



Newsletter of the Old Village Association of Chatham, Massachusetts

Volume V

Issue 3

Winter, 2003

THINK SPRING 2004: We're Going On Line

The Old Village Association is moving closer to creating a web site of its very own. The Board of Directors Web Site Committee has hired a consultant, Nigel Dobereiner of Bay Star Media, who will design the site and be responsible for getting the Association on line. Nigel designed the Chatham Historical Society site and is particularly interested in helping non-profit historical groups.

At the first meeting with Nigel in October, the Committee selected an address for the site, which Nigel has reserved. Meanwhile, Committee members, under the chairmanship of Mary Ann Gray, have been supplying Nigel with background information, pictures and text. The Committee will meet again in mid-December.

The goals for the web site are to define the historical assets and history of the Old Village, including the work of the Association; to provide information on Old Village architecture, and to educate homeowners and interested groups about the National Register designation and the review process. At a later date, as appropriate, the Association may use the site to keep members up to date on town issues which may affect our neighborhood. (Think how helpful this would have been during the Main Street reconstruction crisis!) The Committee does not envision any "chat room" or interactive components. Links will be provided to other historic groups, such as the Chatham Historical Society, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Cape Cod Commission.

The Committee is working hard to provide useful information on the Old Village without invading any home owner's privacy. The Committee will not mention or picture any properties without permission and, in any case, will never identify buildings by street address. All houses will be referred to by their historical names. For further information, contact Mary Ann Gray and/or Committee members, Debbie Aikman, Nancy Koerner, Carol Pacun and Bob Walsh.

Come spring, look for us at oldvillagechatham.org!

Promise Kept: Historical Commissions Meet in Chatham to Discuss National Register Districts

When the Association spoke with property owners about the National Register District review process, we promised we would stay involved. Voila! On November 14, the Old Village Association hosted a joint meeting of the Historical Commissions in the towns on Cape Cod that are responsible for National Register Districts. Several representatives came from the Chatham Historical Commission, as well as from Eastham, Orleans, Truro and Yarmouth. Sarah Korjeff, Preservation Planner for the Cape Cod Commission, was a special guest.

The discussion revolved around the effectiveness of the Cape Cod Commission review process for the demolition of and the substantial changes to historic properties within the districts. Sarah Korjeff outlined the activities of the Commission and said she is very pleased with the growing tendency of owners to ask for preliminary site reviews at which she can indicate what changes might be appropriate and offer alternatives to demolitions. So far, in Chatham, these preliminary sessions have allowed owners to discuss – and possibly revise – their plans without going through the formal hearing process. Sarah also announced that she will be rewriting the Guidelines for Referral in order to make them clearer and easier to follow. There will be no substantive changes in the regulations.

The Commissioners discussed a wide range of topics from demolitions "by neglect," the difficulties encountered with demolition delay bylaws, the importance of communication between building inspectors and Commissions, and the need for training for Historical Commission members in the basics of historic preservation and Cape architecture.

The Association is proud to have facilitated this meeting – which everyone agreed should be held on an annual basis. Through sessions such as this, we have a unique opportunity to stay in touch with districts throughout the Cape and – of course – we can put in our two cents worth on your behalf.



From the President

Several membership data questions came up at our August Annual Meeting. They went unanswered because we didn't have the figures available. Since I'm a "numbers" person, I decided to go one step further and do a more in-depth analysis of our roster. Here are some of the interesting statistics that I have come up with.

The Old Village Association consists of:

- 273 paying units.
(A paying unit is a check received for membership.)
- 97 paying units that are Single memberships.
- 176 paying units that are Family memberships.
- 2 "Honorary" members.
- 451 members who have joined since inception.
(I counted Family as 2 members.)

Of these 451:

- 301 members own homes in the Old Village.
- 44 members are "family" of Old Village homeowners (adult children, etc.).
- 16 members own homes on Bridge Street.
- 9 members own homes in North Chatham.
- 16 members own homes between downtown and the Old Village.
- 45 members are residents in other areas of Chatham.
- 20 members have no Chatham address.
(Many of these members previously owned homes in the Old Village.)
- 198 paying units are current with dues, representing 315 members.

These numbers illustrate just how many people value our Association's mission, centered around historical preservation of our neighborhood. We also strive to share stories of life as it used to be in the Old Village (previously known as "Scrabbletown").

If you have neighbors, friends or relatives who might enjoy the benefits of membership in our organization, please encourage them to join. If you have adult children who have a separate mailing address, think of what a wonderful gift this would be! We keep our dues low: \$10.00 for a Family membership and \$5.00 for a Single membership. Dues are renewable every January.

Enjoy the holidays!

Debbie Aikman, President

In Memory of Alton Gould 1910-2003

We shall miss our long time village resident, Alton Linwood Gould. He was a quiet, unassuming man, well-liked, diligent and trustworthy in his work.

Alton was the last of the long line of village residents descended from Richard Gould. In the latter half of the 18th century Richard's farm lay in the heart of what subsequently became the village. Alton was the only child of Ernest L. Gould and Enderberg Jensen.

Anne Rogers



A LETTER OF APPRECIATION

To: The Old Village Association
From: Mary E. Sicchio,
Cape Cod Community College

The Nickerson Room at the Cape Cod Community College Library would like to thank the Old Village Association for their generous gift of National Register of Historic Places, "The Old Village Historic District, Chatham, MA." We recognize the scholarly work of Candace Jenkins and the great labor of love that is part of documenting an historic district.

Again, thank you for your generous gift, and I hope to have this Title listed as part of the CLAMS Cataloging system for Cape Cod Library Holdings as well as with the Library of Congress.

OVA Asks Town Boards and Commissions for User Friendly Hearings

Chatham's Zoning Board of Appeals is revamping its rules and regulations concerning public meetings and procedures. This work, which the Old Village Association strongly recommended as early as 1998, is long overdue and will hopefully encourage other Boards and Commissions in town to dust off their own rules and make them more "user friendly." The Directors sent a letter to the ZBA (with copies to the other Boards and Commissions) expressing two general areas of concern.

First of all, the Association continues to be an advocate for public access to applications which will be reviewed by boards and commissions. The Board hopes that the new ZBA regulations will clearly affirm the public's right to have access to all plans for a full two weeks before any hearing is held and that those plans are to be complete and final. Too often neighbors have found that last minute changes were made to the



documents on file – or in a worst case scenario – a completely different set of plans was presented. If there are substantive revisions, the hearing should be put off in order to allow for public review.

Secondly, Association members have complained that in some hearings they could neither hear applicants nor see documents presented. They were too often dismayed by the absence of parliamentary procedure and – to be frank – a lack of common courtesy and civility. Correcting these problems does not require any rewriting of rules or procedures.

The Board suggested a few easy solutions:

- provide a podium for the applicant (as opposed to having the applicant stand with his or her back to the audience)
- put the plans on an easel
- provide microphones
- identify all Board members before the hearing begins, clarify procedures and insist on civil discourse.

... And a Special Request for the Planning Board

The Planning Board has adopted regulations which require written notice and access to plans prior to their definitive review. However, much of the work of the Board is done (and decisions made) earlier at preliminary subdivision and site reviews. These preliminary sessions are listed in the Chronicle, but abutters are not notified by mail. In a community such as ours, where the majority of property owners are not here for the full year, that lack of notice often means that the abutter is totally unaware of what's going on, sometimes for weeks at a time. The Association Board, in a separate note, asked the Planning Board to notify abutters of these preliminary sessions. It is only fair that the people most affected by new construction or developments have input from the very beginning of the process.

Will these letters make a difference? Our Board certainly hopes so. As Chatham becomes more congested, with fewer empty lots, and larger buildings crammed into small spaces with a subsequent loss of green space, good regulatory procedures which are fair to everyone are imperative.

Old Village Association Newsletter

Editor

Carol Pacun

Contributors

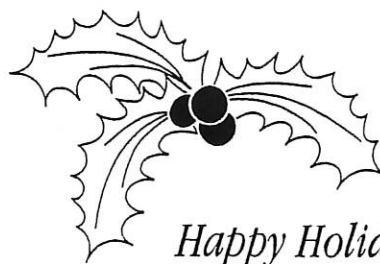
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Happy Holidays

A Commitment to Restoration

These days, the Old Village is in the news – not for the erosion of our beaches or our occasional outbursts of annoyance with the town’s politics – but because we’re not demolishing historic houses. It is indeed a sad commentary on modern life in Chatham that demolitions receive almost no publicity, while a simple effort to save an existing house seems almost revolutionary. Has everyone forgotten that the concept of using and improving what you have is as old as New England itself? What’s happening now in the Old Village, with three old houses undergoing major renovation, is part of a long tradition of looking after your own property, and at the same time caring for your neighbors while being considerate of the neighborhood itself.

Why is everybody shocked – shocked – by all of this? Actually, the answer is simple. It’s all about the money. People tell us that, while old houses have little appeal, Old Village land is so valuable that we are crazy not to “max out” and encourage demolitions. In that way our neighborhood can be transformed into a series of desirable summer mansions and bring in the really big bucks. (These people do not, of course, mention that such structures in a dense neighborhood

such as the Old Village fill up available space, destroy scenic vistas and invade the privacy of neighbors.)

The problem with this money-driven, “max-out” argument is that it’s dead wrong. If we in the Old Village want to talk money, we can point to independent studies which show that throughout the United States historic districts with restrictions do not lose value. In fact, one New York City study found that some neighborhoods have gained value because they were merely *adjacent* to historic districts. Certainly, if we judge the newest property assessments and asking prices of homes in the Old Village – older historic homes that cannot be demolished – there does not seem to be any negative impact.

However, defining value in purely monetary terms is not what we are all about. The value we place on the Old Village has more to do with the happiness we feel when we are here, the joy we take in the beauty around us and the knowledge that being a part of an historic neighborhood which is proud both of its past and its present is a true gift to be cherished and protected.

You can’t pay for this in any currency!

Carol Pacun, Editor



100 Main Street Ready for Renovation

OVA Gives Gift to Chatham Historical Society

The Old Village Association Board of Directors voted unanimously to donate \$1000, to be paid over two years, to the Chatham Historical Society. The Directors felt this was a particularly timely gift in that the Society is presently conducting a fund-raising campaign for capital improvements, including a permanent fishing exhibit and more archival space.

The Association gift will be designated for materials to be used to preserve Old Village documents and memorabilia. In that the Association has no place to call its own, we have in the past and will continue to donate records to the Society so that they will be available to the public. Hopefully, when the Atwood House addition is complete, the Old Village will have a special, designated area in the archives where members can do historical research and donate items they think would add to a continuing historical record of the neighborhood and its people.

Old Village Association, Inc.

Officers

President	Debbie Aikman
Vice-President	Bob Walsh
Treasurer	Mary Ann Gray
Clerk	Ann O'Connell

Directors

Debbie Aikman	Ann O'Connell
Mary Ann Gray	Carol Pacun
Nancy Koerner	Sam Streibert
David MacAdam	David Veach
Ellen McKinley	Bob Walsh

Many thanks to our past Treasurer, Dick Towne, who resigned from the Board as of October 1, for his long and loyal service.

Architect's Corner

Theodore P. (Sam) Streibert

Old Village: Uplifting Sites

Since the Old Village seems to be the house-raising capitol of the world, we are reprinting Sam Streibert's article on new foundations for old houses, which first appeared in the Winter Newsletter of 2000. – editor

Damp 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. (Editor's note: costs in year 2000.)

B & B continues to do 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.

The Old Village Association, Inc.
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How Do I Know it's Autumn in the Old Village?

1. I have leaves and pine needles –not guests – on my lawn.
2. Many Old Village houses are quiet, resting for next summer's onslaught.
3. Now the leaves are off the trees, my house once again has a water view. (The tax assessor noticed this also.)
4. The Surfside Inn is tucked in for its long winter's nap.
5. The nets are down at the Beach Club.
6. I take my showers INdoors now!
7. The cardinals, blue jays and buffleheads have returned to brighten the darkening autumn days.
8. I can actually park at the Overlook.
9. The YWCA gals are back in Philly.

–Nancy Koerner

Think that this
Newsletter is too
much business
and
no fun?

Hold on -
COMING
EARLY IN 2004

An Old Village
Association
Special
Supplement
*"Artists of the
Old Village
Part One:
1920-2000"*

(Later in the Year:
*"Artists Working
Today"*)

