



Local Lore

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The Topsfield Historical Society Newsletter

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Read All About It

The Topsfield Library Society was organized in 1794. Reverend Asahel Huntington was the first secretary and may have been behind the Society's formation. The library Constitution set forth that each member was required to pay twenty shillings to be used for the purchase of books. The library was to be kept within one mile of the meetinghouse and was to be open the last Monday of each month from 1 to 4 PM. Each member could take out one book, not to be kept more than two months. In 1824 the hours were changed to the last Monday of May, August, November and February from 4 to 6 PM and each member was allowed to borrow two books. Eighty members signed the Constitution, including three women. According to the by-laws "Books shall be taken out in alphabetical order." Failure to return a book by 2 PM on a library open day resulted in a 6 pence fine.

Among the first 68 books purchased was Rollins Ancient History in ten volumes. *From History of Topsfield, Dow*



57 years ago this month, Ford introduced the Edsel, one of the most disastrous car launches in American history that lost the company millions of dollars.

Take Note

When parking for Friday night events, please use only the designated spaces along the back of the Emerson parking lot, as The Commons has use of most of that parking lot for their events. Also consider parking along the common, and car-pooling to make things less congested.

Leslie S. & Hope T. Ray Memorial Trust

Leslie Ray, Jr. has established a trust in honor of his parents who were active members of the Topsfield community. His father, Leslie Sr., was born at 54 Main Street where he lived all his life, and was a Topsfield native and member of a long time Topsfield family. He served as Selectman, School Committee Member and Tax Collector for many years. His mother Hope was from East Providence, Rhode Island and was active in a number of community affairs.

The Trust will be administrated by the Historical Society with the purpose of caring for and maintaining the Society's properties. Society members are invited to support the trust by mailing donations to the Topsfield Historical Society, PO Box 323, Topsfield, MA 0198.. For more information about this Trust please contact Norm Isler, President, Topsfield Historical Society at the above address or email him at normisler@comcast.net.

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Upcoming Events

September 19th, 7:30 PM

**Only Yesterday;
Popular Music of the 50s and 60s**

September 24th, 10 AM

Tour of Salem Museum and Luncheon

October 17th, 7:30 PM

Haunted Lighthouses of New England

Kid's Corner



Summer Vacation

Kids are back from enjoying a long summer vacation. The earliest school years in the U.S. had different schedules based on whether they were urban or rural communities. Both, though, included summer terms.

Urban schools ran year-round. Rural schools took the spring off to plant, and the autumn off to harvest. Summer vacation may have come about from 19th century school reformers who wanted to get rural and urban schools on the same schedule. Since rural areas had two terms – in the summer and winter – and urban schools ran year round, a compromise had to be struck. But, why summer?

In rural areas, the summer term was seen as "weak" because it was often taught by girls in their mid to late teens while older males taught the winter terms. Also, in urban areas, rich families vacationed in the summer, so city schools were trying to limit the school year to adjust to the schedules of these wealthy families. Additionally, the school buildings of the 19th century weren't air-conditioned and the heat was often unbearable.