



# Local Lore

June, 2014 Issue 109

## The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

WEB Address (<http://www.topsfieldhistory.org>) Email: [webmaster@topsfieldhistory.org](mailto:webmaster@topsfieldhistory.org)



### A Close Call

During World War II the New England coast was equipped with many reinforced concrete watch towers that were manned 24/7 on the lookout for enemy ships, planes or submarines. In addition the Portsmouth Naval base was guarded by a number of 12 inch guns emplacements plus a net strung across the harbor entrance which only opened to allow military vessels or supply ships to pass. One evening the net was opened to allow a tanker to enter. Unbeknownst to the guard detail a Nazi submarine was closely following in the tanker's wake, obviously hoping to evade detection;



however an alert sonar operator picked up the sound of two vessels, not one, and quickly reported his finding. Searchlights were brought to bear on the sub which quickly reversed course and ran for the open sea before shore batteries could open fire. The damage to the shipyard could have been severe if the sub's mission had been successful.

### Upcoming Events

**Strawberry Festival**  
June 14, 10 AM to 4 PM

**Doll Tea**  
August 27, 2 to 4 PM

From the *Essex Gazette*, Aug. 4, 1772

Abigail, my wife, obstinately refusing to continue with me in Obedience to marriage Covenant, in that she refuses to bed and board with me; Therefore these are to forbid all Persons from harbouring and entertaining the said Abigail as they would avoid the Penalty of the Law: but if the said Abigail will return to her Husband, and behave agreeably in her marriage station, then I stand ready to forgive all former pardonable offences, as though they had never been: Furthermore, I the said Joseph forbid all Persons contracting any Debts with the said Abigail, for I will not pay one Farthing of any Debt contracted by her from the Date hereof.

*Joseph Bradstreet*

### Congratulations to this year's Kimball Scholarship winners:

- Sarah Barrett, UMass Amherst  
Master of Education
- Andrew Boepple, Salem State  
Master of History
- Matthew Chadwick, Westfield State
- Emily Coffin, Connecticut College
- Jeffery Daniels, College of the Holy Cross
- Brian Dierze, Lafayette College
- Jacob Gillespie, Tufts University
- Katherine Guinee, Mount Holyoke
- William Guinee, Dartmouth
- Madison Kelly, Northeastern University
- Aliya Kitsakos, McGill University
- Emily McIlvaine, Bates College
- Kyle Quimby, UMass Lowell

Editor: Anne H. Barrett  
Contributors: Norm Isler, Hannah Barrett

### Kid's Corner

by Hannah Barrett



I recently visited the house of Mark Twain in Hartford Connecticut, home of the author of Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, and many other wonderful classics. Mark Twain was actually his pen name; the real name of this famous author was Samuel Clemens. Clemens was born in 1835, and lived in this beautiful house in Hartford from 1874 until they moved out in 1903 after the tragic death of his beloved daughter Susy. Clemens' wife Livy sketched out plans for their new home when they first moved to Hartford; she had strong opinions for how she wanted their home to look. Construction of their remarkable mansion began in 1873 while Sam and Livy were away. Each room of their home was influenced by different countries they had traveled to, and was decorated as such. The dining room, for example was influenced by Japanese culture, and the parlor had lavish furnishings from India. The Clemens took much care to make their house more than just a house, each room was ornately decorated with fascinating mantles and fireplaces, or ceilings and walls decked out in painted designs. The outside of the mansion has bricks painted to create different patterns and designs, very creative. The Clemens' home was full of wonders bound to spark the imagination, which was partially Sam Clemens' intention. Clemens wrote some of his most famous works while living in this house, such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and arguably his most famous novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Clemens once said: "To us our house had a heart, and a soul, and eyes to see us with; and approvals and solicitudes and deep sympathies; it was of us, and we were in its confidence and lived in it's grace and in the peace of it's benediction."