

SUMMER 2012

The Atwood Log

The
Quarterly Newsletter
of
The Chatham
Historical Society



From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Summer is happening at the Atwood House Museum and our team of volunteers who welcome the public to our beautiful museum have been very busy these past few weeks. Our *Summer of Centuries* program and the remarkable new exhibit were launched proudly over Founders Weekend in Chatham including the first of four "Living History" weekends, the first commemorating the service of our veterans in World War Two. The lecture program involving our veterans and elders on June 10 was heartwarming and moving to all who were present to hear their stories.

The second "Living History" weekend event has just concluded and this too was a remarkable adventure commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Once again we had re-enactors from The 9th Battery Massachusetts Volunteers and the 15th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry group who set up camp for the weekend to give visitors firsthand knowledge of this important part of history. It was a powerful experience for all who came by the museum grounds.

This past week we were very pleased to name our new Executive Director, Dennis McFadden who will join us fulltime on August 13th. Dennis is an accomplished museum professional with a wealth of experience and comes to us after serving as the Associate Director at the Davis Museum at Wellesley College. I wish to recognize and thank the very hard working members of the Search Committee who worked many hours to perform this important task. They are Stephanie Bartlett, Steve Burlingame, Stephen Daniel, Mary Ann Gray, Barbara Newberry, Chris Rhinesmith, and chaired by yours truly. The response to our opening was very strong and we had a terrific pool of candidates from which to choose. We are very pleased to present a distinguished professional of Dennis' stature to the Chatham Historical Society. Please join me in welcoming Dennis and his wife Judith to Chatham.

I will work closely with Dennis in the early part of the transition to ensure a smooth "changing of the guard" and then return to the duties of chairing our Executive Board. It has been a great education for me to serve as Acting Executive Director for the past 10 months and I have enjoyed serving closely with our terrific staff and volunteer leadership to plan the exciting activities we are enjoying in connection with Chatham's 300th celebration.

With best wishes,

John J. King II

A selection of current shop offerings



Coming soon, beautiful photo book of wild life on and around Cape Cod by John and Pam King



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 Historical Society

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Special Events August and September Living History Weekends

Voices: Our Village in Perspective Lecture Series

The Lecture Series, *Voices: Our Village in Perspective*, continues with an exciting selection of lectures through the summer and into the fall, some sponsored by the Chatham Historical Society, and others by the Chatham 300 Committee. All lectures listed will be at the Chatham Community Center on Main Street in downtown Chatham.

Spencer Grey will repeat his very popular photographic overview of life in Chatham during the 20th century on Wednesday, August 8th at 7:30 pm. The presentation includes about 300 pictures culled from the large selection of photographs and postcards in the collection of the Atwood House Museum.

On Sunday, August 12th at 2:00 pm Mark, Ron, and Brian Nickerson will take the audience back to 17th century Norwich, England, the home of William and Anne (Busby) Nickerson prior to their journey to New England and their eventual settlement in what has become the Town of Chatham, Massachusetts. Information from the Nickerson Family Association will be used to describe Chatham's early years. The presentation will also provide a history of the Nickerson Family Association from its beginning in the 1890s to the present day. This will be a multi-media presentation showing historic documents as well as contemporary photographs.

On Sunday, October 14th at 2:00 pm author Mark Jasper will present a lecture based on his popular book, *Haunted Cape Cod and the Islands*. This lecture will be a blend of true ghost stories, history, and folklore and will focus on haunted inns, restaurants, and homes in the Cape Cod area.

An ever popular topic for visitors and locals alike is the great white shark! On Friday, October 19th, at 7:00 pm, researcher Dr. Gregory Skomal will present a lecture with an overview of what we presently know about white sharks as well as the new research he and his team have been conducting in Chatham waters since 2009. The title of his talk is *White Sharks of Chatham: JAWS or a Wildlife Treasure?*

Continuing as part of activities during Homecoming Weekend, a lecture will be presented by Casey Sherman titled *The Finest Hours: The True Story Behind the International Bestseller*. This lecture will be at 4:00 pm on Saturday, October 20th. Additional information about this lecture will be available in October.

Painting to the right is one of the works by Chatham artists in the collection of The Atwood House Museum/Chatham Historical Society. This is Checker Players by artist Wendell Rogers



The Atwood House Museum Living History Weekends continue on Saturday and Sunday, August 18th and 19th with special domestic activities common to 18th century colonial households. This program will be co-sponsored with the Caleb Nickerson House. Reenactors will work at various crafts necessary to life during the 1700s. There will also be open hearth cooking and a demonstration of the techniques required for making clothing. Still in the planning stages are activities which would include live animals such as sheep and processing the wool.

On Saturday and Sunday, September 15th and 16th, we will hold our final 2012 Living History Weekend, focusing on the 17th century and Native American life before and at the time of the arrival of the European settlers. This event will include presentations by the Wampanoag community and also costumed European settler reenactments.



Plans for the Colonial Weekend include open hearth cooking and activities related to making clothing

Special Exhibit of Paintings by Chatham Artists

The Cape Cod Museum of Art in Dennis, together with the Atwood House Museum and the Creative Arts Center of Chatham, will exhibit paintings and prints by artists who lived and painted in Chatham. The show is entitled *Chatham in Art Over Time* and is offered in conjunction with Chatham's 300th Anniversary.

The exhibition will include over 50 works by Chatham artists, many painted in the late 19th century and early to mid 20th century. The exhibition will be on display, free to the public, at the Creative Arts Center, 154 Crowell Road, Chatham from October 8 through October 31, 2012. Drawing on the collections of the Atwood House Museum, the Cape Cod Museum of Art and private collectors, this exhibition promises to present Chatham and its artists in a new light. This will be the first time that such a wide range of artists who had worked in Chatham will be presented to the public.

Benjamin Godfrey and the American Revolution

The American Revolution had a profound impact on Chatham – the town was hard hit by the British Crown’s crushing taxes, while English privateers continually harassed the town’s fishing and trade vessels.

In 1775, Chatham was a hardscrabble village of about 900 souls, dependent on fishing, commercial shipping and some farming. Facing British taxes on imports of household goods, tea, spices and textiles, most residents (apart from a few Loyalists) were determined to live on what they could grow, create or barter. Herbs were used instead of British tea. Clothing was made from flax or wool. Tools were made on blacksmith forges.

As the drums of war grew ever louder in Boston – a day’s journey from the elbow of Cape Cod – Chatham readied itself for the Revolutionary War.

The village leaders turned to gentleman farmer Benjamin Godfrey (whose windmill now stands in Chase Park.). At age 33, he had already seen the first blood of the war. Married to Sarah Mayo for more than 10 years, yet childless, he was one of the first to sign up to join the Continental Army, and fought as a first lieutenant with the 2nd Barnstable Regiment against the Red Coats at the Battle of Bunker Hill during the Siege of Boston.

Both the Continental and Massachusetts Armies called upon all the villages of Cape Cod to supply fighting men, ammunition and provisions to support the war. In 1775, the town’s selectman chose Godfrey to lead Chatham’s militia and to act as recruiter and liaison with the armies. He was promoted to captain and organized a group of men (and boys) from Chatham, Harwich and Yarmouth to defend the seacoast. Almost all of those men served on privateers that tried to interrupt British commerce, supplies and reinforcements.

Godfrey also worked to find recruits for the Continental Army. Early in the war, the town offered enlisting soldiers the promise of up to £10-15 and the promise to look after their families, an offer especially appealing to those with small means. The men, monies and provisions sent by the town to support the Revolutionary troops drew Chatham’s scant resources down and down. Farms were ill-tended, and fishing and commercial shipping had been utterly disrupted by the British privateers.

In the autumn of 1775, the Schooner *Williams*, belonging to a Tory refugee from Halifax, Nova Scotia, was seized by armed cruisers and brought into Chatham Harbor. Another sloop, the *Elizabeth*, which was making its way from the West Indies to Halifax, was captured by an armed brigantine and also brought into Chatham Harbor as a prize of war in August, 1776. In the spring of 1777, the privateer *Wolf* was seized by a crew of Chatham and Harwich men, and later awarded by the Colony to Capt. Nathaniel Freeman of Harwich, whose second officer was Joseph Doane Jr. of Chatham (related to Capt. Godfrey by marriage).

By May, 1777, to encourage the dwindling number of potential recruits to enlist, the town voted to offer a bounty of £20 at the time of muster, should the soldier guarantee to fight to the end of the war. For those re-enlisting, the town promised to continue providing for the families left behind. The next year, the town realized it had to up the ante so in March, 1778, it voted to increase the bounty to £40 for ten soldiers to guard Gen. John Burgoyne, who surrendered at the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777. In April 1778 the town voted to procure the material and clothing called for by the Continental Army and, two months later, voted to raise money “to hire five men for the Continental Army and four for the state.”

But that still wasn’t enough. In July 1778 the town voted to raise £150 for seven soldiers for the state and two more to guard Burgoyne, making the soldiers’ wages £40 a month for six months of service.

But the town could not sustain the cash payments. By July 1779 the town sent Capt. Godfrey to find the men required and negotiate how much they would be paid in grain. In July 1780 the town voted to pay the wages in produce. By April 1782 little or no grain or produce could be mustered and no men “would go into service under any terms.”

The Battle of Chatham Harbor

Active fighting soon came to Chatham’s door. On June 20, 1782, Chatham Harbor was invaded by a British privateer that entered under the cover of darkness and took possession of a brigantine, one of the few boats anchored there. After sending sailors to board her and hoist a British flag, the privateer attempted to leave with the brigantine and some smaller vessels in tow.

But the privateer’s captain had not reckoned on the swift response of now-Col. Godfrey and his company. When the British flag was raised on the *Joseph, Peter and Wells*, an alarm gun was sounded and a flag raised on the hill opposite the harbor.

Col. Godfrey, Joseph Doane, Richard Sears and a number



Early tinted postcard of the Mill Pond with the Godfrey Windmill on the hill beyond

of other armed men, members of the town's militia, gathered at the top of the hill and headed for the beach. By the time they reached the brigantine, the privateers had unloaded her cargo onto a sloop to lighten her enough to get out of the harbor. Led by the British privateer, the brigantine and sloop began to sail out of the harbor.



The Godfrey Windmill in 1908

But Col. Godfrey and his band of 50 men had reached the beach and a hail of gunfire was launched at the privateer, which immediately returned fire. Once the privateer had sailed out of range, the Chatham men peppered the brigantine with constant gunfire. The men aboard the brigantine returned fire with grapeshot and small arms.

Suddenly, the brigantine ran aground on one of Chatham Harbor's treacherous bars and listed to one side. The crewmen abandoned the ship and fled on their boats, back to the privateer, chased the whole way by Chatham men in their own small boats. Col. Godfrey and Capt. Doane boarded the brigantine, struck the hated British flag and hoisted the Continental flag.

Not long after the privateer disappeared from view, four Connecticut coasters laden with provisions were sighted about a league out of the harbor. Capt. Doane, the head of the militia, ordered some men into a boat to warn them of the danger. Two pilot boats were then sent out to lead them to the safety of Chatham Harbor.

After the coasters were secured, a large British cruiser and the British privateer were spotted approaching the harbor. The cruiser anchored beside the bar and the privateer continued on in. The recaptured brigantine fired an alarm and Capt. Doane ordered two cannons to the beach and mustered the militia. After one or two warning shots, the privateer turned about and made a speedy departure, along with the cruiser. "It was claimed that one of the British was killed and two wounded, but no casualties are reported among the militia.

At the beginning of the war, Chatham's harbor was bustling with fishing and trading vessels. By the end of the war, only four or five ships remained. Chatham must have seemed bleak to the returning soldiers, with so few resources and not many prospects.

But as Chatham's sons came home and their wounds healed, so did the town.

Families grew. Fishing and shipping brought the docks to life. Shops opened. Schools were started. And growing prosperity brought with it progress and promise.

Recovery from the war

After the war, Chatham's people began pulling themselves up by their bootstraps through innovation and industry.

Cleverly using the resources at hand – wind, sea and their own determination – individuals developed various means to make a living with what little they had.

In 1789, Col. Godfrey purchased "a dwelling house now standing on a piece of land in Chatham ... situated by the old Stage Harbor" for £17 5 shillings. The dwelling sat just to the south of Mill Hill, the original site of where Godfrey built a grist mill in 1797 and which he operated until his death in 1818.

In 1800, Godfrey's mill was one of seven mills in town; but by the late 1800s, the mill on Crocker Rise was the only gristmill in operation in Chatham.

Though the Godfreys had no children of their own, they became the guardians of several nieces and nephews. When Godfrey died, his grand-nephew Christopher Taylor inherited the property, including the house and mill.

Summary

Nowadays, there are few reminders of Chatham during and after the Revolutionary War.

Fortunately, the Godfrey Mill, now situated at Chase Park, has been beautifully restored for this tercentennial. And the home of Col. Godfrey has been renovated and still stands.

Perhaps the most poignant reminders of that time are the graves of the soldiers who fought in the American Revolution in the Old Burying Ground on Old Queen Anne Road. There you can find the tombstones for Col. Godfrey, Capt. Doane, Capt. Joseph Atwood, Simeon Ryder, Josiah Ryder, Samuel Taylor and many more, each bearing special markers citing their service in the fight for our country's liberty. There we can marvel at just how many men from such a small town as Chatham stood up to fight for their country and their homes.

Lynn C. Van Dine

Lynn Van Dine is a writer and author who lives year-round in Chatham. She is co-owner of Professional Writers & Editors with her husband, Tim Weller. They are among several co-writers of Three Centuries in a Cape Cod Village: The Story of Chatham, for the Chatham Historical Society.



**Tombstone of Benjamin Godfrey,
Photo by the author**

Monday Mornings at the Museum

The Monday children's programs began this summer on July 9th with a two hour program introducing the theme of this summer's programs - *Learning the Wampanoag Way*. The programs will continue through August 27th. Instruction will be led by Wampanoag educator Linda Coombs, ably assisted by experienced Wampanoag educator Nancy Eldredge. The Chatham Wampanoag Circle has planted a garden on the grounds of the Atwood House Museum and this garden will figure into the programs also. The corn has begun to appear in the garden and the squash and beans have been planted, too. They will grow, using the corn stocks as their support.



Civil War Weekend



Re-enactors from the July 14th and 15th Civil War Weekend show visitors camp life from the period. Re-enactors were from the 9th Massachusetts Artillery and the 15th Massachusetts Infantry. On the right a re-enactor explains the procedure for firing a cannon.

Our second annual Civil War weekend was a success! Despite temperatures over 80 degrees, visitors still came out to explore all of the 19th century-themed programs put on at the Atwood House. The 9th Massachusetts Battery Volunteers and the 15th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry were undoubtedly the biggest draw for the weekend. The two reenactment groups set up camp on the front lawn and encouraged visitors to explore their displays and to ask questions.

The camp bugler made announcement of all of the other programs and lectures at the appropriate times. Each program had a great turnout! Rick Spencer, musician and historian, was particularly popular. His musical lectures focused on the 19th century songwriters and the greatest hits of the Civil War. Norbert Rieke, regularly camp surgeon, gave a fascinating talk about the use of field artillery during the war. In between talks, visitors were invited to grab a slice of pizza from Franca's Wood Fired Catering's portable wood fire stove outside. Dozens of types of pizza and calzones were enjoyed outside at our picnic tables.

The Atwood House will be gearing up soon for the next Summer of Centuries living history event - Colonial Weekend. If you enjoyed our WW2 and Civil War events, you will surely enjoy our 18th century program! If you missed either of these two events, be sure to put the August and September weekends on your calendar now. Look on page three for more information about them.

Kealyn Garner

2010 Annual Meeting of Members

Sunday, August 12, the Chatham Historical Society's Annual meeting will be held at 2 pm in the Chatham Community Center on Main Street in Chatham. There will be a short business meeting including election of officers and trustees, approval of the Board of Overseers, report of the Treasurer, and consideration of any others matters properly brought before the meeting.

Following the business meeting speaker Brian Nickerson will present a lecture titled *From Norwich to Chatham: The Nickerson Family Story from the 1600s to Today*.



World War Two Day

Activities included a speech by "Winston Churchill", and explanations about equipment and procedures by reenactment groups representing Italian and German units.



World War Two Round Table participants (from left to right): Robert Norman, Giles Chapin, John Koepper, Bob Hardy, and Bill Wescott - part of the World War Two Weekend events.

This photo and the photo on the back of the newsletter by John Nickerson

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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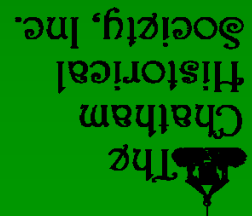
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If you have allowed your membership to lapse, please consider renewal now. If you are an active member perhaps you can think of someone to pass this along to who might be interested in becoming a member.

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

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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 -

August 18 - 19, 2012; September 15 - 16, 2012

Monday Mornings at the Museum - Children's Programs -

continuing through August 27, 2012

Lecture Series - Voices: Our Village in Perspective

2:00 pm At The Chatham Community Center

unless otherwise noted

Wednesday, August 8, 2012 at 7:30 pm

Speaker: Spencer Y. Grey - A Photographic History of Chatham
from 1850 to 2000

Sunday, August 12, 2012

Speaker: Brian Nickerson - *From Norwich to Chatham,
the Nickerson Family Story from the 1600s to Today*

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Speaker: Mark Jasper - *Haunted Cape Cod*

Friday, October 19, 2012 at 7:00 pm

Speaker: Gregory Skomal - *White Sharks of Chatham: JAWS or a Wildlife Treasure?*

Saturday, October 20, 2012 at 4:00 pm

Speaker: Casey Sherman - *The Finest Hours: The True Story Behind the International Bestseller*

