

# PICKERING HOUSE NEWSLETTER

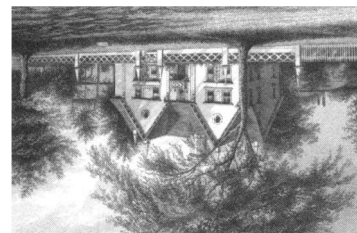
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PICKERING HOUSE



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please consider joining by choosing membership in one of the following categories:

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<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Family	City _____ State _____ Zip _____
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Individual	Email _____

Credit card: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Foundation members are welcome to attend the June Open House*

If you are a member, please renew your commitment  
in one of the above categories. Send your tax-deductible gift/dues to:

The Pickering Foundation  
18 Broad Street  
Salem, MA 01970

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## The President's Letter



*President Ben Pickering, Mike Pickering and Christian Pickering with newly-constructed finial*

This year it is a pleasure for me to bring our friends and Pickering Foundation members up to date on the "behind the scenes" efforts of our Board of Trustees.

As many of you know, our main focus for some time has been on the general degradation of our buildings and property, and the need to focus on the most important of these problems quickly and effectively. Your Board has been working away on promotion, membership and fundraising to increase the awareness of the historical importance of the Pickering House and its wellbeing for the future.

While we didn't receive any grant money this year to repair our chimney we are able to announce contributions from The Marine Society at Salem, The Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, and several other individual donors. As valuable as these donations are, the fact that we must attack our

largest project first makes our job of asking for donations that much more urgent and necessary. I'm happy to announce that, as of our October meeting, the Board has taken decisive action to receive estimates for not only the chimney, but for roof and tree work as well. These are all critically needed operations that will help us avoid more costly repairs down the road.

The Trustees of the Pickering Foundation have become - more than ever - a focused, thoughtful and hardworking group. They have all contributed his or her time aside from their busy lives to become an integral part in the tasks we face in preserving this historic family home.

I urge you all - family, friends or Foundation members to refer to our list of Trustees and get in touch with any of us to rekindle YOUR interest in the house, and be an active part in this most active phase of its history. I am proud of the progress in our quest to stabilize, and eventually improve the condition of this family treasure, and I thank you in advance for your continued support.

In closing, the Pickering family would like to thank the wonderful Goodhue family for being as caring and loving of the house as if it was their own.

Happy Holidays,

**H.B.Pickering, President**



A PAIR OF WORTHWHILE EVENINGS

In 2007, the greater Salem community and many Pickering House members have been treated to no less than two great events honoring the historic nature of the area.

First, last February many of you heard Carl Nold, the President and CEO of Historic New England, Inc., speak about the importance of preserving historic homes and the unique challenges that face those of us endeavoring in that work. Mr. Nold noted that although historic homes can be a fun and transformative experience, providing its visitors with a tactile connection to the past, visitation is down. There are a number of reasons for this, according to Mr. Nold. They include: (i) declining interest in American history and museums in general; (ii) too many competing demands on family time; (iii) museums' failures to accommodate how visitors' interests, expectations, and behaviors have changed; and (iv) an overabundance of historic homes, some of which are not particularly relevant or well-maintained.



Tag Goodhue installing new finial

But hope is not lost for those of us passionate about maintaining historic homes. Mr. Nold counseled all those in attendance to think about using historic



Friends of the Pickering Foundation enjoy the annual Open House gathering

homes in ways other than as strict museums with strict visiting hours. A renewed flexibility in use, such as for parties, meetings and special events, can still get the broader public into enjoy the homes, while adjusting the use to better suit the current culture. Special interest memberships and integration with school groups may also achieve this goal. The key to achieving relevance seems to be shifting the focus from the historic homes to the desires, interests and schedules of its potential customers.

None of this can be even attempted, let alone achieved, without a strong endowment. Mr. Nold emphasized that increasing the endowments of these homes must be the top priority.

In mid-October, the Bowditch Institute with sponsorship from the Pickering House, hosted a weekend of events honoring the philanthropic spirit of the late Caroline Plummer. The weekend began with an open house at the Pickering House. John Pickering VI (1777-1846), a lawyer and scholar, was a close friend and contemporary of Caroline Plummer in 19th-century Salem, and served on her Estate Committee. The highlight of the weekend was the Plummer Party, held on Saturday night in the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum. At the party, Pickering House President, Ben Pickering, introduced the keynote lecture given by Peter J. Gomes, the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister in Memorial Church, Harvard University. A dessert reception followed and a good time was had by all during that festive Halloween environment of Salem in October. We look forward to more historic events in the coming year! Stay tuned!

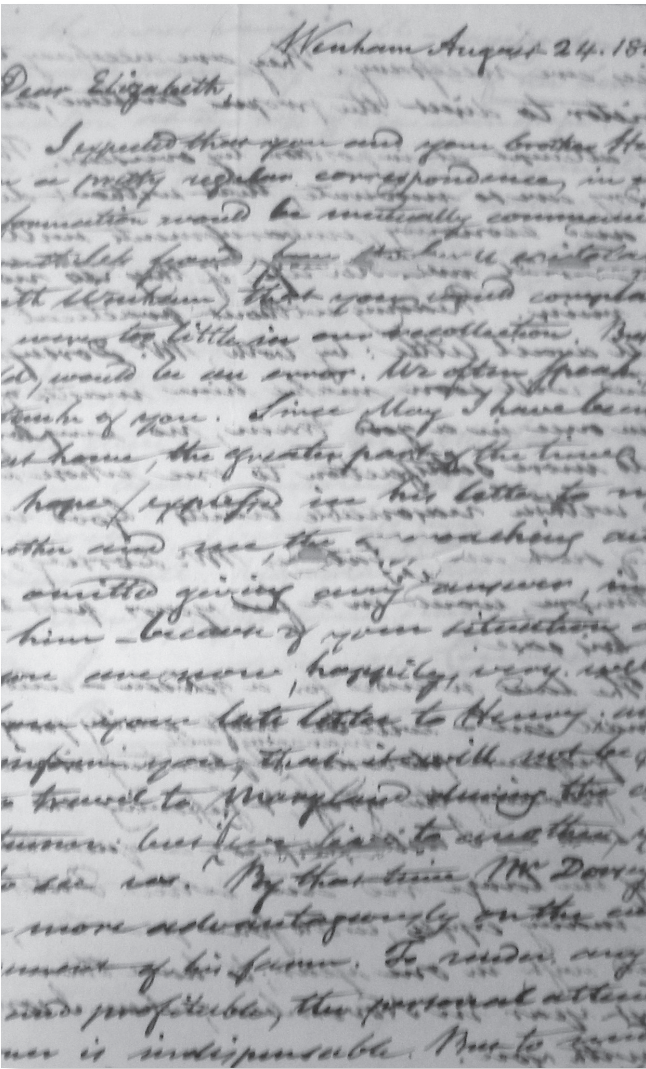
- Nina Pickering with Becky Putnam

PIECES OF PICKERING HOUSE HISTORY DONATED:  
More than 120 Letters and Documents Discovered

For a long time, there has been a collection of over 120 letters and documents mostly concerning Mary Elizabeth Pickering Dorsey, sitting like buried treasure in a closet. The trustees of the Pickering Foundation would like to thank Gerry W. Whitehead of Farmington, Connecticut, for uncovering the aforementioned items and graciously donating them to the Foundation. In his letter addressed to the Trustees of the Pickering Foundation, Mr. Whitehead wrote: "We are pleased to now offer these letters and documents to the Pickering Foundation, hoping that they might be safeguarded and that they might be of use and interest and benefit to the Foundation." He continues: "Should the Trustees and the Museum deem it desirable, we have no objection to the collection being given to the Peabody Museum."

Currently, the letters have been secured in protective sleeves, placed in a binder, and are available for viewing in the library of the Pickering House. They have also been color copied by trustee Racket Shreve.

The letters and documents are particularly interesting for a number of reasons. They are all very personal and unique. They document family and friends' health and well-being, crops, births, and deaths. They are a step back in time as they provide real commentary on the hopes and concerns during the era in which they were written. Included in the collection are nine letters from Col. Timothy Pickering. In one of his letters, Col. Tim amusingly focuses on the drawbacks for women of wearing corsets.



One of the letters from Col. Timothy Pickering bestowing fatherly advice to his daughter Elizabeth

Next time you are at the Pickering House, take some time to sit in the library and read the letters. They convey history in a unique and absorbing way; and at the same time, provide a sense of connection to the present through the common and everyday hopes and concerns unchanged by time.

- Rich Pickering



## THIS OLD HOUSE

In October, representatives of the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory from South Oxfordshire, England dated the age of the house. The study was commissioned on behalf of the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Samples from major beams in the house were taken to determine the exact age of the house using tree-ring dating analysis. Phase I (south-east right front, i.e. parlor) of the house was built with trees felled in the winter 1663, phase II (parlor extension) of the house was added on using trees felled in the winter of 1681. For more information, please visit [www.dendrochronology.com](http://www.dendrochronology.com).



Anne Grady of Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory sampling the house beams

## IN MEMORIAM: SALLY SULGER PICKERING

Sarah Sulger Pickering died peacefully on September 2, 2007. She was the beloved wife of Tim Pickering Sr. for 57 years, mother to Ann, John and Tim, Jr., and aunt to 16 Pickering nieces and nephews.

My mom grew up in Rochester and graduated from Smith in 1946. The Reverend George Cadigan, who was a strong childhood influence on my father at Grace Church in Salem, introduced my parents in the summer of 1948.

It was love at first sight for them. In fact, things proceeded alarmingly fast, with Reverend Cadigan pushing my father to meet this beautiful and talented young woman, and then cautioning that they were too young to become so certain so quickly; after one date.

My mother was the woman behind Dad's career success in Toledo, OH and Bryn Mawr, PA. Through thick and thin she helped him lead large and vibrant congregations. She was a constant source of strength and perspective on every detail of church life.

In 1989, my mom was devastated by a stroke. She accepted her handicaps and aches with great courage. It is incredible to think how much she accomplished over the last 17 years: Several trips to see her beloved friends and museums in England; meals and housekeeping with Dad up until 2005; and, enjoying their wonderful house on the coast of Maine.

She enjoyed being a Pickering very much, and felt lucky to be part of such a loving and generous family.

- Tim Pickering, Jr.

## NATHALIE BINNEY JOINS AS NEWEST FOUNDATION TRUSTEE

At the annual meeting of the Pickering Foundation in June of this year, the Board of Trustees elected Nathalie Binney to be its latest member of the Board. Board President, Ben Pickering, welcomed Nat, who has been a long-time supporter of the Foundation and a lifelong Chestnut Street neighbor.

Since 1986, Nat has been employed at Wellington Management Co., LLP as an assistant in the equity research department. A graduate of Pine Manor College, Nat currently is Vice President of IAAP (International Associates of Administrative Professionals) on the North Shore.

Nat's acceptance of the Board's invitation met with very enthusiastic response from all the trustees. They thought that Nat's participation would be valuable.

## NEWS, EVENTS, AND ITEMS OF NOTE

*The Board of Trustees would like to thank The Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati and the Marine Society at Salem for their generous contributions in 2007.*

*The Pickering Foundation is happy to announce that it now accepts Visa and MasterCard as form of payment for membership contributions and dues! Please contact Sherrie Goodhue, Executive Director, for more information on paying by credit card: [goodhue@bellatlantic.net](mailto:goodhue@bellatlantic.net).*

*The Pickering Foundation is now on the web! Come visit us at [www.pickeringhouse.org](http://www.pickeringhouse.org). Keep tabs on events, newsletters and more.*

*Wanted! Volunteer to keep the Pickering Foundation website up to date. Interested in putting your web skills to work? Contact Carol Pickering at [cpickering@gwi.net](mailto:cpickering@gwi.net)*

## DOCENT REPORT

My name is Brooke Grasberger and at the beginning of this summer I became a docent at the Pickering House. The house was open Mondays through the duration of the summer, with tours beginning at ten o'clock and ending at three o'clock. On my first day, I was fully prepared to have a day with few or no tours, as the Pickering House is fairly off the beaten track for the typical Salem tourist. It therefore surprised me greatly when there was a knock at the door before I had a chance to finish reviewing the script.

That first tour was in fact a couple from Salem who had always loved the look of the house and wanted to see what was inside, but had never seen the opportunity. A number of the tours I gave this summer were likeminded people, who lived down the street or across the road and been walking or driving past it for years. Some of these people just wanted to hear the story of the people who lived there and admire the beautiful rooms and furnishings.

Of course, not all people who came for tours were from Salem. One day I gave a tour to a couple from Arizona who were taking their own historical tour of the New England area. The wife had become interested in the Pickering house when she found out that she could trace her lineage back to those early Pickerings. She was astounded at the surroundings in which her ancestors might have lived, and was extremely enthusiastic at learning the individual attitudes and characters of the Pickerings who inhabited the house.

Visitors to the Pickering House are a certain type of people. They do not go on tours because they feel some vague sense of patriotic obligation or because they want to simply glance in, snap a photo, and walk out. They are truly interested in what I had to say about the family, as well as in the greater historical significance of the house. I think if the public were more aware of this national treasure, they would be more inclined to learn about it.

- Brooke Grasberger