

Down to the Sea in...a House?

by Dave Holbrook

House moving is a small but regular industry that sometimes uses irregular means to get the job done. The Nickerson Family Association determined to rescue its near pristine, 230-year-old ancestral Cape home from demolition and relocate it across Chatham, Mass. But there was a problem: Physical obstacles and the nature of the roadway made it impossible to transport the story-and-a-half post-and-beam house overland.

Undaunted, building mover Robert Hayden charted an ocean route instead. The 25x31-foot structure was raised and trucked down the street to nearby Stage Harbor, then lifted onto a barge for its watery voyage into Nantucket Sound and the mighty Atlantic.

Unusually calm ocean waters and clear skies blessed the team as the old homestead sailed through the notoriously treacherous waters of the Southeast Passage and Chatham Cut before reaching the shelter of Ryder's Cove. A week after beginning its voyage, the Caleb Nickerson House was safely ashore again, ready to embark on a new life as a public museum of ordinary family life in the 1700s.



House ahoy! After nearly two and half centuries on land, the historic Caleb Nickerson House embarks on an ocean passage to its new home on Ryder's Cove.



Where d'ya want it? A crane lowers this unusually well-organized lumber package onto a barge for ocean transport.



Where's the garage? The operator of this 1960s Amphicar drove out for a better look.

