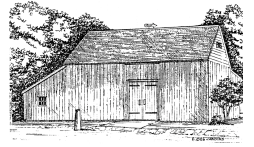




Local Lore

Issue 19



The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

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Abolitionist Paper Issued

The National Park Service in conjunction with the Essex National Heritage Area issued a paper in November describing Essex County's role in the abolitionist movement and the underground railway. The harbors, rivers and access to the sea made this county an important escape route for runaway slaves headed to Canada, not to mention the many individuals in the county who actively supported the movement. Topsfield's part was researched by the Society and is presented on page 8 of the paper. For those interested, a copy is available at the Topsfield Library as well as in the Society's archives.

Capen House Thanksgiving a Success!

A big "thank you" to Pat Rolsma and her family and volunteers for doing a great job at the Capen House Thanksgiving Open House. All were dressed in period costume, right down to a baby in the cradle, and were busy cooking over the fire, pressing cider and in general giving an authentic Thanksgiving charm to the event, which was very well attended.

Upcoming Events

Society Holiday Party
December 10th, 7:00 PM
Gould Barn

"Mary Todd Lincoln"
by Patricia Perry
January 9th, 3:00 PM
Gould Barn

"Keepers of the Lighthouses"

Storyteller Merrill Kohlhofer kept the audience spellbound as he wove his tales of lighthouse keepers at the November 12th THS meeting. Refreshments provided by Joline Guerra rounded out the evening.

Kids' Corner



In this age of electronic toys and gifts, it's interesting to think about what Christmas was like for girls and boys of the 1800's. Handmade gifts were cherished because of the time and effort that went into making them. Families would begin making these handmade treasures months in advance, items such as mittens, handkerchiefs and pen wipers (no ballpoints back then!). Store-bought gifts for girls might include hair ribbons, drawing pencils or painting sets, doll clothes, books or a doll. Boys might receive a sled, skates, carved animals, a model train, marbles or building blocks.

Holiday House Tour

December 12th
2 PM to 5 PM



The Topsfield Congregational Church is sponsoring a Holiday House Tour, with proceeds going toward the Steeple Repair Fund. Six Topsfield houses plus the Emerson Center Parlor will be decked out in Holiday finery. Homes on the tour range from Victorian to contemporary, and from post-and-beam to traditional New England styles.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and may be purchased by calling 978-887-2101 or by visiting **The Gift Horse** in Topsfield center. Tickets on the day of the tour are \$15 and will be sold at the Emerson Center Parlor on East Common Street.

See the special supplement included with this newsletter entitled "The Case of the Wandering Wife".

Docents Needed

In order to keep the Capen House open to the public on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday afternoons from mid-June to mid-September, we need volunteers to act as guides. Last season about 300 people signed the guest register; there were from 13 other states, DC and three other countries. We will provide a history briefing so that you can escort the visitors; it's that simple. Please call Pat Rolsma at 978-887-2504 to sign up for next season. We really need your help, and it's a pleasant way for you to spend a summer afternoon and help the Society at the same time.

Contributors	Editor/Designer
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In 1848 the Illustrated London News published a picture of Queen Victoria and her family gathered around their Christmas tree, and soon after most English households had a tree of their own. When that same picture appeared in an American magazine in 1850, Christmas trees became much more popular in America than they had been before, even though the German immigrants had already introduced the Christmas tree to America years earlier. Early Christmas trees were simply decorated with strings of popcorn, nuts and berries, pine cones and paper chains. Candles were carefully placed on the tree branches. Later trees became much fancier, decorated with miniature toys, musical instruments and store-bought glass ornaments. Most of these ornaments came from Germany, including the pickle...the child that found the hidden pickle ornament Christmas morning received an extra treat.