

Keeping Our History Alive



Raimund Koch

IN THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENT'S LETTER ~ WATER STREET STEPS ~ THE FREIGHT TRAIN ~
CAPE COD MODERN ~ WHY NOT? ~ PRESERVATION AWARDS ~
PRESERVATION TOOLBOX ~ VILLAGE NEWS/EVENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

Sorry for the extra mail folks, this contains the corrected Table of Contents.

The luminous photograph above shows Hatch House, a home restored by the Cape Cod Modern Trust, and featured in the recently published *Cape Cod Modern* (Metropolis Books, ARTBOOK | D.A.P. 2014). The image reminds me of a Hirgoshige woodblock print, showing man's modest presence within the grandeur and power of the natural environment. The structure is nestled close to a kettle hole in the Bound Brook Island landscape, and, like the figures on the beach, is barely discernible. While the style differs from our Old Village architecture, we can appreciate the ingenuity and use of simple, sometimes reclaimed materials the designers employed, combining their own sensibilities with a kind of "Yankee ingenuity". Designed to be in harmony with nature, this special group of houses offers us an uplifting and yet practical (and practicable) design for living in our unique ecosystem. We are pleased to include some fascinating history and illustrations from the book in this issue.

Closer to home, Carol Pacun offers an opinion piece on the distractions and duties of life in Chatham. Nancy and Bill Koerner serve up a memoir of building their dream cottage on

School Street, John Whelan brings us a round up of this year's Preservation Awards, and we have an update on the Water Street steps from Debbie Aikman. OVA President Winnie Lear has important news regarding the traffic situation this summer and beyond. recently, with considerable feeling, that in general, "things change. But here in Chatham, it feels the same, that's one of the nicest things about this place." I hope we can prove him right.

—Jennifer Longworth

President's Letter

Greetings! After this unusually dreary and long winter, we are all looking forward to a warm beautiful summer in the Old Village. As I mentioned last fall, traffic for the next few months promises to be more problematic than usual due to the closure of the Mitchell River Bridge. Through conversations with Jeff Colby, the director of the DPW and Deputy Chief Cauble of the Chatham Police Department, we have learned the following:

- Permitted parking will be allowed on both sides of Bridge Street as usual.
- A no trucks-no buses sign has been placed at the corner of Silverleaf and Main Street.
- A U-Turn in Parking Lot sign has been placed in front of the Lighthouse.
- Policemen will not be assigned permanently to the Lighthouse/Bridge Street area but there will be constant police monitoring.
- Plans for a shuttle to Lighthouse Beach were not approved by the selectmen for this summer.

Please Note:

Residents are urged to contact their landscape companies to inform them that there will be strict enforcement of parking regulations on our narrow streets. Those expecting deliveries are asked to make arrangements so there will be no trucks obstructing traffic.

You are asked to call the non-emergency number **508 945 1213** of the Chatham Police Department if you are concerned about traffic/parking difficulties in your neighborhood. Reporting by phone will result in the problem being noted on the police log as well as a timely police response. It is ideal for the responding officer to observe the circumstances being reported.

The OVA Board of Directors proposed the placement of a crosswalk between the northernmost Lighthouse sidewalk and the corresponding overlook sidewalk, and that Hallett Lane (which has parking on the north side of the street) be made a one-way (westerly

direction) street. The Traffic Safety Committee and the Selectment have approved both proposals, and the signs for Hallett Lane will be up soon. Its success will be evaluated next fall, and it may or may not become permanent. The location of the crosswalk will be determined by DPW director Jeff Colby.

There are no convenient or easy solutions to our congestion and traffic difficulties. I encourage you to contact me with any questions. I especially welcome suggestions and I am looking forward to seeing you in the Old Village this summer. Thank you for your patience!

—Winnie Lear, President
directors@oldvillagechatham.org

Water Street Landing Steps Approved

The campaign to raise funds for the Water Street town landing steps was a huge success, with \$19,165 in donations raised from 53 families. The Old Village Association had pledged \$20,000 to the Town; the difference was made up with the Andrew Harding Beach Fund. A check from the Old Village Association for \$20,000 was presented to the Town Treasurer. Donations are still welcome and can be sent to PO Box 188, Chatham 02633.



OVA Board Directors Nancy Koerner and Debbie Aikman presenting OVA check to Louise Redfield, center, Town of Chatham Treasurer

The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$48,500. Ted Keon, Coastal Resources Director representing the Town, applied for Community Preservation Act funds totaling \$28,500. This was approved by the Community Preservation Committee and then placed on the Town Warrant for approval by voters at the May 2015 Annual Town Meeting. Voters unanimously endorsed the Article. Design work has begun and construction will hopefully be done this Fall. Many thanks go to all who generously donated to the steps fund. Perhaps a beach celebration will be planned as soon as the work is completed.

—Debbie Aikman

The Freight Train's Coming

All of you who have not been in Chatham this winter must be befuddled by the sometimes puzzling news that has come from the year-round community. Chronicle headlines do indeed give the impression, not entirely wrong, that our concerns have fixated, not on vital world and national issues, but on sky-diving, round-about, sidewalks and tilting grave stones.

This emphasis on the local is typical - especially in small towns. But the level of anger on both sides of these issues seems to be over the top. Perhaps the answer to 'why' this has happened lies not in the issues themselves, but with what they symbolize. They all are related to change - Chatham's change from what many once saw as a small New England fishing village to a vibrant, popular tourist attraction. Those who fight against sidewalks, sky-diving, outside interference in roadway construction and lax enforcement of environmental rules are reacting to what they see as a disappearing way of life. Although many of the changes in our community have been occurring incrementally over the years, they now seem inevitable. As one local resident said at town meeting, "the freight train's coming." We all are helpless as forces beyond our control take over.

This negative response is filled with a sense of loss. And, to a degree, the people who try to stem the tide are not wrong in their assessment. It is unrealistic to expect Chatham to welcome more and more tourists and fill almost all available space with real estate without taking steps to deal with the resulting crowded streets and roadways. To ignore the necessity of getting people in and out of town safely is to ignore reality. If not this year, or next, eventually the town will be forced to provide more parking, consider shuttles to the beach, add sidewalks, round-about or other "urban" measures which will serve the growing summer population and move cars around more efficiently.

Like it or not, tourism is our future. It is difficult, if not impossible, to fight successfully against projects the goals of which are (or purport to be) increased safety, less congestion - and more economic growth. We all have to deal with what the town is, not what we remember it to be. We must find ways to ensure that the inevitable proposals coming out of town hall are carried out in such a way that they do not negatively impact our quality of life, destroy our natural resources or compromise Chatham's long valued charm. For example, sidewalks do not have to be concrete with sharp granite edges (which blow tires on contact); parking can be limited on some streets; shuttle routes can be diverted from residential neighborhoods; present town bylaws that protect our environment and curtail over-development can be strictly enforced and tourist- oriented attractions heavily regulated.

Shouting "no" is not a winning strategy. A more effective way to make our voices heard is to say "yes, but." We need to do our homework, stay focused, gather information and be prepared

to offer sensible alternative options to solve today's (and tomorrow's) problems. Admittedly, this approach is not a slam dunk, but I do believe that it will gather more public support.... an essential first step for us to make a difference. By acknowledging the freight train cannot be stopped, we can concentrate on controlling its speed.

—Carol Pacun

Cape Cod Modern

The following excerpt from *Cape Cod Modern* (Metropolis Books, ARTBOOK | D.A.P. 2014), provides a fascinating encapsulation of an extraordinary period in regional architecture. While the story of this branch of the modernist movement and its proponents may be a revelation to some, the values and aims it describes are familiar and apt for those living on the Cape, and are sensitive to its fragile, rare, and ultimately limited bounty. As authors Peter MacMahon and Christine Cipriani remind us, "modernism is fundamentally essentialism: a quest to find the inherent qualities and properties of spaces, materials, colors, and light, and use them to design elegant solutions." In 2007, MacMahon founded the Cape Cod Modern Trust, to document, preserve, and revitalize modern architecture on the Outer Cape. To learn more about programs, house tours, research, and even staying in one of the restored houses, visit ccmht.org. By the way, I got my copy locally at Yellow Umbrella Books. - Ed.



While outer Cape Cod's contributions to twentieth-century art, theater and literature are well known, its profusion of midcentury architecture has gone mostly unnoticed. Ironically, this was somewhat deliberate. These modern houses are the opposite of monumental, often



Charles Zehnder's Kugel/Gips House in Wellfleet (1970, restored 2009). The glass walls and rectangular opening in the deck rail dissolve the barrier between the interior and outdoors.

Raimund Koch

comprising less than a thousand square feet. Most are hidden in the woods. Even so, most are introverted on the approach, peering at guests from high ribbon windows while bursting open to the landscape in back. Their designers initially had no clients; they built for themselves and their families, or for friends sympathetic to their goals. Their summer homes were laboratories, thought experiments, places to revisit problems and work through ideas without spending much money.

These modernists were not iconoclasts, exactly: shacks, including the classic pitched-roof cottage now known universally as a Cape. Borrowing from traditional materials (such as cedar siding), methods, and precepts, they fashioned basic lumberyard materials into new designs that solved genuine problems.

Many of these designers came of age during World War II, when building commissions were few. They earned a living in either academia or carpentry. Out of both necessity and ideology, they wanted to create affordable housing for a growing population. Accordingly, on the Cape, they used inexpensive, off-the-shelf materials such as plate glass and Homasote, the first and only construction materials made out of recycled paper. Some designers, like their thrifty colonial forebears, used salvaged materials, and some used no glazed windows at all, only screens. The results were almost temporary in their constructions. Cottage décor was informal - walls were hung with original artwork by owners' friends, and rooms could be stocked with butterfly or Windsor chairs, whatever was affordable and functional.



Walling's Lechay House living room, Wellfleet (1960), with reclaimed barnboard framing the fireplace.

Raimund Koch

This ad hoc, improvisational quality is what separates Cape Cod modernism apart from other regional adaptations of the modern movement. Many of these houses were thrown together with whatever materials were handy, from eighteenth-century bricks and beams to entire abandoned structures such as army barracks or a water tower. If the property held an old house or cabin, most designers simply grafted a modern house onto it, forming a permanent hybrid.



Walling's Halprin House, Wellfleet (1965). The living room window wall was achieved using only 2-by-4's and strips of plate glass.

Raimund Koch

Today, technology and handicraft are reuniting in areas such as small-scale prefabricated housing, humanitarian design activism, and intricate, digitally enabled architectural forms. Many in the design world are focused on reducing the human footprint through renewable energy, minimal dwellings, nomadic structures, even treehouses - versions of the same ideals that drove the Cape Cod modernists and, in many ways, their colonial predecessors. The modernists' work on the Outer Cape, once experimental, is now historic. In 1959, U.S. Senators Leverett Saltonstall and John F. Kennedy sponsored legislation to create the Cape Cod National Seashore, a narrow, 40-mile strip of 44,600 acres along the peninsula's coast. Gambling that the legislation would not pass, developers and waterfront-property owners began frantically building in the dunes; in 1961, President Kennedy signed the bill into law. Four houses erected during the legislative lull between 1959 and 1961, the government bought out the owners at market value and gave them a 25-year lease, at the end of which the structures would be demolished and the land would revert to its natural state. As it happened, many houses went into administrative limbo, vacant but still standing, becoming

sad shells of a cultural moment that had passed. By 2003, thanks to the work of a handful of preservationists, seashore officials had an inkling that at least half a dozen of its modern buildings were historically significant. The nonprofit Cape Cod Modern Trust, founded in 2007, has since acquired long-term leases on three important modern homes within the seashore's boundaries - the Kugel/Gips House, the Hatch House, and the Weidlinger House - and one by one, restored them.



Shared festivity - designers Schawinsky, Gropius, Bayer, and Breuer, with Mary Coss, who later became curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York

courtesy of Ati Gropius Johansen

From the Summer Bauhaus onward, the Cape's modern designers enjoyed a lifestyle based on communion with nature, solitary creativity, and shared festivity. Their houses captured this ethos with their blurring of indoors and outdoors, their secluded studios, and their outdoor party spaces. The group did serious work on the Cape, and exchanged ideas while walking in the woods or boating on a pond. Despite their cosmopolitan backgrounds, a surprising number, including Breuer, are buried by their homes in this quiet place. Their work is now threatened by the passage of time in an unforgiving climate, its transience a poignant testament to their sensitive, sparing designs.

Why Not?

"Why don't we have our own cottage on Cape Cod??" That question began six months of sometimes frantic activity that led to the realization of our wildest dreams ... having our own cottage on Cape Cod! We had moved from New Jersey to Ipswich, Massachusetts when we were married, just about a year before the question was voiced. We were renting a little vacation cottage off Main Street in Chatham and beginning to realize that living in New England had the huge advantage of being close to the Cape. We could actually drive here in the winter and find that Chatham still existed - not just during July and August as we had previously thought. There was no question about it - we had to find a place in Chatham and it should be near the lighthouse. We'd met at a wonderful inn, the Hawes House, which was at the corner of Water and Main Streets. We were really only familiar with that part of town and since it was where we met, we focused on settling in this area.

We started with grand ideas and talked to a number of builders and realtors in town. It wasn't long before one of them pointed out that all the builders knew we were "shopping around"! Each offered ideas but all had prices way out of our range: \$25,000 or more for the Cape style house we had in mind. We decided to "knock on doors" and try to find something on our own. The first stop was at a home on School Street where we learned that the empty lot next door was for sale. Nancy was teaching in Ipswich and saw an article in My Weekly Reader (remember that from your grammar school days?). It was about a new trend in homebuilding known as "prefabs". Bill sketched plans for a 20' x 25' house with one bedroom and one bath; somehow it grew to 24' x 32' with two bedrooms!

What had started as a dream was becoming a reality. The Chairman of the Board of Selectmen called and suggested we meet with him. We met and he was very helpful, and told us all about taxes, etc. He looked at our plans and asked questions about how we hoped to accomplish this. We hired a mason to build the foundation and fireplace, an electrician to bring power from the pole to the house, a plumber to install pipes and basic fixtures, and an attorney to prepare the Deed. We worked with a lumberyard in Ipswich and two months later a truck carrying the pieces of our house arrived in Chatham.

We invited members of our wedding party to come with a hammer and help us to have a house-raising. We rented a house nearby to accommodate everyone and provided the food and beer. At the end of the weekend the shell of the cottage was up, the roof trusses were in place and we locked the door when we left! For the next two years we spent every weekend working on the house. Any relative, friend or neighbor was recruited to share his or her talents to help us shingle, paint, put up sheetrock, assemble cabinets, sew curtains and re-cover pillows.

Thirty-five years later our two sons, having spent most of their childhood weekends and

vacations at "The Cottage", began bringing girlfriends, wives, babies and dogs with them. We realized we had outgrown our modest vacation home and did as the Cape Codders did - enlarged the space to meet the need. We had the pitch of the roof changed so we could have bedroom space upstairs. We added steps to the basement and a little extra space for an eating area plus a few amenities like a dishwasher, a heating system, a new septic system and outside decks. It's really more than a cottage now, but many years of calling it that just can't be changed.



The Koerner cottage in its early years ...



and with later additions

The Village is the same in many ways now as it was in 1959: the gracious old homes, the hydrangeas and roses, the lighthouse. But in so many ways it has changed: some new homes have been built, many homes have additions to accommodate larger families, lawns and gardens are fussed-over more, and the wonderful place where we met, The Hawes House, has closed. Also the Hammond House no longer serves steaks as good as Pate's, Art Gould isn't around to take folks out to the "far bar", wooden row boats and dories have been replaced with fiberglass, and for the moment there is no fishing off Mitchell River Bridge. Fortunately many folks work at preserving the wonderful charm of the Old Village. Making additions that blend with the original house, maintaining details that define the structure, seeking advice from experts in restoration, encouraging preservation, building with an eye to the size and the site are all methods that will help to keep our area so appealing. When we built our cottage in 1960 we had no idea of the value of the historical significance of the Old Village. We feel fortunate that we didn't like A-frames or other modern styles - I wonder what the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen would have said about those! Somehow we knew what a Cape house should look like, we just didn't know that the roof pitch had to be more than 5/12!

We built our cottage on a lot of handshakes, a great deal of support and advice from the locals, and many hours of labor from folks we know. We have a wonderful family gathering place and enough memories to fill our photo albums and memory banks for many years to come. How lucky we are that we were able to answer the original question with a very positive WHY NOT!

—Nancy and Bill Koerner

2015 Chatham Preservation Awards

2015 was a banner year for homeowners in the Old Village. A total of seven properties received Preservation Awards. The awards are given annually for sensitive renovation, restoration and preservation. They are sponsored jointly by the Chatham Historical Commission, The Historic Business District Commission and the Chatham Historical Society. Builders submit their finished projects and a jury chooses the homes to be awarded the plaques.

Congratulations this year go to the following:

1. 393 Main Street - owners John, Sandy and Ashley O'Brien for their very fresh and tasteful conversion of a former real estate office to a private home. Minglewood Homes was the contractor and the renovated house is now sparkling and the landscaping is particularly attractive.
2. 31 Hallett Lane - owner Lisa B. Green for the renovation and relocation of her home. The original house sat on top of a small hill overlooking Hallett Lane. The hill was flattened and the renovated home now is just above street level. Additions, in keeping with the original house, were added and the result is a very attractive and updated home. The contractor was Eastward Homes.
3. 43 Holway Street - owners Kevin and Nancy Hrusovsky for their restoration of the historic house that at various times in the past was the home of a notorious Old Village character named Creepy Hidgens, as well as the James Family, when they first arrived from Gay Head. The builder was Polhemus, Savery and Da Silva.
4. 42 Sunset Lane - owners Priscilla Painton and Andrew Heyward for their renovation of The Jesse and Mercy Gill House which was built in about 1804. Interestingly, the house was owned by two past Presidents of the Chatham Historical Society. The contractor was Minglewood Homes.
5. The Stable at 58 Watch Hill Way - owners Stan and Leslie Mann for the renovation of the stable once owned by Marcellus Eldredge. Eldredge, who became wealthy in the brewery business in New Hampshire, built the Eldredge Public Library and donated it to the Town of Chatham. The contractor was Essex Associated Contractors.
6. 173 Main Street - owners Gillis and Lori Cashman. Polhemus, Savery and DaSilva was the contractor and they preserved the historic front of the house and created an addition in the rear which matched the original style. The house is now spacious and has been landscaped in the front and the rear to create a gracious living space.

7. 177 Main Street - owners Bryan and Nancy Ruez for their renovation of their home. The historic front of the house was preserved, and a substantial addition was added to the rear. This home was once inhabited by Captain Benjamin Kendrick Jr., who ran the last packet ship between Chatham and New Bedford. Wonderful views of Chatham Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean are available from the restored front porch. The contractor was Rick Roy Construction.

Each of these home owners has done their part to preserve the nature of the Old Village and the Old Village Association is appreciative of their sensitivity to the historic nature of our area.

—John Whelan

Preservation Toolbox



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

As fantastic as it is, the National Register of Historic Places can get a little confusing -- even for a seasoned pro. But fear not, because the PreservationNation blog has teamed up with Jim Gabbert, a historian with the National Park Service, to create their *National Register of Historic Places Guide*.

The series will unfold over the coming weeks, and cover everything from the origins and purpose of the National Register to recommendations on where to look for help with your nomination and tips on how to amend an existing listing -- and all of this information comes to you in a new video format. Watch the show on PreservationNationblog.

~ Village News ~

Events in the Village and Close By

Wednesday July 8 - 9am to noon

Fourth Annual Village Kids for Food Drive



Village Kids will be knocking on your door July 8 hoping you'll have food or a cash donation for the Chatham Family Pantry. As always, the food must carry a current expiration date, and be a regular sized item in an unbreakable container. Especially needed are cereal, chili, brownie mix, canned fruit, beans or chili. For more information, contact co-chairs Nancy Koerner 508-945-1912 nbkoerner@yahoo.com or Lisa Green 617-680-1166.



July 17, Thursdays through Mondays - Lee Seymour performs as Ishmael in the Wellfleet Harbor Actor's Theater production of *Moby-Dick*.

Tickets are available by phone at 508-349-9428, or online at www.what.org. The show has received great reviews from the Cape Cod Times and the Chronicle, and is an excellent evening activity for anyone craving some maritime adventure.



Chatham Alliance For Preservation and Conservation meetings are held and open to everyone, and usually from 3:30-5:00 pm, the **first Thursday of the month, September - June** (except January) at the Community Center. There is usually a speaker/lecture on a topic relevant to conservation and preservation in Chatham at each meeting. Once or twice a year the Alliance also hosts forum/panel discussions on conservation and preservation topics of broad current interest. For more information email David MacAdam.

Date and venue TBA - As the Porches will not be available this summer, the Old Village Association will have a wine, cheese, and iced tea **gathering** in August at a new location. Details coming soon!

Monday August 24, 5pm - Annual Meeting at the Chatham Beach and Tennis Club. Our speaker will be Spencer Grey.

Historical Signs for Pre-1914 Houses - Eligibility for Chatham Historic House Signs has been revised by the Historical Commission, and now houses **100 years or older** are eligible for the white rectangular signs that, in three lines, summarize the early history of pre-1915 buildings, e.g.

The name of the first owner	FRANKLYN NICKERSON
The function of the building	Market
The date	c. 1850

Over 670 Chatham houses are eligible for these signs, 107 are in the Old Village. The information and application form are available on the Town web site under Historical Commission. For street designations in the Old Village visit our National Register District webpage.

Questions? Please email housesignquery@gmail.com.

If you'd like to contribute or subscribe to future e-newsletters please contact us. Allowing us to email you helps us conserve resources and funds! Your email address will be used only for OVA communications.

Happy Summer!
Old Village Association
P.O. Box 188
Chatham, MA 02633
www.oldvillagechatham.org