



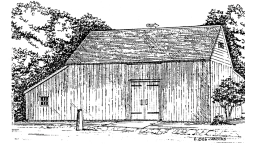
Local Lore

Issue 20

The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

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Archives and Historical Records Survey Project Final Report Readout

The Topsfield Historical Society has completed the first phase of its **Archives and Historical Records Survey** project. The effort was funded in part by a grant from the Essex National Heritage Commission.

At 7:00 pm on the evening of January 10th in the Gould Barn, Melissa Mannon, the consultant contracted to conduct the survey will present her findings.

The project's Final Report includes, "Detailed information about preservation, administration, arrangement, and access issues related to the Topsfield Historical Society archives. The report aims to help the Society put into practice professional standards for the records' security and accessibility."

The consultant's focus was material at the Gould Barn. In addition she included in her analysis Topsfield material maintained at the Town Hall, the Peabody Essex Museum's Phillips Library and the Boxford Document Center.

The report makes preservation recommendations so that the Society may provide appropriate housing for the long-term safekeeping of their archives.

The report recommends that the

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.

"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.

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
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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

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.

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.