



CHATHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Chatham, Massachusetts 02633



Town of Chatham  
Historic Business District Commission



The  
Chatham  
Historical  
Society, Inc.

## 2007 Chatham Preservation Awards



224 Stage Harbor Road • Doc Keene Scout Hall (Atwood School)  
Owner: Town of Chatham

The Atwood School, now known as the Doc Keene Scout Hall, was built in 1869 as a primary school for Chatham's children. Its architecture was the then popular Italianate style. According to town records, the land for the building cost \$100 and the entire building cost exactly \$2,877.17. It continued to be a school until about 1926. Around then a Boy Scout troop was started in Chatham by Doc Keene and met in the old school building. The name was gradually changed to the Doc Keene Scout Hall, as it is now known.

This renovation was a joint effort by many people, both volunteers and public bodies and officials. It began as a volunteer effort in the 1990's, spearheaded by Count Me In, a volunteer group organized to preserve the Bassett House, now home of the Chamber of Commerce at the corner of Main Street and route 137. Gary Seufert helped to recruit volunteers to work on the Scout House, which was deteriorating badly. Bill Marsh of Eastward Companies agreed to take on the project and found a number of individuals and companies to participate in the effort. It was to be a combination of volunteer and Town resources. Town meeting appropriated \$32,000 in 1998 to match private donations to renovate the building. Again in 1998, at a Special Town Meeting, \$53,000 was appropriated to fund an elevator, fire alarm and fire suppression. However, as time passed, the volunteers flagged, the money was insufficient, and it began to look as if it would not be completed. At that point the Town took over, applied for \$90,000 in Community Preservation funds and finally completed the project. Thus, many people and organizations worked on the building over an extended period. And each made a major contribution to the final product. Because this is a municipal building and open to the public, it presented challenges that a simple residential building would not. This was particularly true in the case of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Providing handicapped access made certain changes unavoidable. The most noticeable of these was the addition of an elevator on the rear of the building on Cedar Street. Originally, it looked as if the handicapped entrance would have to be a ramp on the front façade of the building. That would have completely changed the classic Italianate character of the façade. After letters and pleas, the Architectural Access Board agreed to let the major entrance be on the rear. However, it soon became clear that the second floor would have to be accessible too. At that point it was evident that an elevator would have to be installed. In order to provide a smooth traffic pattern on the interior in front of the elevator, it was necessary to move the front door from the right to the left side of the façade. They were careful to maintain the Italianate character of the door, as well as repairing or replacing the paired brackets and dentils. Renovations had to be done for sanitary and water connections, roofing and shell repairs, foundation repairs, doors and windows, electrical, heating and plumbing systems, painting of interior and exterior, floors and site work. It was a massive job, but the result is a community building which retains most of its original character and is an ornament to the town.

Contractors: Eastward Companies, Chatham, MA  
Town of Chatham, MA