



# ATWOOD LOG

SPRING/SUMMER 2021



THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I am stoked that Spring has arrived and we are gearing up for 2021. This will be an interesting year, full of hope and promise. I am confident that the pandemic is moving in the right direction and I am looking forward to positive updates throughout the year. With that said, we will proceed cautiously and continue to maintain a safe environment for all of our staff, volunteers, visitors, and returning members. As state restrictions ease up, we will be ready to increase our in-house capacity. Social distancing and wearing masks will still be the norm for the foreseeable future, but so will the world-class service and wow factor you will experience when visiting the museum.

We have kept our new exhibits from last year intact so that many of you who were unable to visit us in 2020 can enjoy the splendor of our vision and hard work. The first returning new exhibit is “The Turning Point,” celebrating the 400th (now 401st) anniversary of the Mayflower’s historic journey to the New World. In addition to the informative stories, timelines and maps, we’ve added a new model of the famed ship kindly donated by Tom Dorward. This exhibit also features the story of the Wampanoags, the original settlers of this land, highlighted by a timeline and fascinating artifacts on display. We are excited for our first full season of the Wetu, an authentic Wampanoag dwelling built on our property next to the Fresnel Lens. The other new exhibit back for a second season is “Remembering our Heroes,” a visually stunning display that commemorates the end of World War II. This exhibit takes you from the attack on Pearl Harbor, through the many important battles, leaders, and women who helped change the course of history, concluding with a heroic local story about two Chatham boys.

It wouldn’t be the Atwood if we didn’t spruce up the Old House. Three areas received a face-lift with fresh paint, and our costumes & textiles team have added some beautiful christening dresses and interesting artifacts to this year’s exhibit in the Music Room. We also hope to once again open up the North Beach Camp to the public, which was closed last year. Still working on the details so stay tuned.

Finally . . . Ellie O’Reilly and I have been keeping the museum afloat these past six months, and are excited to announce that we have hired a new Assistant Director, John Tibbetts. We couldn’t have done all the work without the extraordinary help from our dedicated volunteers and committed Board of Trustees. Thank You!

**Kevin Wright**  
**Executive Director**

# Epic Events and Disasters on Cape Cod

By Florence Seldin

*2020 has been a strange, challenging and disconcerting year for all of us everywhere. But as an article on the Yarmouth Historical Society website reminded me, the Cape has experienced other catastrophic events which have impacted our lives in a variety of ways. Here are a few:*

## Adapted from the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth

**The October Gale of 1841** The Cape has experienced a great many destructive storms through history, but the people were usually able to rebuild following them and continue on. This storm was different, however, not because it was so severe; a few others have been more powerful. But because it struck when the Cape and the nation were languishing under an economic downturn that had begun four years earlier.

Cape fishing fleets were decimated by the storm. Most were at Georges Bank when the storm struck and were literally wrecked. Hundreds of Cape fishermen lost their lives in that single storm. As hardy and resilient as Cape natives have proved themselves, the fishing fleets never recovered. In the years following, new fishing methods were introduced which demanded larger vessels and deeper harbors to handle them. The small boats that were so common on the Cape were made obsolete. And the storm drove so much silt into rivers on the Cape that they lost their tidal flow.

Even the numerous saltworks on the Cape at that time were dealt a death blow. With fewer ships to buy their salt (used to preserve the catch), and with so much cheap imported salt available, they were unable to rebuild.

Few storms have hit at a worse economic time. Starting in the decade after the storm, Cape Cod's population experienced a decline that wasn't reversed until the century ended. The Great October Gale of 1841 marked the start of the destruction of the old maritime economy and the beginning of the tourist industry which did not begin until after the Civil War.

**The Influenza Pandemic of 1918** The Spanish Flu virus emerged in mid-September and quickly spread around the world. By the time it ended in 1920, it had taken more lives than any other outbreak in human history except for the Bubonic Plague—and about half of the dead were in their 20s or 30s.

The earliest known cases of the flu in the US were two sailors housed

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**On the Cover: Photograph of the S.S. Pendleton after the hull had split in two.**

(Continued from previous page)

at Boston's Commonwealth Pier who were stricken in August. By the end of 1918 4,000 Bostonians had died. Massachusetts was particularly hard hit by the epidemic.

"They closed the MFA, the Boston Public Library, schools, bars, barber shops, theaters, You name it, it was closed down."

"Back then they would have fines against coughing and spitting and kissing in public, and being a 'big talker,' " which was a term used to describe someone who talked loudly. These were all things that were not allowed.

Calvin Coolidge was the governor beginning in Jan. 1919. But unlike today, people in Massachusetts weren't required to wear masks during the 1918 outbreak.

The Cape soon felt the impact. Eventually realizing the threat, people took steps to curb the spread of the virus, closing schools, ceasing church services, cancelling meetings—reducing contact with others. In some towns, Boy Scouts in uniform delivered food to the infected in their homes. When papers reported that coughing and sneezing could spread diseases, people began wearing masks.

The provincial nature of the Cape actually helped prevent much of the spread of the flu here. Let's take Falmouth as a case study. The first reported incidence of influenza in Falmouth was on October 5, 1918. For the next three months of 1918 and into 1919, the disease raged through Falmouth. There are 26 pages in the town ledger for all of 1918. Twenty-three of them cover the period between October 5 and December 31. Between October 5, 1918, and April 15, 1919 (the last day influenza was reported), 762 cases of influenza had been reported, more than 100 cases a month. In the US it is estimated that 650,000 people died of the disease. Since 1918, there have been several other influenza pandemics, although none as deadly. (We do not have final statistics for COVID-19).

**The Rescue of the *Pendleton*** We in Chatham are well aware of the events of February 18th, 1952 thanks in part to our excellent exhibit including the model of the CG36500. Struggling in one of the year's most violent storms, the tanker *M/V Pendleton* enroute to Boston from New Orleans, broke in two six miles off the Cape Cod coast. In what has been called the greatest small boat rescue in Coast Guard history, the 36-foot motor Rescue Boat CG36500, manned by a crew of four—Bernie Webber,



**Crew of the CG 36500: Bernie Webber, Andrew Fitzgerald, Richard Livesey, and Irving Maske.**

Photograph from the Chatham Historical Society collection

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# Virtually Speaking

By Kevin Wright



History, culture, and education. The world is fortunate to be surrounded by museums that take these important attributes to an extraordinary level. Here at the Atwood, we too understand these important attributes and embrace the opportunities to expand our vision.

We are always looking for ways to reach a wider audience, engage the next generation, and create a “cool” museum. Obviously “cool” is in the eye of the beholder, but the challenge is in the road ahead. A challenge we are excited about, and look forward to facing head on. The Atwood Museum understands the critical crossroad that our industry is faced with, and we are dedicated to creating an expanded vision for all to enjoy.

As much as we cherish the exhibits that come to life in our 14 galleries, we are excited to enhance the overall experience with a virtual presence. We feel we can thrive in this arena by giving both the casual and experienced visitor the best of both worlds.

Here is what we have already done, and what we still plan on doing during the year. The virtual homeschool lives on our website under the virtual experience tab. Within that section, visitors can learn about Captain Joseph Atwood and the Old Atwood House, Alice Stallknecht and her mural paintings from the 1930s and 40s, the rescue of the SS Pendleton in February of 1952, the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mayflower voyage to the New World, and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. In addition to our homeschooling experience, you can also learn about the Chatham sea captains who played an important role in the history of Chatham in our Masters of the Sea virtual exhibit.

In 2021, we plan on creating a more high-tech, 3D experience with both our Double Take exhibit as well as our Main Street Cape Cod exhibit, so stay tuned!

It is important to note that our virtual presence is only as good as the feedback from you, our valued members. Our goal is to constantly make improvements and take the museum to the next level. In order to achieve our goal we encourage you to push us to be the best we can be. Do not hesitate to share your ideas and comments; this is your historical society and museum. Your feedback is critical to our success. We cannot guarantee we can accommodate all your requests, but we can guarantee we will listen and do our best to make the virtual exhibits exciting, interesting, and something to be proud of.

# George Washington and the Civil War

By Ellie O'Reilly

The Atwood Museum has an extensive photography collection, ranging from Victorian-era daguerreotypes to color photographs of Chatham in the 1990s. We have information about some of these photographs — they may have come in as part of a scrapbook or with documentation from an eager family historian — but others remain a mystery. The fashion worn by the people in the images as well as the photography techniques can help to date these pictures but we are generally left with a wide range of years during which the photograph could have been taken.

One of my projects as an intern at the Atwood Museum in the summer of 2018, funded through the Tanner Dean Scholar program at Cornell University, involved investigating women in early photographs in our collection. I have grown up primarily with photographs as digital files, so I was particularly interested in the physicality and tactile history of early photographs. In examining these objects, I discovered a few details that helped to date some of the photographs quite precisely, and in doing so, brought them to life.

Photography developed in different forms throughout the beginning of the 19th century, including cumbersome procedures where images were directly imprinted onto glass or metal plates. In 1854, Andre Adolphe Eugene Disdéri, a French photographer, patented a process that mounted photographs onto thick cardstock. This development meant that photographs became cheaper to produce, as well as more portable. These photographs are referred to as cartes-de-visite, and quickly caught on around the world.

In the United States, the photo craze aligned with the advent of the Civil War. For the first time, soldiers going off to war could bring with them an exact image of the loved ones they were fighting for, or families could keep



**This example of a carte-de-visite shows Abigail (Eldredge) Harding, the first wife of Andrew Harding. She passed away in 1865.**

Photograph from the  
Chatham Historical Society collection

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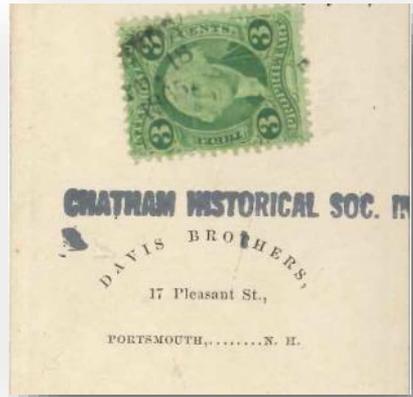
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an accurate memento of their brave sons. This booming industry provided a perfect opportunity for a new revenue source to help support the Union through an expensive war — taxation.

The backs of these cartes-de-visite often prove useful for investigation, typically giving the name and location of the studio where the photograph was taken. In our collection, that could mean anywhere from the Floyd Photographer in Minneapolis, Minnesota to J. Bryant, whose studio was located in the Washington Hall Building in Chatham, Massachusetts. Occasionally, this space also includes a small stamp of George Washington, usually for 2 or 3 cents. These stamps are not postage stamps, but rather taxation stamps. In 1864, Congress passed a tax on “photographs, ambrotypes, daguerreotypes or any other sun-pictures”, which was quickly met with an outcry from photographers, who argued that this tax effectively raised their prices to an unsustainable level. Faced with this opposition, Congress repealed the tax only two years later, on August 1, 1866.

These photographs, which were previously undated, with unidentified figures, can now be dated to a precise two-year period if they have this stamp. This opens up many more arenas for investigation — we now know that these specific photography studios must have been operating at some point between 1864 and 1866 and have better context for who some of these figures depicted may have been.

I have found that one of my favorite entry points into history is specificity — an old photograph can be interesting to look at, but knowing with a high level of certainty that the person depicted lived through the outbreak of the Civil War or the development of photography makes that person seem all the more present. I walk by the building that used to house Andrew Harding’s general store, and now I think about a photograph of Abigail Harding, Andrew’s first wife, preserved in our collection and reproduced here which, due to the stamp featured on the back, I know was only taken a year or so before she passed away. We often take photographs for granted now, as they are so easy to produce with our cell phones. We forget the magic of precisely capturing a scene or a facial expression so that years from now, we can remember exactly how a moment felt.



**The back of the Abigail Harding carte-de-visite, showing a 3-cent George Washington stamp.**

The photographer was the Davis Brothers in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

**Ellie O'Reilly is the Administrator at the Atwood Museum.**

# *Vintage Atwood*



**Elmer Crowell**

Photographed by  
Frederick Wight



**Joseph**



**Marjory (Smith) Atwood**

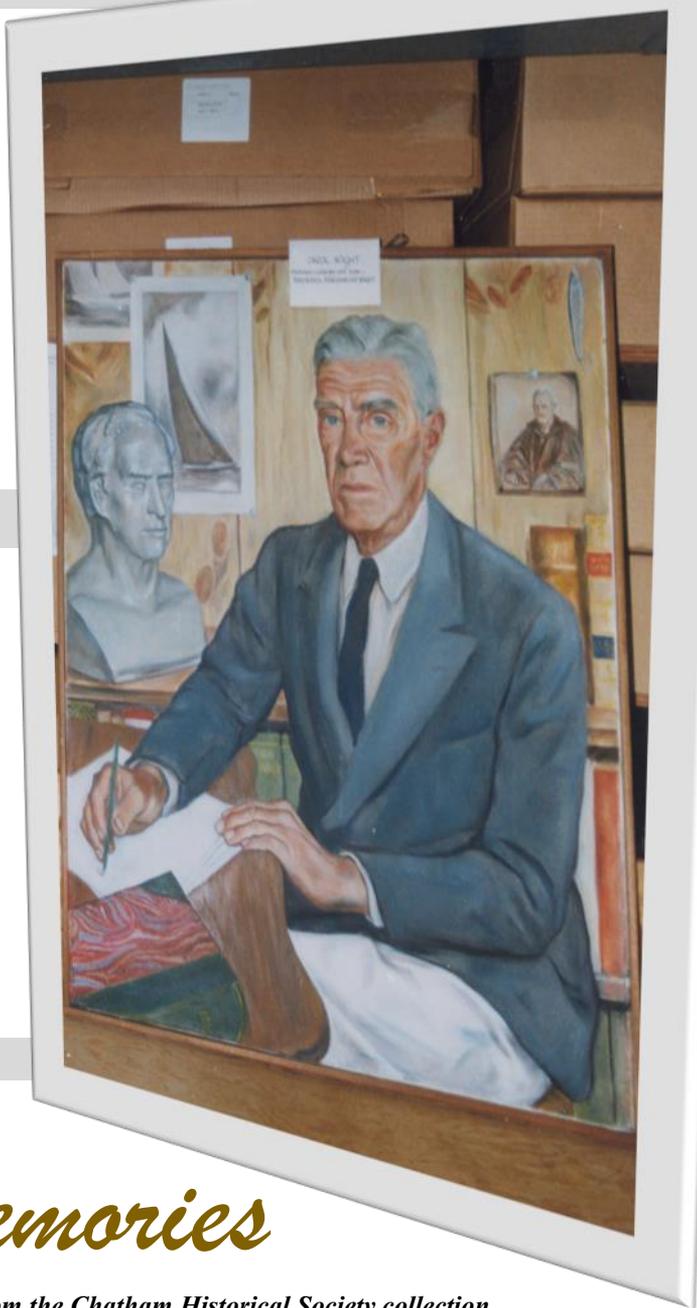
*Class*

# Age ood

**Carol Wight**  
**Husband of Alice Stalknecht**  
**Painting by son Frederick Wight**



**Joseph C. Lincoln**



# Classic Memories

*Images from the Chatham Historical Society collection*

# Online Research at the Atwood

By Judy Cunniff

First, let me say that I am a child of the technological age. I love computers. I love the internet. I love research. I love history. I love the Atwood Museum. I love our cataloging system (mostly).

Yet, somehow, when our former director, Danielle Jeanloz, and our ‘IT guy’, Bob Ralls, suggested putting the CHS archives catalog online, I resisted. Why? From this perspective, I can’t say, except I thought it would maybe incur a lot of requests that would burden our limited archive resources. We are all volunteers who do this job out of – well, the love expressed above.

Was I wrong? Yes, big time. How could I have been so misguided!

When requests for research arrive in the archive email [archives.atwood@gmail.com], I am rarely able to respond immediately with results. Prior to the online catalog, I might reply with an estimate of time it would take to find the material. I love doing the research but often the time required was considerable and of course took away from other projects. I would often send a reply with a request for a clarification/narrowing of the topic since requests were similar in nature to “I’d like all the pictures of Main St” (there are only several hundred).

Post online catalog, the first response is “Have you searched in our online catalog?” Now I am getting initial and/or follow-up requests with catalog numbers of requested items. This makes the archivists’ search so much easier and the turn around so much faster and accurate.

So thank you, Danielle and Bob, for implementing this wonderful improvement in our archives world. You were absolutely right!

To access our online catalog through our website, you can visit [www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org) and click on the Collections tab. Then, scroll down to find the “Visit our Online Collections” button. You can also go directly to <https://chatham.pastperfectonline.com/>. There are some simple instructions on searching; my favorite is using keywords. It is also fun to click on the “Random Images” button to see what comes up. Good luck and looking forward to hearing from you!

**Judy Cunniff is a Volunteer Archivist at the Atwood Museum, home of the Chatham Historical Society.**

**ENJOY VOLUNTEERING?**

**If so, the Atwood Museum wants you!**

**For information and opportunities**

**Contact John Tibbetts: [jtibbetts.atwood@gmail.com](mailto:jtibbetts.atwood@gmail.com)**

# SAVE THE DATE

THE CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*Presents*

## *An Evening to Remember*

*Our annual summer celebration*

This year's gala returns to the spectacular

## **"Sea La Vie"**

**Saturday, August 28, 2021 5:00 - 7:30 pm**



# 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 a simple 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](http://www.tripadvisor.com/reviewit)

## Recent feedback:

### Wonderful new exhibits in midst of a Pandemic

“What a wonderful group of new exhibits! In the midst of a pandemic this exceptional staff put together terrific educational exhibits. The beautiful life size wetu, home for Wampanoag natives gives a real feel for the lives of a people who were here long before most of us. The story boards about the pilgrims journey to our shores, their illnesses, entertainment, and actual living quarters gave a very real sense of the difficult times they had. Too, you were able to really relate the sad interaction of Wampanoags and Pilgrims; it was not all Thanksgiving. The World War II exhibit is colorful with posters, photos and wonderfully real artifacts and uniforms displayed. It makes that era come alive. The docents are always knowledgeable and have great lively stories. Thank you for your continued efforts toward making a first class museum! Good work.”

Barbara

### A Gem of History on Cape Cod

“Had a private tour with Kevin. It was AMAZING! We thought it would be good but had no idea how great it would be. Not only is there a lot of great history about Chatham but also about all of Cape Cod. Plus really cool going through Captain Atwood's house from 1700's. I don't normally enjoy museums but this is definitely worth a visit. Put it on your list when visiting Cape Cod!!

Teresa F.

### So Glad We Explored!

“Fantastic museum with multiple interesting presentations. Holiday train show was charming; presentation of Pendleton boat mishap was thorough; adored the photo display of Chatham “then and now”.

Jerry

**Make your plans to visit us this summer!**

(Continued from page 4)

Andrew Fitzgerald, Richard Livesey and Irving Maske—managed to locate the foundering tanker. Pulling alongside the stern of the *Pendleton*, despite hurricane force winds, snow, sleet and pitch dark, the crew rescued 32 of the 33 crew members trapped on the stern of the ship. One of the *Pendleton's* sailors fell into the sea in the attempt and was crushed. Eight crew members trapped on the bow were lost when it sank. Their bodies were never recovered. Although lacking a functioning compass, the crew of the Rescue Boat made it back safely to port with the tanker survivors.

The heroic exploits of the four Cape Coast Guardsmen have been celebrated in books, paintings and a movie, *The Finest Hours*. The men were honored for their efforts with Gold Lifesaving Medals for "extreme and heroic daring." And in 2005, CG36500 itself was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It can be viewed by the public nearly year-round at its berth at Rock Harbor in Orleans.

**Florence Seldin is a longtime volunteer at the Atwood Museum and is the book purchaser for the gift shop.**

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## Chatham Historical Society

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# CALENDAR



**Virtual Lecture Series 2021**

**April 13, 2021**

*The Man who Invented the Digital Camera*

**Speaker: Michael Tompsett**



**May 11, 2021**

*The Life of a Charter Fisherman*

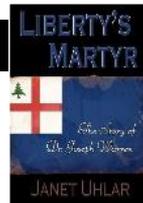
**Speaker: Mike Adbow**



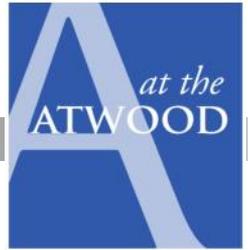
**June 15, 2021**

*Liberty's Martyr: Dr. Joseph Warren*

**Speaker: Janet Uhlar**



**Check our website for additional Talks**



# EVENTS

**ATWOOD MUSEUM OPENS MAY 7TH**

**MUSEUM MONDAYS** IN MAY

FREE Admission In May  
for participating museums

**Atwood Museum - May 24th**  
Check our website for details

## History Weekend

Experience Historic Chatham  
**June 11-13th**  
Check our website for details



## Walk the plank for our annual **Pirates' Day**



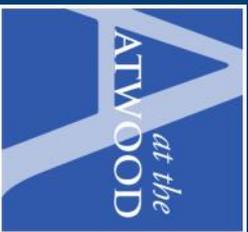
Arrgh! The Atwood Museum hosts another fun-filled and safe family day.

**Saturday, July 31st ■ 11:00 am - 3:00 pm**

# CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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