

WINTER 2010

The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society



Photos from December 2009 Events:
The Annual Hearth Warming with seasonal
decorations in the Old House
The Chatham Student Exhibit with projects
created by students in the Chatham School System



From the Director/Curator

What's all this Talk about Experiential Exhibits?

From Chatham to China-Acculturation, Encounter and Trade: 1850-1900 is the title of this summer's exhibit, opening on July 3rd 2010. It will chronicle and explore the participation of Chatham sea captains during the period of trade that spanned 1850-1900. Featured prominently in the exhibit will be an economic component and subsequent morphing of international markets and export factories to facilitate this nascent globalism that was the result of this very lucrative and compelling trade relationship. Moreover, one of the more interesting and less tangible aspects of this period was the acculturation that occurred between the West and East. How was a Yankee of Protestant/Puritan descent affected by his/her interaction with social customs and ideologies of the East? How did this impact Chatham and the region? What is tangible evidence of this that survives today? The exhibit will explore these important and interesting sociological phenomena and attempt to



Loading tea in Canton, 1855; from a watercolor by Chinese artist, Tingqua

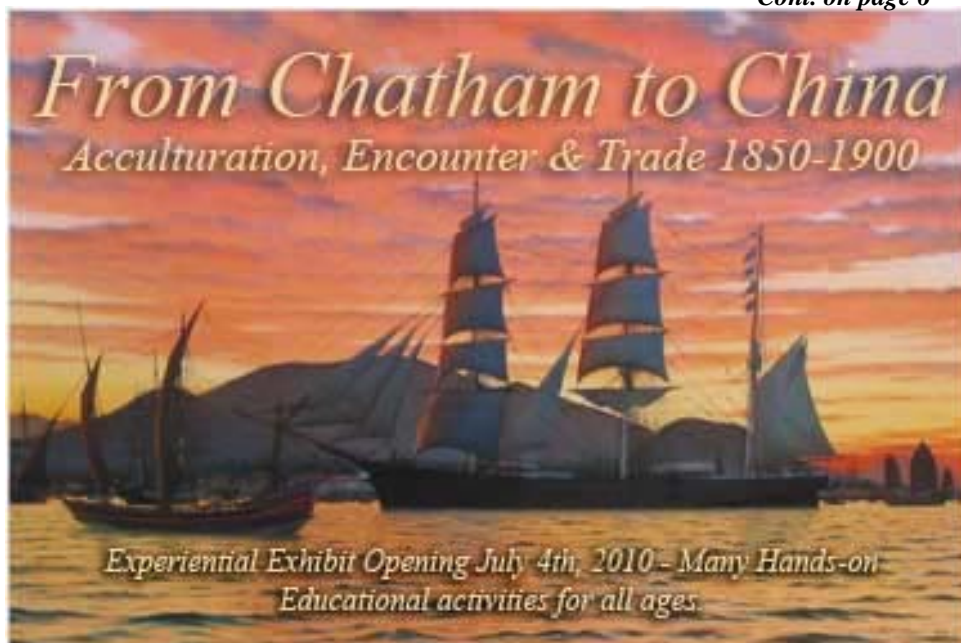
form some conclusions.

Perhaps one of the more compelling aspects of this exhibit is its interactive or experiential nature. The museum patron will experience this exhibit directly as a 'voyager' or participant rather than as a detached viewer. Visitors will start their 'voyage' on the deck of a clipper ship bound for the East. There will be hands on activities that can be performed such as belaying a line on a belaying pin. There will be 'commodities cards' or tokens that they can choose and thereby start the economic piece of their voyage. Proceeding

Cont. on page 6



Marketplace in Canton, engraving, 1843



Chatham Historical Society

Executive Board

Chairman
John J. King II
Vice Chairman
Norman Pacun
Secretary
Phyllis C. Freeman
Treasurer
Linda Cebula
Executive Director
Mark Wilkins
Trustees
John "Jack" Farrell
Reed Hertford
Paul Mangelinkx
Cynthia B. McCue
RoseMarie McLoughlin
Virginia T. Nickerson
Alan T. Sachtleben
Christopher Seufert
E. B. Wilson
Nancy B. Yeaw
Andrew Young

Operating Board

Executive Director
Mark Wilkins
Archives
Mary Ann Gray
Buildings & Grounds
Wayne Jostrand
Costumes & Textiles
Janet Marjollet, Donna Jordan
Education
Richard Curcio
Galleries & Displays
Mary Ann Fritsch
Hospitality
Cindy Knight
Marketing & Public Relations
Nancy B. Yeaw
Membership
Sue Halligan
Museum Shop
Barbara Newberry
Programs
Publications & Library
Special Exhibits
Mary Ann Fritsch, Joyce Lashway
Volunteers

Board of Overseers

Sally Ackerman
Compton Allyn
Richard Batchelder
Tamara Bazzle
Edward C. Collins, II
Bernard Cornwell
Carolyn Yeaw Coursen
Stephen S. Daniel
Robert C. Eldred
Charles Fleischmann, III
William G. Litchfield
Walter J. Meier
Joshua A. Nickerson, Jr.
David R. Oakley
Phyllis Nickerson Power
Norman S. Portenoy
Eugene M. Schott
Mark Simonitsch

Administrator/Newsletter Editor
Margaret L. Martin

Lincoln Challenge Student Exhibit



Nate Whiteley receiving his certificate from Education Chairman Richard Curcio

All school age children in the town of Chatham and all Chatham School students were provided with the opportunity to honor the life of Abraham Lincoln during the 200th anniversary year of his birth. Operating Board Education Chairman, Richard Curcio, created a series of projects at the three school levels for students to engage in either individually or in groups. Students from grades two through six participated and produced some delightful and creative projects.

The exhibit was on display during the Annual Hearth Warming, Saturday, December 12, 2009, through the following Saturday, December 19, when a reception for the

students was held.

Students of Cassandra Kloumann's fifth grade class and Joan Robert's sixth grade Enrichment class created two different but equally entertaining videos instructing the viewer about making Lincoln's favorite cake. The videos are soon to be



Eli Langlois stands by his log cabin project.

available for viewing on cable channel 22 in Chatham. Ms. Roberts' class was assisted by Library/Media Specialist Robert Bourke.

Students of Mary Roy's fifth grade composed letters of condolence from President Lincoln to families in Chatham whose sons had died while serving in the military during the Civil War. As these were individual projects, awards were given to first, second, and third prize entries. The winners received a plaque stating their accomplishment and a gift certificate to use at one of Chatham's excellent book stores. The prize winners were: Rachel Poskanzer, first; Hannah Novotny, second; and Brooke Linnell

and Sam Reed, tied for third. Plaques and gift certificates were also presented to the two classes who participated as groups.

Three second grade classes at the elementary school participated in projects as groups. Students of Margaret Turco and Donna Smoller created posters describing the chores that a ten year old girl or boy would have performed in 1819. Students of



Kaia Whiteley shows her certificate of participation

Amanda Julin created a replica of a log cabin such as one where Lincoln would have grown up, and wrote what they thought about the process of making it.

Nine students in grades two, three, and four made individual log cabin models at home using a variety of materials - sticks and twigs with plaster of paris, Lincoln Logs, Tootsie rolls, modern shingles, carefully cut slices of wood, and popsicle sticks. Prizes are not awarded at the elementary level, however, a gift certificate was given to the school to purchase library materials.

The Chatham Historical Society appreciates the interest and participation of school students, teachers, and administrators that makes this program a success. This is the fourth year for this program;



Group project log cabin by students of Amanda Julin



Log cabin model with split rail fence



Director Mark Wilkins and Retired Board Chairman Spencer Grey next to the sign renaming the Maritime Gallery as the Spencer Y. Grey Maritime Gallery to honor Mr. Grey's many years of service to the Chatham Historical Society

A special thank you to Maureen McClellan who has proofread many Atwood Logs for us and continues to do so. We truly appreciate her assistance.

who had purchased land prior to the husband's death and wished to sell it found that the wife retained her claim to one third of the property. This made it difficult for the second owner to claim clear title to the land. To correct this problem many older deeds contain a statement indicating that the wife of the owner renounced her dower rights to the property at the time of sale.

Dower often was the main source of income for the wife, but as most of the farms and property owned by New Englanders were small and generally produced meager crops to begin with, the income derived was minimal. This was especially true if the widow had to pay someone to harvest the crops and it was rarely sufficient to support her and whatever family she might have.

At one time there was one more exception to women inheriting property. If the woman had left her husband to live with her adulterer, she could not claim her dower rights. This rule did not apply to men who chose to leave their wives to live with someone else.

Dower rights also allowed the woman to stay in the house belonging to her deceased husband for 40 days after his death. This right was called, *quarantine*, taken from the Latin word for 40. This was supposed to give her time to find a new place to live for herself and her family.

Doctrine of Covertures

The *doctrine of Covertures* was also found in the English Common Law. It stated that a married woman or a *feme covert* (from old Anglo-French meaning a protected woman.) had basically no property rights. Under the *doctrine of covertures*, a woman sacrificed the rights and privileges she had enjoyed as an individual or *feme sole* in order to gain the protective cover of her husband. The woman could neither sue nor be sued in her own name, she was limited in making contracts and wills, and all of her personal property as well as the management of her real property went to her husband. In return, common law required that the husband provide adequate support for his wife and not leave her penniless when he died. This meant women were not able to sell any land belonging to their husband. In the first part of the nineteenth century in this country, women who wished to sell their land, especially if the husband had deserted her or perhaps was lost at sea, would have to go to the State Legislature to ask for the passage of a private statute that would allow them to sell the land. In order to correct this, *Married Women's Property Laws* were passed. The first of these was in Mississippi in 1819. This law primarily was concerned with the woman's ability to sell her husband's slaves. By 1842, Maryland gave a married woman the right to become "seized or possessed of any property, real or of slaves by direct bequest, demise or gift." Similar laws were passed throughout the country; and by 1900, married women could make out wills and dispose of property.

Included within most of these married women's legislation were provisions to be sure that the woman's rights were protected. Witnesses for a married woman making a will were supposed to examine the wife privately, out of the presence and hearing of her husband to find out if she was making the will freely and voluntarily and without being induced by fear or threats or ill-usage by said husband.

Formal Written Wills

A will is a document that disposes of the individual making it, his/her property (both real and personal) upon his death. In the past, there may have been two documents prepared. One would cover the real property and the other any personal property. The

will must be written and be signed by the individual drawing up the document and witnessed by at least two (in some states it used to be three) individuals who have witnessed the testator signing the document. The only exception to having witnesses is if the will is a holographic will (written in hand by the testator). It need not be witnessed to be legal. State laws often require that this type of will must be kept in a safe deposit box or wherever the individual's important papers are kept.

Wills also must be the intended desires of the testator. In earlier days that fact was spelled out in the beginning of the will. Nobody has to have a will because the state will distribute the posses-

In the name of God Amen. I, Joseph Atwood, of Chatham, in the county of Barnstable, yeoman, being arrived to an advanced age, and in a feeble state of Body, yet thro God's goodness of disposing mind and memory calling to mind the mortality of my body knowing that it is appointed unto all man once to die, do make and ordain this and no other to be my last will and testament in manner following viz I recommend and commit my Soul into the hands of Almighty God who gave it and my body to the earth to be buried in a decent Christian Burial at the discretion of my executor nothing doubting, but that I shall receive the same again by the mighty power of God, and or touching such worldly estate where with it hath pleased God to Bless me in this life I give devise and dispose of the same in the following manner and form viz, Imprimis, I, give unto Deborah, my Beloved wife, the improvement of all my Real Estate after my just Debts are paid excepting (one third part of my dwelling house) and two good cows and my horse, and six sheep, two swine, and the improvement of all my household furniture during, her natural life.

Item - I give, unto Sears Atwood, my Beloved Son, all my Real Estate after my wife's decease, and my just Debts are paid (excepting one third of my dwelling house) and my pew in the meeting house allowing to my two daughters Deborah and

Sarah and to each of them right to sit in said pew during life and all my wearing apparel and all my farming utensils to him, his heirs and assigns forever.

Item- I give unto Sarah Atwood, by Beloved daughter, one third part of my dwelling house to be improved by her so long as she shall remain unmarried and one of best cows and my best feather bed and furniture and best large looking glass and high case of draws and my large mahogany tea table, two frame chairs and four common chairs, and all my Ironware, two large pewter platters and six pewter plates, one pewter basin and two pint porringers and one pint pewter plates Iron crane and hooks and my carriage and tackling and side saddle, Brass Candle stick and six earthen plates and my mare after my wife's decease to her heirs and assigns forever.

Item- And all the remaining part of my personal and moveable Estate I give unto the heirs of my beloved daughter Bethiah Godfrey and my daughters Debe Young, Sarah Atwood and Salomi Cushman to be equally divided between them and after my wife's decease to them their heirs and assigns forever.

Further more I appoint my son Sears Atwood Sole Executor to this my last will and testament empowering my said Executor to sell and dispose and give legal conveyance of Real Estate to the amount of all my just debts and my funeral charges. I order to be paid out of my personal Estate together with the cost of administration ratifying and allowing this and no other to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this nineteenth day of June A. D. 1789.

Published, pronounced and declared by said Joseph Atwood to be his last will and testament who in his presence and in the presence of each other subscribed our names

Elijah Knowles

Richard Howes

Joseph Ryder.

Transcription of Joseph Atwood's Will, containing examples of characteristics described in the article

sions without one, using the intestacy laws.

Wills, however, have no meaning as long as the testator is alive. The document becomes legal only upon his/her death. It also has to be proven that it is the last will signed by the person. All earlier wills are automatically invalid should a legal will with a later date be found. It is also not necessary to destroy earlier wills to make the latest will valid. It is not necessary to notify anyone that a new will has been drawn up. If the will is destroyed by fire, such as when a home burns down, if what was in the will can be proved, it may still be probated. Also the law does not take into account that the will is old. If the will contains gifts that would no longer be appropriate to the testator's present life situation, it will be executed regardless. The will must be changed as the individual's situation changes otherwise the old will stands. The only exception to this in most states used to be if a marriage occurred after the will was signed. At the present time, in most states this is not necessary, as the widow has rights. The rationale was why invalidate the entire will? Divorce, however, may still invalidate at least part of the will.

Cont on page 6 at the bottom

Cont. from page 2

to the next vignette, a Cantonese market stall, the voyager cum merchant will be encouraged to trade his New England commodities for

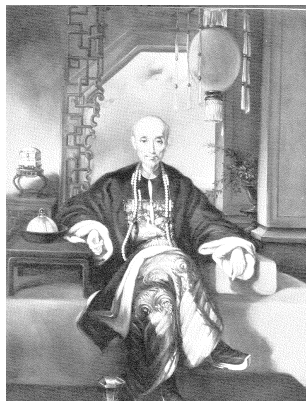


Dinner party at a mandarin's home, engraving, 1843

Eastern ones. Examples of this may be a Ginseng root token that is in turn traded for export china, silk or tea. Another compelling component will be a series of questions or hypothetical scenarios designed to illicit a sociological/ideological incorporation or refusal. For example, suppose you liked a particular food you tried in Canton – would you request this back home? Or suppose you were particularly intrigued by Bud-

dhisism – would you convert? Perhaps you were so taken with Eastern philosophy that you decide not to return to Chatham! After this vignette is experienced, you will pass the scale bow of one of Chatham's most celebrated Clippers – the *Wild Rover* – reconstructed in the exhibit space with its bowsprit soaring over the exhibit space! This portion of the exhibit will give you a sense of the Clipper in port and explicate some of the dangers inherent in an ocean voyage of this period.

The next vignette the visitor will experience is a mock up of the interior of India Wharf in Boston. The voyager will now trade his commodities on the Boston market and realize the full economic implications of his/her voyage. Finally, the weary world traveler will end up back in Chat-



Houqua, whose real name was Wu Ping-chien, was a prominent Chinese merchant who facilitated trade between China and the western world



1812 Ship wreck of a merchant vessel off the coast of

ham and assess the net effects of the voyage both economically and sociologically. It is important to note that the exhibit will include many fine artifacts from the Atwood House Museum's permanent collection, private lenders, as well as other fine institutions such as the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. The new experiential component will be a component of what could be termed 'tiered or stratified learning' - that is, there are multiple curatorial and pedagogical approaches contained within the exhibit, designed to reach a greater breadth of audiences. In short, this exhibit will have something for most

every age and interest level, and should also be fun!

Cont. from page 5, article on Wills

Wills with insufficient witnesses, or proof that the witnesses did not actually see the testator sign the will are considered invalid. Wills may be appealed, as for example, if the widow does not receive her traditional dower rights under the state intestacy laws.

In this country, the will assumed an even greater importance historically, because it often was the only legal document in which property rights were expressed. The recording of deeds as a separate document was not always practiced and in many situations, lawyers were not available to file such papers.

The wording of wills is deeply rooted in custom. Those individuals who came to this country as early settlers had been familiar with the wills written in England and roughly knew how to execute them. They tended to use standard clauses, such as: "*I give, devise, and bequeath all the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate to...*" It certainly would have been sufficient to have said "*I give all the rest of my estate to...*" In the beginning of the will there is often a statement that indicates their knowledge of their impending death, and one that indicates the state of their mental capacity. Statements such as "*being sick in body but in perfect sense and form...*" Also, frequently there is a statement about their religious beliefs such as "*I give and bequeath my Soul unto God, my savior and redeemer and my body to the Earth from whence it came.*" The signing of the will was often part of a ceremony. Families and witnesses gathered at the bedside to witness the signature.

Genealogical Significance of Wills

For individuals seeking information about the history of their families, wills can be invaluable tools. First, the listing of members of the family inheriting property may be a clue as to the members of the family and their relationship to each other. Many families did not formally register the births and deaths occurring in their family. The only evidence may be that found in a father's will. It also may indicate that a child or spouse is no longer living at the time of the death of the testator, helping to establish parameters for the years of those individuals.

Wills that contain lists of personal property also provides clues for the genealogist. They may be an indication of the financial status of the family. Cherished possessions may be left to individuals who would not otherwise claim inheritances. For example, a will might say: "*I give my bed to my niece, Abby*" or "*My dishes are to be given to my sister, Martha.*" It often takes a little effort to determine what some of the items are as they often have obsolete names. Some of those terms will be included in a panel in the new display to assist researchers using the wills in our collection.

References in CHS Library

Freidman, Lawrence M [Dead Hands: a Social History of Wills, Truth, and Inherit Law.](#) Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 2009

Mary Ann Gray

Volunteer Archivist, CHS

An article on Deeds is planned for the next Atwood Log.



From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

The days are growing longer in Chatham and the town is quiet in its winter slumber anticipating a far off spring. Though the museum is closed for the season, there is a lot of activity underway in anticipation of the old house renovations as well as next summer's exciting exhibit on Chatham and the China trade.

Much work is done in our "off season" to prepare the facility and related programs for the summer opening. At the Executive Board, we do not rest either. We are spending precious time this off season working with Executive Director, Mark Wilkins and the Operating Board to do some important longer range thinking and planning for the next 3 – 5 years.

As you know the Atwood House Museum has been managed under the thoughtful stewardship of the Chatham Historical Society for over 85 years. The world, the region, and Chatham have certainly changed a lot since 1924. So has our Museum program. From time to time it is important for your Board to stop and take a step back from the day to day activities to take a look down the road and to ask questions about how our Museum can best evolve to serve our community. After all, the Atwood House Museum exists primarily for the education and benefit of our residents and visitors.

To that end we have embarked on a formal strategic planning process which will continue over the first half of the year. In this process we will look at the needs of our community, get advice from important stakeholders including some of you and finally discuss and agree on a path forward that makes our museum stronger and enhances its value and service to Chatham and Cape Cod.

While still early in the process, I can tell you that under Mark Wilkins' direction and leadership we are embracing a new agenda of excellence for 2010. This focused agenda includes raising our expectations for enhancing the visitor experience at the Atwood House Museum, increasing our focus on sustainability – with an emphasis on additional revenue opportunities and sponsorship, a focus on education for young and mature visitors alike – possibly including programs to be offered year round, and a special focus on our collections and research infrastructure as a managed asset for community benefit.

I look forward to sharing the conclusions of our thinking and long range planning next summer. For now – I hope you will share my excitement about the upcoming season. Once again – your Museum will undergo a winter transformation and we all will be eagerly anticipating your visit in early July when we re-open. Hopefully you have received your membership renewal reminder letter in the mail. Please take note of the new membership levels and benefits outlined. Remember, we depend upon membership dues to crank up the yearly "engine" that powers the Museum and our programs. On behalf of the many volunteers and staff who care for your Museum and operate the Chatham Historical Society – thank you for your continued interest and support.

We could not do this without you.

With warm regards,

John J. King II

Chairman

Mission Statement

The mission of the Chatham Historical Society is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, decorative arts, artifacts, archives, and places of historical interest relating to the history of Chatham and vicinity; and in so doing provide a record of the cultures and the people of our past and thereby inform and educate succeeding generations.

Join Us !

Chatham Historical Society members receive free admission to The Atwood House Museum, 10% off Museum Shop purchases, and a complimentary subscription to our newsletter. Our members play a vital role in helping to preserve the rich history and culture of Chatham and the surrounding region. Many members cherish volunteer opportunities at the Museum

Membership Categories

___ Captain Atwood Circle	\$1000
___ Heritage Society	500
___ Discoverer	250
___ Explorer	100
___ Family	50
___ Individual	25
___ Student Historian (to age 18)	10

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Method of Payment

☐

Check

☐

Visa

☐

MasterCard

Credit Card # _____

Exp. date _____

Signature _____

**Make checks payable to
 The Chatham Historical Society
 and mail with this form to:
 The Chatham Historical Society
 PO Box 709
 Chatham MA 02633**

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.



NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE PAID
CHATHAM MA
PERMIT NO.11

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
Lectures for Winter and Spring 2010
2 pm at Chatham Community Center, Main Street, Chatham, MA 02633

Sunday, February 14, 2010

Speaker: David Crocker

"Rum Running in New England and on Cape Cod"

Sunday, March 14, 2010

Speaker: Dr. Joan Maloney

"Cape Cod Kidnappers: Harwich in 1844 and 1933"

Sunday, April 11, 2010

**Speaker: Mark C. Wilkins, Chatham Historical Society
Director/Curator**

"The Golden Age of Yachting"

Sunday, May 16, 2010

Speaker to be announced



For more information, visit our website: www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org. Or call: 508.945.2493