



ATWOOD LOG

SPRING/SUMMER 2022



**Weird
Wacky &
Wonderful**
Curiosities from our Collection

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY



From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Spring and Summer are always fun and exciting times at the Atwood Museum. Spring brings an abundance of ideas, innovation and creativity as we prepare for the new season. This year is no exception! We are busily creating three wonderful new exhibits. After a pandemic-induced pause for the past

two years, we are committed to making your visit in 2022 an exceptional experience.

Summer is where the magic will unfold with the unveiling of the new exhibits: **Clubs of Chatham: A Century of Summer Leisure** in our **Main Gallery**; **Weird Wacky & Wonderful: Curiosities from our Collection** in the **entrance to our Main Gallery**; and **Alice Stallknecht - American Regionalist: Beyond the Murals**, featuring the lesser known works of one of Chatham's most famous artists, in the **Durand Room**.

You can preview all three of our new exhibits inside this edition of the Atwood Log. I hope you will make plans to visit the museum and enjoy our hard work and creativity. Kudos to assistant director John Tibbetts, administrator Kristina Koskores, and all of our amazing volunteers who helped make these monumental tasks a reality.

In addition to tackling three exhibits in one year, we are also diving into the world of the performing arts. The Atwood Museum is incredibly excited to present *Music at the Atwood*, a six-part Summer concert series throughout June, July and August. Check out the centerspread to read about the wonderful collection of artists who will perform during our inaugural concert series.

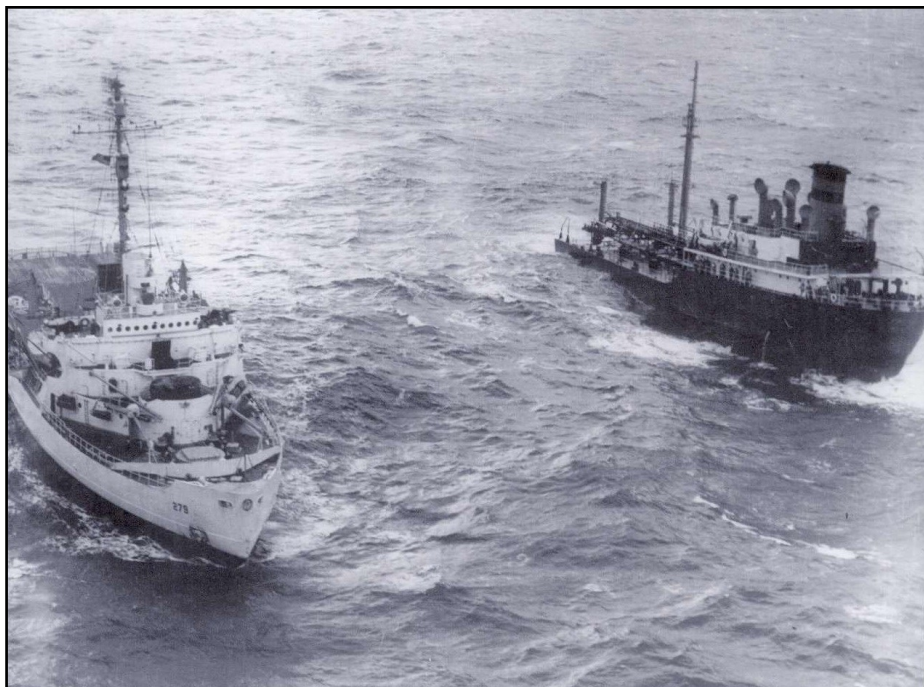
Tuesday Talks at the Atwood is off to a flying start. We continue to host a wonderful collection of speakers in our monthly lecture series. Currently, we maintain our virtual format, but plan on opening the doors to in-person lectures starting in June. Visit our website for a complete list of upcoming lectures.

Finally, Summer wouldn't be complete without our annual summer fundraiser and gala. *An Evening to Remember* will return to the grounds of the Atwood Museum on Saturday, July 16th. We hope you will be a part of making this year's fundraising event the best ever!

2022 will be a great year for the museum, so please make your plans to join the excitement. Our opening day is Friday, May 6th.

See you soon!

Kevin Wright
Executive Director

Coast Guard boat *Eastwind* coming to assist tanker *Fort Mercer*

Chatham Historical Society Collection

The forgotten rescue.

By Kevin Wright

This past February marked the 70th anniversary of the *Pendleton* Rescue. This remarkable rescue by the 4-man crew of the *CG-36500* is an important part of Chatham's history, and will forever live in the memories of the local residents.

However, on February 18, 1952, the *SS Pendleton* was not the only ship facing the ferocious winter nor'easter. Just 30 miles southeast of Chatham, the *Fort Mercer*, a 503-foot T-2 oil tanker similar to the *Pendleton*, battled the elements with a crew of 42 men. At the helm was German-born Captain Frederick Paetzel, a seaman since the tender age of 14.

At 0800, the 48-year-old captain heard a horrific sharp crack from inside

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the ship. Seeing oil gushing in the ocean from the starboard side of the *Fort Mercer*, Captain Paetzel knew the hull of the ship had cracked. Alerting his crew, he quickly radioed the U.S. Coast Guard for help. With hurricane winds, 50 to 60-foot waves, and no signs that the nor'easter would ease anytime soon, time was of the essence. Roughly, 150 miles away, the Coast Guard ship *Eastward* (WAGB-279) had received a distress signal from the *Fort Mercer* and immediately headed to the endangered tanker.

The Coast Guard vessel, the *Unimak* (WAVP-379) was also alerted and ask to divert their search for a fishing vessel south of Nantucket. Yet another cutter, *Yakutat* (WAVP-380), stationed in Provincetown, was dispatched to the disaster along with a forth rescue ship, the *McCulloch* (WAVP-386) out of Boston.

The partly prefabricated and welded T-2 tankers were notorious for hull fractures, especially with high winds and frigid temperatures. Eight tankers had previously been lost as a result of the hull severing at sea. Captain Paetzel and the *Mercer*, it seemed, would soon become the next in a line of T-2 failures. Unbelievably, the *Pendleton*, just miles away, was also on course to meet the same fate.

Around 1030, the *Mercer* suffered another massive crack. With extreme danger imminent, another SOS was sent at 1158 with the message "our hull is splitting." Within minutes, after repeated impacts from the waves, the hull of the *Mercer* split in half, leaving Captain Paetzel and eight crew members stranded on the bow of the tanker and the remaining 34 crewmembers stranded on the Stern. An eerie mirror of what the crew of the *Pendleton* faced.

With no radio available due to the accident, Captain Paetzel could no longer make contact with the Coast Guard, nor could he communicate with his crew on the stern. The stern was in better shape than the bow. With the engine room located in the stern section, the crew was fortunately able to restart the engine, put the ship in reverse, and avoid being rammed by the bow section that was being pushed towards them by the massive waves. All survivors on the stern would safely be rescued, leaving only the fate of the

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Coast Guardsmen rescuing men from sinking bow section of tanker "Fort Mercer" Feb. 18, 1952. Chatham Historical Society Collection

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bow in question.

Shortly after nightfall, the cutter *Yakutat* arrived at the scene, but was unable to pull aside the sinking tanker due to the enormous waves, and had to wait until the wind and waves subsided. With desperation setting in, Captain Paetzel and his crew were concerned that the bow would be lifted straight out of the water and then could rapidly sink. Sensing their desperation, *Yakutat* Commander, Joseph Naab, decided they needed to attempt to rescue them as quickly as possible. He maneuvered the cutter windward of the tanker, had his crew drop several lifeboats tied in a row, and let the wind carry the lifeboats toward the *Mercer*. The survivors on the bow now had the critical decision: to risk their life by jumping into the water during the storm, hoping they could swim to the lifeboats; or to wait until dawn when the storm would end. One crewmember had

already been washed overboard from crashing waves. Four of the remaining eight crewmembers made the fatal decision to jump to the lifeboats. Unfortunately, the shock of the freezing sea was too much to overcome and all of them perished in the water. At this point, Commander Naab decided it was too risky for the remaining men on the bow to jump and backed away from the tanker to wait out the storm until dawn. He could no longer watch men jump to their death. That decision proved to be wise, and in the morning the remaining four crewmembers were rescued. Minutes after the final survivor was rescued, the bow rose up out of the water, came crashing down, and sank into the ocean.

The rescue of the *Pendleton* by the CG 36500 was the greatest small boat rescue in the history of the U.S. Coast Guard. The fact a boat equipped to handle 12 men was able to save 32 survivors during a horrific nor'easter was unbelievable and worthy of a Hollywood movie. It is also important to note, that on February 18, 1952, there were other heroic men doing their duty off the shores of Chatham.



Rescue boat *Yakutat* from Coast Guard going to assist in the rescuing of survivors from tanker *Fort Mercer*

Chatham Historical Society Collection



Crew on CGC *Yakutat* struggle to remove survivors from the fast sinking bow section of the broken tanker.

Chatham Historical Society Collection

Check out the New Exhibits coming to the Atwood Museum in 2022

Our goal at the Chatham Historical Society is to continuously update and refresh our exhibits every few years. We feel we owe new and unique experiences to our dedicated membership and visitors. We also look at it as an opportunity for our staff and volunteers to express their creativity!

The following are snapshots of the new exhibits coming to the museum this summer.

The Clubs of Chatham *A Century of Summer Leisure*

Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on three sides, Chatham's history is tied to the sea. In the 18th and 19th Centuries, Chatham was a working class fishing village. By the early 20th Century, Chatham's economy

changed with the increase of summer visitors. In the 1920's and 1930's a leisure class began to spend their summers in Chatham. The sea, once reserved and revered as a source of food and income had become a summer playground. Activities like golf, tennis, and sailing became popular for both men and women. The summer people began to organize exclusive clubs for their activities. The creation of the private clubs changed the landscape of the town and set forth a century of summer leisure.

What do cannonballs, the Gold Rush, and tonsillectomy tools have in common? They all can be found in the collection of the Chatham Historical Society. For one hundred years the Historical Society has accepted donations of objects that capture Chatham's

Weird & Wacky Wonderful Curiosities from our Collection

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Cabinets of Curiosities

Cabinets of Curiosities can trace their origins back to the 16th and 17th century, as the predecessor to modern museums. Often housing the collections of wealthy nobles, these cabinets would display oddities and curiosities of the natural world. Both encyclopedic and aesthetic, *wunderkammers* (German for 'wonder room') were both a status symbol and source of entertainment. Our cabinet of curiosities invites the viewer to learn more about the history of Chatham and the impact of personal and museum collections.

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history. Various industries and technologies have come and gone, and these curious objects have stories to tell. Explore the history of the life at sea, the China Trade, the Gold Rush, and more industries and events that touched the community of Chatham in *Weird, Wacky, and Wonderful: Curiosities from Our Collection*.



Alice Stallknecht's dynamic mural paintings are one of the highlights of the Atwood Museum, but The Chatham Historical Society also has several other paintings by the artist in our collection that are not typically on display. Stallknecht's lesser known works continue her devotion to her adopted home of Chatham. A series of fantastical scenes, the work captures her unique perspective on the Cape Cod Region. Smaller in scale than her celebrated mural paintings, these images provoke the imagination, and demonstrate Stallknecht's singular vision.

Alice Stallknecht painted Chatham: townspeople, birds, boats, and weathervanes were her inspiration. Fiercely independent, Stallknecht creat-

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ed a body of work that is unique but also earned her place amongst American Regionalist Painters as that style became one of the dominant national art movements in the 1930s. We invite you to learn more about the artist, her inspirations, subjects, and technique.

American Scene and Regionalism Painting:

American Scene Painting is a style of paintings and art popular during the first half of the 20th century in the United States. The artists of the movement depicted scenes of typical American life and landscape. American Scene is an umbrella term for the rural **American Regionalism** and the urban and politically-oriented **Social Realism**, but its specific boundaries remain ambiguous.



Chatham Historical Society Collection

An anti-modernist style and reaction against the modern European style, **American Scene**, **Regionalism**, and **Social Realism** were seen as attempts to define a uniquely American style of art. These terms do not signify organized movements, but rather aspects of a broad tendency of American artists to move away from abstraction and the avant-garde. American artists sought an independent style of realism that would embody the values of ordinary people in the everyday working world. In the wake of severe economic uncertainty, social upheaval and political shifts that followed the Great Depression, American artists maintained a commitment to projecting a very personal view.

American Regionalist style was at its height from 1930 to 1935, and the best known artists were Grant Wood in Iowa, Thomas Hart Benton in Missouri, and John Steuart Curry in Kansas. During the Great Depression, Regionalist art was widely appreciated for its reassuring images of the American heartland. Grant Wood's *American Gothic* is the most recognizable American Regionalist work of art. Regionalism had a strong influence on popular culture. Regionalist imagery appeared in magazine advertisements, and influenced literature and cinema. Alice Stallknecht began painting again during this period and created two her murals: *Christ Preaching to the Multitude* (1932) and *Circle Supper* (1935) along with the weathervane series on display.

Save the Date



The Chatham Historical Society
presents

An Evening to Remember

Our annual summer benefit returns to
the Atwood Museum

Saturday, July 16, 2022

5:00 - 7:30 PM

Cocktails and Hors D'oeuvres
Live & Silent Auction

~ Invitation to follow ~

TripAdvisor Reviews

The best advertising for a small museum like ours is through word of mouth. One of the most popular referral systems currently is TripAdvisor. Reviews on this free worldwide travel site attract visitors, future donors, and supporters. We hope that you will consider reviewing us online. This can be accomplished by creating an account on TripAdvisor or using Facebook to log in. Why does TripAdvisor require an account? To make sure that reviews come from legitimate people.

To review us see: www.tripadvisor.com/reviewit

Recent feedback:

Outstanding Museum

“A fabulous museum. A great variety of information, historical, literary, coast guard, art, woodworking, Native American history and photographic exhibit. The docent led tour of the Atwood house was excellent. She was a former teacher so really knew how to hold an audience. Highly recommend. Spent an hour and fifteen minutes.”

October 8, 2021

If you like local Chatham history, please visit!

“This is a gem of a museum, if you want to learn about local history. There are many artifacts that are original and/or to the era. The house has been kept beautifully with original fireplaces, floors, colors and portraits. The docent is well-informed and enthusiastic. The documentation has been well-done and there is obvious pride from local contributors and descendants of the original owners. The tower from the lighthouse with the Fresnel lens is fascinating and the chimes that had been in a local tower have a lovely tone! There is an addition with rotating exhibits that have a direct correlation to the area.”

October 6, 2021

A very interesting place

“When we arrived at the museum, we did not have the highest expectation. We were very pleasantly surprised. There were many rooms, which really gave a very good picture of the history of the town, including an honest accounting of the history of the family.”

September 20, 2021

Great historical house and museum

“We very much enjoyed our tour of this museum and the exhibits. It's an interesting part of Cape Cod history. Highly recommended.”

September 19, 2021

Make your plans to visit us this fall!

Birds that flock together . . .



**Help Grow Our
Family and Give the
Gift of Membership**

For more information visit our website:
www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org/our-community/membership

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CALENDAR

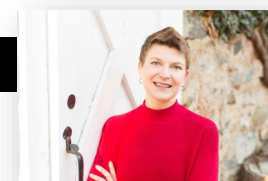


Lecture Series 2022

April 12, 2022

Solving for Alice Stallknecht

Speaker: Ingrid Steffensen



May 10, 2022

*Changes in Chatham and Orleans coast
and corresponding migrating shorebirds*

Speaker: Brian Harrington

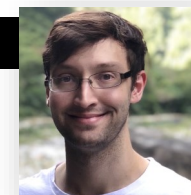


June 14, 2022 - TBD

July 15, 2022

*A New View on the Universe:
the James Webb Space Telescope*

Speaker: Charles Law





EVENTS

A yellow circle with the text 'MUSEUM MONDAYS IN MAY' in white.

FREE EVENT for the entire Family

A red biplane flying over a banner that says 'CAPE COD MUSEUM TRAIL'.

Monday, May 16th
(10-4)



Members Opening Reception

Celebrate the opening of our 3 new exhibits

Monday, May 16 (5:30-7:00 PM)

Details will be posted on our website

Experience our **NEW** Summer Concert Series

Help Support the Atwood

**Six performances -
June, July & August**

Check out the centerspread for details

