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# Pickering House Newsletter

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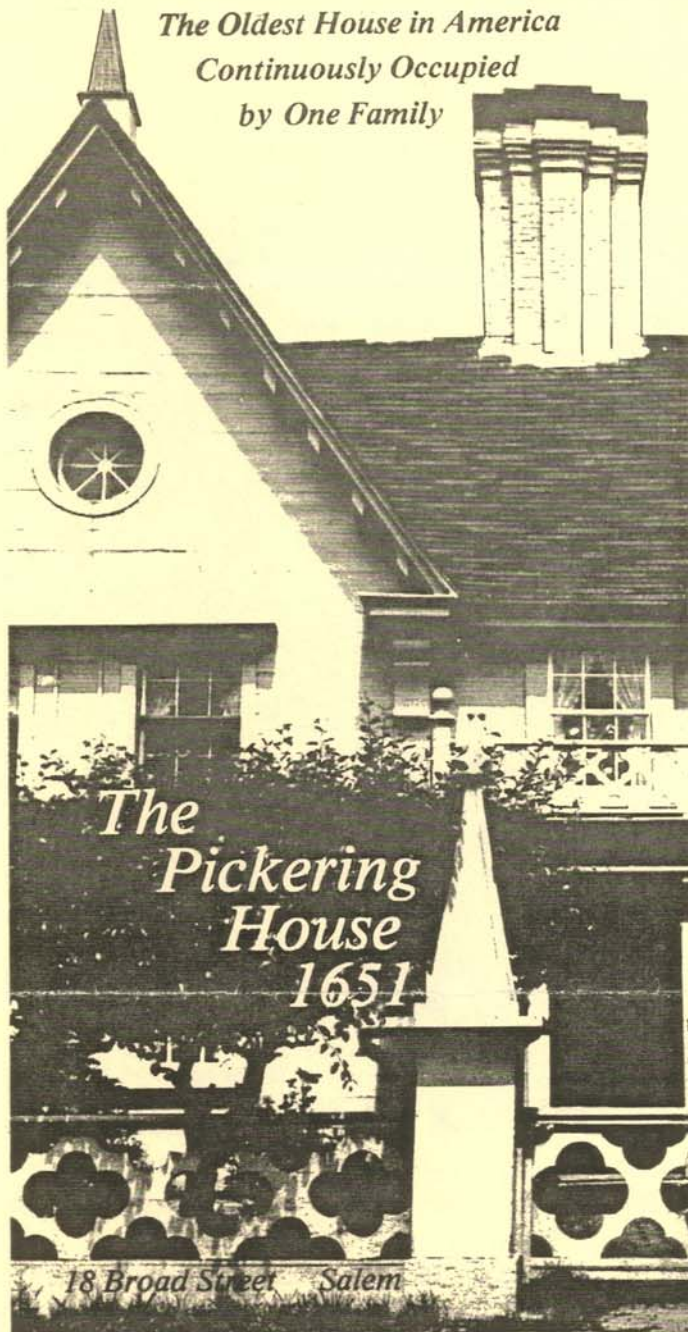
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Issue #2

18 Broad Street, Salem, MA 01970

November 1997

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This is the front cover of a brochure which we place in the Chamber of Commerce and in other Salem tourist spots. These are available to members for greater circulation.

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## President's Report

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Rather than the usual review of the past year's activities, improvements, and finances, I will devote this space to introduce you to our Board of Trustees. There have been many additions and changes in officers since Sally Pickering stepped down last January as our President and Treasurer. Richard L. Pickering, the youngest of John and Ruth, was elected President at our special meeting in February. The Rev. Timothy Pickering continues at his post as Vice President. John Pickering II is now the Treasurer. Henry B. Pickering, Assistant Treasurer, is the current occupant and curator of The Pickering House. Other long term members are John C. Armstrong, A. Lyman Parson, Katharine Pickering, and Racket Shreve.

New Trustees elected in 1997 are Christina Abramson, Edith Armstrong, Richard Armstrong, Sherrie Goodhue, Richard O'Dwyer, David Pickering, Judy Pickering, and Sally Vest. Therein we have the makings of a corps of younger people to take over when we of the older order resign from the Board. You can see that we have added strong representation from the next generation of the extended family. It is also very important that we broaden the base of our Board to include more non-family members and more Salem connected people. If any of

you have suggestions for possible Board candidates, please let me know. We also need volunteer help in the gardens, in showing the House, in general yard work, in costume restoration, in publicity, in fund raising, in any number of ways, if you are interested. Most of all we need your continued membership support in dollars and labor. Thank you for what you have done so far as we continue this wonderful heritage.

*Richard L. Pickering*

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### A Bit of Lore

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Many of my earliest and fondest memories take me to the attic at 18 Broad Street. Visiting Gammy was always great fun. The attic rooms were a treasure trove of very old and well worn toys and games. The hall closets, never off limits, bulged with generations of garments and intriguing accessories.

Various occasions prompted family members to squeeze into the costumes. The "Chestnut Street Days" must have been the greatest, but I remember dressing up with all the ladies in the twin bedroom for the Harvard reunion house tour.

The evidence remains in the split seams, ripped hooks and torn button holes. No-one was aware then of the value and importance of these garments. Becca Haskell has great interest and knowledge and spent one Sunday afternoon last spring with me sorting the salvageable from the completely tattered. She suggested donating the very far gone costumes to a teaching college. Maybe they'll reconstruct them or study them. I have not researched this yet.

Preserving the many intact garments is costly and time consuming, and to what end? Storing them in the recommended archival tissue and boxes makes them inaccessible. It may

be preferable to continue to display them in the house, perhaps more of them, depending on the level of interest. Storing the undisplayed costumes properly will be a priority. I have arranged to show the "collection" to Paula Richter. She is the assistant curator of decorative arts at the Peabody Essex Museum. Apparently, she's the best local person to give us some advice. I also welcome suggestions from interested members.

*Edie Armstrong*



**One of the many dresses from our collection mounted for display by Becca Haskell and Edie Armstrong.**

This summer The Foundation was fortunate to buy back at auction the large dining room table put up for sale by a family member. That piece returned, our dining room with its elegant set of chairs made by Theophilus in the 1720's is restored to its original attractive and functional form.

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## Buildings and Grounds

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This fall Trustee Richard O'Dwyer and a structural engineer assessed the condition of our large central chimney which has settled over the years. There is a hump in the floor of the front hall and some evidence of settling around the fireplaces on the first and second floors. Most of this condition occurred a number of years ago, when catastrophic failure of the stack was averted by the insertion of two substantial buttresses at the chimney foundation. To correct the weakness in the foundation, further remedial work will be accomplished this winter, after some additional investigation and quotations for the work are generated.

This past summer this main chimney was dismantled from the roof up and rebuilt. That work has solved some persistent leaks and is now in great condition for many years to come. Several shingles have been replaced on the house and an old skylight was roofed over. Gutters have been repaired and the Barn has a whole new roof. The house sports a new flag pole donated and rigged by Racket Shreve. Racket, with help from Henry Binney and Henry Pickering, has attacked a very aggressive vine along the back fence and other intrusive growth.

The House roof will need a whole set of new shingles sometime soon, but 1997 saw many long postponed improvements to preserve the structural integrity of the old buildings. We are most fortunate to have such a dedicated and active committee working on the House and grounds.

*News Flash: The Foundation has just received a substantial donation from The Massachusetts Chapter of the Society of The Cincinnati to support our efforts.*



**Henry Pickering holds our restored weather vane prior to mounting back on the barn roof.**

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## Curator's Report

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Since my arrival in mid-March, I have enjoyed the challenge of being the Curator and custodian of the Pickering House. I have particularly enjoyed showing the House and grounds to many of our out-of-town visitors. It is with some pride, that I explained to our guests, that I am the last of the tenth generation to reside at 18 Broad Street.

Visitors have come from afar including those from the Faero Islands, England, Australia, New Zealand, and many from Canada. Group tours included 40 from the Orleans Historical Society, 14 from

"Mary-on-the-Go" from Phoenix, Arizona, and 14 from Cabot Park Retirement Home.

This fall we had a wedding followed by a reception and dinner for forty. Last spring following The Salem Athenaeum's Annual Easter Egg Hunt, we hired a professional magician to perform for about 20 children and their parents. That was great fun and I would like to make it a regular event. I also hosted, along with Martha and Racket Shreve, a cook-out for the members of The Chestnut Street Association. That too was a fun event with lawn games and grilled food. I hope we will do that another year.

Finally I want to express a word of great thanks to Henry Binney, who has been a huge help to the foundation over the twenty years he has lived here. As he takes on a new life more centered in his recently acquired home in New London, NH, I wish him well and know how sorely he will be missed.

*Henry B. Pickering*

While our board of Trustees has not yet adopted a mission statement, it is something we need to wrestle with. Toward thinking about such a statement of purpose, what follows is lifted from our by-laws. The Pickering Foundation is a public charity organized and operated to preserve and maintain the house built by John Pickering in or about 1651.

*The Pickering Foundation is in a very large part supported and dependent upon the largess of its members. The benefits of membership are the realization that you are contributing to a unique institution in this country. With your membership comes an opportunity to visit the house at no charge, a subscription to our Newsletter, preferential scheduling of any event held at the House, and an invitation to our annual meeting and cocktail party in the spring. Please help us continue the tradition by renewing your membership in one of the categories listed on the return*

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**IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY A MEMBER PLEASE JOIN US. IF YOU ARE A MEMBER, IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO SEND IN 1998 DUES**

\$500 LIFETIME

\$100 SUSTAINING (ANNUAL)

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