

Historic Chatham, a historic group

By Caroline Imperato

When visitors and out-a-towners come to Chatham, they are impressed and enamored by the history and overall feel that the town creates. It is like stepping back in time or into an old movie. Upon getting to know the town a little more, people can begin to see how important history is to Chatham. Between articles, guides, pamphlets, memorials, signs, museums, preserved houses, parades (the list could actually go on), Chatham has made sure that history has a voice.

This historical voice doesn't just happen. One group in particular works hard to make sure that Chatham history is dynamic, encompassing, and available to all. Historic Chatham, a group that grew out of Chatham 300, the organizers of Chatham's Tercentennial celebrations, is dedicated to keeping historical organizations informed and connected. By doing this, Historic Chatham has become a resource for the community.

The sites that make up Historic Chatham include the Eldredge Public Library, Mayo House, Marconi RCA-Wireless Museum, Atwood House & Museum, Chatham Railroad Museum, Godfrey Windmill, Caleb Nickerson Homestead, Chatham Lighthouse, and Monomoy Wildlife Refuge.

Many of the organizations who manage these historic sites are dependent on volunteers or have a very limited staff. A coordinated effort like Historic Chatham provides a place and time to share ideas and information, printed materials, and general support from brother and sister groups. Historic Chatham meets every few months to sit down, hear about the different historic organizations, and learn about what is going on in their worlds. It is a good forum to learn how the groups can help each other and share pertinent information. By supporting each other, these groups are then better able to offer events, materials, programs, and other historic resources for the town and visitors to enjoy.

Danielle Jeanloz, executive director of the Atwood House & Museum and Historic Chatham chair, says, "The collaboration of Historic Chatham allows us to coordinate our effort and get more information out to the community."

Jeanloz, who is now in her fourth year participating in Historic Chatham says, "We are here to make it easy for people to learn about our past."

The group welcomes anyone who wants to aid and support the cooperative effort of Historic Chatham. One way to get involved with Historic Chatham is to volunteer at one of the member organizations.

These member organizations provide year-round opportunities for residents and visitors.

"The community sees Historic Chatham in all of the programs, exhibits, events, and talks sponsored by and delivered by the history organizations in Chatham," says the organization's web designer and member Ron Clark.

Historic Chatham's main collaborative event is History Weekend. History Weekend is coming up on June 21-23. The weekend will see museums and sites opening their doors for the season and celebrating the town's history. Many of the sites will offer discounted or free admission for the weekend, docent lead tours, and a variety of special events including lectures, 90 minute guided bus tours of historic sites, a walking tour of downtown, and boat trips out to Monomoy Island.

To learn more about who participates in Historic Chatham and what the schedule of events includes for History Weekend, please visit their site: www.historic-chatham.org.

Caroline Imparato is the Administrator for the Atwood House & Museum, home of the Chatham Historical Society.