

# The Atwood Log

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Chatham Historical Society

## Chatham and The Naval Air Station 1917-1922 “A Flight Into History”



Inside: Seashells, Flags & Special Exhibit News



## From the President

# Museum Opens June 9

All through the fall and winter months, volunteers have been working at the Atwood House Museum complex — keeping up with the archives, refurbishing various galleries, and researching Chatham and world events for the 2007 special exhibit. There have been so many cars in the parking lot that on occasion some visitors to Chatham ring the doorbell thinking our exhibitions are open!

**The 2007 Special Exhibit: A Flight Into History: Chatham and the Naval Air Station 1917—1922** opens Saturday, June 9. It offers a slice of life of our town's, and nation's, great transition periods. World War I had been raging in Europe for three years when the U.S. entered the fray. Here in Chatham, a sleepy resort town was transformed within one year to the site of a Naval Air Station that could house 300 men. Beyond where Eastward Ho! golf course is now located, 50 buildings were constructed seemingly overnight. When townspeople looked up from their work, they saw blimps overhead and heard the whine of seaplane engines. Residents found the influx of new people and new skills mind-boggling. Some even found romance. Two major news stories happened during this period of time right here in Chatham:

✂ Seaplanes from the Chatham Naval Air Station chased a U-boat off Orleans after it shelled a barge. Young Jack Ainsleigh played a key role!

✂ The NC-4, trying to cross the Atlantic in 1919, had engine trouble off Chatham. George Goodspeed helped it be “the first across.”

The aftermath of the war, when the Allies carved up the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, is cited as one cause for World War II and many of the Middle East troubles we now face. Not only will the post-war events be featured, but the stories of everyday people, who lived in Chatham or decided to stay here, will be told.

Beginning in March, volunteers were asked to sign in, to record the many hours they spend here at the museum. On average 22 persons worked at the museum each week, putting in an average of 225 hours per week in volunteer service.

And, oh what they have accomplished! When the Atwood House Museum complex officially launches the season with an Open House on Saturday, June 9, you will see what I mean. Please reserve that day to visit with us from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be refreshments, entertainment and some wonderful new displays. Bring the whole family!

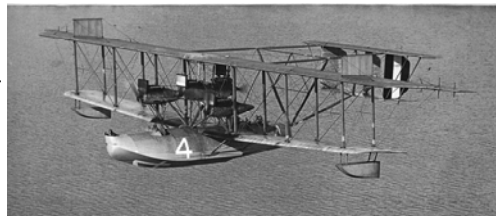
**Additional Events:** Some of our members are so active during the summer months, they rarely get the opportunity to visit the museum. For them and visitors who love the beaches and bike path during the day, the Society has added evening hours. On Thursday evenings during July and August, between 6 and 8 pm, there will be three special one-hour tours offered for members and visitors of the Atwood House Museum complex.

Parents and grandparents, who found the Monday children's classes time well spent by their children, take note. They are returning. Younger children meet at 9:30 a.m. and older kids gather at 1:30 p.m. Content is being finalized.

I want to thank all our members who so faithfully support the Society's programs with their time, talents and treasure. We couldn't do it with you!



Jack Ainsleigh, above, took on a U-boat off Orleans and lived to tell the story. Below, The NC-4, flying boat came floating into the Naval Air Station with engine trouble. After repairs, it flew into history!



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— Janet Morgan Daly



# A Fascination for Seashells

*Man has used shells as utensils, jewelry, symbols, musical instruments. . .even money!*



Seashells have fascinated mankind for eons of time as evidenced by fossil records of deposits found at Cro-Magnon sites dating to some 25,000 years ago. Throughout the centuries shells have been used as utensils, jewelry and decoration, in trading and as money, as symbols, as musical instruments, in the arts, and as motifs in many segments of society. A current design trend employing marine-related themes has shells playing a prominent role.

Collecting these empty calcium houses made by their former inhabitants can be a life-long hobby. Conchologists, like the Durands who gave their collection to the Museum in the 1970s, have worldwide sites to explore. Shells are found in salt water everywhere and some fresh water locations as well. The most prolific areas are in the warm waters of the South Pacific and Indian Oceans.

New species are being discovered still, and new scientific information occasionally leads to reclassification within the mollusk phylum to which invertebrates belong. Of recent interest are photographs from the exploration of Mars, conducted by NASA, showing objects said to be shells that appear remarkably like the shells seen on our own planet.

During the winter while the Durand Room received a refurbishing, a research project to develop identifying signage also



*Seashell, clockwise from above: Arthritic Spider Conch found in shallow coral reefs in eastern Africa. Claveous Cone, a member of the Poisonous condiae family. A group of cowries. Popular mollusks that lay egg masses and sit on them. Lion's Paw or Knobbed Scallop comes in varied colors, orange to red, found offshore to 30 miles from U.S. to Brazil*

has added information to the Museum records on shells. The many often very similar varieties of species present a challenge to cataloguers. In addition to genetics, factors such as age, sex, life cycle phases, environment, parasites and accidents affect the appearance of the individual shell.

The Durand collection contains many beautiful and unusual

shells, such as a golden cowrie and venomous cones. There is also a large yet delicate cockle shell the "quite contrary Mistress Mary" well might have loved to have in her garden.

The newly redecorated Durand Room will reopen in June. Be sure to stop by and see why shells are so fascinating!

– Cynthia McCue

## An Antique Appraisal Q and A

*Q. Did you find a what-is-this in the attic?*

*Q. Have you always wondered whether that lamp of Aunt Sally is a Tiffany?*

*Q. What is that blue and white bowl you bought at the garage sale really worth?*

*A. Come to the Atwood House Museum's annual Antiques Appraisal Day, Saturday, June 2, 10 am – 1. Well-known antique appraiser Keith Klinger will be on hand to give you the answers and provide advice on what's collectable right now. Fee is \$5 per item!*

# OUR WONDERFUL FLAGS

*Flags seem to proliferate around Memorial Day and the July Fourth holidays. Here are flags we wave proudly!*

Among the recent activities of the Costume and Textile Committee has been cataloguing and packing our flag collection in archival tissue and boxes.

Amid a small collection of other flags, we are fortunate to have a much larger collection of American flags reflecting our nation's and Chatham's maritime history. Here are some of our more interesting American flags:

## 13 Stars

Although 13 stars were adopted in 1790, this flag dates from 1860. Made of cotton, it was used



on the schooner Alice H. Belden, Elnathan Mayo, Master. Another note says this flag was flown on July 4th in the late 1800's by Mrs. William Nickerson. It is handmade, each stitch carefully arranged in rows. Mrs. Nickerson recalled her father, Captain Elnathan Mayo, also flew it on his ship, the Fannie Hazard, engaged in coastal trade in the 1860s.

Also in our collection is another 13-star flag, flown by John Atwood during the siege of Richmond VA, near the end of the

Civil War, or as is noted on records, "The Rebellion."

## 32 Stars

Later modified to become 34 stars, this early 37 inch x 78 inch flag, circa 1858, given by the late Mrs. John A. (Phyllis) Mason, had two stars added by cutting holes and hand sewing a star in each. This alteration was probably to reflect the addition of Kansas in 1861 and West Virginia in 1863 to the Union.

## 34 Stars

A hand-sewn United States flag, flown on the S. S. San Salvador during the Civil War. This steamship was a transport commanded by Captain Joshua Atkins. The flag was flown from the masthead of the S.S. San Salvador when it was stationed not far from the battle between the Monitor and Merrimac.

## 44 Stars

One of our larger flags, 114 inches x 156 inches in size, marked "F. Hopkins" on the border. Wyoming was the 44th state, admitted in July 1890.

## 45 Stars

A bit larger at 108 inches x 190 inches, bearing "U. S. Ensign #4 Navy Yard, New York, 1906" on the border. Utah was the 45th state, admitted in January 1896.

## 48 Stars

The United States consisted of 48 states from 1912, when the



Arizona Territory was admitted to the Union in February 1912, until Alaska in 1959. A 48-star flag is shown above.

## 49 Stars

This star was added to commemorate Alaska's admission in January 1959. This is a rare flag,



shown above, since there were only eight months until Hawaii entered the Union.

## 50 Stars

The last star to the flag marked the inclusion of Hawaii into the Union in August 1959.

The Chatham Historical Society now proudly flies its 50-star U. S. flag at the Atwood House Museum complex when it is open from June to October.

— Eleanor G. Oakley



## Chatham and The Naval Air Station 1917-1922 “A Flight Into History”

Change comes in many ways, sometimes moving at a turtle's pace, other times taking off like a jet. Chatham – and the rest of the country – saw enormous change in the years from 1917 to 1922. Traditional ways and modern technology clashed as World War I used both to win the war. Chatham had a front row seat.

While Europe was engaged in a horrific, ever broadening war, the United States used the Atlantic as a shield. By 1917, however, there was no place to hide, the enemy came after us and the United States Congress declared war. Chatham's position on the East Coast provided an ideal location for one of the Naval Air Stations the government built almost overnight to protect the Atlantic coast!

Where fisherman had dug for clams on Pleasant Bay, heavy equipment and machinery carved out a base for dirigibles and seaplanes. Fifty buildings were constructed to house planes, sea sleds, blimps and over 300 servicemen. WCC, the Marconi Radio Station, was nationalized for the duration.

Main Street echoed with wagons carrying servicemen and damaged weather balloons or

crashed planes back to camp. The railroad depot received war material instead of trunks, welcomed aviators and mechanics instead of vacationing families.

*A blimp over the Chatham Naval Air Station circa 1919 looking southwest toward Nickerson's Neck.*



Rationing of sugar and other necessities was announced, daylight saving was initiated to allow more time for work, Victory Gardens were encouraged. America was at war and Chatham was the home front!

Townpeople encountered so many changes. Not only were there new faces and factors to meet, maneuvers and air patrols put them in the middle of the war effort. A U-boat tried to sink

several barges off Orleans and planes from the Chatham Naval Air Station flew to the rescue.

Propaganda on a scale never seen before – primarily in the form of posters [see page 6], music, movies and newspapers – focused having Americans support the war effort by enlisting in the armed service or support relief agencies, buying war bonds, knitting socks for the troops, joining the war effort.

Then almost as suddenly as the war began, it was over. But as the song questions, “How ya gonna keep ‘em down on the farm after they’ve seen Patee.” Americans had stepped forward to help Europe and emerged with a new sense of their position in the world.

But as troops came home they brought not only the glory of winning but the deadly flu virus. In reaction, many troops were kept at U.S. bases to prevent further spread of the disease. The Naval Air Station didn't close until 1922.

The success of the air war illustrated the commercial potential of aviation. Many local

*Continued on page 6*

## Chatham and The Naval Air Station 1917-1922 A Flight Into History

*Continued from page 5*

airlines were formed throughout the U.S. and Europe.

In 1919, *The London Daily Mail* announced a \$25,000 prize for the first plane to cross the Atlantic. At war's end, the U.S. Navy, left with four cutting-edge flying boats ready to be commissioned, ordered crews to ready them to attempt the feat.

On May 8, 1919, three NC-type flying boats took off from Rockaway NY to fly to Portugal, with a stopover at the Azores. As the NC-4 took off on its first leg of the flight, it encountered engine trouble off Cape Cod. That necessitated a water landing and its crew taxied the plane to the Chatham Naval Air .

There it was repaired with the help of a town resident

named George Goodspeed. Six days later it took off to join the other two planes in the flight. The NC-4, however, was the only plane to reach its destination to become the "first across."

Meanwhile Chatham began to return to a peace-time mode. But, the genie had been let out of the bottle and progressive ideas were sweeping the country.

In 1922 women were granted the vote. Some Chatham women also found romance and husbands among the military serving at the Naval Air Station resulting in an influx of new people and families.



*Sailors from the Chatham Naval Air Station lining up on Main Street in front of the Brick Building in 1919.*

When *A Flight Into History: Chatham and the Naval Air Station 1917 – 1922* opens June 9, you'll see and hear from the people who made history during this pivotal time in Chatham's story.

Aviation fans will enjoy the naval air station portion of the exhibit, history buffs will love the songs, movies, toys, fads, newsreels and photographs of the times. -- JMD

## Posters of the World War I Period

*One of the key propaganda elements employed during the war*







## *Dates to Remember . . .*

***May is National Preservation Month in Chatham  
Participate in some of the exciting events planned!***

**M**ay has been proclaimed National Preservation Month by Chatham's Selectmen and five homeowners and the Town of Chatham are being honored for their interest in preserving antique homes and buildings. Several events are planned so residents can learn more about preservation.

**April 28 at 10 am.** A Public Forum: *Taming the Teardown Trend* at the Eldredge Public Library. Q & A period. Slides from "A Sense of Place." Admission free.

**May 12 from 2 to 4 pm.** The Chatham Garden Club is sponsoring a House Tour of Preservation Award winning houses. Tickets are \$10. Museum's Atwood House and shop open from 1 to 5 pm. Tickets available at Museum Shop.

**May 19 at 2 pm.** *Streetscape of Stage Harbor Road*, a lecture and slideshow by Mary Ann Gray, society archivist. At the Atwood House Museum. Admission free.

**May 20 at 10 am.** Walking Tour: *Discover the Old Village*. Limited to 20 people. Make reservations by calling 508-945-1627 or email <clamknife@comcast.net>.

**May 21 at 4 pm.** Holly Herbster of Public Archaeology Labs, presentation and lecture on *The Heritage of Chatham through Archaeology*. Town Hall. Admission free.

### ***Wednesday, June 20***

#### ***Glen Magna Farms, Danvers***

**T**he final spring bus trip is to Danvers. We will spend from 10 to 1 pm at Glen Magna Farms, a property of the Danvers Historical Society. This fine example of North Shore Living is one of the finest examples of North Shore summer living in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The gardens at Glen Magna are especially noteworthy, recognized by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. In 1893, owner Ellen Peabody Endicott began an exemplary expansion of the house and gardens. She received the Hunnewell Gold Medal in 1926, from Massachusetts Horticultural Society in recognition of the excellence of the gardens.



*Glen Magna Farms*

We will enjoy a box lunch at Glen Magna, included in the \$55 cost of the trip, after which we will visit the Rebecca Nurse Home, famous from Salem Witch Trials.

Bus leaves Chatham at 7:30am, arriving back in Chatham about 5 pm. Reservation deadline: June 10. — SG

Wendy Stuart Wade Costello  
1951—2007

Secretary of the Chatham Historical Society

"Her legacy will speak for itself"

### WANT ADS Personnel

**Wanted:** Individuals who would like to assist in scanning some of the original documents in the archival collection on Tuesdays or Thursdays. Minimal computer experience is helpful, but we will be happy to train willing workers. Please contact Margaret Martin at 945-2493, Monday through Friday, 9 am to 1 pm.

**Writers Wanted:** Individuals who find research and writing brochures for our visitors something they would like to try. Some writing experience helpful, but coaching will be gladly given. Hours your own. Computer is necessary and internet capabilities greatly assist delivery of material. If you are interested, please E-mail <adalco@comcast.net>

**Handy Person Wanted:** Do you like to work around the house, are familiar with "honey do lists," then you may be able to help around the museum. Some jobs include moving shelves for a display, touching up some chipped woodwork. Please leave your name with Margaret Martin, 508-945-2493, and a number where you can be reached.

### Objects

**Cat Boat Model Wanted:** The Fishing Gallery still needs a quality wooden ship model of a Cat Boat. Scale desired is 1-inch equals 1-foot. If you have such an object and would like to donate it to the museum, please E-mail Reggie Nickerson at the society <chathamhistoricalsociety@verizon.net> for consideration.

**First Night Buttons:** For an exhibit planned for December on Chatham's Holiday Traditions, we need the first First Night button and several other years. Also any other items about First Night. On loan or for donation. Please call Florine Myers at 508-945-2493, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 to 12 noon with details.

### *Our 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.*

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On the Web: [www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org)

## Mark Your Calendars

Coming up at The Chatham Historical Society & Atwood House Museum

**Sunday, May 27, 2007 at 2 pm**

**Afternoons at the Atwood —Free Lecture Series**

**David Crocker: "The NC-4: Flight Into History"**

The who, what, where and how of the first Trans-Atlantic flight, which included its brief stopover at Chatham.

**Saturday, June 2, 2007 at 1 pm**

**Antiques Appraisal Day — \$5 per item**

Appraiser Keith Klinger will examine your collectibles, provide information and value in an "Antique Road Show" style.

**Saturday, June 9, 2007 from 10 am to 4 pm**

**Museum Season Opening** —Open House with refreshments, entertainment and activities for all ages, 10 am to 4 pm.

Preview *A Flight Into History: Chatham and the Naval Air Station 1917—1922!*

**Wednesday, June 20, 2007 from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm**

**Bus Trips to History — \$55 includes box lunch**

Glen Magna Farms & Rebecca Nurse Homestead  
See page 7 for details



Photo courtesy of David Crocker

**2007 Special Exhibit**  
***A Flight Into History: Chatham and the Naval Air Station 1917—1922!***