

JAFFREY

A party for the 250th

Town celebrates the
anniversary of the
Meetinghouse

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On Tuesday night, Jaffrey celebrated the 250th birthday of its iconic Meetinghouse, harkening back to some of the building's earliest moments as the centerpiece of Jaffrey.

The night began with tours of the nearby Little Red Schoolhouse and Melville Academy Museum, with the celebration proper beginning at the Meetinghouse shortly before 6 p.m. The original plan was to host the Lafayette Artillery from Lyndeborough to shoot off its historic cannon, a nod to the shots that could be heard by the builders of the Meetinghouse from the Battle of Bunker Hill in Charlestown, Mass. Rainy conditions canceled the cannon firing, but the remainder of the program carried on inside the Meetinghouse.

The event kicked off with a town tale that took place as the Meetinghouse was being erected. Specifically, about John Eaton, who came to Jaffrey when he was 47 and did work about town in various ways, often for trade instead of cash payment. He kept an account of these exchanges in a logbook.

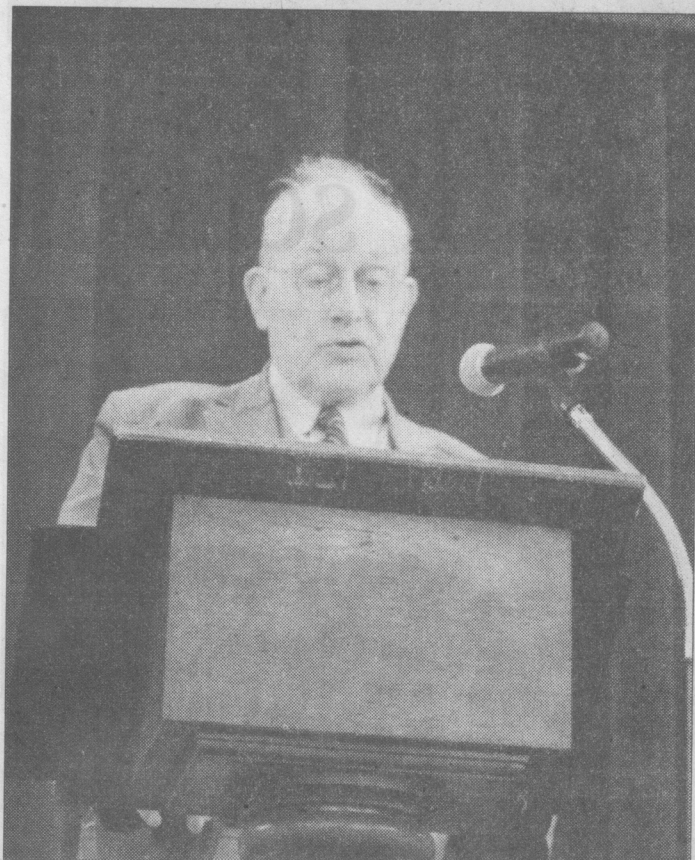
"He had rather inventive spelling," said Historical Society member Bruce Hill. "You had to use your imagination when you read his book."

One such entry detailed Eaton's payment for helping to rack hay: "...a yeard and a half of read cloth to make me a chacket."

When the time came to erect the Meetinghouse, every able-bodied man in town was on hand to help, including Eaton.

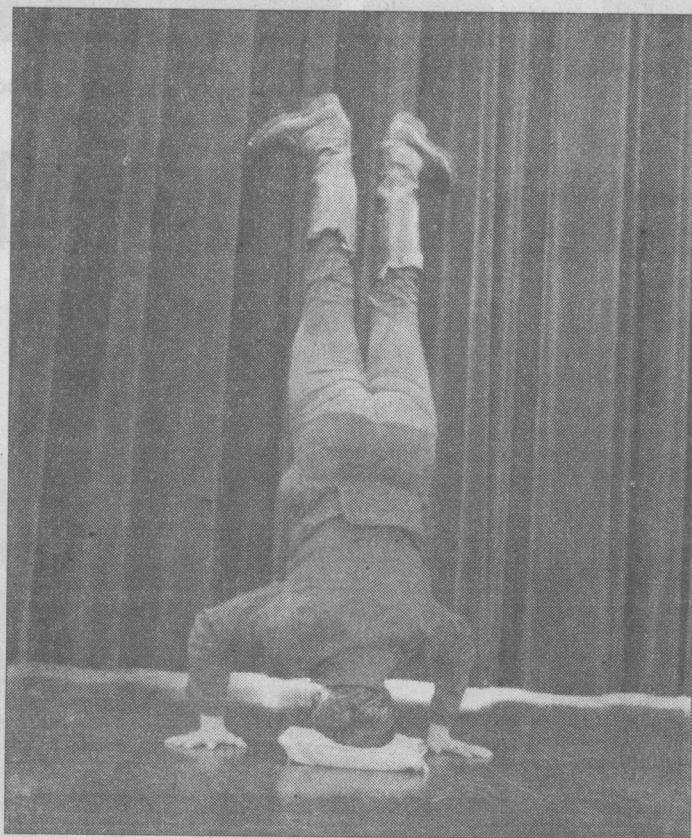
"The work was finished at the end of the day, and as the sun was setting and people prepared to return to their

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Cassius Webb reads an original poem about the history of the Meetinghouse.

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Neige Christenson, as John Eaton in his "chacket," performs a headstand, reminiscent of the one Eaton performed on the ridge pole of the Meetinghouse during its raising.

STAFF PHOTO BY ASHLEY SAARI

Jaffrey celebrates 250th anniversary of its



Kathy and David Torrey, dressed as Mary Minot and Laban Ainsworth, Jaffrey's first minister and his wife, lead a promenade around the interior of the Meetinghouse.

STAFF PHOTO BY ASHLEY SAARI



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Randy Miller mans the fiddle during a rendition of "Fisher's Hornpipe."

s Meetinghouse

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farms and their chores, a great marvel appeared before them. John Eaton, in his red 'chacket,' stood on the ridge pole of the Meetinghouse," Hill said.

What happened next was that Eaton performed a headstand on the ridgepole. Neige Christenson, donning a red jacket, performed the stunt for attendees – on the ground.

David and Kathy Torrey, dressed as the town's first minister and his wife, Laban Ainsworth and Mary Minot, welcomed the town to the celebration. Selectman Franklin Sterling read a proclamation, signed by the Select Board declaring the week a celebration of the Jaffrey Meetinghouse.

Cassius Webb read an origi-

nal poem, from the point of view of the Meetinghouse itself, detailing the building's raising, its life as a schoolhouse and church, the addition of the tower and clock and its uses today.

Carol Compton and Randy Miller played "Fisher's Hornpipe," which was the first song played in the Meetinghouse on the pipe organ when it was installed. Compton and Miller also played a tune as the residents, led by the Torreys playing Ainsworth and Minot, did a promenade around the room.

To cap off the night, Kathy Torrey acted as caller for a contra dance, with Compton and Miller providing music.

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