

Windows Into Time Exhibit Closing Soon

AT THE ATWOOD

By Danielle Jeanloz

Remembering Chatham's past is a relatively easy activity when you have the responsibility of preserving the town's treasures. With a collection of nearly 5,000 objects amassed over 95 years, the Chatham Historical Society uses its property, the Atwood House & Museum to display some of the many donated goods. While only about 20% of the collection is on display at any given time, staff and volunteers work to provide rotating exhibits, in addition to permanent exhibits, to share with the public access of the many fascinating objects.

Through October, you can still view the changes in costumes and textiles in our community over 300 years as you visit *Windows Into Time*, an exhibit which has been on display for the past 18 months. In this exhibit, the history of our community springs to life as the colonials settled and built their farms. Clothing of our early settlers was simple and functional as Europeans focused on surviving the hardships of changing seasons, planting crops, tending livestock, and fishing. As settlers began to focus on education and manufacturing, sturdy locally-woven garb became more colorful and varied. Local sea captains traveled the world and amassed wealth. Clothing became more formal with lace and frills. Accessories such as fans and parasols became popular. One unusual item during that era was a skirt lifter, which looks like a pair of tongs that clamped together and dangled from the wrists of women. Why? Well, to lift long skirts from the dirt, mud and water on the streets and to help navigate stairs. Skirt lifters are one of many small fashion items that have come and gone over time and certainly became obsolete as hemlines became shorter. These lifters were made in a variety of both decorative and simple patterns; an example of a simpler one is on display in our exhibit.

During the Revolutionary War, soldiers usually wore their own work clothes while officers received uniforms. The onset of the Civil War brought formal uniforms through the ranks. These items were often kept as proud mementoes of the war effort. Women's clothing during the Civil War was generally drab since many families were in mourning.

The age of trains, which came late to Chatham in the 1890s, brought more trade and a greater variety of clothes as travel to major cities such as Boston and New York became more common. Cars helped fuel the age of tourism, bringing wealth and luxury items to the community in the early 1900's. Women, even those in New England, pushed boundaries by wearing shorter and more revealing clothing. You can learn about this colorful era with our interactive display highlighting Rum Running and The Jazz Age.

Windows Into Time includes eight vignettes showing snapshots of a developing New England seaside community. Each lifelike setting has been meticulously curated by the dynamic volunteer team led by Janet Marjollet, a mostly self-taught fashion designer, and Barbara Hogan, who owned a fabric store here in Chatham for many years. To experience this visually dramatic exhibit be sure to come to the Museum before the end of October, when this major exhibit will be replaced for the holidays with the return of the Magical Holiday Trains by Ryder Martin.