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Spring/Summer News

May 2012

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Editor's Letter

This issue is filled with activities and events past, present and future. What suffuses the whole is the idea of being good neighbors. Lately, we've been experiencing changes in our neighborhood. Some will create new dwellings, and ultimately welcome new neighbors; some will return parts of our landscape to what it once was, allowing us to further enjoy our bit of sand and sea.

There's also been talk lately about what constitutes being a good neighbor: not letting overly-exuberant kids run around in the neighbor's yard (guilty), helping out people in need, designing architecture that adds to our neighborhood, being mindful of others during construction, and assessing proposed bylaw changes. All of these actions create a rich and ever-changing tableau, both social and physical.

This issue also introduces "Preservationist Toolbox", which we hope will deliver timely, practical ideas to your digital doorstep. If you aren't a subscriber to our e-newsletter, please send us your email so we can get you on board. We're excited to bring you this initial crop of information, culled with the help of the National Trust's Digital and New Media department. We're grateful to our contributors, Ted Keon, John Whelan, Mary Ann Gray and the many members who add to our Village News. Happy summer!

Jennifer Longworth, Editor

President's Letter

Oh the Times, They are A-Changing ... and in the Old Village we certainly are seeing signs of change. Some are good, some are not so good. I'll let you decide which are which! But the newest and most exciting change is the founding of a new group within our ranks ... the Village Kids! This is an ever-changing group of youngsters who have ties to the Old Village - through grandparents, parents, friends, friends of friends.

The kick-off for the group will be the Kids for Food project. See the story below. Hopefully this will be the beginning of welcoming young people to share the joy of being connected to one of the loveliest spots in town! And as these young people and their peers grow up we hope they will honor the traditions and philosophies of the OVA - that is to quote our Article of Organization, "to preserve and protect the historic nature and architectural beauty and integrity of the Old Village area".

~ Nancy Koerner, President

Water Street Town Landing



Water Street Town Landing, a work in progress

Chatham's Director of Coastal resources, Ted Keon, brings us this update on the reinstatement of the Water Street Town Landing, for which he is providing leadership:

In honor of the town's 300th Birthday celebration, the Old Village Association has contributed \$8,500 to the Town of Chatham to fund an invasive vegetation removal project at the town landing at the eastern end of Water Street. As many will recall, this landing once provided public access to the beach and offered a lovely view overlooking Chatham Harbor and the ocean. After the inlet formation in 1987, access to the shore at this and other landings along Chatham Harbor were essentially lost following the extensive erosion and construction of revetments. Water Street landing then subsequently became a spot solely for scenic viewing.

Vistas from the landing have become impaired in recent years due to the uncontrolled growth of non-native vegetation at the top of the coastal bank. The project will remove the non-native vegetation and then re-plant with native plant species more suitable for this type of coastal environment. Once completed it will also serve as an example of this type of restoration for other locations along the shoreline. The Conservation Commission has already approved the project and the work is scheduled to begin this winter and spring with minor follow-up maintenance for the next couple of years.

~ Ted Keon

An Old Village First - Village Kids for Food Drive Celebrates Chatham's 300th!

Who: OVA's Village Kids for the Chatham Food Pantry

What: Food Drive to collect 300+ items, celebrating Chatham's 300th anniversary

Door to door pick up by Village Kids in the Old Village

When: Monday July 2, 9 am **promptly** - 12 noon, rain date Friday July 6.

Where: Headquarters at Koerners', 99 School St.

The OVA is delighted to sponsor its first **Village Kids for Food Drive** to benefit the **Chatham Food Pantry**, in honor of Chatham's 300th anniversary! The drive, headed up by OVA President Nancy Koerner, welcomes volunteers ages 5 and up to help collect at least 300 food items from participating OVA homes. Children of OVA members, residents and friends are welcome to join the fun. On the day of the drive, participating kids can fill out one card which will be used to enter a random drawing to win one of three **\$10 gift certificates** for the Capabilities' Farm to Table store, 195 Main Street. We'll have cool drinks on hand as well. The Kids for Food Drive provides a great way to meet other families with kids!

CFP serves Chatham residents exclusively and depends heavily on donations of food and cash to carry on their fine work, and requests **currently dated** non-perishable food items in original packaging. Please check that foods have not expired. Cash or personal check donations made out to Chatham Food Pantry are also welcomed, for which receipts will be issued. If you'd like to leave food outside (in fair weather) for collection, please put it in a plastic bag clearly marked "Food Pantry" and leave them by your front or side door **Monday morning July 2**. CFP **always** needs:

cereal, oatmeal, cans of coffee, spaghetti, corned beef hash, beef stew
solid white tuna, hamburger helper, 32 oz non-refrigerated juices
canned vegetables - beans, peas, beets, corn, baked beans
canned fruit - peaches, pineapple, pears, fruit cocktail

To make this event a success we need:

Volunteers:

Runners - kids aged 5 and up to pick up items, deliver and unpack at the Koerners'

Team leaders - kids aged 12+ to issue receipts, coordinate, pick up, deliver, unpack

Grownups - to help runners and team leaders

Equipment:

Wagons, beach carts, wheelbarrows and similar to transport pickups.

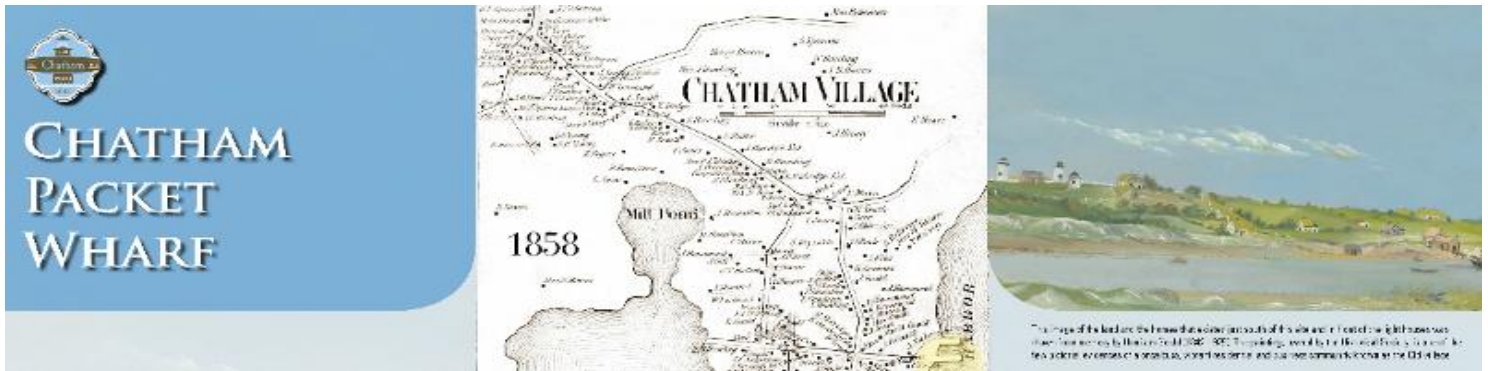
Register by email directors@oldvillage.org or call Nancy Koerner 508-945-1912 with:

Volunteer names, kids' ages, phone number, Old Village address **and email** so we can update you

Please let us know if your child(ren) will bring a cart and/or backpack - this will really help!

Be on time! We need to start **together** at 9 am so we can make the process smooth and fun. **Please check** that your food donation is not about to expire. Food that has expired or is about to must be discarded by CFP. We look forward to your involvement with what we hope will be the first of many kid-friendly events!

Chatham Packet Wharf Plaque Makes Headway



Last summer the OVA voted to support the purchase of a plaque to be placed at the foot of Water Street (on the ocean side) as one of our contributions to the celebration of Chatham's Tercentennial. The plaque, designed by Garry Gates Design of Chatham, tells the story of the packet trade and its Old Village business owners during the early years of Chatham's development. It also includes a detail of an 1858 map showing two docks at the end of the street, and a painting by Harrison Gould, which shows the two lighthouses, and provides a rare contemporary view of the lively mix of commercial and residential activities of the Old Village. The plaque will be in place soon, pending acceptance by the Board of Selectmen, at the site of the invasive species removal undertaken with the help of the OVA, on Water Street's eastern end. "Water Street is likely the only street running from one body of water, the Atlantic, to another, Mill Pond, so this is a very special spot to visit" says Mary Ann Gray, archivist of the Chatham Historical Society and OVA board member.

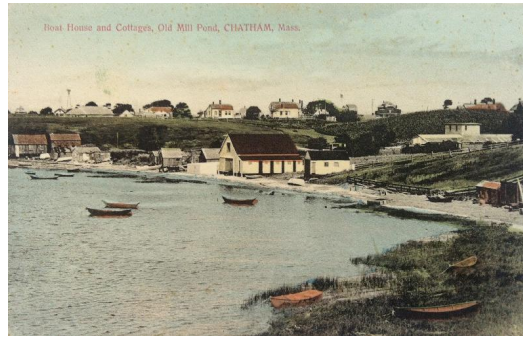


Mill Pond and the Old Village

I have just finished reading "Mill Cove" by Ann J. Rogers and David MacAdam, published in 2002. This is possibly my second or third reading, and I've come to realize that the Mill Pond, or Mill Cove as it was known historically, played a very important role in Old Village life. I recently dropped in to talk with Alice Walsh Weidman on Hallet Lane. Alice was one of six Walsh sisters who grew up in their family home on Hallet Lane and helped me a great deal with her memory of her uncle, Mert Rogers. I remember Uncle Mert, who was not really my uncle. Alice is the younger sister to Winifred Walsh Shepard, who was married to my Uncle Charlie. Alice's children and Bea Walsh Lightfoot's children and Jimmy Walsh Taylor's children were actually my cousins' cousins and not my cousins. But as a child in Chatham, they were all called cousins, and the aunts were aunts and the uncles were uncles. So I always called Alice, Aunt Alice. So Mert, who was Winifred Shepard's mother's brother, moved to Chatham from Brookline as a young man because he had tuberculosis and Chatham's climate was judged to be better for his health. Mert came down and lived with his Uncle George who had been a partner in a hunting lodge on Morris Island. With purchases in 1906 and 1909, George and Mert bought most of the land at the bottom of Elphamet's Lane from Solomon W. Nickerson.

In the 1800's, the eastern shore of Mill Cove was a beehive of commercial activity. The first use was as a saltworks owned by Joseph and Benjamin Loveland. Salt was a major industry on Cape Cod until about 1850 when substantial salt deposits were located elsewhere, and the drying of salt water became impractical. That area next housed several commercial businesses. The Menemay Weir and Fish Company, Tom Gills boat works, Lathrop

housed several commercial businesses. The Monomoy Weir and Fish Company, Tom Gill's Boat Works, Lottrop Bearer's slaughterhouse and a cranberry bog. Monomoy Weir and Fish Company was a significant business and large fishing boats sailed in to Mill Cove through the drawbridge and offloaded their catch. Ann and David note in their book that at one time, 125 catboats used Monomoy Weir and Fish Company for their catch. Tom Gill was a craftsman known as a builder of high quality dories. Many Chatham residents were proud owners of a Tom Gill dory. The slaughterhouse had to be most unattractive. I've been to a pig slaughterhouse in Miacomet on Nantucket, and the smell is difficult to bear. Our forefathers were less sensitive to horrible odors, so it may have been less of an issue in 1875. The large doors on the ends of the building were left open to air out the smell. Little chance that that could happen today.



Postcard from 1908 showing the "Flat Top" house and chicken coops on the right

For a variety of reasons, after 1900, George and Mert were able to acquire the whole area and a different era started for Mill Cove. George and Mert built the distinctive Flat Top house which still stands on Eliphamets Lane. They raised chickens and ducks for eggs and to supply the town with poultry. Upstairs were bedrooms, but downstairs was storage and chickens. It was a pretty good business, and in an attached building, George Rogers had a tinsmith shop. George could put a tin roof on your house and make stove pipe and fittings. The actual waterfront soon had small shanties everywhere. Initially, the shanty owners were squatters and it took a while for George and Mert to work out a lease agreement with the squatters. The rent to keep your shanty on Mill Cove was \$10 a year. Apparently, it was a fair price because photos in the book show a great number of shanties standing. They were particularly attractive for shell fishermen who created mountains of empty shells all around their shanties. The poultry farm lasted until 1960 and then "Flat Top" was converted to a residence and used to rent to summer tourists. One by one, as owners died off, the shanties were removed or demolished. Several were sold to Mert for \$1 a piece. One remaining shanty was the residence of Uncle George, Mert's older brother. George survived by digging quahogs or catching a flounder for breakfast. He lived much of the year in this shack without electricity. In his declining years, his main activity seemed to be listening to the Red Sox on an old radio powered by extension cords stretched across the ground from the Lightfoot's house to his shack. As a young child, the sight of these extension cords and the sound of the ballgame coming from this very dark shack was something I will always remember.

A few shacks are left and Mill Pond, to that extent, is one area of Chatham that still resembles what it was like 150 years ago. I encourage you to get the book "Mill Cove", and read it. Unfortunately, Anne Jeanette Rogers died of cancer in 2002, but we still can talk with David MacAdam and learn a great deal about Mill Cove. I recently told David that my favorite photograph in the book was the one of Mert's garage leaning over so far it might collapse. Supporting it were a number of 2 by 4's, the removal of which would have meant certain disaster. David told me he took that photo when he was a child. We both smiled as we remembered the stubborn determination of people who lived in Chatham and on Mill Pond.

~ John Whelan

Chatham 2012 Tercentennial - Find Your Way Here

Founder's Weekend - June 8 - 11
 Independence Day - July 4
 Chatham Arts Weekend - September 1 - 3
 Homecoming Weekend - October 19 - 21
 First Night Chatham - December 31
 For more information visit www.chatham300.org



~ Village News ~

The OVA is pleased to announce its Chatham Tercentennial Edition of the newly revised "**Step by Step**" walking tour guide of the Old Village is now available at bookstores, and through the OVA, for \$8.00. This wonderful book, edited by **Carol Pacun**, is replete with historic maps, photographs and of course, histories of Scrabbletown, many of its lovely houses, and fascinating characters.

Old Village neighbor **Joan Horrocks** has published a new book of photographs. She talks below about her experiences and also especially hopes that residents of the Old Village will attend the book signing party June 8, details below. Horrocks will have a book signing at the Creative Arts Center on June 8, from 3:30 - 5 pm, with refreshments, followed soon by a signing at The Yellow Umbrella and a display of prints from the book at The Nickerson Art Gallery.



"*Dusk to Dawn The Old Village at Night* is my first book. Ten years ago while walking, I was hit by a car speeding through a stop sign. I needed to make my art, and sculpture was too difficult at that time, so I decided to photograph while recuperating. I thought a lot too about being able to walk, still being here, still able to notice the beauty all around me! In *Dusk to Dawn*, as the light fades, so does much that fills up a picture. Moonlight, streetlight, car light and house light bring into view small vignettes that are unnoticed during the day. My book is a gentle bedtime story for grown ups as the day winds down, and becomes quiet as night arrives. It is about seeing, and it asks more questions than it answers. There is a lot inside this little book of photographs and I hope the reader notices more to see and think about over time."



and Sally's in her living room
off Ivy Lane



and the fox from the wetland
runs over the road
hunting his dinner



David's house glows at the top
of School Street

photographs and text © 2012 Joan Horrocks

Among this year's **Chatham Preservation Awards** winners is 90 Silverleaf Avenue. Kudos to Marjorie and David French! We encourage you to see their winning property below, and more at www.chathamhistoricalsociety.org.



CHATHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Chatham, Massachusetts 01925



Town of Chatham
Historic Business District Commission



The
Chatham
Historical
Society, Inc.

2012 Chatham Preservation Awards



90 Silverleaf Avenue
Owners : David & Marjorie French

This house was built about 1850, possibly earlier, by David Bearse, but it is known as the Godfrey Tripp House, after the second owner, who bought it in 1851. Tripp sold it in the late 19th century to George and Margaret Bearse. After George's death, his wife lived there with her son Russell, a well-known shell fisherman and a hunting and fishing guide and manager of the Brant Club. When his wife died in 1968, the house was sold to Donald and Lydia Earnshaw.

The renovation of 90 Silver Leaf Avenue involved work on three separate buildings, the house, the cottage and the garage. All three had had substantial deterioration in a number of structural components. Every effort was made to save the original millwork, floors and beams. The contractor reused as much original material as possible in the renovation. A full cellar was built under the house, and the entire property was re-landscaped. The end result is a beautiful home in keeping with Silver Leaf Avenue and the Old Village.

Architect: Neshamkin French Architects, Charlestown, MA
Contractor: McPhee Associates, Inc., East Dennis, MA

text by by John Whelan, photo: Leonard Sussman

In Memoriam - We note with sadness the passing of **Eileen McDonell**, wife of Horace McDonell, formerly of School Street, in February. We extend our deepest sympathies to her family and friends.

OVA Website/newsletter - This summer, our website will be undergoing exciting changes. We welcome your news about member accomplishments that may be posted on the site. Also, we'll be archiving print and digital newsletters on the site! If you aren't an e-newsletter subscriber, please contact us at newsletter@oldvillagechatham.org with your email address. Sending you timely news by email is the most immediate and cost-effective means of reaching our members. Your email address will be used for communications only from the OVA.

Upcoming Events

July 2nd - Kids for Food Drive

August 1- 1-3 pm. Iced tea at "The Porches", on the Chase Estate, Water St. Joan Horrocks will give a brief history of the Estate. Light refreshments will be served. Bring your own chairs! Rain date August 2.

August 26th- Annual Meeting at the Chatham Beach and Tennis Club. This year, we welcome Noel Beyle, a collector, historian, author and humorist, who refers to himself as the "Mayor of West Eastham". He has one of Cape Cod's largest collections of unique memorabilia and old Cape Cod photos and postcards. Beyle has published a long list of books about how Cape Cod used to be. We can look forward to a humorous and engaging talk.



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Old Village Association | Box 188 | Chatham | MA | 02633