

SPRING 2012

The Atwood Log



LIVING MEMORIES OF
CHATHAM'S
300 YEARS

The Quarterly Newsletter
of
The Chatham Historical Society



From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Spring is upon us in Chatham. This means that the forsythia is blooming and the Atwood House Museum is bustling getting ready for the coming season, our *Summer of Centuries*. Our volunteer leadership team is busy with program preparation, building our new exhibit, setting up the museum shop, performing cleaning and maintenance on the building and many other important tasks to get ready for our opening over Founders' Weekend on June 8th. I know you will enjoy all that we have in store for you this summer.

In particular, I want to draw your attention to our two summer camp offerings for young people. Details are available elsewhere in this issue but know that Mary Ann Gray's Colonial Camp, which was such a hit last year, will again be offered in late June. In addition we have a very special program offering on Wampanoag Culture and History that will occur in July and August. We are pleased to welcome Linda Coombs, a noted Wampanoag educator, to teach this program with support from our Education Chair, Richard Curcio. The program is being co-sponsored by the Chatham Wampanoag Circle and spaces may be limited so please register as early as you can.

Congratulations and sincere thanks are in order to the hard working authors of the newly published – *Three Centuries of a Cape Cod Village: The Story of Chatham*. The authors are Dana Eldridge, Mary Ann Gray, Lynn Van Dine, Spencer Grey, Debra Lawless, Tim Weller and Eric Hartell. Please thank them when you see them for this priceless gift to Chatham on our 300th birthday. The book is available for a special price to members of the Chatham Historical Society for a limited time so please get your order in via our web site.

Finally, our search for a new Executive Director is well underway and I hope to be able report on behalf of the Executive Board on this in the not too distant future.

Sincerely,

John J. King II

Tercentennial Book *Three Centuries in a Cape Cod Village*

THREE CENTURIES
IN A CAPE COD VILLAGE
The Story of Chatham



Chatham Historical Society
Chatham, Massachusetts
2012

**Now available at a special
sale price to Chatham
Historical Society
members through
May 31, 2012
15% discount from retail
price of \$34.99
\$5.00 shipping or pickup
at the Atwood House
Museum.**

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Special Events

Special Exhibit *A Summer of Centuries*



In June, 2012, our Atkins-Kent gallery will be transformed into a new exhibit called *Visions of Chatham Past: an Exhibit of Personal Stories*. The exhibit will feature four outstanding Chatham residents, one from each century, from the 17th through the 20th century.

The four people chosen to highlight each century are Ann Busby Nickerson (17th), Benjamin Godfrey (18th), Almira Crowell (19th), and John Hughes Nickerson (20th). Through text, objects, and artifacts, a different vignette will describe each person's amazing life and accomplishments. Each story will show an aspect of the spirit, mettle, hard work, and courage that defines Chatham's rich and varied history.

Engaging All Five Senses: *Living History Weekends* Four weekends: June – September 2012

History has never been so alive! Step back into the past as you experience key moments from Chatham's pre-colonial Native American roots all the way up to the influential changes experienced during the 20th century.

Following the popularity of last year's first ever Civil War weekend, we have prepared four living history weekends to celebrate Chatham's 300th year. Each weekend will represent a period from a different century, working backwards from the 20th to the 17th century.

Our 2012 Summer of Centuries season will kick off with a WWII Living History celebration on Sunday, June 10th from 10 am to 4 pm. Through this celebration, visitors will rediscover the exceptional era of the Second World War as they witness powerful reenactments, costumed interpreters, authentic gear and artifacts. Members of the Living History Association will be setting up an educational encampment on the front lawn and visitors will be able to hear a rousing speech by the Prime Minister Winston Churchill himself! Later, hear about the war as it really was - a roundtable discussion of WWII experiences will be conducted in the afternoon featuring our own Chatham residents.

Next up in July, our Civil War weekend is back! The 9th Massachusetts Battery Volunteers will be rejoining us to set up an encampment on the Atwood House lawn, give brief lectures, and demonstrations. Rick Spencer, music historian, will also rejoin us and will perform two new programs on popular period music. Sample real civil war era food including hardtack!

Opening Weekend for *The Atwood House* Museum

The Atwood House Museum will open for the 2012 season on Friday, June 8. Except for special events, June hours will be Tuesday through Saturday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Saturday, June 9, the museum will hold its annual Open House from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm with free admission on that day.

On Sunday, June 10 we will hold our first Summer of Centuries special event as noted elsewhere on this page - a World War II Living History event.

While the museum will not be open on Monday, June 11, there are a number of special events planned town wide from Friday through Monday during this Founders Weekend, all part of the Chatham 300 Celebration. Details about these events may be found on the Chatham300 website. Each day of the weekend will focus on a different century.



The Founders - About the Chatham Reading Club and the Founding of the Chatham Historical Society

Land a time capsule in downtown Chatham on Cape Cod in 1912, and you find yourself on a rough road with fields, a treeless landscape and a farming and fishing village shaped by the sea, transported to a time with a different way of living in most respects. The only paved road is a short Main Street. Nearby there are inns and boarding houses. Stores sell goods and services, men's work clothes, hardware, stoves, lumber, groceries and dry goods, crockery, and baskets. Women customers wear long sleeved dresses with long skirts, and the shop keepers and business men are more formally attired than today. For entertainment, check the projection booth at Town Hall. There is little traffic to dodge, except, perhaps, Crowell's grocery store wagon or a peddler's cart.

Most homes are lighted by candles and kerosene lamps, and heated by coal stoves or fireplaces. With so many of the men at sea, children are accustomed to helping with the chores inside and out, tending vegetable gardens, small flocks of hens and barrels of provisions. Discomfort is the norm. With no running water, Saturday night baths may be in the kitchen, in a wooden tub, and in the winter it's a cold trek out to a three-hole privy. Home deliveries of groceries, milk and blocks of ice arrive by wagon; and trades people like the knife grinder are always a welcome interruption.

A few years earlier, the assessor's tally of animals and poultry on farms beyond the town center included horses, cows, cattle, poultry, and some pigs. Large traditional crops were corn, cranberries and turnips. Very few horses and carriages were seen. People traveled by water to Oyster Pond, and walked on dirt paths and roads to everywhere short of five miles, for errands, meetings, church, school, anywhere. Unless there was a bright moon, roads were empty at night, for neither street lights nor efficient communications had yet arrived. Nevertheless, with its own Depot and trains running the two and a half hour trip to Boston, news of the outside world found its way to Chatham, and into a local newspaper also.

It was this setting in October 1911 that compelled a group of ten intrepid women to pursue their common interest in a world beyond their surroundings. They decided to meet together to make plans for a way to expand their knowledge through a reading club. With children to be tucked into bed, they agreed to meet at day's end and, weather permitting, walk the dark streets with lanterns in hand to the home of Alice Walker Guild who had extended the invitation. Although Cape Codders are said to be strong and scrappy, and certainly determined, Josephine Ivanov's club history notes that occasionally a meeting was cancelled because of storms making the roads impassable and walking not to be thought of, even with a lantern.

The ten original members were: Josephine K. Atkins, Mattie J. Bearse, Dr. Marinda B.G. Buck, Faustina Freeman, Alice Walker Guild, Sarah P. Kent, Eglantine F. Nickerson, Laurietta Nickerson, Rebecca Ryder and Florence Smith. Although they lacked long range plans, by May 1912 The Chatham Ladies Reading Club was ready to hold its first business meeting and elected Mrs. Guild as president with a three member executive committee. Their eve-

ning meetings continued weekly for five years, then bi-weekly, always from October through May with a break for the busy summer months (as they are today). According to member emeritus Sybille Colby, their number had grown to twenty enthusiastic members who were eager to begin their program of literature, art and music. Without benefit of the cultural sources we have today... live theater, concerts, radio, television and new media, these ladies rose to the challenge. Each member was expected to bring whatever she could find on the subject at hand, from articles and illustrations to family treasures. By their second year, programs were planned a full year ahead, making it easier "to be on the lookout." When the focus was on music, they could always count on some among them with musical talent. In addition to the Eldredge Library, arrangements were made with the New Bedford



Founding member, Dr. Marinda "Minnie" Buck and friend



Club members in 1965

Library, "especially for art materials for the study of the greatest artists." In 1914 a constitution and by laws were adopted, dues were set at 50 cents to pay for postage and other incidentals, and Miss Nellie Atwood became Treasurer.

Although autos were not allowed among the twenty horse-drawn floats in Chatham's Bicentennial Celebration of 1912, the gala event (with a dinner for 600 under tents!) ushered in an era of change that would affect Chatham's outlook and way of life.

The next ten years introduced:

- ...improved roads
- ...The Cape Cod Canal
- ...motorized vehicles for business
- ...Marconi's wireless transatlantic signal
- ...limited electricity
- ...fire wagon and police
- ...first Chatham woman elected to a "significant post"
- ...boys' baseball and girls' basketball teams
- ...new buildings, including Chatham Bars Inn
- ...1917 war gardens and hospitality centers for servicemen
- ...Naval Air Station (brought "wash-ashores")

The buildup to World War I increased concern about being informed, and Reading Club programs always began with "current events," with some meetings scheduled entirely to a current issue.

With President Guild so energetically involved "everywhere," it comes as no surprise that she also wrote for the Chatham Monitor and reported Reading Club meetings. Ten years after the Reading Club was inaugurated, in December 1922 a news item foreshadowed an important local "happening:"

"...There was some discussion of the need in Chatham of an association which would be responsible for the preservation of furnishings, papers and so forth which belonged to the people who have made Chatham. ... As progress reaches out it is possible to retain a bit of the romance of the past by saving and caring for these inanimate things which have been so closely associated with

the lives of the people."

Change gained momentum in the Twenties. The Forgeron Shoe Shop and Acme Laundry brought new services; the Mayflower Shop installed a radio set with a loud speaker to bring in the World Series game. Much of town was electrified although service was erratic, and candles were kept handy. Education was important with nine schools, the Main Street School being recently built.

A rough handwritten draft of a report by Alice Guild about the birth of the Chatham Historical Society begins with a chance remark overheard after an historical program which may have been the catalyst: *A member said, "It's too bad but we are losing these treasures of the past to outside people; we should keep them here."*

Alice wrote, *Well, why not try to do just that!*

From Alice Guild's columns in the Chatham Monitor:

Nov. 27, 1923 Reading Club. "The matter of forming an Historical Society for Chatham was received with so much enthusiasm that the club felt that they were merely crystallizing a wish of many people instead of proposing something new. A temporary organization was formed, Mr. Wm. C Smith, President, and Miss Bertha Arey, Secretary. A committee of three was appointed to assist them in writing a constitution. A report will be made at a public meeting in December...They expect to enlist the sympathy and help of all who are interested in preserving Chatham's history."

Dec. 11, 1923 Historical Society. The first Monitor column devoted to the newly formed Chatham Historical Society reported on the meeting to prepare a Constitution and By Laws.

A committee consisting of Mrs. Alice Guild, Dr. Minnie Buck and Mr. Joshua Nickerson was then elected to prepare the annual meeting's program (Feb. 19, 1924). "Any one desiring to join should apply to Miss Bertha Arey, Secretary-Treasurer. The fee is one dollar..."

Feb. 19, 1924 Historical Society. The first formal meeting of the Historical Society was held. After an informative program about local history followed by "What our museums should do," William C. Smith was elected President, and other positions were filled, some by members of the Ladies Reading Club of Chatham.

Alice's draft continues: *"By the Fall of 1924 the group arranged for a public meeting at the home of M/M Geo. H. Nickerson, 2d. Invited were Selectmen and ... people who it was thought might be interested. After a program...an organization was effected with William C. Smith as President. The idea of an historical society fell into receptive minds and as always, everyone took hold to make it a successful venture."*

Although the Town had voted to allow them the use of the Atwood Schoolhouse, *"another proposition came to hand. One of the owners of the Atwood home came to town to see just what could be done with the building...Bessie Taylor told him about the Historical Society."* She suggested they be allowed to possess it.

March 4, 1926 Historical Society: Negotiations are moving for purchase of Atwood House. Officers elected were: Alice W. Guild, Bertha M. Arey, Dr. Minnie Buck, L. Sidney Atwood, Marion Ellis, Rebecca Nickerson, Heman Harding & Joshua A. Nickerson, 2nd. (The first three were Reading Club members.)

Alice continues: *This was in 1926 and we were young and had a slim treasury.* Nevertheless, details were worked out and the purchase of the Atwood House became a fait accompli!

We looked about, - the house was "a ragged beggar sunning." Her handwritten report concludes with a delightful and detailed account of the repairs and renovations required and carried out by members and friends of the Reading Club and Historical Society, skilled and unskilled together. It reflects good-humored camaraderie and practical solutions to costly problems. (See Home Song Chatham by Marcia J. Monbleau, 1995)

In the last paragraph of a printed report about financing the Atwood project, Mrs. Guild gave credit to the ladies who substantially added to the funds by giving bridge parties in August for several years: "These parties were largely patronized by the Summer folks. Mrs. Joseph Shattuck (great grandmother of current Historical Society Chairman John King), Miss Edith Sears and Miss Eunice Chase were the chief actors in this."

By November 1926 the House was ready for the public, and Joseph C. Lincoln wrote: "And the old Atwood House, by far the oldest building in Chatham, is, according to the terms of the deed, to be *Conserved for the benefit of all* and its beauty and that of its site are not to be impaired."

The remarkable Alice Walker Guild retired as President of the Chatham Ladies Reading Club in May 1965. In spite of establishing a one year term for the presidency when she wrote the Constitution in 1914, she was annually re-elected as President for fifty-three years! Apparently she was a legend in her own time, for the minutes note "we can't improve upon perfection." Nevertheless, the gavel was successfully passed to Elizabeth W. Eldridge (Mrs. Wilber Eldridge), a long time member who served as the second President for the next eighteen years, 1965-1983. Their combined presidencies equaled seventy-one years! Each as President Emeritus continued active participation.



Elizabeth Eldridge, second president of the Chatham Reading Club

Betty Eldridge was an ideal choice, not only because she and The Reading Club were born the same year, but also because she was an avid reader who was in charge of the South Chatham Library for forty-eight years. A direct descendent of William Nickerson, founder of Chatham, her background was crystallized by the Cape, with its self-sufficient farmers, fishermen, seafarers, teachers, and a love for their environment.

The era of change on the Cape continued unabated and everything was affected, as well as the Reading Club's programs. Entire-group presentations evolved into single member reports on a topic within the theme of the year, usually based on a book and any supportive materials needed. Sharing of ideas and lively discussion still traditionally follow with tea-time favorites in members' homes.

Ever open to change, minutes from Betty's presidency note innovative programs and the use of various new media with reports. Two meetings were devoted to reading parts in The Importance of Being Earnest, "with humor and dramatic talent;" three groups were given twenty-five minutes to deliberate over assigned social issues, then presented the results with "amicable disagreement;" slides and recordings enriched various subjects.

This year's theme was *Making a Difference - Change in the last 100 years*, with reports on Women Physicians, Medical Advances, American Roads, Architecture, Prohibition, Talkies, Last Child in the Woods, Silent Spring (nature), Triangle Shirtwaist Fire (labor), Faberge and the Russian Revolution (art), Secondary Education, and Preserving Historic New England.

The last returns us full circle to the lively curiosity and probing spirit of the founders of the Chatham Historical Society and Chatham Reading Club, to continue the quest for increased knowledge and understanding of our shared past, present and future.

Katherine Ann Snow Cima

Colonial Camp and Monday Mornings at the Museum

During the last week in June, the Museum will once again be sponsoring a Colonial Camp for children. As in the Camp presented last year, activities will center on the life at the time our Atwood House was first occupied by Joseph Atwood and his family. We will be learning about the type of lighting that would have been used during the Colonial era. This will include exploring the displays in the old house about early lighting including whale oil lamps and kerosene lamps. In addition we will try our hands at making candles from wax. Another activity will be making bread and butter. Attendees will learn about the bake oven and butter churns and will try their hands at churning butter from cream and baking corn bread. One day will be devoted to making baskets out of vines and using them to gather herbs from the Atwood House Herb Garden. The final activity will be to create a square for a quilt to be exhibited in the Atwood House to commemorate the 300th anniversary celebration of Chatham's recognition as a chartered town.

The Colonial Camp will run from June 25th through June 28th. The hours are 9 am to 12:30 pm. A small snack will be provided during the morning. Children from ages 9 to 12 are invited to participate. The cost will be \$25 for children of members and \$30 for children of non-members. Cut off for Colonial Camp registrations will be Friday, June 22.

The program, Monday Mornings at the Museum begins on Monday, July 9th and continues through August 27th from 10:00am to 12:30pm at the Atwood House Museum. This year's program is "Learning the Wampanoag Way." The program will be taught by Wampanoag educator, Linda Coombs. The weekly curriculum is designed to articulate and celebrate the noble life of The People of the First Light. Teaching emphasis is on family life, lifestyle, cultural accomplishments and the Wampanoag sense of purpose. These classes will use art, artifacts, and discussion for a hands-on, fun-filled learning experience. The program is planned for children ages 6 to 11. Richard Curcio, who has planned the Monday Morning programs for the last five years, will be working with Ms. Coombs on some of this year's programs.

The fee for each class is \$7 for children of members, and \$10 for children of non-members.

Reservations for either program may be made by calling Margaret Martin at the museum, 508-945-2493, or emailing to mmartin@chathamhistorical.org.



Colonial Camp 2011

Lecture Series - Voices: A Village in Perspective

The Tercentennial lecture Series continues with a variety of offerings in the next few months. On Sunday, May 6, Dana Eldredge will present *Favorite Monomoy Memories* culled from his columns in *The Cape Codder* newspaper over past years. Mr. Eldridge is a retired teacher, a 13th generation Cape Codder, and a part-time interpretive ranger with the Cape Cod National Seashore. His talk is sponsored by the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, and will be held at the Chatham Community Center.

A 12th generation Cape Codder, Todd Morgan Kelley, will present a talk on Sunday, May 20, *The Acculturation of Cape Cod: Changes in the People, Culture, and Landscape*. Mr. Kelley will begin with an overview of the glacial formation of the Cape and the lives of The First People and their culture. He will continue on into the 20th century, the effects of three centuries of deforestation and the tourist economy, and end with the dramatic changes to the landscape, and the social and cultural demographics in very recent years. This program is sponsored by the Chatham Historical Society and is also at the Chatham Community Center.

On Sunday, June 17, there will be a round table discussion with the authors of our newest publication, *Three Centuries in a Cape Cod Village*. This discussion will be held at the Atwood House Museum in the Mural Barn. Attendees will be able to purchase copies of the book in our gift shop and have them personalized after the discussion.

On Sunday, July 8, back at the Chatham Community Center, local historian, Jim Coogan, will present a lecture on the *War of 1812*, its impact on Cape Cod, and Cape Cod's impact on the war, since this year marks the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the War of 1812.

All of these programs will begin at 2:00 pm.

SAVE THE DATE

The Chatham Historical Society's Annual Summer Celebration

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

Saturday, July 28, 2012

5:30 to 7:30 pm

Cocktails and Hors d'oeuvres

Please join us as we present our third annual
"Bringing History to Life" award

INVITATION TO FOLLOW

From the Archivist

This spring and summer the archives has become a place for several new and younger members of the community to volunteer. It has been fun working with two of these individuals, and I am anticipating that I will enjoy working with the third person in May.

Vince Cheney began his internship at the Museum in February. He elected to take part in a program sponsored by Chatham High School. He has spent one hour, Monday through Thursday, taking part in all of the various activities that make up the day to day life in the archives. His tasks have included checking the internet for sites that might possibly wish to acquire some of the items that have found their way to our archives and are not part of our collection mission. These included several sets of 1930's WPA architectural drawings of buildings from communities off Cape. He has participated in the process of working with Bill Horrocks and Bob Zaremba in our project to have our marine maps and charts assessed. Also included in the experience has been cataloging the contents of a large scrapbook, inventorying and accessioning a large group of documents and manuscripts donated to the archives by the Chatham Historical Commission, and participating in preparation of a one day exhibit on Joseph C. Lincoln. In addition he has spent time in observing the development of a long range plan for the budget as related to the archives collection. I hope that his experience will be valuable to him and that perhaps in the future, other interns from the high school will wish to participate in a similar experience.

The second student who has begun to participate in our activities is a Chatham Middle School student, Vincent Jodice, who spends one afternoon a week sorting, preserving and cataloging items that have been cut from newspapers by Ellen McKinley who also spends one afternoon a week doing that activity. He seems to enjoy the sense of accomplishment from this activity and eagerly looks forward to his afternoon at the Atwood House. In this case, I hope that his interest in history and archives will become a long term interest especially as the archivist is his grandmother and would like to see one of her grandchildren follow in her footsteps.



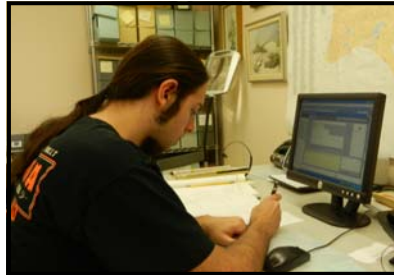
*Chatham Middle School intern
Vincent Jodice*

Our third intern will be a college student, Elizabeth Mauer, an archeology major at Boston University, who will begin working with us during May and remain until the end of July. She will be introduced to all the areas of the museum including the textile and clothing collection, the archives, the exhibits and their development, the store including the books, the role of tour guide, membership development, and the care of our collections in storage. She will be able to attend Operating Board meetings and assist at both the Colonial Camp the last week of June, as well as the Monday Morning Camp in July. In addition it is hoped that she will complete a special project that she can present to the Operating Board. We hope that through these activities she will obtain a better understanding of the small house museum and its role in preserving the community's history.

Mary Ann Gray, Archivist

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.



*Chatham High School intern
Vince Cheney*

I would like to Volunteer!

Check on the line next to your interest or you may underline your preference:

- ___ Archives
- ___ Children's Activities
- ___ Costumes and Textiles
- ___ Development and Grant Writing
- ___ Displays, Collections, Exhibits
- ___ Docents, Costumed Interpreters
- ___ Educational programs
- ___ Hospitality
- ___ Membership, Admissions
- ___ Museum Shop
- ___ Publicity and PR
- ___ Special Events

Are you able to volunteer year round

___ or summer only ___ ?

History Lives

At

The Atwood House

Museum

New paintings in the Robert Verity Clem Exhibit

This is the second year of our very special exhibit of works by the late Robert Verity Clem. The exhibit will include multiple paintings not previously on display.

The owners of all of the paintings shown both last year and this season have been most generous in sharing these wonderful works of art, and The Atwood House Museum is deeply appreciative of their kindness. The catalog for the exhibit is available for sale in our shop all of this season, or may be ordered online or by telephone.

May is Preservation Month

May 18 at 4:30 pm: Talk at the Town Hall Annex Meeting Room, by Jim Owens, Miller of the Eastham Windmill, about windmills.

May 19 at 10:00 am: Grand Opening and Re-dedication of the Godfrey Windmill, Chase Park, Cross Street, Chatham. Weather permitting, the Mill will be in operation.

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Mark Your Calendars

Coming up at
THE ATWOOD HOUSE MUSEUM

Future Events - See Details Inside

Summer of Centuries Living History Weekends - June 10, 2012; and July 14-15, 2012

Colonial Camp - June 25 - 28, 2012

Monday Mornings at the Museum, beginning July 9, 2012

An Evening to Remember - July 28, 2012

Lecture Series - Voices: A Village in Perspective

2:00 pm At The Chatham Community Center unless otherwise noted

Sunday, May 6, 2012

Speaker: Dana Eldridge - *Favorite Monomoy Memories*

Sponsor: Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge

Sunday, May 20, 2012

Speaker: Todd Morgan Kelley - *The Acculturation of Cape Cod:*

Changes in People, Culture, and Landscape

Sunday, June 17, 2012, 2:00 pm at the Atwood House Museum

Round Table Discussion by the authors of the new publication:

Three Centuries of a Cape Cod Village

Sunday, July 8, 2012

Speaker: Jim Coogan - *War of 1812*

