

*Welcome to the New Millennium!*



**Newsletter of the Old Village Association of Chatham, Massachusetts**

Volume III

Issue I

Winter, 2000

## *The Chatham Alliance Up and Ready for Year Two*

The Chatham Alliance, composed of nine nonprofit Chatham organizations, is celebrating the conclusion of its first year. During that time, the Alliance supported the Land Bank and the purchase of the MCI property, and individual Alliance members joined with the Old Village Association in objecting to the Main Street Reconstruction Plan. Guest speakers at Steering Committee meetings included: Paul Parker of the Hook Fisherman's Association; Dick Batchelder from the Open Space Committee; Dr. Robert Duncanson, the Director of the Town Laboratory; and Bill Hinchey, Town Manager. Representatives of the Merchants Association attended several meetings to discuss overdevelopment on Main Street.

This November, the Co-Chairmanship of the Steering Committee passed from Carol Pacun of the Old Village Association and Kurt Hellfach of the Friends of Chatham Waterways, to Spencer Grey of the Chatham Historical Society and Phyllis Freeman of the Friends of the Eldredge Public Library.

In its second year, the Alliance will be concentrating on development issues; in particular, how overdevelopment will affect Chatham's economy, aesthetics, and ecology – with an emphasis on drinking water and wastewater management. The Alliance will be holding informational public meetings, with guest speakers, the second Thursday of each month at the Eldredge Public Library. On January 13th at 2:30 pm, Paul Kelley, who is a member of the Board of Health, will discuss the Board's role in managing Chatham's growth from the point of view of public safety. On February 10th, Mike Pessolano, the former Harwich Town Planner, will analyze Chatham's zoning bylaws and discuss possible changes which could help Chatham preserve its historic properties and its natural resources. The Old Village Association *urges you to attend these roundtable discussions!*

## **Old Village Survey to be Updated and Expanded** Homeowners' Help Needed

All Old Village homeowners whose properties were surveyed in 1990-1991 by the Chatham Historical Commission will receive a copy of the completed survey forms of their houses in order to make absolutely certain that the information is correct. The Association is asking that everyone read through these descriptions and make corrections or additions as necessary.

Up-to-date and accurate information is vitally important. These surveys will be retyped onto new forms which will then be compiled with the surveys in progress to create a complete record of Old Village assets. This document will not only provide the basis of the National Register application but also will be printed as a research document for use by future historians. It will be distributed to the Eldredge Public Library, the Chatham Historical Society, and any other interested organization on the Cape. The document will also serve as a basis for a new expanded Walking Guide.

Please read the survey carefully. If we do not get a response, we will assume the document is correct.

## **Snow Fences at Andrew Hardings Lane**

Ted Keon, Director of Coastal Resources, arranged for snow fencing to be put on the beach from Andrew Hardings Lane to Holway Street. Richard Perry, who owns a good part of the beach, said that the purpose of the fences is to keep the sand on the beach and out of the wetlands as well as to prevent flooding west of the beach. During this past summer, the sand migrated into the wetlands and even into the backyards of some Holway Street residences. Beach grass has been planted to further stabilize the sand. According to Ted Keon, the fences seem to be doing their job, although the real test will come when Chatham has a storm accompanied by winds from the southeast.

Hi, I'm Bob Walsh. Although many members of the Old Village Association already know me because I have lived in the Village most of my life, I thought I should introduce myself properly, as I was elected Co-President of the Old Village Association at our Annual Meeting in August.

I live at 61 School Street, across from the head of Sunset Lane. My grandparents purchased the house in the late 1930's as a retirement home. Some of the older Village residents may remember my grandfather, Bob Gay, also known as "Doctor" or "Professor" Gay. When I was young, my family summered here, which probably did not tickle Grampa pink, but it got us out of New York City for part of the year.

In my high school years I was lucky enough to work three summers for Arthur Gould at Andrew Hardings Lane beach. What a job! Getting paid to mess around in boats and to hang out at the beach! Though Art made sure I had plenty of hard work to do, I thought it was the best job a kid could have. I saw and appreciated a bikini for the first time there!

Later, in 1962, I left college and moved to the Cape full time. A varied

## From Our New Co-President

(okay, "checkered") career started at Oyster River, where I worked at Des Eldredge's oyster shanty. Later I worked for Cultured Clam in Dennis, buying and selling shellfish and eventually working for two years in their shellfish hatchery. From there, I became a fulltime shellfisherman. In 1971, a partner and I leased Mill Pond Boat Yard from Spaulding Dunbar (it's now run by the Pease brothers). There I built and repaired boats until 1980. After that I became a commercial fisherman for a number of years until my poor aching body indicated it was time to give up manual labor. I have worked the last dozen years as a computer programmer.

My home was built about 1830, but no one is sure where. There are, of course, scanty records concerning it. My grandfather believed the house was moved to its current location from perhaps a lower location east of Main Street or from Monomoy or even Nantucket. The house is obviously built on the classic half-Cape model, but with higher walls. Unlike most Capes, the eaves of mine do not nestle just over the windows. My grandfather attributed the additional height to the influence of the taller, Greek Revival style, but who knows? The owner probably just needed more room upstairs.

My grandparents made a number of changes to the house. The little "hen coop" jutting off the front of the house was my grandmother's solution to the lack of closet space in old homes. The old entry is now a bathroom, its staircase long gone. The old, very steep back stair was reversed in direction and built with short risers to accommodate my then aged great-grandmother. The

unfinished rooms upstairs were turned into two bedrooms and a bathroom with a steeply slanting ceiling.

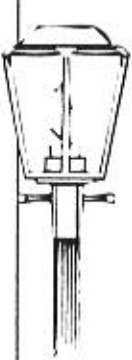
My interests today, besides making a living, are very much into historic preservation and environmental conservation. The Old Village faces some serious challenges in the not too distant future. Thanks largely to the efforts of Carol Pacun, Nancy Yeaw, and David Veach, we are no longer threatened by the Main Street Reconstruction Project, and thanks to all the members of the OVA, the work to place the Village on the National Register is going forward.

Soon, we will have to make some difficult and probably expensive decisions about sewage disposal and the pollution and eutrophication of the Town's salt water embayments, the Big and Little Mill Ponds in particular. We are going to hear a lot about Critical Nitrogen Loads and methods to reduce the amount of nitrogen

entering the embayments. Related issues may involve severely limiting the number of bedrooms that may be built on a given area of land. If a measure to reduce bedrooms per acre is adopted, that may be good news for the Village, perhaps limiting the number of older homes destroyed to build large trophy homes. The nitrogen problem will likely boil down to whether we want healthy embayments full of fish and shellfish, or whether we want to let them go and save money. (See *Wastewater Management Basics*, page 4)

In future columns, I will keep you posted on the issues the Village must address, and I will probably toss in a few anecdotes that I hope you will find interesting.

Bob Walsh



*The Old Village  
is a jewel in  
the crown of  
Cape Cod's  
historic  
resources.*

— Candice Jenkins  
*Consultant in  
Historic Preservation*

# Architect's Corner

Theodore P. (Sam) Streibert

## Old Chatham Village Architecture

As a residential architect, occasionally I have the opportunity to help people with an old house that has deteriorated and suffered from deferred or no maintenance. Sometimes the owners feel that a coat of paint, a new kitchen, and new bathrooms will do the trick. Many times it will. However, more serious problems may exist like outdated utilities, sagging floors, or a chopped up room layout.

These old houses usually have a lot of charm. Many have well proportioned front entries and doors that fit with the house, the front yard, and the street as well as all the other houses on the street. They are part of a neighborhood that is human scaled. The interior has antique mantles, unique stair rails and balusters, prominent window and door mouldings, and wide floor boards.

What to do first? If the roof leaks or the wind blows in where trim has rotted out, or the bricks in the crawl space have collapsed, these problems have to be fixed first to stop damage within. Any structural damage might require temporary support. After the planning for the house is completed, more permanent repairs can be specified and included with the work.

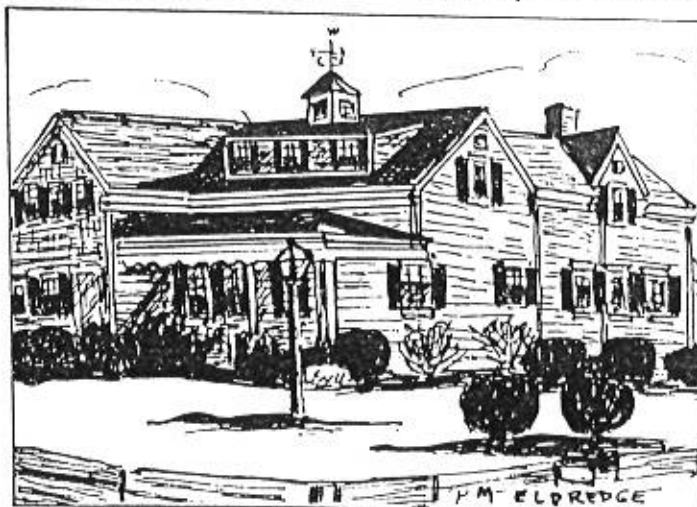
The house must be considered as a whole: the planning would take into account how the house is to be used, the family patterns of living, and the need for formal spaces for entertaining and special holiday gatherings. Walls can be removed so that spaces flow into each other. Doors and windows can be added to the exterior walls to bring in a sense of light and air. The

changes must be in proportion to the whole, and all detail elements should be like those in the rest of the house.

These plans can be combined with the reinforcement of foundation and house frame, the incorporation of modern utilities, and the reuse of preserved and restored elements of historical value. Working on one of these parts leads to problems with others, but as the plans coalesce all these parts should begin to fall in place.

Often two problems are overlooked until late: the septic system and the basement. A new septic system is considered as essential as any new appliance would be to a new kitchen. An updated system assures the future value of the house and satisfies an obligation to protect our drinking water. Often older houses benefit from a new basement in many ways. The wood structure of the first floor can be reinforced and leveled. The perimeter sills upon which the walls bear can be replaced with wood that will not rot. If the house is lifted a bit, the wood will end up above the wet leaves and earth. The basement will provide needed storage and will allow electricians and plumbers to easily install new outlets, new water and sewer pipes, and new insulated heating ducts or pipes. New basements today can be dry and warm and all other work can be completed more easily and quickly.

Restoration of an old house is extremely satisfying. It is a gift to ourselves and to our neighbors. Often it takes a great deal of effort, patience, and money. These seem to be required to make any dream come true.



Salt Acres, from *Chatham's Old Houses* (1966),  
copied with the permission of the Chatham Historical Society, Inc.

# Wastewater Management Basics

*A Conversation with David MacAdam*



In 1997 the Selectmen appointed a Wastewater Management Study Committee to oversee and keep the public informed about the planned study of Chatham's wastewater issues, which would include analysis of present conditions as well as recommendations for the future. Each section of Chatham has a representative on the Committee. David MacAdam is the Old Village representative.

Wastewater management is perhaps the most important and the most technical issue facing the Old Village now – and in the future. We asked David to explain the very basics of the issue in laymen's terms so all of us can keep up with the process and sift through the data to find good solutions.

## *What is the purpose of the study?*

The purpose is to provide a comprehensive strategy for wastewater treatment and disposal issues for the next 20 years. The study is intended to be consistent with the Town's Growth Policy Plan developed in 1988 and the Local Comprehensive Plan, which is currently being prepared.

## *What is the goal of the study?*

To protect Chatham's natural resources now and in the future.

## *Why is Chatham doing this study now?*

Chatham has been directed in an Administrative Consent order agreed to by the Town and the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection to conduct the study and implement the recommendations of the plan.

## *Who is in charge of the study?*

The driving force in the study is the Technical Advisory Committee, made up of several key Town department heads, and the Citizens' Advisory Committee, comprised of broad representation from the Town. Stearns and Wheeler, the consultants, serve these two groups and do the lion's share of the grunt work.

## *What does the study involve?*

The study itself is comprised of three phases. The first, the Needs Assessment Report, was completed in late August. Required hearings before various regulatory bodies on that report are now complete. The committees and consultants are now at work on the second phase, the Alternative Screening Analysis, where alternatives to remedy wastewater problems will be developed and evaluated for overall feasibility. The final phase of the study will consist of detailed cost evaluations and a recommended plan of action. All this will then be followed by a Town Meeting to fund the recommendations and the implementation plan.

## *What is the timetable?*

The timetable has us completing phase two (Alternative Screening Analysis) early in the winter and phase three (Cost Estimates and Impact Analysis) early in the spring. I have heard talk of a Town Meeting sometime next fall, with implementation following, spread out over several years. But the original timetable has slipped one year already. My sense is that it is slipping further – by how much, I cannot say.

## *The initial report lists Little Mill Pond as an "area of concern." Why?*

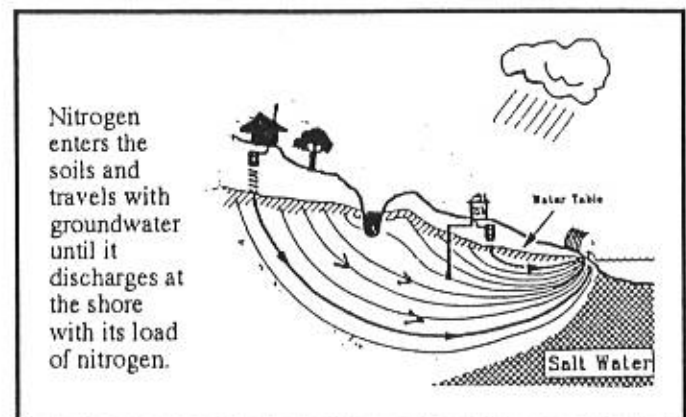
Little Mill Pond, along with 5 other embayments, is an area of concern because it is (or will be) impacted by excessive nitrogen loading. The term being used for this condition is "eutrophic."

## *Before we continue, perhaps you can clarify the vocabulary of wastewater. First, what exactly is an embayment?*

Being new to this field, I've had to struggle with that one too. After listening to the term bandied about for six months, I would say it's pretty much synonymous with bays and ponds (in particular tidal bays and ponds).

## *And nitrogen – as in nitrogen loading?*

Again, I'm not a chemist. However, nitrogen, as with any chemical, exists in several forms. As a gas it is the primary component of the air we breath and is basically harmless. But it does promote growth. That is why it is the primary ingredient in fertilizer – and the primary ingredient in waste products. Unfortunately, our septic systems function as ubiquitous fertilizer plants for surrounding ponds and bays as the nitrogen seeps into the soil and flows down toward our embayments. The trick is to return nitrogen in waste to the



air as a gas directly rather than first passing it through our waters. Our municipal sewage plant does this, but it treats only a very small portion of the sewage generated in Town.

### *And, finally, what does “eutrophic” mean?*

The word “eutrophic” comes from two Greek words meaning “well nourished.” The enrichment of water with nutrients (including nitrogen) is a naturally occurring biological process scientists call eutrophication. This enrichment leads to increasing fertility of the water which in turn gives rise to an ever increasing growth of aquatic organisms. In the case of salt water, nitrogen is the one that powers runaway algae growth. Natural flushing of the water body prevents or at least delays this process as long as the amounts entering the water body are small. When they are not, algae takes over, dissolved oxygen in the water necessary to sustain life disappears, and the water body “dies.”

When an excess of nitrogen pushes the water body over the brink, it is said to be “eutrophic” and that body of water is on the road to becoming a swamp. In review, eutrophication is under normal circumstances a natural process which goes on over thousands of years. However, what we have seen recently in Chatham – and especially in Little Mill Pond – is an enormous increase in conditions that have hastened this process.

### *How did Little Mill Pond get into this mess?*

This one is easy to answer – runaway development in Town over the last 20 to 30 years. Title V septic systems were designed to eliminate the health hazards of raw sewage, but not the primary byproduct, nitrogen, which enters the ground through leaching fields all over Town and gradually migrates down to surrounding water bodies. The position of Little Mill Pond, where flushing is inadequate, especially during the summer, makes it particularly vulnerable to excessive nitrogen buildups.

### *What about Mill Pond and Stage Harbor?*

The entire Stage Harbor system has received rather close study this past year, thanks to the combined efforts of the Friends of Chatham Waterways and the Chatham Water Quality Laboratory. This is the first comprehensive, long term sampling and testing that has occurred in Chatham waterways. The results were not available in time to be included in the Needs Assessment Study. When they became available in a preliminary form, they seemed to confirm the fears of many that several parts of the Stage Harbor system were worse than generally acknowledged. However, water quality is a new and difficult science – and the confirmation of these results could take up to five years.

Having said this, I must emphasize that I am not advocating doing nothing but water testing – or getting bogged down in technical data – for five years! Both the evidence and common

sense tell us that the Stage Harbor complex is threatened and that threat must be addressed as quickly as possible. If we wait, we may not be able to repair the damage. The best strategy is to act early on the basis of preliminary data and trends – and plain common sense.



### *What about our own safety – can we swim in or eat shellfish from these areas?*

There are no dangers to humans, as far as anyone knows. However, an excess of nitrogen in these areas are bound to weaken and eventually kill shellfish. Unlike fish, shellfish can't swim away when their environment deteriorates.

### *What about our drinking water?*

Chatham's well fields are in the northwest portion of Town away from the densely populated downtown and shore. They are presently out of harm's way. This situation could change if building continues at present rates and that is something the committee will be looking into.



### *If we ignore the problem, what will happen in the future?*

Excess nitrogen is bound to hasten the process of eutrophication, especially if the climate continues to warm. This will lead in turn to the production and release of hydrogen sulfide odors (rotten egg odors) from bottom sediments. Aquatic life (including clams and oysters) will die out or avoid the area. For a time the pond or bay will look pretty much as formerly. It will continue to be popular for boating, but increasingly less so for swimming. Gradually the pond or bay will deteriorate beyond where it is suitable even for boating. Of course, as the pond or bay loses its recreational value, nearby property will lose its monetary value.

### *The finished study is far from complete. What should the Town be doing now to stop further damage?*

The most important things to be done by the citizenry right now is to get and stay informed on wastewater issues. If you want to do something individually, a good place to start is reducing or eliminating the use of lawn fertilizers and cleaning up after your dog.

However, the only viable present solution – and the only affordable one – is a moratorium on new construction or any construction resulting in new bedrooms. Everyone who wants Little Mill Pond and Mill Pond to continue to be viable waterways should support a moratorium when one is forthcoming.

*Note: David MacAdam is presently in California. In his absence, Bob Walsh will be attending CAC meetings. He welcomes your questions or comments. Barbara Waters is giving a seminar on these issues at the Eldredge Public Library starting in February.*

## Along Main Street

### Another Hawes House “Gang” Member Signs In

“I am so lucky to have so many wonderful memories of the Hawes House, Chatham. When I was a kid it seemed like we were always moving and I was the “new kid.” However, each summer I went back to Cape Cod (as a guest and later as a waitress). The same people were there, the same rooms, the same beach – it was constant. We all knew each other and seemed like we had never left. And such fun! Wonderful times on the beach, catching my first fish (a baby shark), walking to the movies and later a cone at Howard Johnson’s (now the park between Fleet bank and Getty gas station on the rotary), Friday night band concerts in town, browsing the stores on rainy days and getting free samples at the candy store, Fourth of July parades and fireworks, (Freeman’s) homemade ice cream every Sunday, swimming to the “far bar” (South beach) and feeling fantastic, playing tricks on Uncle Walter Husted (Nancy’s father), sneaking in the haunted house (Good Walter’s for those who remember).

It was also during those summers that I probably developed my love of nature. I spent hours beachcombing and watching or collecting creatures, seaweed, bugs, birds, and fish. Half the time I was in or under the water. One night walk, my footprints were luminescent from organisms in the sand. The stars were the brightest anywhere.

It was also a much “gentler” time. Our grandparents let us loose with the other kids as soon as we arrived. There were no warnings about strangers or dangerous adults. We walked back from the movies without a care. Our beach parties were filled with folk songs, corn on the cob, watermelon, and soda pop.

So these memories are priceless of a time that’s gone but happily remembered.

*Peggy (Lavern) Kochanoff  
Guest and Waitress*

### The Calico Cat



One of the reasons we treasure the Old Village neighborhood is that it doesn’t feel like the suburbs. We don’t have plain vanilla cookie cutter houses and we still have a few businesses to spice up the mix, like several historic inns, a boatyard specializing in wooden boats, and the Calico Cat, a delectably different sort of gift shop.

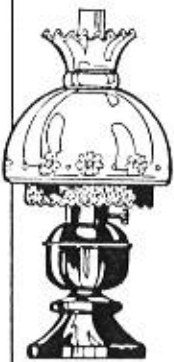
Do you want an original baby gift? There are hand-knit baby sweaters. How about a Chatham antique? There are framed, enlarged postcards depicting the twin lights, the Mill Pond and Main Street, as well as Joseph C. Lincoln books. And you can still buy the original balsam calico cats – favorites of children and adults alike.

Back when I was still a summer transient, I had a pleasant little routine on my first morning here. There was no food in the house, so it was a good excuse to walk to Port Fortune for breakfast. (Alas, no longer possible.) Afterward, I would stop in to chat with Mrs. Zaremba, the owner of the Calico Cat. Had Mr. A. actually sold his house? Those are new Bennington mugs this year. An antique copper wash basin? Perfect for my firewood. A mix of timely local gossip and a little shop talk – the best way to start my day, as well as my summer.

Most of us (those who have done their homework) are familiar with the history of the Calico Cat. I particularly relish the idea of ships coming into the Water Street port with bolts of calico for Halletts, as the dry goods store was called back in 1840. Today, the store still has the original shelves, built to accommodate the round bolts of fabric, as well as the original windows. Antedating the Gothic Revival store was the Smith House, a simple half Cape built around 1800. The original walls have no studs and are filled with oyster shells and horsehair.

The Zarembas came here from Vermont, where they had apple orchards on Lake Champlain, in 1967. They acquired the store and began to work their way into the contents, which included many bolts of calico material. Mrs. Zaremba made childrens’ dresses and bonnets, as well as aprons, from the calico. The late Ted Zaremba made wooden objects, and several years later their daughter, Diane, began knitting sweaters for the shop. Today, there is no more calico, but Mrs. Zaremba’s son, Bob, buys antiques for the store. He has also recently published an antique postcard book with many views of the Old Village which will undoubtedly be available next summer at the Calico Cat.

*Eleanor Gelsey*



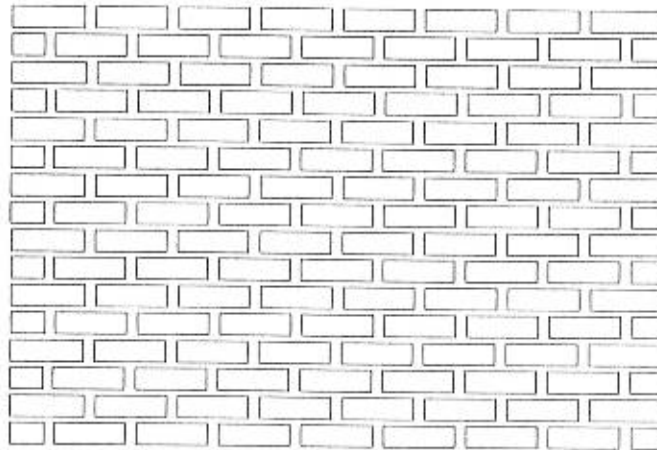
# Renovating?

## *How about a New Foundation for that Old House . . .*

**D**amp ocean breezes are notorious for invading old Cape Cod houses and settling in, unwanted, through even the driest summer months. However, there is a way to dry out: get a basement.

This solution is particularly appropriate for those who are planning a major restoration and renovation of an historic home. A firm foundation can be the first suggestion a contractor on a project makes to a client, according to Bill Ellis of B & B Houselifting, one of the house-moving businesses on the Cape. The benefits are many; the house is easier to rewire and heat, the mustiness disappears, sagging chimneys can be supported, and the typical settling problems inherent in houses "of a certain age" can be effectively solved. Increased safety is another positive result. Bill said that when he starts working on some homes, the present pipes and wires literally fall apart when the sand around them is removed.

Surprisingly, the process of adding a foundation to an old house is not that complicated. First, the house is supported on steel beams and lifted off the ground to a height above where the new foundation will rest. At that point, the workers go beneath the house and dig out a suitable hole (which does not necessarily involve the whole structure), pour a concrete basement, and set the house back down. Chatham's sandy soil actually facilitates the digging process.



Of course, there can be problems, particularly if the lot is small, but B & B has almost always been able to deal with them. The major concern is the damage time has done to the beams supporting the house, but old-time builders tended to use hard woods, which have proven to be amazingly resistant to rot and insect invasions. Of equal concern are the decidedly nonprofessional repairs which were attempted over the years to deal with problems, such as leaks or sagging walls. When put on a level foundation, structures which were tinkered with are more vulnerable to wall cracks than houses allowed to "settle in" on their own.

However, Bill says most people who use his services are planning major interior renovations as well, so repairs can be dealt with as part of the

restoration work. All these variables make it impossible to give any hard price for houselifting, but Bill Ellis said most jobs (which include basement, windows, and bulkhead) range between \$30,000 to \$50,000 and take about six weeks to two months to complete.

B & B has done work in the Old Village on some of our oldest homes. 35 Sunset Lane, 415 Main Street, 78 Silverleaf Avenue,

and 63 Water Street are examples of what can be done. Actually, passersby would be hard pressed to identify those homes which have been given new foundations – which is exactly the point. Sometimes what can't be seen is the most important part of a restoration project.

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The Old Village Association, Inc.  
Box 188  
Chatham, MA 02633

## WANTED: Old Village Association Members!

The Association's dues envelope is enclosed in this issue of the Newsletter. The Board appreciates the continuing support of its members and relies on dues and donations to keep members informed about Old Village activities, to continue work on the survey, and to begin the application process for the National Register application.

The Old Village Association is a tiny organization with tiny dues – the cheapest in Town! – but it packs a wallop on the preservation front! Members get a real “bang for the buck” – Association Directors are ready to serve 365 days a year. Where else are questions and complaints answered in person on an ASAP basis? The Association helps its members the old fashioned way: it works for them.

Start the new millennium by renewing your membership today. Thank you.



## Of Addresses and Such...

We need help! Much to our embarrassment, some of our material never reaches our members. If you haven't received all our mailings, if you have moved, or – most important – if you have a post office box, **please let us know**. You should be aware that we send everything to your winter address, except for the invitation to our Annual Meeting, which is sent to you in Chatham (under the theory that you won't be coming if you're not here). The Post Office returned several undeliverable invitations to our August meeting to us in October (!), when it was too late to send you another. Next year, we will again announce the meeting in our Spring Newsletter. If you don't hear from us during the summer, please give us a call. The meeting is **always** in August.

The Association's **most important job** is keeping you up-to-date on Old Village matters. We want everyone to receive everything.

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## Old Village Association, Inc.

*Co-Presidents* Carol Pacun, Robert Walsh  
*Vice-President* Elinor Gelsey  
*Treasurer* Richard Towne  
*Clerk* Ann O'Connell

*Directors* Sally Daniel  
Kathleen Earnshaw  
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David MacAdam  
Ann O'Connell  
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Richard Towne  
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