

SUMMER 2009

The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society



*Children's Summer
Programs 2009*



From the Director/Curator

Greetings! As we gratefully leave the fog and rains of late spring in our wake, we look forward to an exciting summer at the Chatham Historical Society/Atwood House Museum. There is much to report as we begin the most desirable season at the Society, not the least of which include the opening of the special exhibit entitled *Chatham's Attic*, a whole suite of exciting children's programs, and the upcoming Jubilee 85. The focus of this event is to thank Cynthia McCue, raise awareness and funds for the Atwood House Preservation Fund, and to welcome me. As many of you may well know, the Atwood House faces significant restoration challenges, and we are running out of time! In 2008 architectural historian Brian Pfeiffer stated that the Atwood House was "historically significant both for its associations with the Atwood family and for its well preserved condition." He also stated that restoration should be conducted immediately - I will explore and explicate this in detail later (on pg. 4) in this *Atwood Log*.

The Nickerson papers have arrived! The Society received a very generous grant from the Community Preservation Committee to properly document, archive and place online these wonderful materials on Chatham sea captains, seafaring, and Chatham history, generously given to the Society by Gerry Nickerson. Archivist Stephen Farrar has been secured to perform this work.

Work has also begun on the exciting educational website entitled "From Chatham to China" which will be a 'virtual voyage' starting in Chatham then to Boston, down to the West Indies, around the horn, and finally ending up in China and Japan. The site will be interactive, and will be chock full of information on the various cultures encountered by our Yankee ancestors. Special emphasis will be on acculturation, mobility, encounter and how Chatham sea captains contributed to what is currently termed globalism. The site will feature excerpts from captain's logs, Society artifacts and much more.

In an ongoing effort to make the Society a center for learning for everybody, we are pleased to be currently offering a series of eight children's programs, ranging from educational units on Abraham Lincoln to Shore Whaling and the United States Life-Saving Service. Lessons are suitable for ages six to twelve years old. If you would like additional information, don't hesitate to contact the Society at 508-2493 or the Instructor, Richard Curcio at 508-945-3080. You can also email the society at info@chathamhistorical.org. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable and enjoyable summer season, and please visit the Society to see all the wonderful exhibits, programs and events that we are currently offering.

- Mark Wilkins

Cover Photos

The photographs on the cover of this issue of The Atwood Log are from sessions of the Children's Monday Mornings at the Museum. During one program, the children outlined the space for a log cabin such as the one in which Abraham Lincoln spent his childhood. They also decided on the furniture to place in it and how many people might have lived in the small space. During another session, the children outlined a right whale using garden stakes and string to visualize how large some whales really are. To quote some of the youngsters - **awesome!**



Making origami whales during Monday Mornings at the Museum

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Jubilee 85

The premier event to initiate fund raising for the preservation and restoration of the Old House was held on a beautiful Saturday evening, July 18, in a tent provided by the Barnstable County Sheriff's Department. A delicious selection of hors d'oeuvres was generously provided by Chatham Bars Inn; Wequassett Resort and Golf Club generously provided the beverages. Many of the guests at this well attended event took some time to tour this summer's special exhibit, *Chatham's Attic*.

Executive Board Chairman Spencer Grey took a few moments to thank Cynthia McCue for serving as the Society's first Executive Director while a search was in progress to find a candidate for that position to serve long term. He then introduced Mark Wilkins who was offered the position in January of this year and began his tenure this past March.

Mark Wilkins also spoke to guests, particularly calling attention to the preservation/restoration needs of the Old Atwood House.



Mark Wilkins addressing Jubilee 85 guests

Many thanks to the committee who planned this event; they are to be congratulated on the success of the evening. Committee members were: Susan and Ned Collins, Spencer Grey, Pam and John King, and David Oakley. Also involved with the planning were Phyllis Freeman, E.B. Wilson, and Nornam Pacun. Interns Carina Murphy and Jade Poulton provided valuable assistance.

ANTIQUES FOR YOU

The Eleventh Annual Chatham Historical Society Antiques Show and Sale for Cape Cod will be held at the Chatham Elementary School on Saturday and Sunday, September 19th and 20th (10:00 am. to 5:00 pm. both days). Hold those dates and do come. Help us see to it that our fine dealers—30 from all states of New England—are exposed to at least 1,000 people on the two days. Tickets will be \$6, as they were last year, but advance sale tickets for \$5 will be available after September 5th from distinguished antiques dealers in Chatham—Maps of

Antiquity on Route 28 and Chatham Village Antiques next to the Mayflower. Tickets will be good for multiple entries to the antiques event as well as to the Atwood Museum.

"Sponsors" of the event--making most substantial donations to it--will participate in an "Antiques Preview" on the Friday night before, 7:00 pm. to 9:00 pm., at the Chatham Community Center. This "preview" will be a live auction consisting of special items selected by participating dealers. The auctioneers will be Mr. Robert C. Eldred and his son of the well-known galleries in East Dennis bearing their name.

All Society members have been invited to become sponsors. As a sponsor, entrance to the Antiques Show and Sale will be free, you will be recognized by name in the program of the event, and a special reception will be held Saturday afternoon after closing just in honor of sponsors at the Chatham Railroad Museum.

In addition, there will be a food service provider on Saturday, a book signing on Sunday, and a very fine "silent auction" in a separate room of the School with items from Society members and some dealers. Children bored by antiques can take advantage of the equipment and playground right across the street. Parking for patrons is available within 20 feet of the booths!

This is the major fund-raising event of the Society. Help us make it the unbounded success we are planning for it to be! All proceeds will be dedicated to the operating funds of the Society to support the exhibits of the Museum, children's programs, and other regular expenses which have made the Society an unique source of history, culture, and education, bettering the lives of the people of Chatham and the Cape Cod community more generally.

*Reed Hertford, Chairman
Antiques Show and Sale for Cape Cod*



Jubilee 85 guests checking in with intern Carina Murphy

Volunteers Needed Antiques Show and Sale

Volunteers are urgently needed for the many tasks involved in running a successful event. These include help with advertising, distributing posters and promotional cards to local establishments, and correspondence (folding and stuffing envelopes). Other volunteers are needed to help develop an entrance display for the show, identifying and organizing articles from the Historical Society for its booth at the show, organizing and implementing the "Antiques Preview" to be held on Friday, September 18 (the day before the show), planning and implementing the reception for dealers at the Railroad Museum (on the Saturday of the show just after the 5:00 closing), organizing and implementing the "Silent Auction", and creating raffles for the event. Volunteers are also needed for food and food service at the show, portage for the dealers, arranging for and distributing signage inside the event and on the streets, and selling and taking tickets.

If you are able to assist with any of these projects, or, indeed, take on a particular project, please contact Margaret Martin at the Historical Society between 9 and 1 weekdays (508-945-2493) or Reed Hertford at home (508-945-4476).

Atwood House Preservation and Restoration

The Chatham Historical Society's centerpiece is the Joseph Atwood House dating from circa 1752. It was presumably built by its namesake in that year, and survives today in its original, undisturbed or altered, mid-18th century condition. It is one of the finest surviving examples



The Joseph Atwood House

of Cape Cod architecture and, understandably, is in grave need of restoration and preservation as of this writing. This house is emblematic and archetypal of many houses that used to dot the Cape's landscape from the late 17th century, gradually becoming refined before devolving into the somewhat diluted and mass-produced iteration that is endemic nationwide. Gone are many of the subtle proportions and details that came to characterize these minimal yet beautiful houses during the late 17th and 18th centuries.

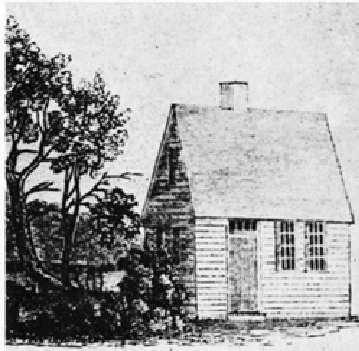


Figure 2

The first houses in the Massachusetts Bay area (and later Cape Cod), were derivations from the English and Dutch small homes endemic to Europe (see fig. 2). The plan of what came to be termed the Cape Cod house was almost purely of 17th century descent, reminiscent of the one-room homes of Plymouth England.¹ The term 'Cape Cod house' was coined by Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College who visited the Cape in 1800 and found the small Spartan cottages so unique that they deserved a regionally-centric moniker.² Dwight continued by describing the orientation of Cape homes as the house being characteristically, "nestled under the lee of a hill covered by shrubby trees. Dwight described these homes as having:

"...one story, and four rooms on the lower floor; and are covered on the sides, as well as the roofs, with pine shingles, eighteen inches in length. The chimney is in the middle, immediately behind the front door: and on each side of the door are two windows. The roof is straight. Under it are two chambers; and there are two larger, and two smaller, windows in the gable end."³

Interior characteristics were equally austere, consisting of a few chair rail moldings and some paneling usually placed around the fireplace. The walls and woodwork would have received whitewashing during the 18th century, and the floors were kept bare, but scrubbed with sand,⁴ a technique that carried over from the maritime practice of 'holystoning' the decks of ships to keep them clean and bright (as if freshly sanded). Window construction featured 9/6 sash windows, the casings for which

protrude from the walls, as in total the walls are only three inches thick. Front entrances usually had a transom above the door, and some sort of decorative molding framing flanking the doorway. For example, the Atwood House features an urn motif atop the fluted and tapering pilasters. (see fig. 3) The subject for the greatest degree of personal interpretation was the placement of the gable windows, or as Thoreau penned in his book on Cape Cod was as if each builder: "had punched a hole where his necessities required it, and according to his size and stature, without regard to outside effect."⁵ (see fig. 4)

As mentioned, the house currently referred to as the



Figure 3



Figure 4

'Atwood House' was built circa 1752 on thirty acres of land that was deeded to Joseph Atwood that year by Colonel Elisha Doane of Eastham.⁶ Captain Joseph Atwood was known as a 'navigator of unfrequented ports' and was engaged in trading in Amsterdam, the Mediterranean, and the West Indies- most likely Barbados. The timbers for the house were harvested from trees on the thirty acre parcel.⁷ The house is framed using four vertical corner posts hewn to approximately 9"x 9" at the floor planking, flaring to 9" x 12" at the ceiling. Each wall is bisected by an additional post of these dimensions. The sills, plates and

¹ Charles R. Strickland, 'The First Permanent Dwellings at Plimoth Plantation', *Old-Time New England*, XL, 3 (Jan. 1950), 163-169.)

² Connally Ernest, "The Cape Cod House: An Introductory Study." *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (May, 1960), p. 47.

³ Connally, p. 50.

⁴ Connally, p. 51 (Freeman & Kittredge)

⁵ Ibid, (Thoreau's CC)

⁶ Monbleau, Marcia. *Home Song Chatham*, p. 126. Nickerson, *Chatham Sea Captains*, p. 22.

⁷ Ibid.

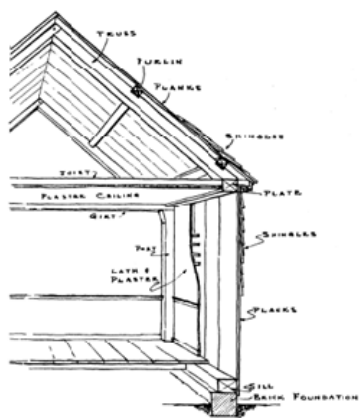


Figure 5

house in Sandwich (fig. 6), which was built in mid-seventeenth century.⁸ To the vertical planking shingles are nailed directly on the outside, and on the interior portion, lath was fastened to the planking, to which plaster was applied.⁹ On the Atwood house, a planked wainscot (running horizontally) of sorts is evident below the window sill line. This construction methodology yielded a wall of approximately three inches thick.

The roof of the Atwood house is somewhat different from the average Cape dwelling in that it is of Gambrel construction. This type of framing was developed, not surprisingly, by the Dutch – in an effort to gain a little more space in a given roof height. As mentioned, this type of roof was not common in Chatham or the Cape, but Atwood, as a traveler of distant ports, would have been exposed to this style of roof construction if not in Amsterdam proper, then at the very least in the port of New York City, which subsumed the Dutch settlement of

girls are of unknown dimensions but are most likely of the proportions of those found in figure 5. The wall sheathing is of vertical ‘plank-construction’ which was most likely introduced during the 17th century by inhabitants of Essex county Massachusetts– it can be seen in the construction of the Cape’s oldest building: the Hoxie

New Amsterdam in the late 17th century.

The roof, that which protects everything beneath it- whether inspired by architecture of what is now New York City or a distant port in Europe - is in precarious condition. If something isn’t done soon, it too may pass into history. According to the report executed by Brian Pfeiffer in 2008, approximately thirty percent of the roof framing and planking is rotten. In response to this, the Society has braced the roof (fig. 7) and has begun to fund-raise at an accelerated pace, and have, as of this writing, raised around twenty-five thousand dollars to at least begin the fundraising process in earnest.



Figure 7

It is estimated that we will need to raise approximately three to five hundred thousand dollars to cover the cost of restoring the Atwood house, and returning it to a stable and responsibly restored condition for posterity. Some of you have already given generously, and many of you are hearing of this pressing issue right now. I realize that the economic climate is difficult- but I also urge you to give whatever you can to help us restore this national treasure; no gift is too small! Please make checks payable to the Chatham Historical Society, and please indicate on your contribution that your gift is to be used for the Atwood House Preservation Fund. Act now and insure that this historical treasure and Chatham icon will be safely passed into the hands of our children.

– Mark Wilkins



Figure 6

⁸Connally, p. 52.

⁹Connally, p. 54.

YES! I would like to contribute to the Atwood House Preservation Fund.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Method of Payment

Check

Visa

Mastercard

CC# _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Please make checks payable to The Chatham Historical Society and mail with this form to The Chatham Historical Society PO Box 709 Chatham, MA 02633

Shop Talk

What if you could buy a gift for yourself or for friends or family, and at the same time, benefit the work of the Chatham Historical Society? What if we filled the Museum Shop with beautiful gifts that are locally relevant, contemporary, yet reminiscent of the Museum's exhibits? What if you could teach your children to savor their Chatham heritage and surroundings, and at the same help preserve Chatham's history for your great great-grandchildren?

Better yet, given this miserable global economy, with your Society membership, you will receive a 10% discount! We have chosen items for this year's Shop with very reasonable prices in mind. Whether it's a shawl for cool summer evenings, seashell-inspired jewelry, a perfect little black jacket, a hand-painted chest or bowl, creative books and toys, or a good book with local color, come to the Shop at the Atwood House Museum.

What if you could go to "one of the Cape's best Museums," take home an affordable gift or memento of your visit, and know your money also has contributed to the education of your family, and the on-going work of preserving Chatham's amazing history? Docents and



Among the appealing items to be found in the Atwood House Museum Gift Shop

volunteers (perhaps some of them are your neighbors) await your visit!

- Dot Gross and Barbara Newberry

Events Past and Future

During the month of August we shall continue to offer our Monday morning camp for children ages 6 through 12 from 10 am to 12 noon. The programs in August include "Silas Atwood's Whaling Voyage" (a local boy's whaling adventures), a program on the U.S. Life Saving Service and the Wadena tragedy, a program about Cape Cod houses, and a final program about Chatham Sea Captains. Each session includes a variety of activities. Reservations and information may be obtained by calling the Historical Society at 508-945-2493.

Sunday, August 16, the Chatham Historical Society's Annual meeting will be held at the Community center on Main Street at 2 pm. There will be a short business meeting and election of officers, followed by a speaker, Jane Turano-Thompson. Ms. Turano-Thompson will present an illustrated program titled "Photography and the Maritime Experience in America, 1840-1880."

The museum is open every Thursday evening from 6 to 8 pm in July and August. During one of those July evenings we held a book signing at which Debra Lawless signed copies of her recently published book, *Chatham in the Jazz Age*. On Thursday, August 20, we will hold a showing of the silent film, *Partners of the Tide*, based on a Joseph C. Lincoln story. We had intended to have two showings of this film as part of this past First Night's festivities, but we were cancelled by snow. We do not expect to have that problem for this showing! Refreshments will be served.

In September the Society will hold its Eleventh Annual Antiques Show and Sale for Cape Cod at the Chatham Elementary School on Depot Road. The show will be from 10 am to 5 pm on Saturday and Sunday, September 19th and 20th. Additional information about this event and the opportunities to volunteer to help make it a success are on page 3.

Two lectures are scheduled for the fall. On Sunday, October 11 at 2 pm at the Chatham Community Center, author Diane Rapaport will present a program titled "True Crimes and Controversies from the Courts of Colonial New England", a lively account of our forebears' misdeeds based on her book, *The Naked Quaker*. On Sunday, November 8 at 2 pm at the Atwood House Museum, Mark Wilkins, Executive Director of the Chatham Historical Society, will present a program on "The War of 1812 and the USS Constitution/Old Ironsides." Donation to lectures are welcome.



Volunteer Marilyn Brown purchasing a copy of *Chatham in the Jazz Age* signed by author Debra Lawless

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY?

Our archivist, Mary Ann Gray, put together some questions for you to test your knowledge of the Atwood House Museum and the Chatham Historical Society. All of us will be able to answer some of the questions, but others will require some research on your part, and some will probably amaze you (such as the number of boxes in the archival storage area). So have some fun testing your knowledge. Maybe you will be inspired to make up some questions of your own for the rest of us.

What interest brought the women together who were responsible for founding the Chatham Historical Society?

What year is the commonly accepted one in which the old house was built?

What is the name of the man who built the old house?

Where will you find the following objects in the museum?

- Admiral Rockwell's punch bowl?
- A courting lamp?
- A clam shell?
- A painting with a cat in it?
- Horse shoes for the mud flats?
- A picture of Joseph Lincoln?

Where is the *Wendy Wade Costello Gallery* located?

What is the current exhibit in that gallery?

Approximately how many photographs are there in the Chatham Historical Society's collection?

Approximately how many archival boxes are being stored in the Archival Center?

Name two other community groups that have decided to store their documents with the Chatham Historical Society.

Do we own any top hats in our textile and costume collection? If yes, how many do you think we own?

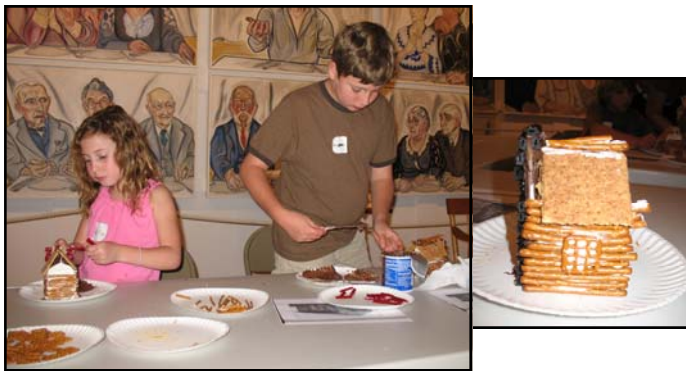
What was Alice Stallknecht's husband's name?

Who is the carver of our bird collection in the shell room?

How many members belong to the Chatham Historical Society?

What is the average number of hours per week that volunteers contribute during the months when the Museum is closed for visitors?

Monday Mornings at the Museum



Constructing an edible log cabin made from pretzels, icing, licorice, and graham crackers; a project made while learning about Lincoln's childhood



Celebrating the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth at the Children's Monday Mornings at the Museum

Here it is - the change of mailing address.

As we noted in the Spring Atwood Log, our mailing address would be changing as we needed a larger post office box to accommodate larger pieces of mail. The new box is now in use - **P.O. Box 709**. However, we will be using up a backlog of stationary and envelopes; the post office will continue to forward mail for at least six months.

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.

347 Stage Harbor Road
PO Box 709
Chatham, MA 02633

On the Web: www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org

Mark Your Calendars

Coming up at The Chatham Historical
Society & Atwood House Museum

Afternoons at the Atwood Lecture Series

Sunday, October 11, 2009

Speaker: Diane Rapaport, author

"True Crimes and Controversies from the Courts of Colonial New England"

Lecture to be held at 2:00 pm at the Chatham Community Center

Sunday, November 8, 2009

Speaker: Mark Wilkins, Executive Director, Chatham Historical Society

"The War of 1812 and the USS Constitution/Old Ironsides"

2 pm at The Atwood House Museum, 347 Stage Harbor Road.

Donations appreciated at all lectures.

Other Events

Sunday, August 16, 2009, 2:00 pm Admission Free

Annual Meeting to be held at the Chatham Community Center

Speaker: Jane Turano-Thompson

"Photography and the Maritime Experience in America, 1840-1880"

Saturday and Sunday, September 19 and 20, 2009

Antiques Show and Sale, held at the Chatham Elementary School

10:00 am - 5:00 pm both days Admission fee

