

## Beachcombers Strike It Rich – In The Stacks

by Kaimi Rose Lum

I was helping a parent find children's books on sharks when I saw it: a cream-colored sliver of binding wedged in a crack between bigger, more toothsome volumes in the juvenile non-fiction section. The spine was so narrow that the call number wouldn't fit and had been placed at the bottom left-hand corner of the cover: J 594 RICH, a paper-back guide to the seashells of Cape Cod National Seashore. Jumbled in with the predatory fish like some sad little library flotsam. Only it was a treasure—filled with careful descriptions and crisp pencil-and-charcoal drawings of things we see every day but never think to look up.

I checked it out and took it home. Later that weekend my two daughters and I brought down the chunky whorled shell that's been sitting on the kitchen windowsill for years and leafed through the pages to see if we could find a match. We'd been told our shell was a moon snail, but on page 36 we learned that there are three kinds: common, lobed and spotted. Conveniently, a note above the description of each shell in the book showed where, on the Cape, it could be found. We'd picked this one up on Newcomb Hollow Beach in Wellfleet, so we decided it was a common moon snail – the others were exclusive to the marsh or bay. Natural history lesson #1—done!

We moved on to the pictures of periwinkles. I would rather go on calling them "Tiggywinkles"—the word my 3-year-old kept exclaiming when we found a load of them on the Skaket flats a few Sundays ago—but here we were confronted with the hard reality of Latin names and strict science. Still, we enjoyed reading that the

northern rough periwinkle is "dark orange-tan with many slight ridges spiraling up the shell" and that the smooth (yellow) periwinkle "is often found among the fronds of brown rockweed on the bay shore," with colors that shift from bright yellow to taffy-brown.

Our beach trifles were more compelling now that we had a book to affirm their existence and garnish them with useful adjectives. Who would have thought an accidental find on a shelf at the library could lead to such pleasure?

We'll make sure it's filed properly when it's returned—between "Creepy Critters" and "The Spotter's Guide to Shells." While we're at it we'll see if we can find a book to tell us more about the wild beach pea whose purple flowers my preschooler was so careful not to squash walking in the dunes on Memorial Day. We'll start with "A Beachcomber's Botany" by Loren Petry and Marcia Norman. And my seven-year-old will want something on horseshoe crabs—if only to obtain an accurate count of their appendages (she likes to draw them). Maybe "Horseshoe Crabs and Velvet Worms: The Story of the Animals and Plants That Time Has Left Behind" by Richard Fortey. It sounds too good to pass up.

As for me, I'll look into expanding our Cape Cod collection with books on topics inquiring beachcombers might want to explore. How to decode the stripes on a lobster-pot buoy. How to triangulate the location of the smoothest sea glass. How to extract a message from a bottle with a leaky seal.

Your beach adventures await. And so do the library books to inform them.

*Kaimi Rose Lum is assistant director at Snow Library in Orleans.*



SNOW LIBRARY

## Historic Chatham, A Historic Group

by Caroline Imperato

When visitors and out-a-town-ers come to Chatham, they are impressed and enamored by the history and overall feel that the town creates. It is like stepping back in time or into an old movie. Upon getting to know the town a little more, people can begin to see how important history is to Chatham. Between articles, guides, pamphlets, memorials, signs, museums, preserved houses, parades (the list could actually go on), Chatham has made sure that history has a voice.

This historical voice doesn't just happen. One group in particular works hard to make sure that Chatham history is dynamic, encompassing, and available to all. Historic Chatham, a group that grew out of Chatham 300, the organizers of Chatham's tercentennial celebrations, is dedicated to keeping historical organizations informed and connected. By doing this, Historic Chatham has become a resource for the community.

The sites that make up Historic Chatham include the Eldredge Public Library, Mayo House, Marconi RCA-Wireless Museum, Atwood House and Museum, Chatham Railroad Museum, Godfrey Windmill, Caleb Nickerson Homestead, Chatham Lighthouse, and Monomoy Wildlife Refuge.

Many of the organizations that manage these historic sites are dependent on volunteers or have a very limited staff. A coordinated effort like Historic Chatham provides a place and time to share ideas and information, printed materials, and general support from brother and sister groups. Historic Chatham meets every few months to sit down, hear about the different historic organizations, and learn about what is going on in their worlds. It is a good forum to learn how the groups can help each other and share pertinent information. By supporting each other, these groups are then better able to offer events,

materials, programs, and other historic resources for the town and visitors to enjoy.

Danielle Jeanloz, executive director of the Atwood House and Museum and Historic Chatham chair, says, "The collaboration of Historic Chatham allows us to coordinate our effort and get more information out to the community."

Jeanloz, who is now in her fourth year participating in Historic Chatham, says, "We are here to make it easy for people to learn about our past."

The group welcomes anyone who wants to aid and support the cooperative effort of Historic Chatham.

One way to get involved with Historic Chatham is to volunteer at one of the member organizations.

These member organizations provide year-round opportunities for residents and visitors.

"The community sees Historic Chatham in all of the programs, exhibits, events, and talks sponsored by and delivered by the history organizations in Chatham," says the organization's web designer and member Ron Clark.

Historic Chatham's main collaborative event is History Weekend. History Weekend is coming up on June 21 to 23. The weekend will see museums and sites opening their doors for the season and celebrating the town's history. Many of the sites will offer discounted or free admission for the weekend, docent-lead tours, and a variety of special events including lectures, 90-minute guided bus tours of historic sites, a walking tour of downtown, and boat trips out to Monomoy Island.

To learn more about who participates in Historic Chatham and what the schedule of events includes for History Weekend, please visit their site: [www.historic-chatham.org](http://www.historic-chatham.org).

*Caroline Imperato is the administrator for the Atwood House and Museum, home of the Chatham Historical Society.*



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