

The Atwood Log



The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society



From the Director

I am taking the opportunity offered by my letter in this issue of The Atwood Log to share with you the news that I will be leaving the Museum at the end of the year. Early in 2015 I will be moving to Easton, Maryland where I will serve as the director of the Academy Art Museum. The decision to leave the Atwood House has not been an easy one. I have enjoyed my time at the museum, and more importantly, over the nearly two and a half years that I have been privileged to work here, I have learned a great deal about the Chatham community and the history of this town. I have also made friends and gained colleagues whom I will certainly miss.

I came to Chatham in the final months of 2012, the tercentennial year. It was quite an experience to arrive at the Museum during that celebration. The history of the town was one of the major focuses for events and programs at the Atwood House and elsewhere. The Museum had mounted a special exhibition, published *Three Centuries in a Cape Cod Village*, a wonderful book of essays, and, over the course of the year, presented a series of talks and hosted several living history programs. Other organizations had also presented programs focusing on Chatham history. It was great to arrive at the museum while history was thick in the air and when the celebration of it had inspired a spirit of collaboration among organizations.

Over the next two years I had the opportunity to undertake crash courses in sailboat design and embroidery in addition to trying to acquire a basic knowledge of the history of Chatham. As I did I was struck over and over again by the wealth of information people here had at their fingertips and by their generosity in sharing it. This is a community that takes great pride in its past. It was also clear to me that my colleagues here at the Chatham Historical Society were extraordinarily knowledgeable about the people, places, and events that have played roles in Chatham history, both major and minor ones. I am very grateful to all these individuals for their generosity in welcoming me to the Atwood House and their patience with my limited knowledge about the town.

I am also very grateful to the many volunteers who have given so freely of their time and enthusiasm during my tenure here. Visitors have frequently complimented me on a wonderful experience they had at the museum, as though I was responsible for the warm welcome they received and the quality of the information our docents shared with them. I was not, of course. Their visit was shaped by individuals anxious to enrich the experiences our guests have when they come here. By the way, if you are looking for a way to engage in your community, consider the many varied opportunities for volunteering offered by the Atwood House.

I am leaving the Atwood House Museum with a great appreciation for Chatham and great respect for all the Historical Society has done over the nearly 100 years since it was founded to preserve and celebrate the town. And I am leaving with a great sense of gratitude toward the leadership of the Historical Society for giving me the opportunity to serve as director of the Atwood House Museum and for the many generous members and donors who have supported our activities.

Dennis McFadden

Chatham Historical Society

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From the Atwood House Museum Collection

The Atwood House Museum's recent exhibit of a selection of wedding gowns and clothing, dating from 1830 to the late 19th century, gave a glimpse of the artifacts belonging to the Chatham Historical Society. Three of the gowns shown in the exhibit were originally worn as wedding gowns by women who lived in Chatham.

It is interesting to note that, when in 1840 young Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom married her cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg,-Gotha, she chose for her wedding a comparatively simple gown of white silk satin and handmade English lace – not an elaborate concoction created in silver or gold fabric and embellished with jewels as that which was favored by royal European brides of the mid -19th century. The fashionable choice of middle and upper class brides of the period would likely have been a stylish gown of richly colored fabric. Blues, garnet, amethyst and shades of brown (a favorite) were the preferences. Practically, these costly gowns became part of a trousseau to be worn on special occasions, sometimes restyled, for years.

Two such gowns were featured in the exhibit. An intricately detailed two piece brown silk taffeta gown with a fitted bodice was worn by Phebe Eldredge Small Tripp who married James Albert Kendrick on December 23, 1874. Her gown was constructed with pleated overskirts, the left side creating a draped effect and an asymmetrical panel on

the right side with eight rows of ruched ruffles. The back overskirt pleats into a bustle. A double row of steel cut buttons adorns the bodice.

A dark blue silk faille gown with contrasting fabric and a fitted style jacket was worn by Ardella Harding, daughter of Juliana Burgess Harding and Elisha Harding, when she married Edgar Taylor, a seaman, in 1875. The bodice displays an inserted shirred silk jabot, a trim or frill attached to the bodice, above ten oval multi-colored enamel buttons. The skirt is comprised of a fringed apron open in front and draped around back ending below a very full bustle. Box pleats

complete the hemline. The "Johnny" collar and decorative arm bands add to the military style of this fashionable gown.

A simple gown of sage green silk with wide neckline and a high waist bodice is made elegant by the addition of leg o' mutton sleeves, their fullness created by eighteen pleats. A narrow sleeve extends from elbow to wrist. The gown is believed to have been worn in 1830 by one of the daughters of Mrs. Dolly Loring who was born in 1811. It was passed down through the Loring, Carleton, Brastow, and Semple families.

The Society's collection also includes a very formal silk moiré gown from 1895 which repeats the same leg-o-mutton style of sleeve.



*Sage green silk gown
believed to be from 1830*

By the third quarter of the 19th century, the queen's style of dress was widely copied. The white wedding gown became the hands down preference – still is and, no doubt, will be for some time.

An ivory silk crepe-de-chine wedding gown was worn by Julia Wade who married Robert Little Forsythe in 1869. An elaborate waterfall of lace decorates the center front panel of the beautifully detailed skirt.

Petticoats, handkerchiefs, stockings, shoes and gloves are examples of other wedding finery included in the collection and were displayed in the exhibit.



*Julia Wade ivory crepe-de-chine
gown from 1869*

Clothing from the simplest every day dress to the more elaborate formal gowns, both wedding and evening, are archived in the Chatham Historical Society's collection. The general collection of associated accessories includes coats, jackets, bodices, skirts, blouses, shawls, underwear, sleepwear, footwear, hats, and purses. Infant christening dresses, children's clothing and accessories, men's wear and uniforms are also a part of the archived collection. The Society is always interested in acquiring artifacts which are in good condition and have a direct connection to Chatham townspeople.



Ardella Harding dark blue silk faille gown from 1875

About Adding to the Collection

Earlier this Fall I attended an Environmental History program at the Massachusetts Historical Society. The program was about Bridal Veil, a small lumbering town in the Cascade Mountains in northern Oregon. A background paper circulated before the program provided an account of the history of the town from its beginnings in the late 19th century to the demolition of last remaining structures there in the first years of the present century. In between the town had been shaped by the ebb and flow of the timber industry.

While the story of the town was itself of interest, much of the discussion during the program focused on broader cultural issues posed by its demolition. I was especially intrigued when the conversation turned to how we choose what to save of the past. Bridal Veil's past was represented by a cultural landscape; the accumulation of utilitarian structures, simple houses, and alterations to the natural setting that together provided the record of more than a century of human activity there. Their removal erased the tangible evidence of one part of the past in favor of other cultural values. A local historical society in a nearby community now tells the story of Bridal Veil with the artifacts and records in its collection.

At the Chatham Historical Society we frequently face the question of what to save. People generously offer us all manner of things and while it is tempting to add everything to the collection, the limited space we have for storage and display and the limited resources we have to care for it impose a discipline on the process of adding to the collection. In keeping with the standards of the museum field we pose a series of questions when we consider adding something to the collection. What is the object's connection to Chatham? Do we have good evidence that it belonged to or was used by someone living here? Can we use it to help tell the story of the town? Is it something of

interest that is not already represented in the collection? Is it a good example of its type? What condition is it in? Can we envision using it in an exhibition or a display? Will it be of interest to researchers?

Some of these questions have straightforward answers. As an example, when considering a military uniform for the textile and costume collection we can often tell whether it is in good condition. We also know whether it would be the only one of its kind in the collection or if we already have five other examples. Sometimes the answer to one question shades how we weigh the answer to another. To use the example of a uniform, if we were considering one that would be unique in the collection, we might be willing to take it even though it was going to require some costly conservation.

Less straightforward are the more subjective questions. When we try to determine whether a proposed addition to the collection is going to be of interest to our audience or researchers we cannot help but be influenced by our own personal interests and the values of our time. The lives of prominent citizens are often well represented in history museum collections. This is not surprising when we consider that it was often prominent citizens who provided the resources needed to establish museums. But what about the lives of the less prominent? Today museums, anxious to tell a more complete story and responding to the public's interest in the whole fabric of society, try to fill in some of the blank spots in our collection left by decisions our predecessors made. We also try to think for the future and, especially when considering the artifacts of today, envision what a generation or two ahead will be interested in. With this in mind we are delighted to report that we recently added examples of Chatham High School team uniforms to the collection.

Dennis McFadden



*Enjoying refreshments and conversation at the
2014 Hearth Warming*

Volunteer Needed

The Historical Society is looking for a volunteer to help manage the database we use to track membership. This position calls for someone comfortable working with a computer and able to accurately enter information. It is not a "high tech" position. We do need a volunteer who is in Chatham year round and willing to commit to come into the Atwood House on a regular schedule. Training will be provided. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity please email the Development Committee at info@chathamhistorical.org.

Minutes

Annual Meeting of Members Chatham Historical Society

Sunday, August 17, 2014 at 4:00 PM

The meeting was called to order at the Atwood House Museum at 4:00 pm by Executive Board Chairman Steve Burlingame, who welcomed those present.

Minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting

Copies of the minutes from the 2013 Annual Meeting were distributed; a motion to approve those minutes was made, seconded, and approved.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Linda Cebula presented her report, reviewing the financial results of recent fund raising events and the increase in the Society's endowment portfolio since last year. She also reviewed the report from the accounting firm that files our federal 990 form and we are in good order with the government. Steve thanked Linda for her excellent work as the Society's Treasurer.

Report of the Executive Director

Executive Director Dennis McFadden reported on his second year at the Atwood House Museum/Chatham Historical Society. In particular he commented about the development of the Monomoy Wilderness Exhibition and the Ann Grey embroidery exhibition – *Works most artful & ingenious.*

He reminded attendees that the museum will be open until Columbus Day weekend and they might want to return to see other parts of the museum that are not open today. He also reminded those present that we always welcome new members.

Report of the Governance and Nominating Committee

Chairman of the Governance and Nominating Committee Stephen Daniel presented the slate of officers for the next year. A motion to approve the slate was carried. Stephen also requested a motion to approve the trustees of the Class of 2018. This motion was also carried.

The officers elected for the year 2014-2015 of the Chatham Historical Society are:

Chairman: Steve Burlingame
Vice Chairman: Stephen S. Daniel
Secretary: Stephanie Bartlett
Treasurer: Linda Cebula

Trustees elected to the Class of 2018 are: Stephanie Bartlett and Alan Sachtleben

Steve expressed the Executive Board's appreciation of Debbie Swenson's service to the Historical Society as a member of the Executive Board upon the completion of her term.

Steve also recognized John King for his commitment to the Chatham Historical Society and the Atwood House Museum since coming onto the Executive Board in 2005. John served as Board Chairman from August, 2009 until January, 2014 and as Acting Executive Director from October 2011 until August 2012. John is resigning from the board as of this meeting. In his honor, the members of the Executive Board have acquired an original George Eldridge Chart, the 1852 Upside Down Chart.

Steve adjourned the business meeting at 4:30 pm.

Steve then introduced the speaker of the day, Spencer Grey, who presented an illustrated program entitled *Tourism in Chatham*. The program ended at 5:30 pm.

Minutes compiled by Dennis McFadden, Steve Burlingame, and Margaret Martin

November Embroidery Event Well Attended

On Friday, November 7th forty attendees were fascinated by the presentations of three speakers on topics about the art and craft of embroidery.

Tricia Nguyen spoke about the Plimoth Jacket. This was a project undertaken at Plimoth Plantation to recreate a garment comparable to garments worn by aristocrats and the more wealthy in England in the early 17th century. Research was undertaken at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston as well as with the Victoria & Albert Museum in London which owns the garment that was the inspiration for the one constructed at Plimoth. Over 200 embroiderers and lace makers participated in the project. Many individuals had never worked on embroidery before but were trained to create parts of the design. Some of the materials had to be recreated and techniques analyzed to learn how to use lost fabric arts. Tricia brought the coif along so that we could see some of the final creation. It was truly beautiful.

Joetta Maue is a person who works on contemporary embroidery projects, often using found linens to which she adds her own new designs. Many of her projects involve embroidering words onto the article, expressing her thoughts about her own life, and being a young mother. Her presentation was a computer slide show of some of her work.

Marie Schlag presented information, including pictures for clarification, on caring for and preserving your embroidery. Marie is the owner of The Studio for Textile Conservation in Scituate, MA. Some of her work includes assisting museums, historical societies, and private clients with costume and textile conservation as well as collection surveys and management.



*Presenters, left to right:
Marie Schlag, Tricia Nguyen, Joetta Maue*



Some of the very attentive audience



Above and above right: embroidery projects by Joetta Maue



Guests enjoyed a delicious lunch after the program, catered by The Pampered Palate.



Tricia Nguyen shows guests the embroidered coif which is part of the Plimoth Jacket project.

The speakers may be contacted using the following websites:

Tricia Nguyen of Thistle Threads:

www.thistle-threads.com

Joetta Maue:

www.joettamaue.com

Marie Schlag of The Studio for

Textile Conservation:

www.conservetextiles.com

The hostesses who welcome visitors to the Atwood House encourage them to sign our guest book and, if they would like, leave a comment or two about their visit. During the summer we have only a minute here and there to glance at these. In the off season we have the time to sit down to read them through, following the course of the past summer. When we see notations like, "So much more to see than we expected!" "Best couple of hours in a long time," or simply, "Thanks," they bring back memories of excited voices in the galleries, the sound of feet running across the floor, and complements about our docents. At a time when the museum is very quiet they inspire our work toward the year ahead, developing new exhibitions and improving favorite installations. We share them with you, our loyal members, to thank you for your past support and to encourage you to contribute to our Annual Appeal, if you have not already done so.



Holiday decorations from an earlier time, left, and checking out the cider on the refreshment table at the annual Hearth Warming, above

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

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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.

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Mark Your Calendars Coming up at THE ATWOOD HOUSE MUSEUM

At the Atwood -

Lectures and Programs for the Winter and Spring at the Atwood House Museum are in the planning stages. Please check our web site, our next newsletter, or call the museum for information as it becomes available

The Museum Main Gallery Train Exhibit, the Side Galleries, and the Shop will be open New Year's Eve 2014 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm for First Night festivities