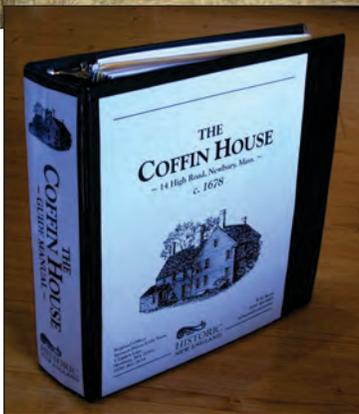


## *Guide manuals keep the staff ‘on the same page’, and interpretive handouts build loyal visitors*

By **R.W. Bacon**

An ongoing project with a remarkably long shelf-life has been the compilation – and subsequent revisions – of the guide training manual for Historic New England’s Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm in Newbury, Mass. The 230-acre working farm is also the site of the massive 1690 stone manor house, the centerpiece of an interpretive tour that covers multiple periods of ownership from its beginnings until the late 20th century. The project began in 2006 during my internship with Historic New England as part of the Harvard graduate program in museum studies. At that time the guide training resources were scattered or buried deep in the files, making it difficult for the seasonal guide employees to get “on the same page” with tour presentations.



**Coffin House  
Guide Training Manual:  
15 sections, 160 pages.**

Regional site manager Bethnay Groff charged me with (1) surveying and evaluating interpretive information in four large file cabinets, (2) selecting categories of information for an all-new guide training manual, (3) organizing the material in logical progression, and (4) producing a manual for the site manager as well as every guide on staff for the new season.

The result presented to all guides at the early-season training meeting was a 20-section-tabbed, 442-page binder. The three-inch thick heavyweight reference was tightly clutched by every guide for years. In fact, in too many cases it disappeared with guides who departed for other museum career adventures.

The Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm guide manual proved to be such a useful reference that I assembled a similar manual for the Coffin House in Newbury, Mass., a 1678 home that grew and evolved along with the many generations of the family until its acquisition by Historic New England (SPNEA) in 1929. This binder was a slim volume in comparison: 15 tabbed sections and only 160 pages.

### **Interpretive Handout Materials**

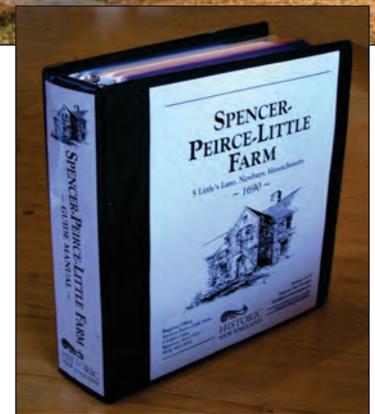
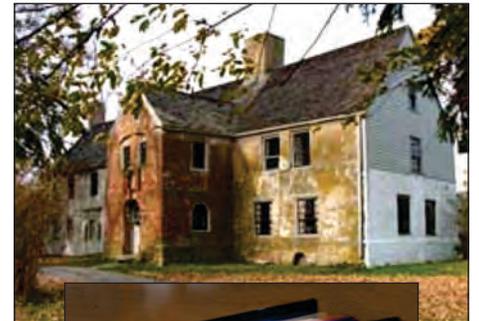
A byproduct of the survey of files at the Newbury, Mass. regional headquarters was a thorough understanding of all five properties in the region, and a sense of what curiosities each property would arouse among visitors.

My experience as a public presenter convinced me long ago that every museum visitor or program attendee should leave with something tangible in-hand that reinforces the content presented. The rationale: Museums invest in glossy marketing materials to draw the visitors in. But then after an information-packed visit or tour, they often leave with nothing in-hand for future reference. In my view, even a

minimal, low-cost, informative take-away handout demonstrates a sincere commitment to the educational mission component. Demonstrating this commitment builds visitor loyalty and encourages membership support.

Therefore as part of the Family Genealogy Day event conceived and executed also in 2006, I developed interpretive materials to include in the program packet – single-page handouts on low-cost paper – for all five properties in the region. In the decade since, these interpretive materials have proven useful to the guide staff and informative to the public.

On the next few pages are the guide manual covers and contents, followed by the “one-sheet” interpretive materials developed for the Historic New England properties that are still working for the organization today. ■



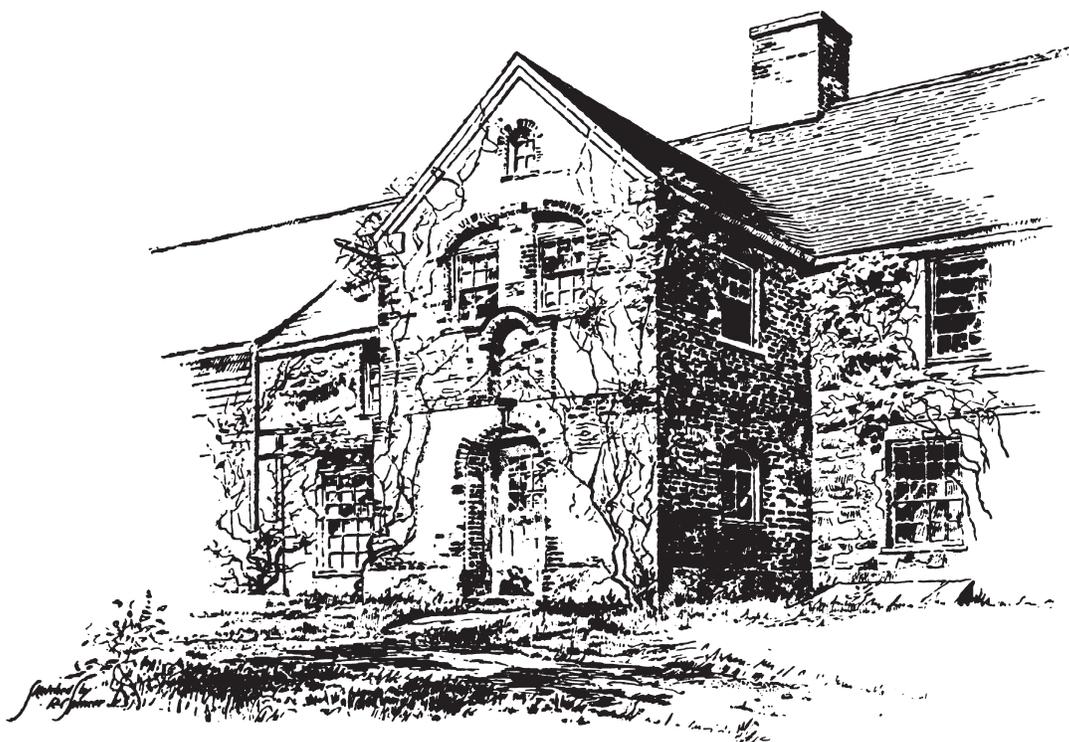
**Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm  
Guide Training Manual:  
20 sections, 442 pages.**

---

# SPENCER- PEIRCE-LITTLE FARM

5 Little's Lane, Newbury, Massachusetts

~ 1690 ~



Regional Office:  
Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm  
5 Little's Lane  
Newbury, MA 01951  
(978) 462-2634



HISTORIC  
NEW ENGLAND

Bethany Groff  
Regional Site Manager  
[bgroff@historicnewengland.org](mailto:bgroff@historicnewengland.org)

Compilation from HNE files by R.W. Bacon, spring 2006.  
Revised spring 2012.

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# SPENCER-PEIRCE-LITTLE FARM

5 Little's Lane, Newbury, Massachusetts

~ 1690 ~

## ~ GUIDE MANUAL ~

*Compilation from HNE files by R.W. Bacon, spring 2006.  
Revised & updated, spring 2012.*

### Table of Contents

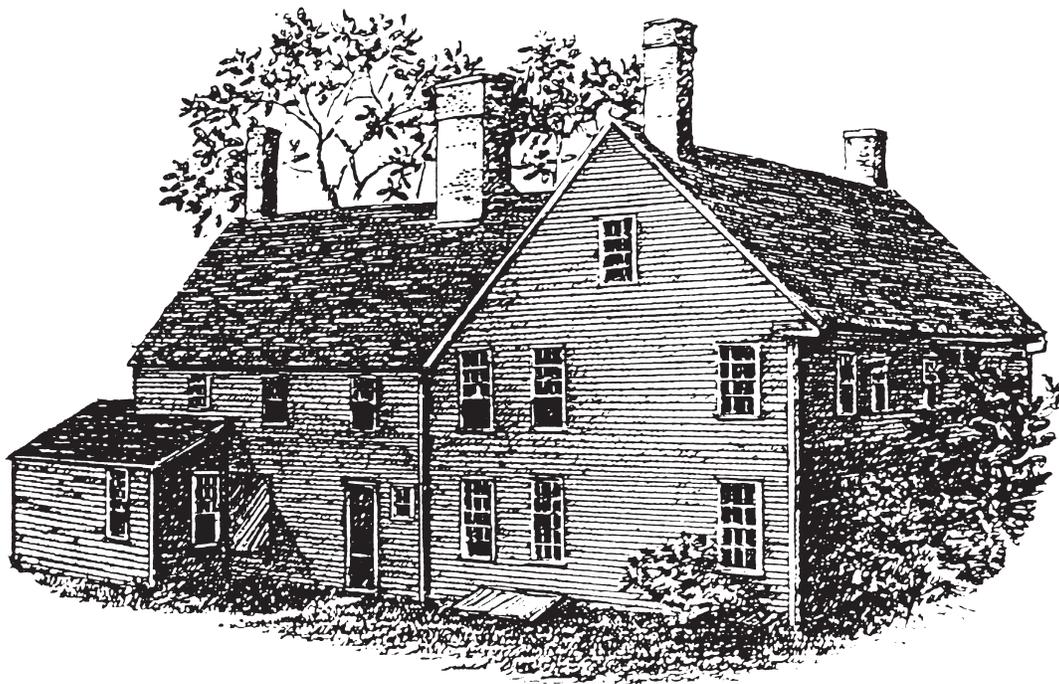
1. ....	Schedule
2. ....	Contact List – Phone #s & E-mail Addresses
3. ....	Opening & Closing Procedures
4. ....	Cleaning Protocols
5. ....	Event-Specific Protocols
6. ....	Security Procedures
7. ....	Animal Care Procedures
8. ....	SPL “Walk Through Time” Tour Information
9. ....	Event Tour Outline
10. ....	2009 Dendrochronology Report
11. ....	General Newbury History: <i>Old Town and The Waterside</i>
12. ....	Chronology of Ownership
13. ....	Spencer (1635-1651) & Peirce (1651-1778) Periods
14. ....	Tracy Period (1778-1797)
15. ....	Boardman Period (1797-1813)
16. ....	Little Period (1861-1986)
17. ....	Stekionis Family (1913-1994) (Tenant House Exhibit)
18. ....	Agricultural History at SPL Farm
19. ....	HNE Newbury & North Shore Region Properties)
20. ....	Personnel Policy



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# THE COFFIN HOUSE

~ 14 High Road, Newbury, Mass. ~  
c. 1678



Regional Office:  
Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm  
5 Little's Lane  
Newbury, MA 01951  
(978) 462-2634



HISTORIC  
NEW ENGLAND

R.W. Bacon  
(978) 462-4407  
[rwbacon@comcast.net](mailto:rwbacon@comcast.net)

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# THE COFFIN HOUSE

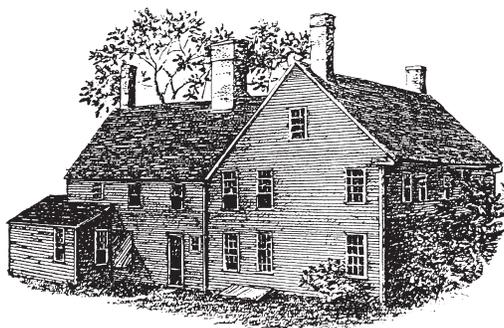
~ 14 High Road, Newbury, Mass. ~  
c. 1678

## ~ GUIDE MANUAL ~

*Compilation from HNE files by R.W. Bacon, spring 2006.*

### Table of Contents

1.....	Tour Outline
2. ....	Tour Information
3.....	Family Tree
4.....	Architectural & Conjectural Evolution
5.....	Dendrochronology Report
6.....	Good Wives (L.T. Ulrich)
7. . .	Ould Newbury (J. Currier); Away Off Shore (N. Philbrick)
8.....	Plans & Drawings
9. ....	Old-Time New England - 1929 Article (J.W. Spring)
10. ....	Old-Time New England - 1936 Article (H. Huse)
11. . . .	Old-Time New England - 1950 Article (F.D. Kingsbury)
12.....	Antiques Magazine - 1960 Article (N.F. Little)
13.....	1839 Letter (Joshua Coffin)
14.....	On Dating N.E. Houses (Antiques, 1945, N.F. Little)
15.....	Physical Evidence Recently Uncovered



# SPENCER-PEIRCE-LITTLE FARM

~ 5 Little's Lane, Newbury, Mass. ~  
1690

Open Thursday through Sunday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., June 1 through October 15 (tours or drop-in basis).

Open Wednesdays for group tours by appointment.

Admission: Children \$4, Adults \$5, Families \$18; Historic New England members free.

Directions: Take I-95 to Rte. 113, Newburyport. Rte. 113 turns into Rte. 1A (High Rd.)  
Follow Rte. 1A for 3.7 miles. Turn left onto Little's Lane.



## A 230-acre farm . . . a family-friendly site for hands-on learning . . . a majestic 1690 stone house . . . and a National Historic Landmark

At *Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm*, visitors of all ages can enjoy hands-on activities that teach about farm life over the centuries. Experience old-fashioned trades & pastimes, explore nature trails, and enjoy a picnic under ancient maple trees. Pump water from a well instead of turning on a tap. Look through a stereo viewer instead of watching TV. Learn about archaeology by piecing together excavated "artifacts." Visit our resident farm animals – a cooperative program with the MSPCA. The farm is open on a drop-in basis, but "Walk Through Time" house tours are also available.

The 1690 house is also a laboratory for learning about social history, building conservation, and archaeology. Archaeological digs have yielded evidence that contributes to the story of the house. View-ports throughout show how preservation architects addressed critical structural problems.

The medieval-style cruciform structure was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1968.

The medieval-style cruciform structure was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1968.

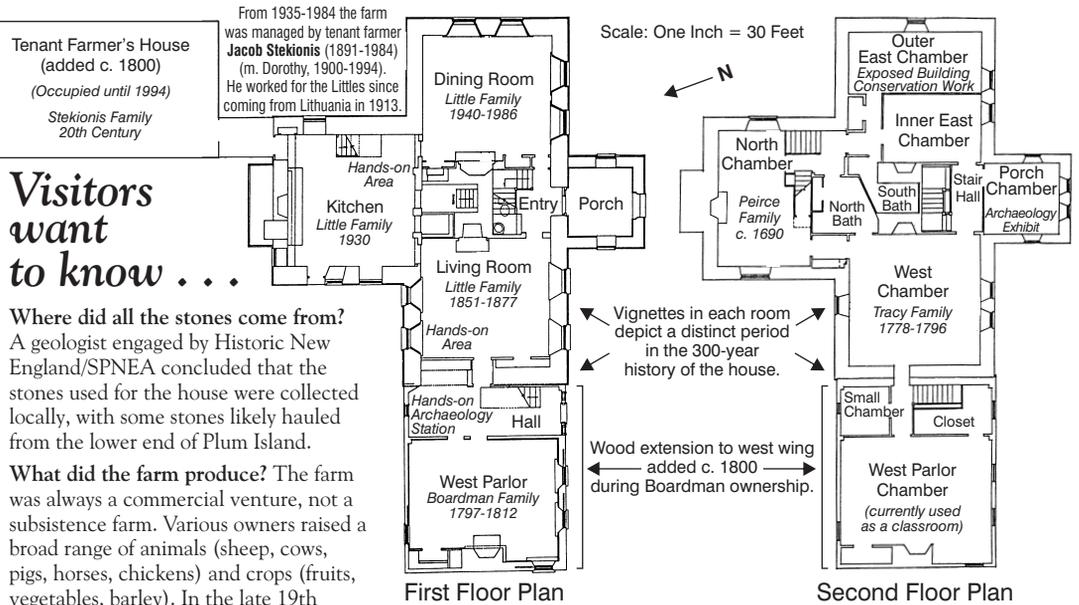
### Visitors want to know . . .

#### Where did all the stones come from?

A geologist engaged by Historic New England/SPNEA concluded that the stones used for the house were collected locally, with some stones likely hauled from the lower end of Plum Island.

**What did the farm produce?** The farm was always a commercial venture, not a subsistence farm. Various owners raised a broad range of animals (sheep, cows, pigs, horses, chickens) and crops (fruits, vegetables, barley). In the late 19th century the primary business of the Little family was training & selling draft horses.

**When was the barn built?** The barn northwest of the house was built c. 1775. The current Visitor Center is located at the end of the former carriage barn, which was built c. 1850.



First Floor Plan

Second Floor Plan

South (Front) Elevation



## A Time Line of Ownership . . .

<b>John Spencer</b> (1604-1648) In 1635, Spencer was granted 400 acres in Newbury. He returned to England. His nephew, <b>John Spencer</b> (16??-16??) inherited the farm in 1648.	<b>Daniel Peirce</b> (1611-1677) m. Sarah (?) (d. 1654) Ann (Goodale) (Milward) (1600-1690) A blacksmith, he purchased the farm in 1651. Also lived on Federal St., Newburyport.	<b>Daniel Peirce, Jr.</b> (1638-1704) m. Elizabeth Milward (1644-1709) The stone house was built during Daniel Jr.'s ownership in 1690. The other family home was on Federal St., Newburyport.	<b>Benjamin Peirce</b> (1669-1711) m. Lydia Frost (1674-1752) <b>Charles Peirce</b> (1694-1764) m. Sarah Frost (1699-?) <b>Charles Peirce, Jr.</b> (1719-1772) m. Mary Feveryear (1738-1760)	<b>Daniel Peirce &amp; William Peirce</b> Charles Peirce, Jr. left no heirs, and ownership of the farm was in dispute between his nephew & brother. The property was divided into two parcels.	<b>Nathaniel Tracy</b> (1751-1796) m. Mary Lee (1755-1819) Revolutionary-era privateer acquired both divisions of property. Remodeled interior until 1786 bankruptcy. His widow sold the property to Offin Boardman.	<b>Offin Boardman</b> (1748-1811) m. Sarah Greenleaf (1747-1796) m. 2nd Sarah Tappan (1745-1820) Mariner, merchant, ship owner, farmer. Added west wing & tenant house. Kept a detailed diary of farm activities.	<b>John Pettingell</b> (1745-1827) m. Sarah Smith (1751-1836) Newburyport merchant used farm as summer residence 1813-1827. <b>Pettingell</b> heirs rented to tenant farmers 1827-1851, then leased to E.H. Little.	<b>Edward H. Little</b> (1819-1877) m. Catherine Little (1824-1923) Leased 1851; purchased 1861. <b>Edward F. Little</b> (1853-1935) m. Sarah Adams (1854-1921) <b>Daniel N. Little</b> (1858-1912) m. Amelia Bradley (1863-1903)	<b>Eliza A. Little</b> (1861-1959) <b>Agnes L. Little</b> (1896-1982) <b>Amelia W. Little</b> (1892-1986) Farm managed by tenant farmer <b>Jacob Stekionis</b> . In 1971 cousins Agnes & Amelia deeded farm to SPNEA, reserving life tenancy.	<b>Historic New England (SPNEA)</b> Upon the death of Amelia Little, SPNEA began the monumental architectural conservation project and developed the "Walk Through Time" historic interpretation.
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1635-1651 → 1651-1677 → 1677-1704 → 1704-1772 → 1772-1778 → 1778-1797 → 1797-1813 → 1813-1861 → 1861-1935 → 1935-1986 → 1986-Present



# HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

Defining the past. Shaping the future.

### Become a Member of Historic New England!

Historic New England is the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive regional preservation organization in the country. We're a membership organization – not an exclusive club – so we welcome you to join us in our efforts. For membership categories & benefits, please visit our web site.

Regional Office:  
Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm  
5 Little's Lane  
Newbury, MA 01951  
(978) 462-2634

Interpretive materials by R.W. Bacon (2006; rev. 2012)

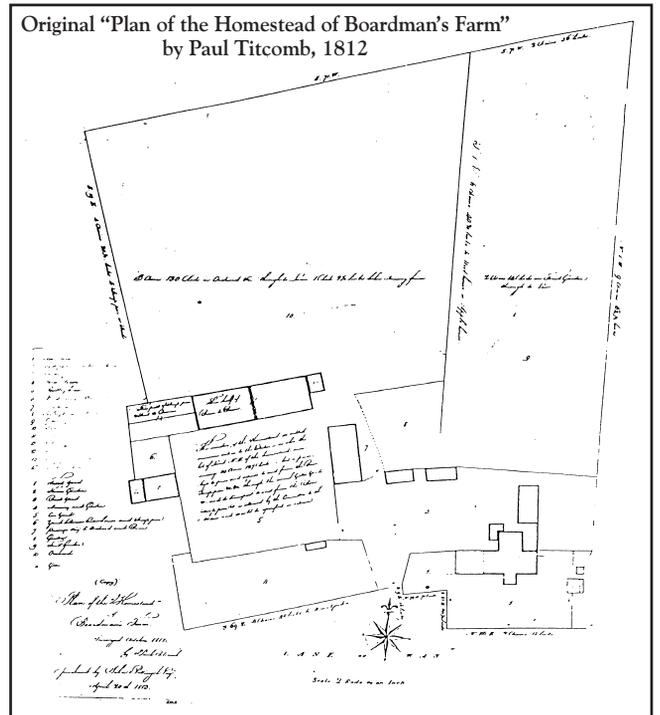
[www.HistoricNewEngland.org](http://www.HistoricNewEngland.org)



## An 1812 survey of the farmyard . . .

In 1812, after the death of Offin Boardman, two detailed surveys of the farm were undertaken in preparation for the sale of the property. At right is the survey by Paul Titcomb, "A Plan of the Homestead of Boardman's Farm." The survey indicated buildings, assigned use areas, landscape features, pathways, field divisions, boundaries, and abutters. The plan is shown at right.

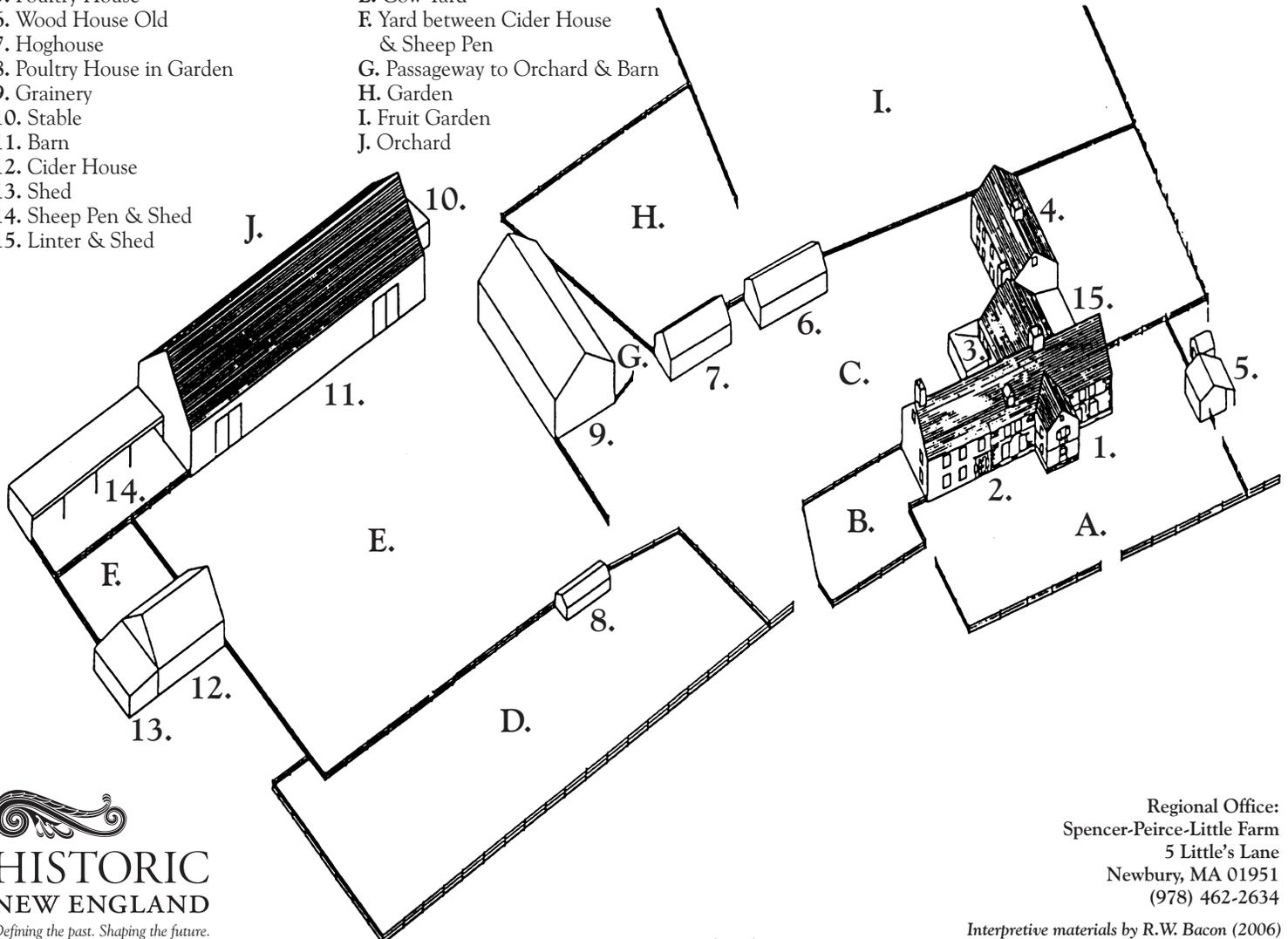
In the early 1990s SPNEA (Historic New England) preservation carpenter Bruce Blanchard drew a three-dimensional conjectural drawing based on Titcomb's plan. This drawing, below, gives a readily understandable view of the farmyard as it would have appeared during Offin Boardman's ownership.



### 1812

Based on the survey "Plan of the Homestead of Boardman's Farm" by Paul Titcomb, 1812  
(Conjectural Drawing by Bruce Blanchard)

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Stone House                 | A. Front Yard                           |
| 2. Wood Part of Dwelling House | B. Flower Garden                        |
| 3. Scullery                    | C. Back Yard                            |
| 4. Farm House                  | D. Nursery & Garden                     |
| 5. Poultry House               | E. Cow Yard                             |
| 6. Wood House Old              | F. Yard between Cider House & Sheep Pen |
| 7. Hoghouse                    | G. Passageway to Orchard & Barn         |
| 8. Poultry House in Garden     | H. Garden                               |
| 9. Grainery                    | I. Fruit Garden                         |
| 10. Stable                     | J. Orchard                              |
| 11. Barn                       |   |
| 12. Cider House                |   |
| 13. Shed                       |   |
| 14. Sheep Pen & Shed           |   |
| 15. Linter & Shed              |   |



# THE COFFIN HOUSE

~ 14 High Road, Newbury, Mass. ~

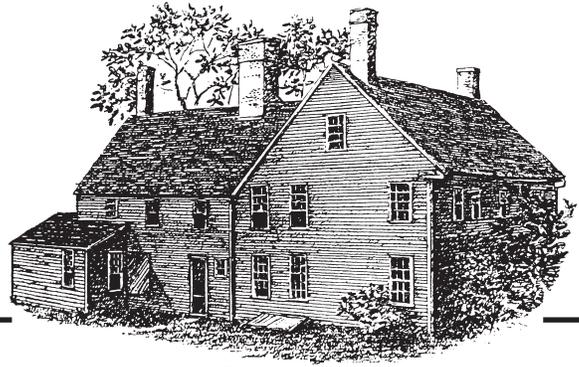
c. 1678

Open the first & third Saturdays of the month, June 1 through October 15, from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (last tour at 4 p.m.); tours are approximately one hour.

Admission \$5, seniors \$4, students & children 6-12 \$2.50;

Historic New England members free.

**Directions:** Take I-95 to Rte. 113, Newburyport. Rte. 113 turns into Rte. 1A (High Rd.) Follow Rte. 1A for 3.3 miles. The Coffin House is on the right, just before the church.



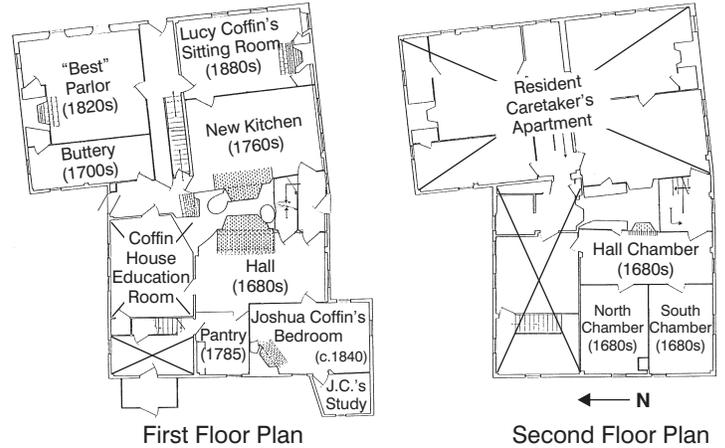
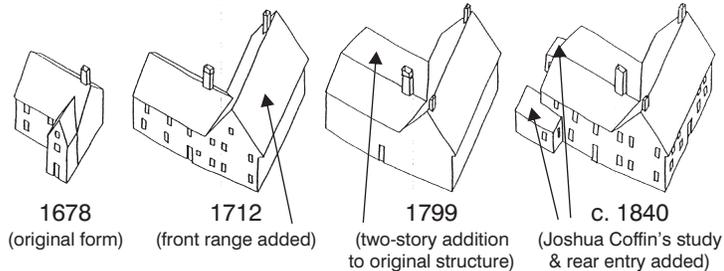
**The Coffin House** chronicles the evolution of domestic life in rural New England over three centuries. The structure, which contains the family's furnishings, began as a simple dwelling built in 1678 in the post-medieval style. Tristram Coffin and his family lived, cooked, and slept in two or three rooms; their possessions were few.

In 1712, the house was more than doubled in size to provide living space for a married son and his family. As the family grew, partitions were added and lean-tos built so that different generations could continue to live together under one roof.

In 1785, two Coffin brothers legally divided the structure into two separate dwellings, each with its own kitchen and living spaces. With rooms from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, the Coffin House depicts the impact of an expanding economy and new concepts, such as the notion of privacy, on architecture and modes of living. **For more details about the Coffin House**, including history and photos, visit [www.historicnewengland.org/historic-properties/homes/coffin-house](http://www.historicnewengland.org/historic-properties/homes/coffin-house).

While in Newbury, visit the Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm less than a mile away. Other Historic New England properties are nearby: the Swett-Isley House (Newbury) and Rocky Hill Meeting House (Amesbury). Visit [HistoricNewEngland.org](http://HistoricNewEngland.org) for more information about museum visits.

## Architectural evolution . . .



## Visitors want to know . . .

**How do we know when the house was built?** For many years the house was thought to have been built in 1654. In 2002 sample borings of timbers in the original structure and front range were analyzed by the Oxford University Dendrochronology Laboratory in England. Study of the growth rings determined the original structure was built in 1678 and the front range in 1712.

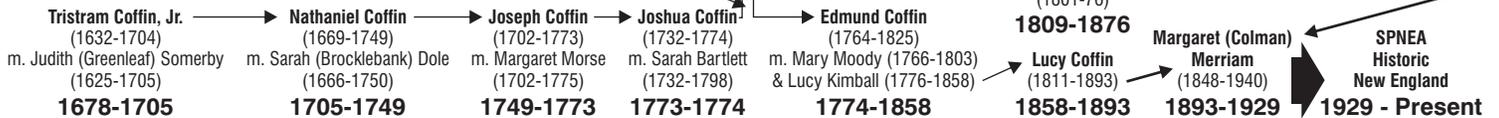
**Was Tristram Coffin, Jr. related to the Coffin family of Nantucket?** Yes. Tristram Coffin, Sr. and family [except sons Tristram Coffin, Jr.; Peter Coffin; and daughter Elizabeth (Coffin) Greenleaf] moved to Nantucket in 1659.

**How and when did Historic New England acquire the Coffin House?** The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA, now known as Historic New England) was founded in 1910 to preserve examples of early New England architecture. Coffin family descendants knew they had a historic treasure worthy of preservation, and they gave the house to SPNEA in 1929.

**Did any Coffin family occupants ever have indoor plumbing?** No. The reconstructed privy behind the house is in the same location as in 1929.

## A Coffin House Time Line . . .

### A Time Line of Ownership . . .



### A Time Line of Newbury and beyond . . .



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(978) 462-2634

Interpretive materials by R.W. Bacon (Revised 4/2015)

[www.HistoricNewEngland.org](http://www.HistoricNewEngland.org)

# Coffin House Families in Newbury, Mass., 1678-1929

Prepared for Historic New England by R.W. Bacon, June 2010.

**Tristram Coffin Sr.**  
(1609-1681)  
b. Brixton, Devon, England;  
d. Nantucket, Mass.

**Coffin Family immigrant ancestors**  
m. 1629,  
Devon, England  
(9 children)

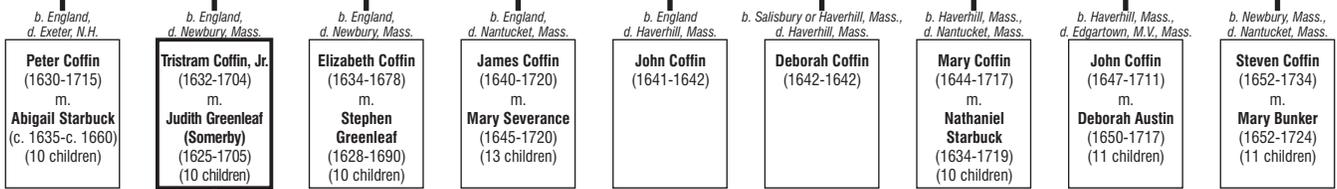
**Dionis Stevens**  
(1609-1676)  
b. Brixton, Devon, England;  
d. Nantucket, Mass.

# The Coffin House

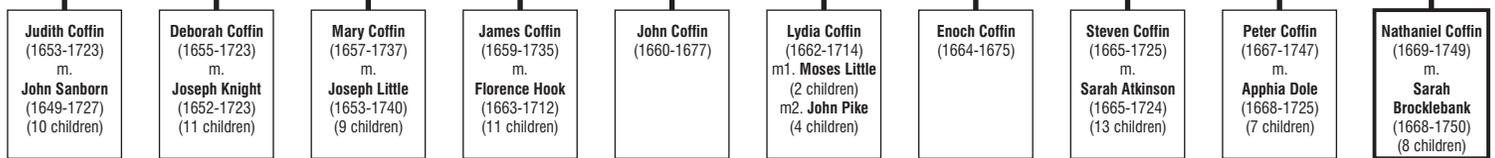
c. 1678

14 High Road, Newbury, Mass.

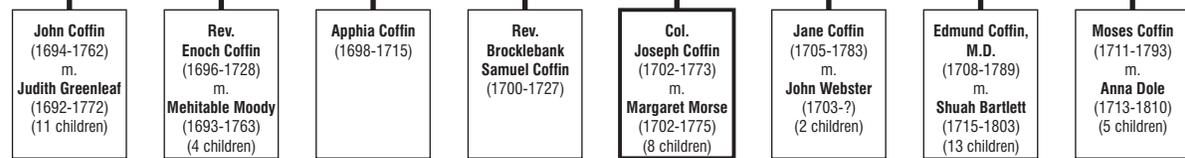
Tours: 1st & 3rd Sat., 11-4 (June 1 - Oct. 15)



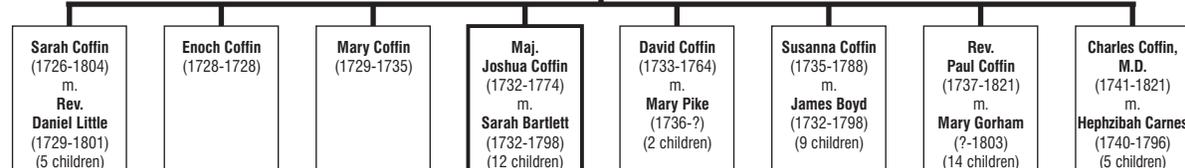
**Tristram Coffin, Jr. Family**  
Tristram Coffin, Jr. (1632-1704) m. Judith Greenleaf (Somerby) (1625-1705) 1652 in Newbury, Mass.; 10 children; plus 3 children w/ Henry Somerby (1610-1652) (Coffin House in Newbury built in 1678.)



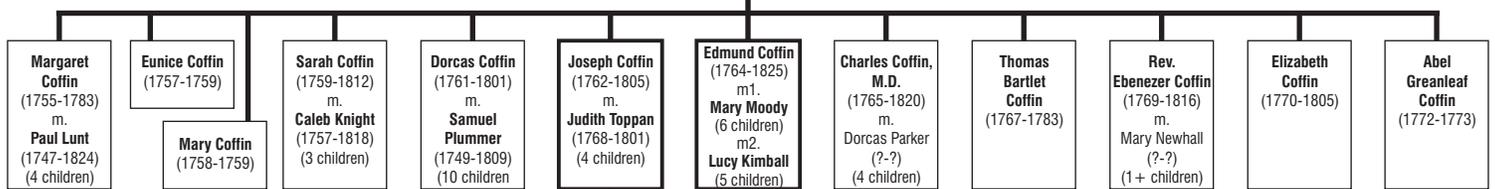
**Nathaniel Coffin Family**  
Nathaniel Coffin (1669-1749) m. Sarah Brocklebank (1668-1750) 1693 in Newbury, Mass. (8 children) (Nathaniel added front range of house facing High Road in 1712.)



**Joseph Coffin Family**  
Joseph Coffin (1702-1773) m. Margaret Morse (1702-1775) 1725 in Newbury, Mass. (8 children) (Joseph Coffin & son Joshua replaced all windows and built one-story rear addition c. 1765.)



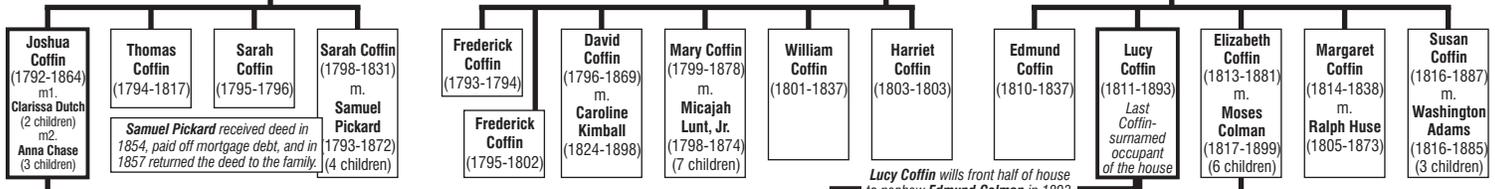
**Joshua Coffin Family**  
Joshua Coffin (1732-1774) m. Sarah Bartlett (1732-1798) 1755 in Newbury, Mass. (11 children)



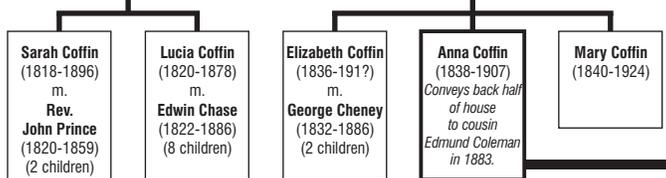
**Joseph Coffin Family**  
Joseph Coffin (1762-1805) m. 1st Judith Toppan (1768-1801) 1791 in Newbury, Mass. (4 children); m. 2nd Margaret Sutherland (1775-1861) 1803 in Newbury, Mass.

**Joseph & Edmund Coffin**  
legally divided the house in 1785.

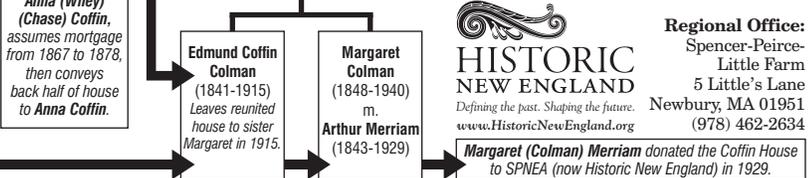
**Edmund Coffin Family**  
Edmund Coffin (1764-1825) m. 1st Mary Moody (1766-1803) 1792 in Newbury, Mass. (6 children); m. 2nd Lucy Kimball (1776-1858) 1809 in Newbury, Mass. (5 children)



**Joshua Coffin ("The Abolitionist") Family**  
Joshua Coffin (1792-1864) m. 1st Clarissa Dutch (1792-1821) 1817 in Exeter, N.H. (2 children); m. 2nd Anna (Wiley) Chase (1801-1876) 1835 in Philadelphia, Pa. (3 children)



**Elizabeth Coffin / Moses Colman Family**  
Elizabeth Coffin (1813-1881) m. Moses Colman (1817-1899) 1839 in Newbury, Mass. (6 children)



*Elizabeth Wiley, sister of Anna (Wiley) Chase Coffin, assumes mortgage from 1867 to 1878, then conveys back half of house to Anna Coffin.*

*Lucy Coffin wills front half of house to nephew Edmund Colman in 1893.*

**Regional Office:**  
Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm  
5 Little's Lane  
Newbury, MA 01951  
(978) 462-2634

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*Margaret (Colman) Merriam donated the Coffin House to SPNEA (now Historic New England) in 1929.*

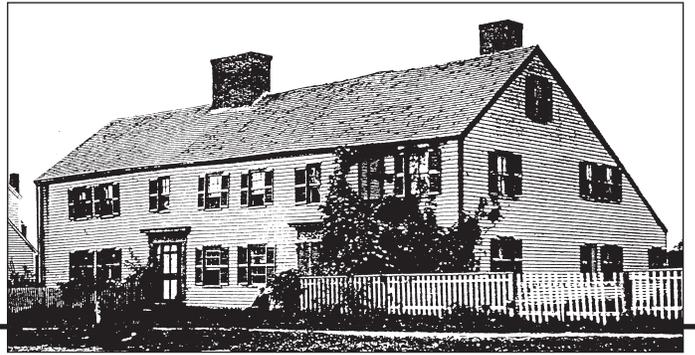
# SWETT-ILSLEY HOUSE

~ 4 High Road, Newbury, Mass. ~  
c. 1670

*A Historic New England Study Property*

Private Heritage Tours available with advanced reservations June 1 - Oct. 15.  
Call 617-227-3956. (Also open on selected dates during the year.)

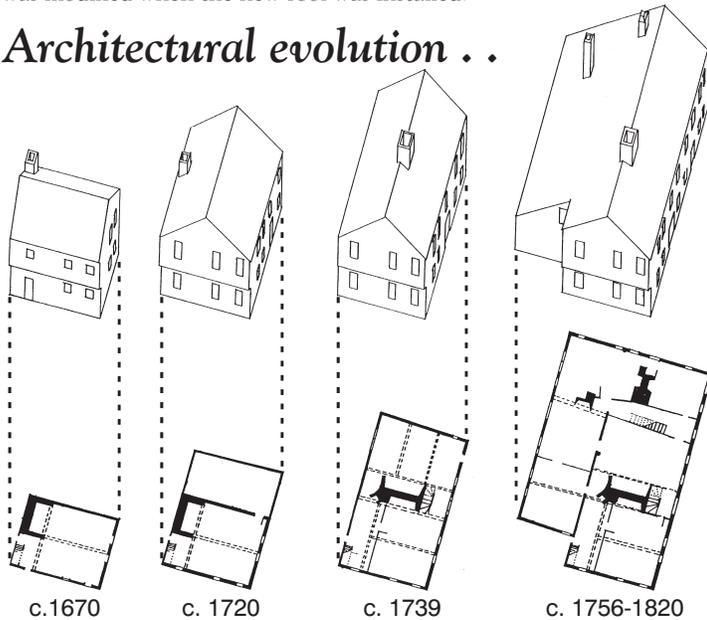
**Directions:** Take I-95 to Rte. 113, Newburyport. Rte. 113 turns into Rte. 1A (High Rd.)  
Follow Rte. 1A for 3.2 miles. Swett-Ilsley House is on the right, at the Newbury town line.



**The Swett-Ilsley House** was SPNEA's (now Historic New England) first architectural acquisition in 1911. Built in 1670 for Stephen Swett, innholder and proprietor of the Blue Anchor Tavern, the original portion of the house was a single room with chimney bay, and faced south.

Passing through a series of owners, the house remained essentially unaltered until about 1720, when it was enlarged in an atypical fashion with the addition of a second unit to the north. A new roof, made in part with the salvaged rafters of the old roof, was built over the whole, changing the ridge pole direction from an east-west to a north-south axis. Although the chimney, then located at the northwestern corner of the main block, was retained, the upper stack was modified when the new roof was installed.

## Architectural evolution . . .



The house was further extended to the north, although the addition had to conform to an irregular lot line. The original chimney was demolished, and a new central chimney was added to serve the 1650 and 1720 portions of the house. The irregular perimeter of the house was rectified in 1756, when the purchase of land to the north allowed a final northern addition with stair-hall and separate chimney. The building achieved its present form with the construction of a kitchen lean-to at the west end of the house, complete with one of the most massive fireplaces of the period (over 10 feet wide), containing three beehive ovens.

Over the years, in addition to being a residence, the building is known to have been a tavern, chocolate mill, tallow chandlery, tobacconist shop, printing shop, restaurant, and "house of public entertainment." In addition, owners who were carpenters, cordwainers, saddlers, joiners, and blacksmiths may have plied their trade there. In its last commercial incarnation (1916-1965) it was a tea room and gift shop.

## Visitors want to know . . .

**Why did SPNEA/Historic New England choose the Swett-Ilsley House as its first acquisition in 1911?** SPNEA founder William Sumner Appleton chose the Swett-Ilsley House as the organization's first preservation project because he was interested in saving the earliest examples of humble residential architecture that were the most vulnerable to drastic remodeling or demolition. Such modest houses were less likely to be rescued by private restoration efforts than grand Georgian or Federal houses.

**Why isn't the house restored and furnished?** The original restoration ran out of money, and later, Appleton's outlook on preservation vs. restoration changed. The original work, funded by the local chapter of the D.A.R., peeled away layers of lath and plaster to reveal original timbers, early eighteenth-century paneling, and one of the largest fireplaces in New England. Restoration stopped when funds were exhausted, before any long-gone original features like diamond-paned case-ments were recreated, resulting in a house with an unrestored eighteenth-century exterior and a partially restored interior reflecting both the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Today the house is one of Historic New England's Study Properties, and is purposely left unfurnished to allow architectural historians and preservation craftsmen easy access to the building's original features.

## A Time Line of Ownership . . .

<b>1670-91</b> Stephen Swett (1620-1693) innholder	<b>1691-13</b> Hugh March, Jr. (1656-1727) innholder 1694 John March (1658-1712) 1713 John March (1690-?), saddler	<b>1715-52</b> Isaac Noyes (1698-1718) joiner 1739 Enoch Noyes (1717-1747) Moses Noyes (1714-1754) joiner	<b>1752-65</b> Daniel Clark (1705-1764) cordwainer	<b>1765-72</b> Nathan Pierce (?-?) shopkeeper	<b>1772-80</b> Benjamin Colman (1720-1797) Dudley Colman (1745-1797)	<b>1780-83</b> Nicholas Titcomb (?-?) chocolate, tallow chandlery, & tobacconist business	<b>1783-97</b> Oliver Putman (1755-) blacksmith, scythemaker	<b>1797-1911</b> Isaiah Ilsley (?-1828) joiner Stephen Ilsley (1772-1832)	<b>c. 1832</b> John Ilsley (?-?) Stephen Ilsley, Jr. (1810-1851) c. 1880 Stephen Ilsley III (1837-?)	<b>c. 1890s</b> Mrs. Moses (Ilsley) Knight & Mrs. James (Ilsley) Small	<b>1911</b> Miss S.E. Small, g-granddaughter of Isaiah Ilsley, sells property to SPNEA (now Historic New England).
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*Interpretive materials by R.W. Bacon (6/2006)*

[www.HistoricNewEngland.org](http://www.HistoricNewEngland.org)

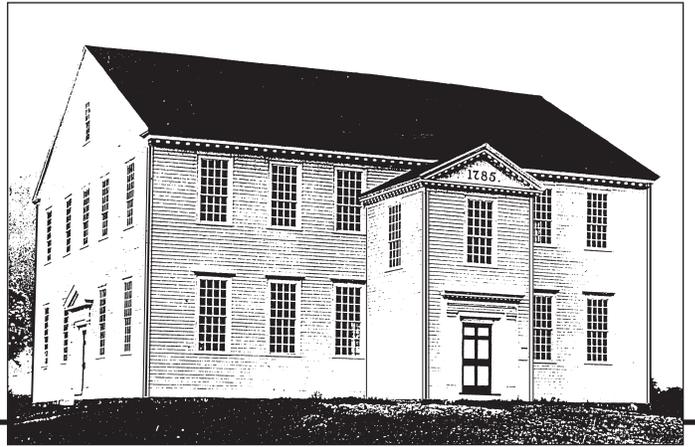
# ROCKY HILL MEETING HOUSE

~ 4 Old Portsmouth Road, Amesbury, Mass. ~  
c. 1785

A Historic New England Study Property

Private Heritage Tours available with advanced reservations June 1 - Oct. 15.  
Call 617-227-3956. (Also open on selected dates during the year.)

Directions: Take I-95 to Rte. 110 west, Amesbury. From Rte. 110 turn right onto Elm St. towards downtown Amesbury. Look for Old Portsmouth Rd. 0.4 miles on the right.



**The Rocky Hill Meeting House** is the best preserved example of an original 18th century meeting house interior in New England. It was built in 1785 for church services and town meetings, replacing a c. 1715 meeting house for the West Parish of Salisbury, Mass. (now part of Amesbury). It was located on the only road that crossed (via ferry) the Powow River, leading to Salisbury Pt. and Portsmouth, N.H. Today we owe the existence of the Rocky Hill Meeting House to an accident of timing and location – a circumstance that led to a decline in its use just a few decades after its construction.

With the beginnings of industrialization around 1800, a new mill town arose on the banks of the Powow. The West Parish, trapped by geography between the mill town to the west and the fishermen and farmers to the east and south, found itself in difficult financial straits. The economic situation, coupled with new ideas about religion and architecture – and the construction of two new churches in the area – led the meeting house congregation to steadily drift away.

Without the support of a large congregation, funds were never available for alterations to the meeting house. Thus, the Rocky Hill Meeting House has survived with its original fittings and finishes intact. The pews have never been painted, while the marbled pulpit and pillars supporting the galleries still boast their original paint. In addition, the original 18th century hardware survives throughout the building. Historic New England (formerly SPNEA) acquired the property in 1941 to ensure its preservation.

## Visitors want to know . . .

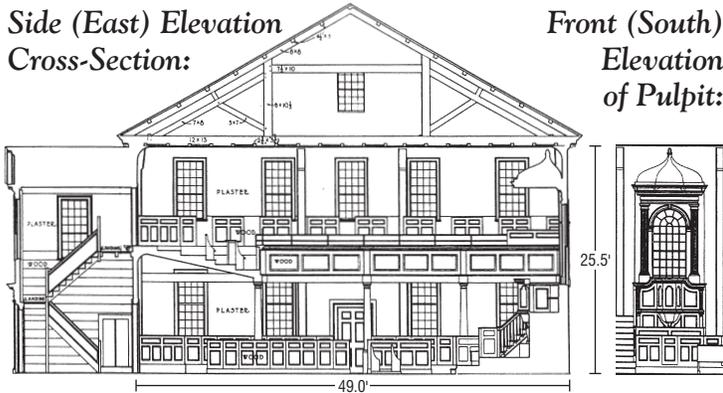
**Who built this architectural marvel?** The design and construction is credited to Palmer & Spofford of Newburyport, but research is inconclusive as to whether “Palmer” was the celebrated long-span bridge builder Timothy Palmer. The building is notable for its 61' x 49' dimensions – with no supports in the expansive interior except for the columns that hold up the balcony. The 1785 construction used material salvaged from the 1716 meeting house, such as the sill on east side.

**Why do the bench seat fold up?** The bench seats folded up so people within the confines of the pews could all stand for prayer more comfortably. Because of this, the meeting house was known to accommodate as many as 700 people.

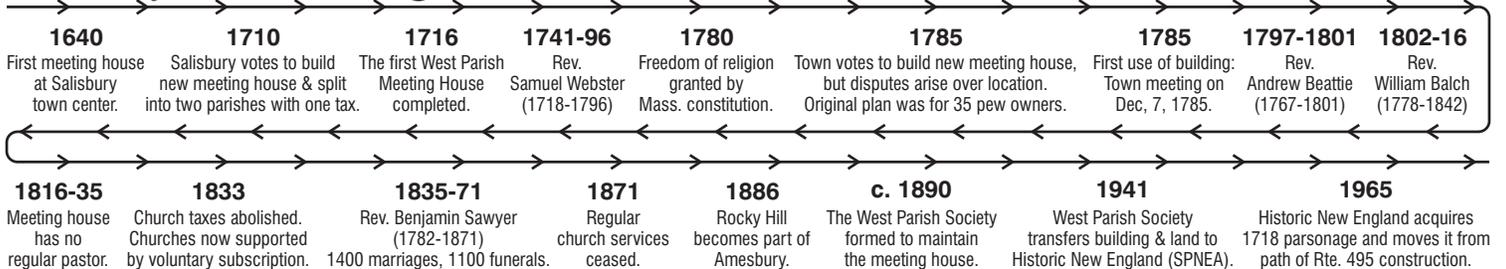
**What were the folding shelves in some of the pews used for?** In the early days, church attendance was an all-day affair, and it is believed that many pew owners fashioned the folding shelves as a convenience for eating lunch.

**Was George Washington ever at the Rocky Hill Meeting House?** George Washington passed through Amesbury on his way to Portsmouth, N.H. in 1789. Crowds gathered around the meeting house and parsonage to honor Washington at that time. Despite the graffiti “signature” in the stairway, it is unknown if Washington was ever inside the meeting house.

**How did Historic New England acquire the building?** The West Parish Society, a group of descendants of the original pew owners, was formed in the late 19th century to care for the meeting house. In 1941 the group transferred the deed to SPNEA (now Historic New England) for preservation – with the stipulation that at least two services be held at the meeting house each year.



## A Rocky Hill Meeting House Time Line . . .



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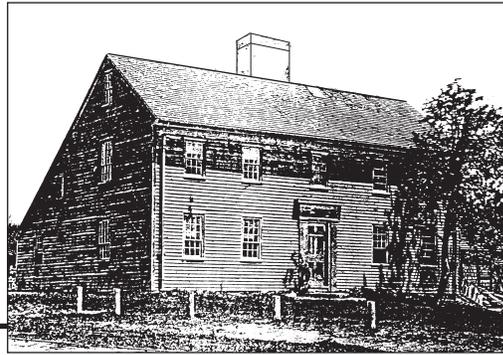
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# DOLE-LITTLE HOUSE

~ 289 High Road, Newbury, Mass. ~  
c. 1715

Private Heritage Tours available with advanced reservations June 1 - Oct. 15.  
Call 617-227-3956. (Also open on selected dates during the year.)

**Directions:** Take I-95 to Rte. 113, Newburyport. Rte. 113 turns into Rte. 1A (High Rd.)  
Follow Rte. 1A for 6.0 miles. The Dole-Little House is on the left,  
before the Parker River boat ramp & bridge.



**Before restoration.**  
At left is the Dole-Little House as it appeared before its 1955 restoration, when the 18th century double-hung windows were replaced with leaded glass casements in the original window locations.

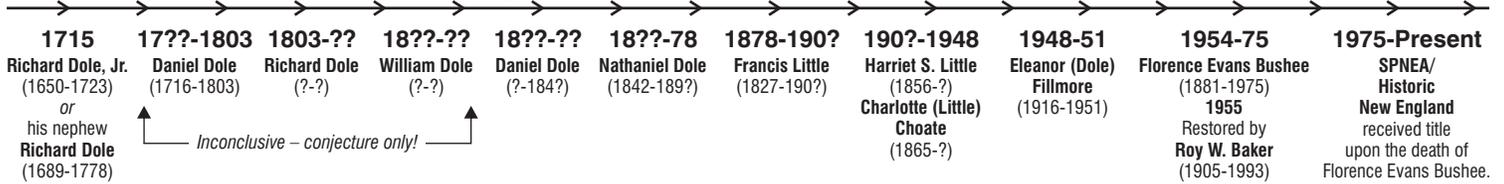
**The Dole-Little House** was built about 1715 for Richard Dole, a cattleman, with materials salvaged from an earlier structure. The house was built on a two-room, central-chimney plan with a small kitchen shed at the rear. This shed has since been replaced with a larger lean-to. Decorative carpentry and finish include chamfered edges, molded sheathing (especially in the great hall and parlor), and possibly original stair balusters.

Acquired by Florence Evans Bushee in 1954, the house was restored a year later to reflect the original period by restoration contractor Roy Baker. Baker discovered that new mortise and tenon joints and various

other changes had been added to many of the salvaged framing members to allow them to conform to the plan of the house.

During restoration, the lean-to was removed and reconstructed with new timbers, and small-paned sash from the front of the house was reinstalled in the lean-to. The paneling from one chamber was removed and reinstalled as an exhibition room at the National Museum of History and Technology in Washington, D.C. A copied version was reinstalled in the chamber. The stair balusters, removed by Baker in 1955, are now on display in the house. SPNEA, now known as Historic New England, received the title to the house after Mrs. Bushee's death in 1975.

## A Time Line of Ownership . . .



# HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND STEWARDSHIP PROPERTIES

Privately owned – NOT open for tours – but in partnership with the owners, permanently protected by Historic New England.

## The town of Newbury, Massachusetts

boasts two commons, the Upper and Lower Greens, each surrounded by historic structures. In each location, the settings have evolved over time as assorted vernacular buildings were placed in the landscape; today the historic ambience gives the community a sense of place.

Through its Stewardship Program that began in 1948 and protects over 70 New England properties, Historic New England holds preservation easements that protect the appearance and historic building elements of two privately owned Newbury houses. Working with the owners, Historic New England provides guidance and a discreet presence that promotes preservation within the community. While the Short House and Seddon Tavern differ in age and design, the easements help ensure that Newbury's important community assets – the Upper and Lower Greens – remain unchanged for future generations of residents and visitors to pass by and enjoy.

**THE SHORT HOUSE (c. 1732), High Road at Rolfe's Lane, Newbury, Mass.** The Short House, which anchors one corner of the Upper Green, has long been admired for its unusual architectural features: two brick end walls punctured with small gable-end casements and a boldly carved pediment at the center entry. Although the interior was once divided into two halves to house different families, the

exterior has undergone little alteration in nearly three hundred years. Pictured in numerous publications throughout the 20th century, the Short House is one of Newbury's most familiar architectural icons.

**SEDDON TAVERN (c. 1728), Lower Green, Newbury, Mass.** Several miles to the south, the Seddon Tavern (c. 1728) overlooks Newbury's Lower Green. In 1727 Samuel Seddon was given land at the corner of the Lower Green to construct "a house for the entertainment of travelers." The house also served as the point of contact for the ferry service over the Parker River. Not an original building but a meticulous reconstruction of the tavern destroyed by fire in 1940, it reflects a mid-20th century antiquarian understanding of 18th century architecture.

**THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM.** A partnership between the property owner and Historic New England, the goal of the program is to protect a property's historic character. The tool used to accomplish this is the preservation restriction, a perpetual legal agreement recorded in local land records. By releasing certain property rights, owners entrust Historic New England to protect the property's historic features from alteration, demolition, or neglect. Owners retain rights to sell, bequeath, lease, or mortgage the property. The provisions of each preservation restriction are tailored to meet preservation goals for the property, and include protection for interior, exterior, landscape, and contextual features.



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