished much meaningful work together. I would especially like to express my sincere gratitude to the core volunteers for their help in executing my vision over the last couple of years. It is my firm belief that if we stay focused on serving our public and inspiring our constituencies – especially children, who are the next generation of museum patrons – there is little we cannot achieve while simultaneously insuring the longevity of this fine institution. As for my immediate future plans, you probably well know by now that I’ll be taking a part-time job with Mystic Seaport Museum as a content and exhibits developer. I’ll also be finishing my thesis at Harvard, and will be dividing the remainder of my time between writing books on maritime history, working on ship model projects, and continuing to lecture on various historical subjects. I’ll also be doing some freelance exhibits and program consulting on the Cape.

The other day in a moment of peace amidst the hustle and bustle of the daily operations of the Museum, my gaze rested upon a plaque on my office wall – it listed all my predecessors all the way back to 1923; it is with a profound feeling of wistfulness and solemn pride that I now add my name to that distinguished and honorable list. I cannot help but wonder who will follow me and what new and exciting vision they will bring to this very special place in Chatham. I do know that the Atwood House Museum will always be a place where those who love history and culture will feel welcome.

Mark C. Wilkins

Thank you to our Volunteers

Our thanks to all the volunteers who worked together to make two recent events of the Chatham Historical Society successful as well as enjoyable. The Thirteenth Annual Antiques Show and Sale was held on September 24th and 25th at the Chatham Community Center. The dealers were almost unanimously pleased with their sales and the fine organization of the show, ably arranged by Society Treasurer Linda Cebula.

A new event, managed by Kealyn Garner and held on October 29th, called Halloween Happenings, provided a variety of seasonal activities for guests, including apple bobbing, Halloween themes baked goodies, a scavenger hunt, and pumpkin decorating. The day was topped off with a showing of the Boris Karloff movie – *The Mummy*. We hope to add more activities to this event next year. As with all events at the Chatham Historical Society/Atwood House Museum, the success of this event was made possible by the many volunteers who gave of their time and talent in support of your museum/ historical society.



*At the 13th Annual
Antiques Show and Sale*

Chatham Historical Society

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Afternoons at the Atwood Lectures

The fall and winter 2011-2012 Lecture Series is off to a very interesting start with the recent lecture by Paul Mangelinkx, Chatham High School principal, on *The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882*. The next three lectures are November 13, 2011, January 8, 2012, and February 12, 2012.

The November lecture, presented by Bob Prescott, director of the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, is titled *Birding with Bob Clem*. Mr. Prescott has been actively involved in coastal issues and research; he is particularly interested in coastal ecosystems and the wildlife, both vertebrate and invertebrate, associated with them.

In January, the speaker will be Spencer Grey, presenting *A Photographic History of Chatham from 1850 - 2000*. Spencer is well known to Historical Society members, having served as President and later as Chairman of the Executive Board of the Society for many years.

The February speaker will be Judy Reed whose topic will be - *A Most Contemptible Passion: Marriage and Divorce in 18th Century New England*. The lecture will be based on the diaries of Ms. Reed's great, great, great grandmother, Abigail Abbot Bailey, who was granted a divorce in 1792.



From the Archives of the Chatham Historical Society Above: Photo from the 1940s, Below: A view of Chatham in 1914



November and December Special Events



Atwood House Museum Event

Join the Chatham Historical Society for our Day-After-Thanksgiving/ end of the season crafting event and gift shop sale!

- Visit the museum
- Make holiday crafts
 - Topiaries
 - Kissing balls
 - Craft items for children

30-50 % off
selected items

Friday, November 25th 11am - 4pm
The Atwood House Museum
www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org/Blackfriday

Annual Hearth Warming, December 9th and 10th, Friday 1-4pm / Saturday 10 am-4 pm

Our Annual Hearth Warming settles nicely into the Christmas Stroll taking place throughout the center of Chatham. Join us in celebrating the holidays 'Atwood House-style.' Hot mulled cider and baked goods, caroling, Christmas tree lighting, crafts, picture taking with Mrs. Claus, and gift shop sales highlight some of the activities planned for the two days. The Hearth Warming is an open-house event, so admission to the museum is free!

Mrs. Claus offers a wary young visitor a candy cane at the 2010 Hearth Warming



The Day-After-Thanksgiving Holiday Event and Sale, November 25th, 11 am - 4pm

Black Friday sales! The day after Thanksgiving, the Atwood House gift shop will be open from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm so that guests may shop for beautiful and charming items. We offer a wide array of items from books, to jewelry, to toys, to home décor. Our gift shop is the perfect place to buy unique gifts for holiday presents- even more perfect is our offering of *special wrapping for all gift purchases!*

In addition, ongoing tours of the museum, refreshments, and holiday crafting will be offered.



First Night Chatham: Swing Time, 2:30 pm

The Atwood House Museum presents the 1930's classic, *Swing Time*, as a part of Chatham's First Night Celebrations. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers star as at-odds dance partners in this celebrated musical comedy. The film will start at 2:30 pm, December 31st. Refreshments will be available for purchase in the gift shop prior to the start of the film. Shuttle service to the Atwood House Museum will be available from Rockland Trust Bank on Main Street at 2:10 pm with a 4:30 pm pickup time from the museum returning to Rockland Bank.

From Chatham to China: **CHATHAM AND THE COOLIE TRADE 1840-1875**

When the African slave trade gradually came to an end because of international laws passed during the first 35 years of the Nineteenth Century, the agricultural and mining enterprises that had depended on slave labor, especially in Latin American countries, looked for another source of cheap labor. It wasn't long before their needs were met in China, where in 1842 the first Opium War ended with the Treaty of Nanking, which forced the Chinese to open five ports to trade with western countries. Because of wars, famine, and a shortage of land, economic conditions in China were such that many Chinese, especially men, looked to emigration in hopes of a better life. While some volunteered to leave, many were deceived or kidnapped and sold to traders.

By the middle of the 19th century, traffic in Chinese coolies had become an important source of income for British and American ships, but chiefly the Americans. In 1855, for example, of the ships taking coolies as cargo in the port of Swatow, now Shantou, five were American and three British, and the tonnage of the American ships was nearly twice that of the British. In fact, from 1847 to 1865, American coolie traders dominated the traffic between Macao and Havana. Conditions on board ships carrying Chinese coolies usually were overcrowded, unsanitary, and brutal. Between 1847 and 1859 American ships carried 50,879 Chinese to Cuba, and of those 7,782 died during the voyage. Those who were indentured fared even worse, for nearly all died before the end of their period of service. Because of this frightful record, the United States Congress enacted in 1862 the Prohibition of Coolie Trade Act, which made it a crime for American shippers to participate in this enterprise.

Of the many ships commanded by Chatham men, some inevitably were engaged in the coolie trade, among them *The Independence* and *The Ringleader*, both at one time captained by Isaac W. White. White went to sea when he was 18, became a captain at 24, and followed the sea from 1857 to 1897. When he became Captain of the *Independence*, he was paid \$50 a month, except when he carried Chinamen, when he was paid \$95 a day. Clearly such a cargo must have been dangerous to justify such a vast difference in pay. White was engaged in the carting of coolies for nine years during the mid-1860's, transporting from 750 to 800 a trip from China to San Francisco and Cuba. Captain White either was unaware of or chose to ignore the fact that trading in coolies had been outlawed by Congress in 1862, as he never mentions it.

In 1862 Isaac White assumed command of the American clipper ship *Ringleader* and immediately sailed her to Yoko-

hama, then to Shanghai and Hong Kong. The ship left Hong Kong on May 3, 1863, bound for San Francisco with some cabin passengers and a cargo of several hundred Chinese coolies. On May 9th she ran aground on the Formosa Banks and was immediately surrounded by piratical Chinese fishing boats, whose crews drove the coolies ashore and began pillaging the ship. Captain White and his crew escaped in the ship's boats, eventually reaching San Francisco on the bark *Emily Banning*. Shortly

thereafter, 200 of the pirated coolies arrived on the *Don Quixote*, with an additional 400 coolies that had been picked up at Simoda.

Isaac White was captain of *The Independence* for twenty-four years; and of those years, he spent nine during the 1860's carrying Chinamen to Cuba, San Francisco, and once to Australia. At that time he had a red beard that reached to his waist, making it necessary for him to wear it in two braids to keep it out of his eyes while at sea. When he was interviewed by Alice Stallknecht Wight in the early 1930's while her son, Frederick was painting his portrait, he revealed as much information as we have of his experiences carrying Coolies from China.



Portrait of Captain Isaac White by Frederick Wight.

As White explains, the Chinamen were collected from all over China by agents, who either promised them work overseas as indentured laborers or simply kidnapped them. He says that they were "...poor men, starving," and therefore desperate enough to go along with the agents. He would take seven hundred and fifty to eight hundred a trip, and had to have supplies sufficient to feed that many starving men. When he got them on board, he would restrict their amount of food or else they would "eat themselves to death." Until he realized the importance of restricting their diet, he "...was losing seven a day."

Because the coolies often were desperate and dangerous, White always kept three men on watch with one stationed outside his cabin door. On three or four occasions, the Chinese mutinied, and one time he shot but did not kill two of them.

Captain White kept a Portuguese interpreter on board, most likely from the Portuguese colony of Macao. Again quoting from White:

"He sat at the table with me, and he always had with him a wooden paddle with holes bored in it. Soak that well in water, and it would raise a blister in each hole every time. No question came up about argument. You have to have control on a ship and keep it and never relax. Never. I ran that ship, and I ran that ship my way. And in a mutiny I didn't spare 'em. Those men didn't set down for two weeks when I got through with 'em. One time I had

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The 2011 Neesima-Japan Challenge for Elementary and Middle School Students

Chatham Elementary and Middle School Children have been invited to participate in a selection of projects related to Japanese Culture in the 19th Century and to Neesima Shimeta, the young Japanese man who escaped from Japan in 1864 and came to New England on the “*Wild Rover*”, a ship owned by Alpheus Hardy and captained by Horace Taylor (both of Chatham). Students will learn about his connections to two Chatham maritime families and are invited to select from an interesting array of projects relating to Japanese culture. Among the projects included are haiku, origami, Japanese calligraphy, sushi cooking, or a “*Wild Rover*” reproduction. The program is open to elementary and middle school students who live in Chatham, whether they attend school in Chatham or not, and school choice students who are attending Chatham Elementary or Middle Schools.

Each fall the Chatham Historical Society sponsors a challenge program of projects to further student knowledge of a particular topic. In the last few years, the challenge program has offered projects about the Chatham World War I Air Station, about Abraham Lincoln, and about Chinese culture and the China Trade. We look forward to the students’ wonderful interpretations of this year’s projects.

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forty-nine to fifty in irons at once. So you chained ‘em so; two men, wrist to wrist, hands back to back, and you hung them up on that chain between them just so their toes touched. And sometimes a shorter man was up against a taller man and, God, in the morning they were senseless. Sound cruel? It was the only thing you could do. You don’t know what these men were like.”

Because of the sugar plantations in Cuba, most of the Chinese were taken there. In his interview with Alice Wight, Captain White tells of delivering many of them in Havana:

“I used to land a lot of them in Cuba. When you landed, you handed them over to an agent. Agents took charge. They would let them out to different trades: carpenters, coopers, trades of all work. They’d file off the boat with an armed guard lining both sides, the agents with a big whip, and let one lag and he’d catch it. They sold them out for seven years. Those Spaniards made cruel masters, too.”

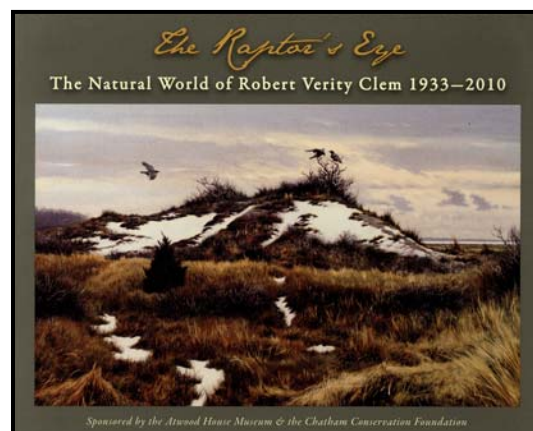
Once while bringing Chinese coolies to San Francisco to work on the railroad, there was an outbreak of cholera aboard the ship. White had the ill Chinese laid out on the deck where he and his first mate inspected them, and those that seemed least likely to survive were thrown overboard.

Late in his life, during the interview with Alice Wight, Isaac White expressed on several occasion his deep sorrow for having been involved in the cruelty of the coolie trade. After explaining that he was paid \$95 a day rather than \$50 a week for carrying coolies, he said, “No amount of money would make me do it now. God no. No matter what they offered me, I couldn’t do it now.”

Reading his comments today, we have to realize that he had to carry whatever cargo the owners of his ship directed, and he was a young man who probably needed to earn as much as possible and whose sensitivities were possibly not fully developed.

Spencer Grey

In the Museum Shop



This catalog and the Robert V. Clem Exhibit poster are now available by calling the Chatham Historical Society (508-945-2493) or by ordering online on the Chatham Historical Society’s web site. Either or both would make a lovely gift for yourself or for family or friends interested in fine paintings, birding, or the legacy of Robert V. Clem.

Holiday Shopping Solved

Afraid you won’t find the perfect Christmas present for your grandchild? Wondering what to give Aunt Mary for a gift this holiday? Problem solved -- **Buy them a brick!**

Honor someone:

Mary J. Smith
My favorite Aunt

Commemorate a special date:

Happy 25th Anniversary
Lucy and Bill
April 22, 2012

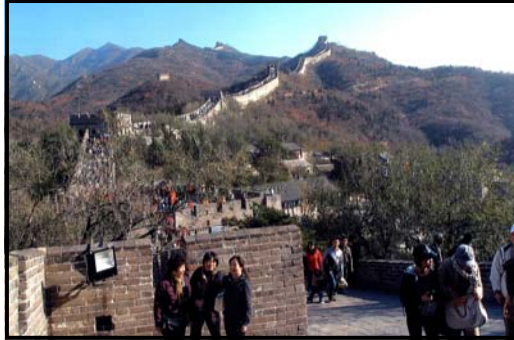
Acknowledge an accomplishment:

John Q. Brown
Class of 2012
Sudbury High School

It couldn’t be easier. Just call the Museum (508-945-2493) and we’ll send you an order form. Fill out the form and send it back to us with your check. The brick will be ordered, engraved just as you wish, and installed permanently in the handsome brick pathway leading to the Museum. You’ll be honoring your loved one in a lasting and special way. We’ll be happy to provide you with a presentation card announcing your thoughtful gift, and once the brick is installed, we will send you a photograph of it in its permanent home

There – your shopping’s all done. That was easy!

China Trip Reminisces: From Shanghai to Beijing



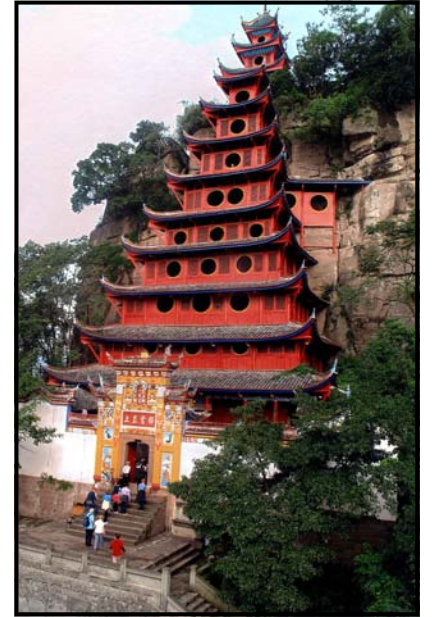
What a wonderful trip! At first it seemed as if it was all gigantic cities. However, once we went through the famous locks going up the Yangtze River we saw the most breathtaking scenery. There were high, striated rock formations that were smooth due to age, and gorges with beautiful waterfalls and caves. We even saw wild monkeys! One of the highlights of our first few days was a visit to a primary school. They danced and sang for us (all with huge smiles). We were able to visit several museums where we saw bronze artifacts, jade carvings, and musical instruments, all from many centuries ago.

This was just the beginning of our trip. We still had Tiananmen Square (three miles long), the Forbidden City with thousands of rooms, the Great Wall, and the Terra Cotta Warriors. Did you know that the terra cotta warriors had been painted? The paint had oxidized immediately when they were first opened up. For this reason, there are still many buried until science finds a way to preserve these colors. Also, during the Peasant Revolution all of the statues were broken. There was only one that was essentially whole (just missing his head). They have been painstakingly putting all of the pieces together again.

The food was delicious and plentiful. We tried many different styles, including mandarin and Cantonese. Anybody for jellyfish salad?

The trip was definitely worth the long plane ride.

Stephanie Hamilton



Photos courtesy of Sue Plumb. Clockwise from top left: Along the Yangtze River, The Great Wall, Panda at Beijing Zoo, Shibaozhai Temple near Chongqing on the Yangtze, Terra Cotta Warriors, and Open Air Tai Chi Practice.



The Development Committee of the Chatham Historical Society Executive Board is interested in planning additional trips, either locally in New England or abroad such as this one described above. A trip could be as short as a one day outing to a museum or historical house, or more lengthy - depending on how far away. If you have a suggestion for a trip, please let us know so that we can look into the possibilities.

Chatham 300

Plans continue to be refined for the celebration of the 300th Anniversary of Chatham's Incorporation as a town. Details as well as an overview of events are available on the Chatham 300 web site: www.chatham300.org. Many organizations in Chatham, as well as your Chatham Historical Society are planning special events around the various major events. The celebrations will begin with the weekend of March 9th, 10th and 11th, 2012, and are expected to include an Opening Banquet, a Period Ball, and a Convocation Service. Other events that weekend are also in the planning stages. During Founders' Weekend, June 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th, each day will focus on a particular century. A weekend dedicated to the Art is being planned for Labor Day Weekend, and Homecoming Weekend is scheduled for October 19th, 20th, and 21st. First Night Chatham will bring the 300 days of celebrations to a close on December 31, 2012 with many of its usual events as well as some special anniversary events.

Much more information will be provided in the next Atwood Log, coming out in early February of 2012, and, of course, there will be many opportunities for you to volunteer to be a part of this very special town wide celebration.



From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you well and looking ahead to a fine holiday season. The days of Indian summer have now left us and we are experiencing the occasional taste of winter here in Chatham. With the museum now closed for regular visitors for the season, it is an appropriate time to remember what a wonderful season we had and to thank the many talented volunteers we have among us who gave of their fine talent and precious time to make the past season one of the best we have enjoyed in years.

Our touching exhibit in memory of Robert Verity Clem was indeed a highlight for all of us. Inspired by the determination of Bob's life partner Louise Russell and members of Bob's family, Mark Wilkins and team delivered a beautiful and popular exhibit experience for the public remembering one of Chatham's own. Another highlight was the beautiful presentation in September of the Atwood House Museum's collection of antique quilts. Visitors from all over Cape Cod found their way to the Atwood House this fall to study our collection so thoughtfully displayed by our Costume and Textile Chair, Janet Marjollet and her team. Thanks too to the terrific performance of our volunteer docent and host/hostess corps, lead so well this year by Carol Kolb. This personal "hands on" offering continues to gain very positive comments from our many visitors. Thanks to all of you for this precious commitment of time to enhance our visitor experience.

The Operating Board, made up of volunteer leaders who operate the Chatham Historical Society and the Atwood House Museum under the direction of our Executive Director, Mark Wilkins, again did fantastic and meticulous work, much behind the scenes, this season to make sure our museum was at its best. Their names are all listed in the masthead of this LOG. Please join me in thanking them for their extraordinary service during the past year. We could not operate the museum and our related services without their dedicated service to our mission.

As we now look toward the very exciting prospect of celebrating Chatham's 300th birthday next year, we welcome a new member to the Atwood House Museum staff. Kealyn Garner joins us as Operations Administrator to assist the office of Executive Director and the museum volunteer leadership in managing the many tasks that are required to make our museum run. Welcome Kealyn!

I look forward to seeing those of you who are in Chatham for our special events planned during the Holidays! Check our website for the latest happenings at the Atwood House Museum. www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org

Very truly yours,

John J. King

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

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**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.



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.

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

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Mark Your Calendars

Coming up at The Chatham Historical Society & Atwood House Museum

Future Events - See Details Inside

Friday, November 25, 2011 "Black Friday" - Day after Thanksgiving Event

Friday and Saturday, December 9 and 10, 2011 Annual Hearth Warming

Saturday, December 31, 2011 First Night: film showing
"Swing Time" starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers

Afternoons at the Atwood Lecture Series

2 pm at The Atwood House Museum

Sunday, November 13, 2011

Speaker: Robert Prescott - *Shore Birding with Bob Clem*

Sunday, January 8, 2012

Speaker: Spencer Grey - *A Photographic History of
Chatham from 1850 - 2000*

Sunday, February 12, 2012

Speaker: Judy Reed - *A Most Contemptible Passion:
Marriage and Divorce in 18th Century New England*

