

The background of the cover is a painting of a small, dark boat on a body of water. The sky is filled with soft, horizontal bands of color, ranging from pale yellow and orange near the horizon to a light blue at the top. The boat is dark and has a tall, thin mast that extends towards the top of the frame. The water reflects the colors of the sky and the boat. The overall mood is serene and historical.

SPRING 2013

The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter
of
The Chatham Historical Society



From the Director

When planning Atwood House Museum programs for this year we chose to present an exhibition about the yachting in and around Chatham. The subject promised to be a visually appealing one, bringing to mind signature Chatham images of handsome boats under sail on Pleasant Bay or at rest in the anchorages around town and the fleets of the Stage Harbor and Chatham Yacht Clubs competing on bright summer days. The story had a local hero in F. Spaulding Dunbar who grew up visiting Chatham and then moved here in the early 1930s after training as a naval architect at MIT. Except for a brief interlude during the Second World War when he worked on the development of designs for PT Boats, Dunbar lived in Chatham for the rest of his life and designed a series of remarkable boats ranging from 15' Catabouts to the extraordinary Ocean Pearl created for J. Seward Johnson.

The exhibition, *Wood, Wind & Water: The Genius of Chatham's F. Spaulding Dunbar*, will open at the museum on June 15th, and we hope all of you, your families, and friends will stop by to see it several times over the course of the summer. It will celebrate Dunbar's career by documenting a series of his most significant designs. Included will be a selection of his own drawings ranging from the construction documents for a small catboat to detailed layouts for the interiors of several of his most accomplished large commissions. These drawings have a graphic power and appeal far beyond their value as design documents. They also offer insights into how Dunbar translated his visions for the form of a hull and the layout of sails into two-dimensional representations that allowed skilled builders to bring his ideas to life.

The exhibition will also provide some historical context for Spaulding Dunbar and his work. When yachting came to Chatham over a century ago it added a thread to the story of the town's already rich and longstanding association with sailing vessels. Photographs of working boats and pleasure craft under sail from the Historical Society's Archives will be included in *Wood, Wind & Water* as will memorabilia related to our yacht clubs and the history of boat building here.

Along with the exhibition we are planning a Dunbar Celebration on Saturday, August 17th and summer camps for young boat builders. For more information about these and other programs like our Chatham By the Sea House Tour on June 28th and this year's edition of our Evening to Remember, scheduled for July 20th check this copy of The Log and our website, www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org.

Dennis McFadden

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.

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The Atwood House Museum opens for the season on Saturday, June 15th at 1:00 pm

***“Chatham By The Sea” House Tour
Friday, June 28, 2013, 10:00 - 3:30
Visit a collection of
beautiful Chatham homes.
Tickets go on sale on May 1***

Seven amazing houses will be featured on this House Tour, including the Atwood House Museum. Tickets are \$40.00 and will be sold on the Chatham Historical Society web site or by calling the Atwood House Museum (508-945-2493). Tickets will also be available at the following locations in Chatham: Chatham Clothing Bar, 534 Main St.; Where The Sidewalk Ends, 432 Main St.; Cape Cod Five Bank, 548 Main St.; The Hair Company, 447 Main St.; and at Oasis Salon, 1671 Route 28, West Chatham. Cash or check only, please, at the business locations.

Committee members planning this event include Judi Clifford, Chairman, Stephanie Bartlett, Linda Cebula, Peggy Crespo, Dee Flaherty, Carol Garey, Janet Holden, Carol Kolb, RoseMarie McLoughlin, Janine Scott, and Paula Stookey. Many volunteers have been recruited to serve at the houses and we hope that many of you will attend what is sure to be an exciting event.

***Girls’ Night Out:
Tuesday Evenings
July 2 through August 13,
7:00 pm - 9:30 pm***

A new program of events is being planned at the Atwood House Museum for the summer of 2013; the committee, chaired by Judi Clifford, is comprised of Janet Holden, Laurie LeConte, Paula Lofren, RoseMarie McLoughlin, Janine Scott, Regina Shaken, and Paula Stookey.

The first presentation of the series will be held July 2, 2013 and will be entitled “*Eat Dessert First*”. The fee for each program will be \$20.00 with a special of all seven evenings for \$120.00. Each evening will have a different theme. Other evenings will focus on fashion and beauty, floral arranging, and sailing Chatham. There will also be a music night, an author and a handwriting analyst, and a wine and cheese evening.

This promises to be a lively series of events that we expect to be appealing to many of our year ‘round residents, summer regulars, and everyone’s summer guests. Look for more detailed information soon on our web site or call the museum number (508-945-2493) in June.

At the Atwood!

2013 Summer Camp - Building the Dunbar Skiff

Have someone with a passion for boats or maybe a budding naval architect in the family? This summer, in conjunction with *Wood, Wind & Water: The Genius of Chatham’s F. Spaulding Dunbar*, the Atwood House Museum will offer kids ages 11 to 14 the opportunity to build a 10 foot Spaulding Dunbar skiff. This week long program will be offered July 8th through 12th and again August 5th through 9th. During each session participants will work with master craftsman Dave Archibald, learning about boat design and construction as they build one of these handsome skiffs. The program will also include a visit to the Pease Boat Works & Marine Railway on Chatham’s Mill Pond to see a boatyard at work. Space is limited to six participants in each session and we encourage interested participants to register as soon as possible. Advance registration for Atwood House Museum members opens May 13th; general registration begins June 3rd. The fee for this program will be announced shortly before registration opens.

WOOD, WIND & WATER

In 1892 the Hotel Chatham published a booklet extolling its virtues as a vacation destination. On the cover the

stop for members of those clubs sailing along the coast and visits such as that by the 93' schooner *Atalanta*, owned by W. B. Vermilye, Vice-Commodore of the Atlantic Yacht Club, in 1880 were reported in the newspapers of the day. Boats like the *Atalanta* were usually sailed by professional crews and many were known for their lavish furnishings. In addition to cruising along the coast, often with a visit to Newport as a destination, racing was popular. There was an active regatta schedule, especially in the waters around New York, with stiff competition, heavy wagering, and boats designed and built specifically for speed and handled by hired crews. The extreme examples were the boats known as "sandbaggers." These were sloops whose designs derived from workboats used on Long Island Sound.

Those built for racing carried crews of burley men whose job it was to move from side to side the heavy bags of sand or gravel that provided the ballast needed to keep the boats upright.

Several yacht clubs were organized in and around Chatham toward the end of the century. The Pleasant Bay Yacht Club held a regatta at least as early as 1889, a Cape Cod Yacht Club in Orleans appears on a list of clubs as having been organized in 1891, and an 1892 news item mentions the Chatham Yacht Club. News accounts about the activities of these clubs suggest that racing was their



From a booklet promoting the Chatham Hotel in 1892

hotel described its setting as "The Acme of Location" and its facilities as "The Perfection of Equipment." The appealing picture above was printed inside the booklet and depicts the hotel in the background overlooking a lively scene with guests walking along the beach, rowing small skiffs and paddling canoes, or venturing out on the waters of Pleasant Bay in larger sailboats and steam launches. This image and the text inside the booklet hint at transformations underway in Chatham at the end of the 19th century. The town was becoming an increasingly popular destination for tourists, though it didn't attract enough of them to save the grand hotel from bankruptcy a few years later. In the 1890s Chatham was also witnessing the end of the era when packets and catboats under sail carried freight and passengers and served the town's fishing fleet and the beginning of another when yachting or recreational sailing would become a defining feature of the waters surrounding the town.

In the United States interest in yachting grew significantly during the second half of the nineteenth century. The dates that yacht clubs were organized and their locations offer evidence of when and where centers developed. In the Northeast there were two, New York and Boston, each boasting a number of clubs and New York claiming primacy with the establishment of the New York Yacht Club in 1844. Chatham was an occasional



Circa 1900, on Pleasant Bay

Cont. on page 6

SAVE THE DATE

*The Chatham Historical Society's
Annual Summer Celebration*

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

Saturday, July 20, 2013 5:30 to 7:30 pm

Cocktails and Hors d'oeuvres

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

INVITATION TO FOLLOW

Once again the Evening to Remember Committee is organizing this popular event. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will again be provided by Wequassett Inn and Resort and Chatham Bars Inn. Chairman Pat Sachtleben has informed us of several exciting auction items. These will include a Week in an Irish Cottage by the sea, a week in January at Playa Linda Beach Resort in Aruba, a weekend in Bermuda with a special event, a private tour at Winterthur, a Sunset Sail on a classic sailing vessel, a Cocktail Party for 10 at historic 606 Main Street, as well as Dine-around and Shop-around packages.

In addition to chairman Sachtleben, committee members are Stephanie Bartlett, Susan Collins, Peggy Crespo, Phyllis Freeman, RoseMarie McLoughlin, Ginny Nickerson, and Debbie Swenson.



Silent Auction items and bidders from July 2012

Afternoons at the Atwood Lectures 2013

The 2013 Lecture Series continues in May and June with two programs. On May 5th, in honor of the reconstruction of Chatham's historic Orpheum Theatre, we will present Professor Ken Eisenstein to explore the era of silent films from the invention of moving pictures in the early years of the twentieth century to the final silent productions in the latter 1920s. Mr. Eisenstein is a film historian who has studied at the University of Chicago's Department of Cinema and Media Studies, and has offered courses at Emerson College. He is currently

a professor at Mount Holyoke College.

June 23rd there will be a program by Kenneth C. Turino focusing on historic houses, entitled Thinking about Historic Houses. Mr. Turino is a speaker from Historic New England who specializes in talks about historic houses and house museums and also, the history of various holidays.

These programs are supported by a grant from the Chatham Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Programs begin at 2:00 pm.



Cont. from page 4

primary focus. The same accounts also suggest that regattas frequently took place in Cape Cod Bay, that owners usually sailed their own boats, and that these were often modest vessels, some adapted from the catboats popular with fishermen on this part of the Cape. This is consistent with the development of amateur yacht racing elsewhere in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The story of sailing in Chatham in the first two decades of the twentieth century is a subject of ongoing investigation. Photographs in the collection of the Chatham Historical Society document a continuing interest in yachting, especially among those who spent their summers here. Many who came to the summer camps that began to appear around Pleasant Bay during this period were introduced to sailing. Less is known about the various clubs that had sprung up in the 1880s and 90s. Local newspapers like the *Barnstable Patriot* reported on club activities such as the relocation of the Cape Cod Yacht Club from Orleans to Provincetown in 1897 and regattas in the early 1900s. But activities then seem to slow and when the name Chatham Yacht Club appears in 1921 it is associated with an entirely new organization from that formed in the 1890s. This one grew out of the Regatta Committee of the Chatham Country Club, forerunner of *Eastward Ho!* In the years that followed, the Stage Harbor Yacht Club was organized in 1932 and the Monomoy Yacht Club in 1937.

The organization of the Chatham Yacht Club and Stage Harbor Yacht Club mark the beginning of a new chapter in the story of yacht racing here. The clubs each identified a “one-design,” a boat type that could be built in numbers following clearly defined specifications for all aspects of their design, dimensions, construction, and materials. With all competitors using boats of standardized design, regatta results would better reflect the skill of those sailing them. Chatham’s clubs selected boats suited for challenging conditions here and for teaching young people how to sail, and built fleets of these for use by their members. At the Chatham Yacht Club the first fleet was comprised of 19 Baybirds. A year after it was organized Stage Harbor experimented briefly with the Corsair before settling on the Catabout. The 1930s also saw the clubs begin to develop a more structured approach toward teaching as evidenced by Stage Harbor’s hiring its first instructor in 1937. Not surprisingly, club activities diminished during the war years. In the late 1940s, however,

there was renewed enthusiasm for the programs and both clubs settled on a new design, the Whistler.

The Corsair, Catabout, and Whistler all came from the hand of a single designer, F. Spaulding Dunbar. Dunbar grew up in Mansfield, Massachusetts and spent his summers in Chatham. After training in the Naval Architecture program at MIT, a period of work at sea, and a brief stint with the designer Gordon Monroe, he settled here in 1932 and established not only a practice as a boat designer but a boat yard, first on Bridge Street and later on Chatham’s Mill Pond. He was also a moving force in the early years of the Stage Harbor Yacht Club.

Over the next four decades Dunbar designed a remarkable series of boats. All were wooden. In addition to his one-designs he created a number of larger boats, primarily ketches, for individual clients. During the Second World War he also contributed to efforts to design PT boats, work which led to the development of Bristol runabouts. All of Dunbar’s designs, from his 10’ plywood skiff to his largest private commissions, are notable for their elegance and



Sailing in Stage Harbor, circa 1950

grace. His cruising designs were also valued for the handsome yet functional quarters he provided for his clients. For those whose knowledge of boat design extends beyond the aesthetic the name Dunbar also calls to mind his technological sophistication. He was an innovator in developing boats of very shallow draft, that is, boats that were capable of navigating in shallow waters like those around Chatham, yet fully seaworthy in demanding conditions. *Ocean Pearl*, the ketch Dunbar created for E. Seward Johnson, is the design in which the multiple facets of his genius come together most clearly. The 62’ boat was built almost entirely of teak and had fully



The Ocean Pearl while moored in Chatham's Mill Pond

equipped quarters below deck. It was built with two centerboards., and with them up *Ocean Pearl* draws only 5'6" of water.

A year ago when *Ocean Pearl* returned to Chatham's Mill Pond news spread fast and many found their way down Eliphamet's Lane to admire her from Pease Boat Works & Marine Railway, which now occupies what had been Dunbar's own yard. Some recognized who she was and knew her story, others simply responded to her beauty. For the Atwood House Museum the presence of one of Spaulding Dunbar's crowning achievements set us thinking about how important sailing and the beautiful boats that call Chatham home are to our identity as a town. With *Wood, Wind & Water: The Genius of Chatham's F. Spaulding Dunbar*, our summer exhibition which opens on June 15th, we will celebrate this, keeping in mind and perhaps sharing with our visitors a playful warning in that 1892 Hotel Chatham booklet, "One must be resolute indeed if in Chatham he does not soon become a sailor, for an object lesson in sailing is ever before him from the moment of his arrival."

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

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Coming up at

THE ATWOOD HOUSE MUSEUM

Future Events - See Details Inside

Museum Opens June 15, 2013

Historic House Tour June 28, 2013

Evening to Remember July 20, 2013

Girls' Night Out - July and August

Children's Summer Camps - July and August



Afternoons at the Atwood Lecture Series

Lectures are 2:00 pm at the Atwood House Museum

Sunday May 5, 2013

Speaker: Ken Eisenstein - *History of Silent Film*

Sunday June 23, 2013

Speaker: Kenneth C. Turino - *Thinking about Historic Houses*