



FALL/WINTER NEWS  
DECEMBER 2025

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## Keeping Our History Alive



61 Elphamets Lane: Slaughterhouse to Sanctuary  
A Quiet Village in the Snow - Surfside Sleuthing

### FROM THE EDITOR

The articles in this newsletter touch on cultural, social and architectural history from the 19th century to the present. One featured building remains a commercial enterprise, while another has become a treasured home for a young couple. We also learn a bit about the organizations in Chatham in the late 1800s, which range from somewhat frivolous to beneficent, reflecting the passions and concerns of the year-round and seasonal populations. Likewise, our architecture reflects the interests of all of us as citizens, neighbors, and families. There is an interesting reciprocity between our Old Village homes and ourselves. Our homes and neighborhood businesses add so much to the texture of our lives, and we in turn contribute to the

character and beauty of these structures. We are fortunate that our carefully stewarded architecture provides a window into the past; hopefully it will continue to do so well into the future.

Many thanks to Kyle Gould, John Whelan and Elizabeth Stryjewski for their stellar research and contributions. We are also grateful to Elizabeth and to Kim Longworth for their kind assistance in editing and proofreading the news. Joan Horrocks' glorious pictures of homes and winter landscapes extoll the beauty found year-round in our Village.

Best wishes for the New Year,

Jennifer Longworth  
newsletter@oldvillagechatham.org

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Villagers,

Having successfully weathered a cold, wet and potentially disastrous storm this week, we are now enjoying sunny skies. Main Street is beautifully lighted and is crowded with happy shoppers.

This fall our Historical Preservation Committee engaged with new and old homeowners in our neighborhood, along with local realtors and the Chatham Historical Commission. As owners considered renovations to their houses, we encouraged preservation of our lovely Old Village streetscapes and our historic waterfront tableau at Mill Pond.

As always I invite you to communicate concerns and questions to our board and wish you a safe and healthy New Year.

Winnie Lear  
President of the Old Village Association Board of Directors  
directors@oldvillagechatham.org

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"We Three Kings"

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## 61 Eliphamets Lane - From Slaughterhouse to Sanctuary

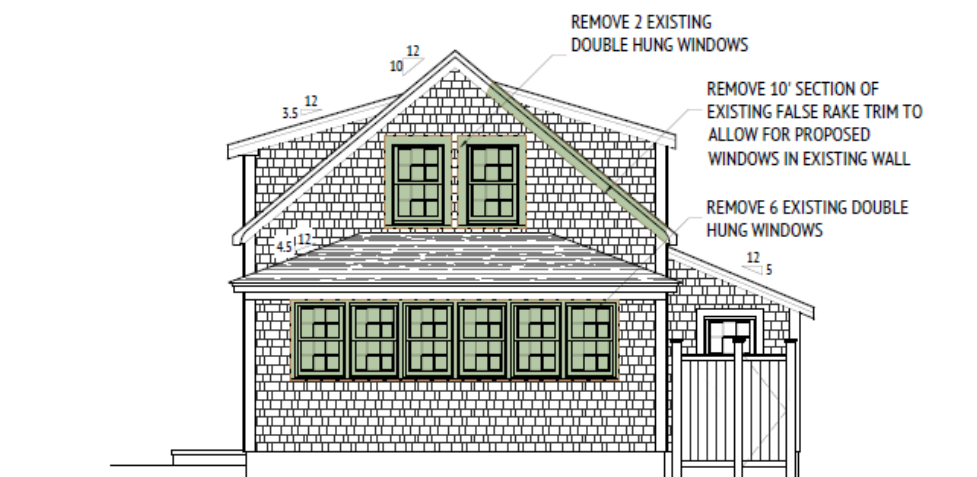
~ Kyle Gould

*Kyle thanks the authors of **Mill Cove**, Anne J. Rogers and David P. MacAdam. Their book provided the majority of the history of the slaughterhouse.*

61 Eliphamets Lane has lived many lives. Constructed in 1874 as part of Lothrop L. Bearer's compound consisting of a tavern, livery, and home for his large family on Bridge Street, the structure at 61 Eliphamets Lane was originally a slaughterhouse situated on the outskirts of the property. It was a one-and-a-half story building at the time, dominating the otherwise vacant landscape. Barn-like doors on the east and west sides allowed a prevailing sea breeze to move through the building.

In 1906, the slaughterhouse was sold to Joseph D. Bloomer for forty dollars. Bloomer used the property to store anchors, chains, and the like as his wreckage business grew over the course of his career. As part of his wreckage and salvage business, Bloomer would find and surface anchors that had broken from ships in port. During the early 1900s, Bloomer transformed the property into a livable cottage, but the property still had more lives to live. During and after World War I, it was a seasonal, then full-time residence, with each new owner making small improvements along the way.

Alongside the changing of hands of the slaughterhouse, the Mill Pond was gaining more neighbors. Around 1916, parcels of land were being leased to fishermen who erected shanties, using them as a warm place to open the shellfish they had caught - at times the discarded shell piles reached the roof lines of the shacks. These shanties came and went and within twenty years all but a few had been torn down as economic changes within the fisheries and for the landowners led to the properties having little practical use.



Site Plan rendering by McPhee Associates of Cape Cod, Dennis, MA

The evolution of the slaughterhouse continued. In 1930, the property was transformed into a full-service restaurant called *The Shanty*. The restaurant soon became an institution in the Village and beyond. The little shed next to the main house served as the kitchen and prepared chowder and seafood platters from the fresh fish and shellfish brought to the Mill Cove. Heartier meals were served in the main building. After closing in 1935, *The Shanty* reverted to a home. The property changed hands again in 1941, 1964, 2009, 2017, and most recently in 2024 when my partner Abby and I became its owners after a nail-bitingly tense foreclosure auction.



The house's spectacular views of Mill Pond - photos courtesy the author

I'd grown up in Chatham, with my mother owning the cottage at 63 Eliphamets, and my father owning the last remaining shanty on the Mill Pond at 49 Eliphamets. The Goulds' history in Chatham, and more specifically at the Mill Pond and the Old

Village spans over 100 years. Abby, after I tricked her into spending "just one summer" in Chatham, now also calls the Mill Pond home. We both work primarily from home and have been able to enjoy the changing of the seasons at the Mill Pond. The change from crowded summers to quiet winters are what attracted us to the property in the first place.

In trying to keep the charm of the home, and the Old Village, we have made only some small improvements to the property. The original six ocean-facing windows have been replaced with four larger windows. The small building off the house, originally used as a kitchen for *The Shanty* and subsequently used as an artist studio, is now my office. The quaint house consists of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen/living space and a den. During the modest upkeep in the house over the first year of ownership, hints of the past have shown through. An update to the floorboards in the den exposed the original wood flooring of the slaughterhouse, a smattering of scrap wood, none of it flush, but all of it full of character and history.



The sanctuary in the snow - photo courtesy the author

The landscape outside mirrors the same history. While reconstructing the revetment wall, old nip bottles and shards of ceramics were found scattered across the property. The excavation showed the history of the shanty town which used to surround the slaughterhouse. About a foot of topsoil is followed by three inches of oyster, quahog, and bay scallop shells, as one digs down into the Mill Pond soil. All around the house is a reminder of its past and the shanties that used to scatter the surrounding properties. The rich character that 61 Eliphamets has is one of its most special attributes and adds to the pride that we have in calling it our home.

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## A Quiet Village in the Snow

~ John Whelan

The Village is quiet these days. A blanket of snow arrived over the weekend and it is very cold. Since most of the houses in the Village are owned by seasonal or summer visitors, there are very few houses with people inside. I have never done a count of year-round inhabitants of the Village - it certainly would be an interesting contrast to the numbers here in July and August.

But that was not always so. I have a wonderful Directory from 1901 which lists all the people in the towns of Dennis, Harwich and Chatham. The Directory listed "Residents and Businesses" from 1901 and was published by A. E. Foss & Co., of Hopkinton, Mass. The book claimed to contain a complete "Resident, Street and Business Directory, Town Officers, Schools, Societies, Churches, Post Offices, Etc."

Advertisements for businesses were on the front and back covers and on a few pages, including three from Chatham. R.D. Kendrick of South Chatham was a farrier, and offered carriage building and repair. Since this was still the period before the automobile, Mr. Kendrick was most likely very busy. The next advertiser was W. F. Harding, a dealer in "Meats, Beef, Lamb, Pork, Veal, Fruit, Vegetables and Eggs". His address was Main Street, Chatham, exactly where I don't know. Mr. Harding was owner of a turn-of-the-century grocery store. Whatever happened to his grocery store is another thing I don't know. The third business, J. T. Sparrow of Depot Street and close to the train depot, offered "Harnesses and Horse Clothing, Blankets, Robes, Whips, Etc." He also listed "Cigars and Tobacco".

The 1900 Census of Massachusetts is near the front of the Directory. Chatham had 1,749 people in 1900 and was one of the most populous towns on the Cape. Provincetown was second largest with a population of 4,247, narrowly trailing only Barnstable with 4,364. Harwich and Dennis were slightly larger than Chatham. Mashpee, which at that time was close to one hundred percent Native American, numbered just 303. Brewster, which was mostly open land, totaled just 829. The Cape was not a large population center, nor was Nantucket with 3,006 residents.

Some interesting facts about Chatham streets: Main Street ended by the Chatham Light, as now. Shore Road was called The Boulevard and ended at Barcliff Avenue. Stage Harbor Road was then Atwood Street. School, Water, Holway Streets and Silverleaf Avenue were as now.



The Old Village under a blanket of snow

Chatham had five post offices then, with Chathamport in addition to the present four. As might be expected, three of the Post Masters were named Nickerson, along with an Eldredge and a Freeman. Mail arrived at all post offices twice a day - postal service was much better then.

The Eldredge Public Library was open daily in the summer from 3:00 to 5:30 PM and open Thursdays and Saturdays in the winter from 3:00 to 5:00 and 6:30 to 9:00 PM in the winter. The South Chatham Free Library existed and claimed to have 500 volumes. The hours reflected the fact that nearly everyone worked during daylight.

There were four churches: The Congregational, the Methodist, the Universalist (where St. Christopher's now stands) and the South Chatham church. Chatham had lots of clubs and societies: the Masons; the American Legion; the Grand Army of the Republic for Civil War veterans; the WRC or Women's Relief Corps, made up primarily of the wives of Civil War veterans; the Ladies Club of Industry (a group promoting better treatment and conditions for working women); the NEOP or New England Order of Protection, founded by the Knights and Ladies of Honor; the Towsomet Club, a social club headed in part by Marcellus Eldridge; the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and the YMCA, whose listing stated that it met every Sunday at 4:30 PM for men. Ladies were invited the second Sunday of every month. Women apparently did not need exercise.

The Village was full of year-round residents, 86 named Eldredge or Eldridge and 79 named Nickerson. There were also 42 members of the Harding family as well as lots of Hammonds, Howes, Kendricks, Bearses and Bassetts. Very few summer

residents are listed. Chatham was small, but the Village was full of residents. Quite a difference from today with Chatham having over 6600 year-round people, but not many in the Village.

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The Mattaquasson

## Surfside Sleuthing

~ Elizabeth Strjyewski

I remember in the early 1970s going with my mother to spend the afternoon at the Atwood House where she was a docent. Guests could wander through the house and volunteers like my mom were stationed in each room. We always sat in the kitchen. The Atwood House was a hub for townies like Joe and Reggie Nickerson, who came to chat and exchange old Chatham memories. Joe and Reggie both knew my mother well, as their cousin had proposed to my mother many years earlier when they were all working at (or near) the Old Harbor Inn in North Chatham (now a private home). They always considered my mother one of the family and called her “cuz” even though she had married someone else.



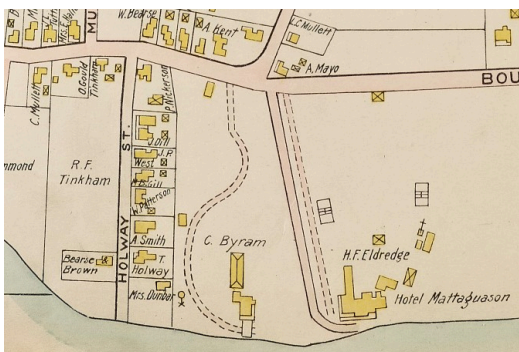
A vintage postcard image of the Surfside Inn, and how it looks today

But I digress - back to the conversations I listened in on, one of which centered on the Surfside Inn. As I recalled, they said it had been one of the homes on Watch Hill when Marcellus Eldridge (1838-1898) bought most of the land in the area for his new estate. The existing houses had to go, to make way for the compound he was

planning. Marcellus moved one of them to Holway Street and offered it as a residence to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Dill. From then on, it was known as "the Dill House". Another house was later added to it, owners changed, and it became the Surfside Inn.

Relying on this recollection, I thought I had the beginnings of an article for the OVA newsletter, and just needed to shore up some of the details. Unaware of the confusion that lay ahead, I started looking into the origin of "the Dill House" and found an article by Spencer Grey. He said that in 1894 Marcellus Eldridge purchased the Watts House, a boarding house next to his Watch Hill estate, enlarged it, and had a relative of his wife Mary, Joshua Dill, run it. It was then known as "the Dill House". This made sense, maybe the Surfside Inn had always been an inn and not a residence as I had understood. Grey goes on to say that the Inn was subsequently purchased by Frank Wilkey in 1901, who renamed it "Hotel Mattaquasson".

Further sources confirmed Dill House and the Mattaquasson were one and the same, but how could this be? Wasn't the Mattaquasson a sprawling place, in the style of old Chatham hotels like Chatham Bars Inn and the old Hawthorne Inn (see photo of my mom on the beach with the Hawthorne staff), with their gambrel roofs and long covered porches? And I had understood that the Mattaquasson was demolished in the 1950s.



Detail of 1910 map and 1949 photo of Hawthorne Inn staff with the author's mother seated third from right - courtesy the author

Could it be that the Surfside was just a surviving portion of the old Mattaquasson? A study of the exterior should confirm this. I turned to my friend Nancy Koerner and her wonderful collection of old postcards. We found several early views of the Hotel Mattaquasson. Sharing a magnifying glass, we studied each angle and could find no similarity with the Surfside Inn. Even the outbuildings around the Mattaquasson could not be mistaken for any of the collection of houses that made up the Surfside. Several searches through the archives at the library (which of course, was built by the same Marcellus Eldridge and given to the town along with his collection of 5,000 books), the Atwood house archives and the Cape Cod Chronicle could shed no light on this conundrum.

At a complete loss, I turned to Facebook; I'd seen historical postings from local photographer Christopher Seufert. Maybe he could help. He directed me to his sister, Nancy Barr, who is the Eldredge Public Library's genealogist. My prayers were answered! She knew that houses from Watch Hill were moved when Marcellus Eldridge purchased the property, and said it made perfect sense that Marcellus had moved one for a relative of his wife to live in (not her mother as I had remembered, as she had died by then). Marcellus was quite wealthy and known to help out his wife's family. He had hired Mary's cousin, Joshua, to run the inn he had just purchased on the property adjacent to his new estate.

So there you have it - Marcellus Eldridge purchased two separate buildings on Watch Hill. One he moved to Holway Street (then called Green Street) for a Dill family member, which would have been "the Dills' House" (later to become the Surfside Inn) and the other stayed put and was run as "the Dill House", which later became the Hotel Mattaquasson. Nancy Barr also provided me with a map from 1910 that depicts both the Mattaquasson and the Dill House, confirming that they were separate buildings. The Dill House became a collection of structures: a barn was moved from Watch Hill and added to the main house in 1884, and Marcellus purchased another house on Watch Hill from Rhoda Eldridge which became the third section of the building. In 1890, after Marcellus' death, Joshua and Mary Dill (not to be confused with Marcellus' wife, Mary Dill) ran the "Dill Cottages" as a boarding house.

In 1920, thirteen-year-old Bob Edwards worked at the Dill Cottages and Nancy Barr sent me a charming 1990 article from the Cape Cod Chronicle written by a 92-year-old Edwards. He describes the "long continuous porch, its length filled with rocking chairs", right across Pleasant Bay from where North Beach ended. His day began at 6:00 am when he started the fire under the heat engine which pumped water into the attic water tank. He then set out on his bicycle to collect groceries for the Inn from the Atwood store on Main Street, then getting the day's supply of fish, shellfish and lobsters from the fish pier (then located where Stage Harbor Marine is now on Bridge Street) and on to the post office at the corner of Main and Chatham Bars Avenue where Chatham Collections is now (the site of Mark Fore and Strike when the 1990 article was written). All of which he loaded into the basket of his bicycle. He said that the inn didn't have a basement, but was instead on pilings "because they didn't trust the ocean to stay where it belonged", a feeling we can certainly relate to today. Although the ocean has significantly changed Chatham's shoreline since Ed worked at the inn, the boarding houses like the Hawes House, the Nautilus and the Whistling Whale that once dotted the old village have stayed essentially the same. The Surfside Inn is the only one remaining that still welcomes guests, keeping alive a summertime tradition started long ago by Mary and Joshua Dill and once a topic of discussion at the Atwood house.

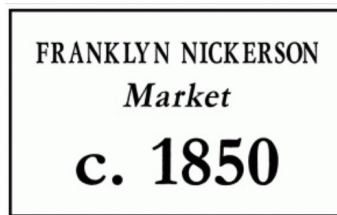


The Whistling Whale and the Nautilus are now both private homes

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## In The Old Village

**Chatham Historic House Signs** - houses 100 years old and over are eligible for signs that highlight the building's early history, as in the example below. Learn more and apply [here](#).



### Chatham Walkers Welcomes You!

We invite all Old Village residents and visitors to join the Chatham Walkers, motto: "For fun and fitness", for 2-3 mile walks starting at 7am at the Oyster Pond bathing beach parking area on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings. All ages and walking rates are welcome!



Happy New Year!



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