



Volume III

Issue III

Winter, 2000

## We've Finished!

### National Register District Nomination Sent to Mass. Historical Commission for Review

In the middle of October, the Old Village's nomination papers for listing on the National Register of Historic Places were delivered to the offices of Massachusetts Historical Commission. Accompanying the application, a hefty 73 pages long, were 99 survey forms, which bring to completion the inventory of all Old Village properties.

This mass of paper represents hours and hours of hard work – especially from Candace Jenkins, who wrote the application. The Old Village Association is also grateful to Nancy Yeaw, other Chatham Historical Commission members and neighborhood volunteers, in particular Norm Pacun, for putting together the forms, checking the application and doing the necessary research for a complete, accurate – and, to this editor, incredibly interesting – document.

The Mass. Historical Commission will take several months to review the nomination. In all likelihood, the staff will have some corrections and suggestions, which will be sent back to the Association for review. After this is completed, the Association will send a letter to all those who own property in the proposed district giving the final details of the nomination, including the status of their property (“contributing” or “non-contributing”) with the hope that those who have objections, or find inaccuracies, will contact an Association board member immediately. Probably in August, the Massachusetts Historical Commission will invite all property owners to an informational meeting in Chatham on the nomination. Property owners will then have an opportunity to vote on the application by mail.

#### MEANWHILE, THE ASSOCIATION'S WORK CONTINUES – WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

The Board of the Old Village Association appreciates the overwhelming support property owners have shown for this nomination over the past year. However, due to the difficulty in keeping track of who owns what at any given point, we are

devoting the next 10 months to tracking down everyone in the District, including elusive new owners, absentee owners, and people on the move. We hope to have a continuing dialogue with as many people as possible about the issues involved in a National Register District and for that –

#### We Need – You!

All property owners, Old Village Association members or not, are urged to provide us with an accurate full-time address where their mail is guaranteed to be delivered.

### Replacement Telephone Poles for School Street

Barbara Hill of the engineering department at Verizon confirmed that the telephone company will be replacing four telephone poles on School Street in December or January. Three of the poles (3,4,5) are north of Sunset Lane; the last (7) is to the south. Hill said that Verizon will not be able to remove the old poles until electrical and cable wires are transferred. The Association will try to get those companies to do this work right after the new poles are in – and well before the summer!!

### Board of Health on Cutting Edge

On December 18th, at 7:30 pm, in the Annex, the Board of Health will hold a public hearing on revisions to the Town's Title V and Nitrogen-Loading Regulations. This session is a part of the Board's continuing study of wastewater issues which may impact the Old Village, including suggestions such as a possible moratorium on new building, new septic systems and/or the addition of new bedrooms. While the Board of Health had previously not noticed its agenda in the paper, this – and future – meetings will be listed in the Legal Notices section of the Chronicle. The Old Village Association has always been a strong advocate of public notice of all important meetings and is pleased that the Board has come forward to meet this standard. We encourage home owners to attend this meeting, or write to the Board, with questions or comments.

This Newsletter is "late" on purpose. (Yes, really!) The Board of the Association wanted a December edition so that our loyal members would be absolutely clear that the dues they send in are for the whole of 2001 – January to December. While we love to get double dues (from those of you who mistakenly send them twice a year), it is far more important to us to have you on board.

Of course, we can't exist without funds. We continue to urge you to give what you can beyond our tiny dues (the lowest in town) and are grateful beyond words to those who have made generous gifts. But The Old Village Association is really not "about the money!" It is about all of us getting together, creating a dialogue about the future of our neighborhood and speaking out, when necessary, on its behalf. In order for this to happen, we must have, along with money for postage, active, verbal, interested members.

2001 is set up to be a "doozie" of a year. The National Register District, of course. But the Association sees as its primary goal in 2001 to keep you informed and educated about wastewater issues. The entire western

## We the People of The Old Village...

edge of the Old Village (Mill Pond and Little Mill Pond) is one of the most "at risk" areas for nitrogen loading in all of Chatham. In the next months, the consultants will be making recommendations about what to do. The options could range from sewers for the entire area to shared "community" nitrogen reducing septic systems. We will be affected – even those of us with state-of-the-art Title V systems. The role of the Association, with your help, will be to (1) keep you informed, (2) try to help property owners with questions and concerns, (3) discover if there is a consensus among property owners and (4), if appropriate, be an advocate for the Old Village. In order to preserve the embayments and our enjoyment of our property, we must identify the solution that works for us. The only way to do that is to know the facts and keep abreast of what's going on. The Association is lucky to have David McAdam on the Citizens

Advisory Committee, with Bob Walsh as his alternate. The Association will also ask individuals with an interest in this issue to attend the meetings as observers on behalf of all of us.

I'd also like to say that we are the only organization in town that can, in one newsletter, meeting or conversation, move from serious issues, such as wastewater, to the pure joy of exchanging stories, remembering past "characters" and having a good laugh together. That brings us to our second goal for the year: an exploration of publishing an Old Village History using material from the National Register application as well as stories about the people who once lived in our wonderful historic houses. (For that, of course, we will have to search for "real" money!)

Thank you so much. We who try to find ways to preserve the spirit and character of the Old Village understand very clearly that the Old Village is YOU.

*Carol Pacun*

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## Wastewater Management Update

The Wastewater Management Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) met November 16 for the first time in three months. Despite the paucity of meetings, much work has been accomplished during this period. This work, performed by outside scientists and engineers under contract to the town, has been on three fronts:

- the tidal flushing study performed on all town embayments
- the water quality model for town embayments
- the biological water quality study being conducted at 14 stations in Chatham waterways.

All indications are that the results of these studies will soon be completed. A comprehensive folding together of these results will appear in a draft report due out mid-January, with a final report due a month later. All indications are that these deadlines will be met. This report should end the confusion that reigned a year ago with conflicting data and interpretations of degree of nitrogen loading of Chatham's embayments and its consequences. This report should answer definitely how much nitrogen needs to be moved from each of the town's watersheds. Sterns and Wheler, the Town's consulting engineers, will fold the results of the new

water quality modeling report into the phase 4 wastewater report due out in late spring of 2001. Since the phase 4 report will supercede previous reports, no revisions of earlier reports are planned. A number of public meetings are planned during the summer of 2001 to educate residents on viable solutions for each of the town's watersheds. Phase 5 will begin in the fall of 2001. There was discussion of the town's proposed septic system data base authorized by Town meeting a year ago, but now hung up in a debate over whether to include it in a larger data base building effort encompassing all town permitting activity. Finally, there was debate over whether or not new interim measures should be put in place by the Board of Health at this time. Some felt these were needed in light of what is already known about existing wastewater problems and current growth rates in the town. Others felt it more appropriate to await a more coherent and informed approach based upon what will be known once the phase 4 report is in next spring. Regular meetings of the CAC will be held the third Thursday of each month during the coming winter and spring.

*David McAdam, Old Village representative to the CAC*



Note: On November 14, 2000, Nancy Yeaw of the Chatham Historical Commission and Carol Pacun from The Old Village Association reported to the Selectmen on the progress of the application for the National Register and gave them an overview about the completed survey of properties, the NRD process, and the implications for the Town of such a District. We thought you might be interested in excerpts from the report.

## Excerpts from the Presentation to the Selectmen on the Proposed Old Village National Register District

Nancy Yeaw, Chatham Historical Commission  
*Why the Historical Commission supported and  
co-sponsored the application:*

### Eligibility

There is no question in our minds as to its eligibility.

It is a dense cluster of historic buildings, reflecting important aspects of Chatham's past history, and

it has an almost complete representation of the various architectural styles found here.

It's also picturesque and beautiful. The consultant we've been working with described it in the application as "the jewel in the crown of Cape Cod's historic resources."

In terms of eligibility, it was pretty much a no-brainer.

### Vulnerability

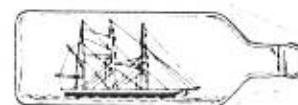
Partially because it is so beautiful and picturesque, we have become increasingly concerned about the accelerating rate of demolition and major alteration. At least eight Old Village houses have been demolished in the last five or six years, and frankly we worry every time we hear that a house in the area is on the market. We are afraid that Chatham could lose something precious, house by house. A National Register District highlights the historical significance of an area which might increase respect for its historic integrity, and it also provides some protection under the Cape Cod Commission Act.

### Local Support

It was clear that there was a great deal of support for this project among the local residents. The Old Village was offering volunteers to work on it and – critically important – MONEY to pay a consultant to prepare the application and the necessary architectural descriptions. That is a big commitment on their part and was a major consideration when we agreed to support them.

Carol Pacun, Old Village Association  
*Why is a National Register District important to  
the Old Village?*

If I were a preservation consultant, I would talk with you about the unique combination of 18th, 19th, and 20th century homes which are nestled together in the Village. I would try to communicate to you in terms of scale and appropriateness and balance – why, when all of us walk into the Old Village there is an immediate sense of being someplace special – someplace where everything seems to come together in harmony. But, in conclusion, what I'd like to emphasize is that, in the Old Village, each historic house is a place holder for Chatham's history, for its people and their stories. The historic houses of the Old Village tell us about our heritage, about the people – many of them fishermen and sea captains – who decided to settle here, to raise their families and create a life for themselves and their children. When the Long Range Planning Committee sent out their poll several years ago, a great majority of people said they wanted Chatham to retain the flavor of a small fishing village. Protecting Old Village homes from needless demolition and honoring its architecture plays an integral role in that goal.



Comments? Questions? Call or write:  
Box 188, Chatham 02633 (508) 945-1627

## **ERNIE BRIDGES SHARES CHATHAM MEMORIES BEFORE HEADING SOUTH**

*by Debbie Aikman, in collaboration with Richard Towne*

After more than six decades as a resident of Chatham Village, Ernie Bridges has sold his home at 66 Water Street and moved permanently to West Palm Beach, Florida. Ernie, who was born and raised in West Palm Beach, first came to Chatham in 1938 to be with his bride, Jean (Edwards) Bridges.

Ernie and Jean met when she was vacationing in Florida with her parents, Luther and Ina (Bearse) Edwards of Chatham. Ernie met his future wife at the restaurant where he worked evenings. (He was a self-admitted "beach bum" during the day.) They courted for a mere six weeks before secretly marrying at the Stuart, Florida Courthouse.

Jean's father Luther, who Ernie remembers with great fondness, invited Ernie to come live with the Edwards family at 66 Water Street. Ernie quit his job and drove 46 hours, arriving in the middle of the night at a place he'd never been before. To Ernie's surprise, Luther had caught on to his not-so-secret marriage to his daughter. (Luther, incidentally, was a retired builder and Ernie recalls that he built one of the houses on School Street.)

Ernie adjusted well to his new surroundings, accepting a job at the Acme Laundry and growing to love the cooler summer climate. He liked to fish for bass and flatfish in Pleasant Bay, bringing his catch up the steps at the foot of

Water Street. He recalls renting a boat from "Good" Walter, only to learn later that it wasn't Walter's boat to rent!



*66 Water Street*

Eventually, he bought his own boat – a Grand Banks dory – from lobsterman Joe Stapleton. It cost him ten dollars. All winter, he worked on his boat in a garage at 96 Water Street. His restoration included mounting an air-cooled engine that required the installation of a new shaft. Harold Claflin, the harbormaster, volunteered for the job. Ernie described how Harold

skillfully drilled through to the precise spot where the connections needed to be made. Travelling up to 8 miles per hour in his newly refurbished dory, Ernie caught an abundance of fish (with the help of his own handmade Burma cane surf rods.)

Eventually, Ernie and Jean became "snowbirds," and neighbors always looked forward to their spring arrival. Jean died in 1998 and Ernie went through much agonizing before finally deciding this year to sell his summer home. After closing in September, he returned to West Palm Beach where he now resides near his sister, Ernie's only surviving sibling.

We may see Ernie return next summer – Alton Gould has offered him a place to stay, and he might just take him up on it!

### *Christmas at the School Street School*

*This memory of Christmases past is from  
Charlotte Forgeron's article, "Memories of a Village School Girl" in the Fall, 1997 newsletter.*



Perhaps the most enduring and endearing memory of that first year in the village school was the day when our parents visited for a Christmas program. There were "recitations" and songs, with Mrs. Parish at the piano. I don't remember any exchange of gifts. I remember that Mrs. Parish stood behind the piano and I can see her still as she said, "This will be our last Christmas in this dear old school." I felt there were tears in her eyes and I wanted, in my childlike way, to go up and comfort her. We had a real Christmas tree in the classroom, with live lighted candles all over it. It was magic! (Concern for fire would not allow children this hazard today!)



# Christmas Past

by J. S. Stinson



That dear old place where we rediscover our childhood. Popcorn and maple taffy – evergreen and tinsel – holly and candles – sleds and snowflights – songs and shouts – roast goose and a bad cold. Here ones relatives become more mischievous than children, placing marbles in our soups or hickory nuts in the beds. Reliving the old days with their inconveniences – pumping water in a howling blizzard and struggling at the same time to keep ones feet on the sheet of ice that covered the well. Returning in safety to the comfort of the warm kitchen with the medley of fresh bread, newly ironed linen and garden herbs. Out to the wood lot for the tree – bringing back evergreen streamers found beneath the pitch pine and scrub oak and the favorite hog cranberry vine in festive confusion to the homestead. The rows of red candles with the asthmatic little melodeon and evening parlor games increasing the joviality. Tradition was preserved in sincerity and simplicity.

Being aroused at five o'clock Christmas morning for the exchanging of the gifts. A fortunate

lad was he who won a pair of skates from premiums for getting new subscriptions to "The Youth's Companion." Ushering in the New Year wearing a bright scarf and clutching a new silver dollar.

The dinner with the best china from CHINA. The silver teapot and hot water jug shone forth in pride; owing their existence to a captain's ingenuity. The harvest table groaning under an abundant supply of turkey or chicken pie, potatoes, squash, turnips, onions, cranberry sauce, cran-apple jelly, hot biscuits and cider. Plum pudding, mince pies, nuts, apples and raisins to end the repast.

Later in the day the young ladies of the household gathered to distribute baskets well laden with the necessities of life to others less fortunate. The young men, returning to their Chatham homes from voyages to foreign ports, were not to be outdone with their fair share of marvelous tales of tall variety and regaled their families sitting before the blazing fireplaces on many a Christmas Eve.



A BRIGHT AND  
HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

SO

*This richest day in all the year  
The poorest homes do have some cheer  
That each from fullest heart does sing  
And feels him richer than a king.*

—Anon



*Bob, Elinor, Ann, Dick, Sally, Debbie, Ellen, David, Sam, Kathy and Carol wish all of you fond memories of Christmas past, the joy of Christmas present and an abundance of peace and hope for the New Year.*

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## Chatham Alliance Plans Four Public Meetings on Preservation and Conservation Issues

The Chatham Alliance for Preservation and Conservation, which is composed of 10 nonprofit Chatham organizations (including The Old Village Association) plans to continue its series of public forums on managing Chatham's future growth. The Steering Committee has scheduled four public meetings for this purpose, starting in Jan. 2001 and continuing through April.

On Jan. 11, a panel, moderated by David Veach, will discuss downtown Main Street. This public meeting will concentrate on the appearance of the business district and its buildings, in terms of scale, balance, density, aesthetics, and use. Past and present preservation efforts as well the future of the Historic Business District Commission will be discussed, along with the possible revisions of signage and display bylaws. Members of the audience will be encouraged to contribute their vision for the future of Main Street – and offer suggestions on how to manage its growth. The meeting

will take place at the Eldredge Public Library at 3:30 pm.

The Wednesday, February 14 meeting will feature scientist and educator Barbara Waters in a lecture and demonstration about "Water – Coming and Going." The Alliance Steering Committee feels that with the upcoming completion of the wastewater study it is essential that all citizens have the basic know-how and the vocabulary to make intelligent decisions about protecting Chatham's water – and waterways.

At the March meeting, John Lipman of the Cape Cod Commission will lead a discussion on the "Uses and Abuses of Zoning." He will speak to the effectiveness of zoning, how it can and cannot be improved and offer some suggestions for the future. In April, the Alliance is honored to have Alan AtKisson, author of *Believing Cassandra*, present a program on conservation. All meetings will be at the Eldredge Public Library.

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### Old Village Association, Inc.

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|
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| <i>Vice-President</i> | Elinor Gelsey             |                  | Sally Daniel      | David MacAdam  | Richard Towne      |
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