



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The Judge Nathaniel Foster House, right, circa 1730, was kept close to its original condition through the centuries because members of the family owned it until 2006. Above, the parlor has its original fireplace and hardwood floors.



Family ownership saved Foster House for future

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — The Judge Nathaniel Foster House, circa 1730, will soon be owned by the county Division of Open Space and Farmland Preservation Program and then sold for a nominal amount of money to Lower Township. The township's goal is restore the home as a historic site.

The Foster House, located

at 1649 Bayshore Road, remained in ownership of the original family until 2006, when Isabella Foster Sakewicz passed away. The Cape May County Historical and Genealogical Society then bought the house.

The house is of First Period heavy timber frame construction with large corner posts and mortise and tenon joints, according to research from the Museum of Cape May County.

The corner posts can be seen in the second floor bedrooms.

The kitchen features the original fireplace used for cooking. The iron crane that held pots remains in the fireplace. In the cellar, a brick arch supports the large fireplace above. The original wood paneling and hardware remain in the kitchen. A winding staircase to the second floor is behind a door in the kitchen. A number of small doors, which are of double thickness and feature a cross and Bible configuration, surround the fireplace.

The rafters in the attic, which are numbered with Roman numerals, are hand-hewn and pegged together.

Jeff Hilgert, a member of the board of trustees of the society, pointed out a cast iron fire back in the living room fireplace. It is marked with "Batsto," a location of an iron works and preserved historic site from the mid-1700s.

The parlor walls, which would have been wood paneled, were later replaced

with plaster walls, he said.

Nathaniel Foster (1700-1769) purchased 100 acres of land from the West Jersey Society in 1727 that stretched from Bayshore Road to the bay and from Drummed Road to Cardinal Avenue. Foster was a direct descendant of one of 35 whale-yeoman families who came to settle in Cape May County around the late 1600s. He recorded his first earmark, used for identifying cattle, in 1720. On the 1727 deed for the property, his occupation is listed as carpenter.

Foster was appointed Justice of the Peace for Cape May County in 1739 and held that position for almost 30 years. When he died in 1769, he left his property to his son, Salathiel, and to his grandson, Reuben, the son of his deceased son, George.

Salathiel (1725-1792) served as an officer in 1775 in a battalion of Minutemen from Cape May County. In 1777, during the Revolutionary War, he served as captain of the 3rd Company Battalion, also of Cape May County. He went on



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to become a farmer who increased his acreage and owned part of Five Mile Island near Wildwood.

Reuben Foster (1780-1870) and his son, Downs Edmunds Foster (1807-1886), both carpenters, probably remodeled the front portion of the house, adding a staircase in the front hall and changing fireplaces in the parlor and upstairs bedrooms around 1830.

Later in life, Downs Edmunds Foster was the keeper of the Cape May Lighthouse for many years.

Hilgert said the house has remained intact since it has remained in the ownership of the original family.

"Because it was in the family, they wanted it just like grandma had it, and that went on for generation after generation and they really didn't change all that

much," he said.

A gunstock corner post is visible in a second-floor bedroom. Ceilings and doorways are low compared to today's standards. The home appears to have its original floors, although the planks are narrower than some of the era, Hilgert noted.

Two other structures exist on the property that are presumed to be an outhouse and shed. The home's original exterior beadboard is hiding under a layer of pink-hued shingles. Hilgert said he hopes the shingles preserved the beadboard from the elements.

Hilgert said due to declining government support, the museum was unable to restore the Foster House but was able to preserve the home from demolition.



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In the cellar, a brick arch supports the fireplace above in the kitchen.



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2	6:03	6:36	11:57	
3	7:01	7:29	12:47	12:50
4	7:56	8:20	1:43	1:43
5	8:50	9:11	2:36	2:35
6	9:43	10:01	3:29	3:26
7	10:36	10:51	4:21	4:18
8	11:29	11:41	5:13	5:11

MOON PHASES
New moon, June 5 • First quarter, June 12

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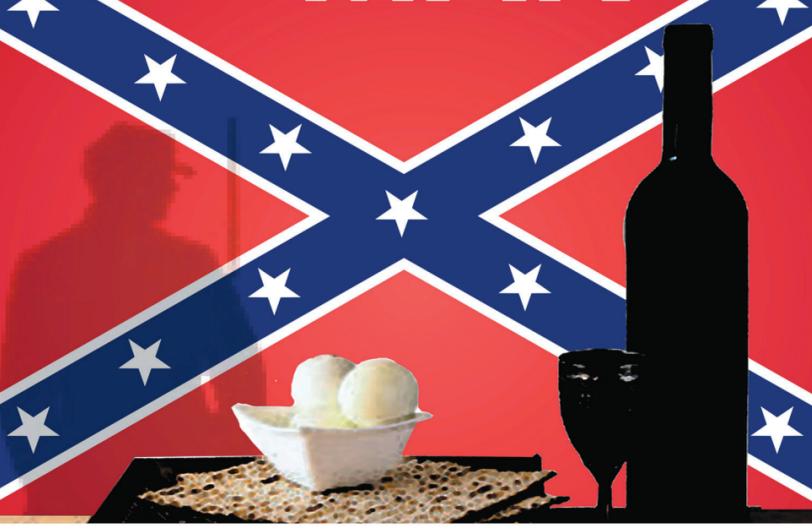
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