



NEWSLETTER *of the* *Tefft Family Association*

uncovering the past

the descendants of John and William Tefft

Vol. 3, No. 2
Spring/Summer 2002



In this issue:

Reunion Special!

Where to go. What to do and see, including some historical Tefft places that aren't in the guide-books. It's all here to help you plan your trip for the Oct. 12-14 annual Tefft reunion in South Kingstown, R.I.



Next issue . . .

Researchers have been looking at 16th century probates and wills that seem to point to an origin in Lincolshire, England for the Teffe brothers, John and William, of Boston.

A Pettaquamscutt Gazetteer

by A. Craig Anthony

W

elcome to this corner of the world once called the "Narragansett Country," the "Pettaquamscutt Purchase," later "King's Province," and now officially known as "Washington County" for the past two centuries. There is a lot of history here, all crammed into the southernmost county of the smallest state in the Union. You see, this little spot was also one of the last places to be successfully populated by European immigrants on the eastern seaboard. From the time of King Philip's War in 1675, to the King's determination of the boundary line between the colonies of Rhode Island and Connecticut in 1726, this regions was known as the "Vacant Lands."

The "Vacant Lands" were much contended, predating the infamous Mason-Dixon Line controversy by a century. Few men even attempted to settle their families and work the rocky glacial soil. In fact, well into the 20th century it seemed as if the modern world was passing southern Rhode Island by — just look at how Interstate Route 95 pretty much avoids the county all together, with the exception of the northwest corner. Yet, it was this isolation that preserved its history as well. Now, it seems, that development and progress are catching up, but I am content that the best

See *Gazetteer* page 4

Welcome Family, Associates and Friends . . .

If you're not able to come to this year's 4th annual family reunion, Oct. 12 - 14, in South Kingstown, R.I., this newsletter will serve as a guidebook for another time, or at least give you something of a taste of what it's like to be a Swamp Yankee from South County.

Small though Rhode Island is there just isn't enough space in this newsletter or time for vacationing there to see everything. We've been to two of the three reunions and there are still plenty of things we want to see and do on this third time back. Beside the new temptations on this year's reunion itinerary (see page 6 for a preliminary schedule), there are old favorites like dinner at Wakefield's lovely old Larchwood Inn and a walk on the Tefft Homestead. Naturally, we're also anxious to meet and greet friends from earlier times and those whose acquaintance we've yet to make.

From the reunion to something entirely personal — You may notice from the signature below that I'm not the same person I used to be. The news is I was married on April 27 to Richard Hamilton Norwood, Rick to his — now *our* — friends. A condition of my accepting Rick's proposal was that he would cook when I was otherwise occupied with Tefft Family business. He agreed, so now I can spend every night doing things for the TFA. Alas, Rick's idea of making dinner is to order pizza. Please remember this when your newsletter is late and take pity!

We hope to see you at the reunion...and if not, then you will remain, as always, treasured in our hearts and thoughts and stored away for meeting at another time!

Darlene Tefft Norwood
Interim President, Tefft Family Association

Copyright 2002 Tefft Family Association

Published quarterly by
TEFFT FAMILY ASSOCIATION
3535 West Avenue J-13
Lancaster, CA 93536

TFA Newsletter Masthead design by Jamie Tefft Cochran

Family Album

Grace Corinne Tefft Gourlay
Aug. 12, 1906 to March 16, 2002

Grace Corinne Tefft Gourlay passed away March 2002, having nearly reached her 96th year. My only blood aunt, Aunt Grace — through her self-taught artistry and her intense curiosity about life in general and her family in particular — started me down my own life's road to becoming a writer and chronicler of family history. She was and remains my joyful guiding light.

Over her lifetime, she wrote verse, much of it humorous; documented her family history in detailed narratives of their lives and her vivid memories of them; and painted and did needlework. She would be the last to claim that her life and work should be spoken of as *accomplished*, yet she has left behind much that can rightly be celebrated and treasured as family heirlooms.

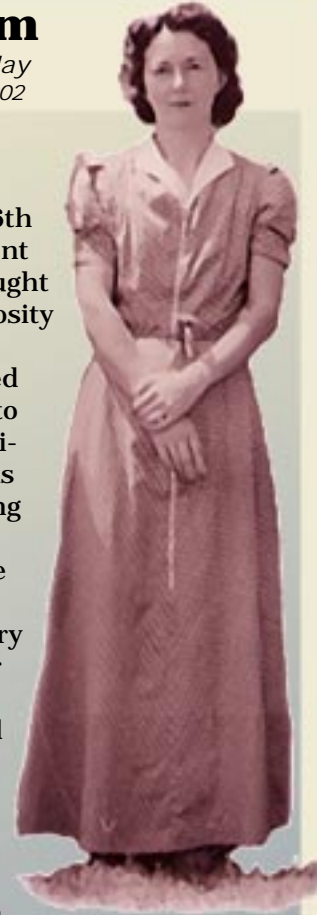
Her stories alone about her maternal grandmother and great-grandmother, who she remembers as a child, are treasure troves of family lore. Recalling a memory of "the oldest living family member I knew," her great grandmother, Nancy Colvin Marshall Carwell, a pioneer of the Oregon Trail who "survived five of her seven children and three husbands," she writes:

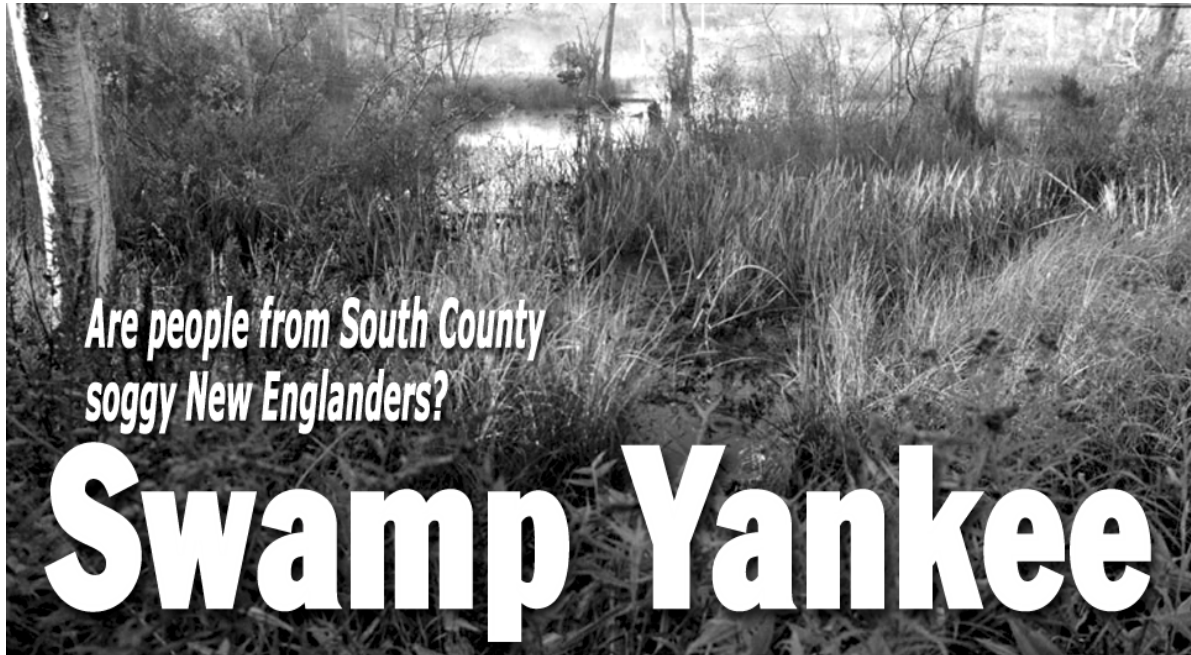
There is no doubt that if Grandma Carwell had a motto, it was "waste not, want not," for she was extremely frugal in all ways and most particularly where food was concerned.

... the most glaring example of her frugality was the case of the salty jelly. In those days household staples were bought in bulk, and one day when she was making jelly, she mistook the salt for the sugar, resulting in a big batch of salty would-be jelly. Did Grandma Carwell throw it out? No indeed. Everything she cooked that needed salt got a dose of that jelly, until it was all used. She must have turned out some interesting menus!

As she remembered, so shall we. Thank you, Grace.

Darlene Tefft Norwood





Great Swamp photo by Darlene Tefft Norwood

The following comments, provided by Barry Hale Browning, first appeared on Genforum's Rhode Island list, Nov. 11, 2000, in response to a request for a definition of the term "Swamp Yankee."

Does anyone recall that geographical definition of a Yankee as, for Southerners, *someone from New England*, and for New Englanders, *someone from Northern New England*, and for Northern New Englanders, *someone from Vermont*, and for Vermonters, *someone from the late Senator Aiken's 'Northeast Kingdom'*?

Well, there may be some truth to the assertion that for some people, a Swamp Yankee is *someone from Southern Rhode Island and Southeastern Connecticut* (many of whom migrated there from Southern R.I.), and for people in these areas, a Swamp Yankee is *someone from Washington County, R.I.* (also known to Swampers as South County), and to South Countyites, a Swamp Yankee, or Swamper, is from rural parts of South County, such as Perryville, Hope Valley, Richmond, Hopkinton, Exeter, Alton, Woodville, "Tuckertown," Matunuck, etc.

As the Hazard family once noted, there is a peculiar and welcome freshness in the slightly salt-scented air which hits the nostrils when one travels south from Providence and passes by what, in our day, is the Bostich-Textron Plant on Route 2 in East Greenwich; and that is when one enters the Land of the Swamper. One other fast-disappearing characteristic of the

people in this geographic area, and also true of Swampers, is the peculiar, unmistakable dialect of the area. One of the four New England dialects, it encompasses all of Rhode Island and extends on all sides approximately 40 miles into nearby Connecticut and Massachusetts, but is particularly prominent in Old South County.

I would tend to agree with the assertion that the term Swamp Yankee is somehow connected in local minds with South Kingstown's Great Swamp. Located just north of Worden's Pond the swamp is the site of the most important South County event of the 17th century, the Great Swamp Fight, a preemptive strike by the forces of the Plymouth Colony, the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Connecticut Colony against the area's all-powerful Narragansett Indian tribe. The battle marked the beginning of the end of the Wampanoag chief Metacom/King Philip's devastating 1675 war, as well as the eventual end of Indian power in the area, and the subsequent rise of the local English and Scots immigrants who adopted a number of skills from their former Narragansett friends.

Just as the Plymouth Colony's settlers learned skills from the Massachusetts


Gazetteer

From page 1

has been preserved. And, there is one family that was here — before, during and after, and I expect will always return to this hard ground — the Teffts. This is no Walt Disney World; this is a brutal history. So, saddle up, no sense in giving a single tour; everybody climb aboard! A good map and sense of colonial history is requisite.



Tefft Historical Park

 Originally a 500-acre parcel, purchased about 1660, by John Tefft and initially occupied by his sons Joshua and Samuel. It remained in the Tefft family as a working farm until 1909. Today the park includes about 28 acres of the original farm.


Location — About 1/2 mile southwest of the center of Kingston Village. (The center of Kingston Village is on Route 138, roughly at the main entrance to the University of Rhode Island, near the white church and library.)

First, I'd like to call your attention to the Tefft Historical Park in Kingston owned by the South Kingstown Land Trust. If anything, this should be your first stop. Access to the site has been improved over the last year, but is not ideal at this point. The terrain is easy to moderate, and occasionally rocky. Wear good boots. There is an abundance of deer ticks also, so be forewarned. And please, do not disturb the historic features.

I recently joined the staff of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission on an archaeological excavation and we made some interesting finds. I will give you a full account in a future article, but for now I will just say that we found many nails, plaster, a kitchen knife, and some stone chips. The data generated from the archaeological analysis will be included in the nomination form for the National Register of Historic Places.



Tower Hill, 1640s John Tefft land


 Site of family founder John Tefft's home where he lived for some 30 years before and during King Philip's War and Joshua's capture and execution by the army of the United Colonies.

Location — East of South Kingstown on Route 138 near the junction with Route 1.

Next, we travel east on Route 138 to the junction with Route 1, making a stop at the tower at Tower Hill for a view of Narragansett Bay (wish those pine trees weren't so tall!). At the bottom of the hill is Middle Bridge Road

along the west side of the Pettaquamscutt or Narrow River, which divides the present day towns of South Kingstown and Narragansett. Follow Middle Bridge Road south (take a right off Route 138) about two miles. This is where John Tefft settled in the early 1660s after he left Portsmouth, where he had lived since the early 1640s. It appears that he owned 20 acres, being the second lot south from Torrey Road.


Jireh Bull's trading post

 Site of an attack on European settlers by the Narragansetts during King Philip's War. The successful storming of Bull's Tower Hill garrison by the Indians led to the march on the Great Swamp where Joshua Tefft had been taken after his "capture" by Narragansett sachem Canonchet.

Location — East of South Kingstown on Route 138 near the junction with Route 1.

Not far away — just before the bridge — the south lot was Jireh Bull's ill-fated trading post where 17 people were killed by the Narragansett Indians on Dec. 17, 1675. Across the water, just north of the Narrow River inlet, was the land of the notorious Major Humphrey Atherton, an arch-nemesis of the Rhode Island government. The Narrow River Land Trust owns property along the river with a trail entrance and parking at the bridge. The trail leads to open fields reminiscent of early Pettaquamscutt with the site of Bull's garrison house located atop the nearby rocks.

Treaty Rock, Cojoot Mine


 On this spot, the Pettaquamscutt Purchase of 1658 was negotiated with the Indians. About 144 square miles were included in the purchase, approximately 500 acres of which were owned by John Tefft. Cojoot Black Lead Mine, on the Thomas G. Hazard Farm, provided a source of black "paint" for Indian's of the region who smeared it on their faces as a sign of mourning.

Location — Pettaquamscutt, or Treaty Rock, is located off Route 1 on Treaty Rock Road (private).

Returning north, back past Torrey Road a short way, is the enchanting Pettaquamscutt, or Treaty Rock, with its wonderful view of Narragansett Bay. On the far side of the park is a trail that leads up to the summit. Nearby is the graphite mine called *Cojoot*, which attracted goldsmith John Hull, who minted the Pine Tree shilling and was one of the seven Pettaquamscutt Purchasers. This land too, has been preserved by the Narrow River Land Trust and the Town of Narragansett.




Casey Farm, Gilbert Stewart home

 Casey Farm is Rhode Island's oldest working farm, built about 1725. Nearby, the Gilbert Stewart home, built 1751, pays tribute to the birthplace of one of America's great portrait painters and his Scottish-born father's snuff-making art.

Location — Casey Farm is 1 mile south of Route 138 on Boston Neck Road.

Following Middlebridge Road north to the junction of Bridgetown Road, go right crossing the Pettaquamscutt River to Boston Neck and the junction with Route 1A. Taking a left at the signal, you will soon arrive at Casey Farm, Rhode Island's oldest working farm. The farm, owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, looks much as it did 250 years ago, and is open for tours several days a week. Further up Route 1A, on the left, is Snuff Mill Road, home of Gilbert Stewart, famous artist who painted George Washington. For many years, tobacco was a cash crop in Rhode Island, especially before the Revolution.

Wickford Village, Smith's Castle


 The old Wickford Village has a number of 18th century houses, the first house being built in 1711. Smith Castle served as garrison house for the Colonial troops during King Philip's war and was the site of Joshua Tefft's execution. **Location** — Wickford Village is located along Route 1A south of the intersection with Route 1. Smith's Castle is less than a mile to the north of Wickford Village.

Again, following Route 1A north, we come to the picturesque Wickford Village, certainly worth a stroll through its historic downtown. Past the village, Route 1A intersects with Route 1, and less than a mile to the north is the infamous Smith's Castle, the seat of government for the colony of Connecticut. Richard Smith owned a tract of land one mile square and for years was another nemesis of the Rhode Island government. His garrisoned dwelling house was headquarters of the United Colonies army in King Philip's War during their staging of the assault on the Narragansett Fort in December 1675. It was the site of a mass burial of their soldiers after the fight, as well as the site of Joshua Tefft's execution in January 1676. The "Castle" was burned by the Indians the following March, rebuilt in 1678, and remains the finest example of a plantation house in New England.



Queen's Fort



 The Queen's Fort, belonging to Queen Magnus, also called Quaiapen, Natantuck, the Saunk Squaw, and "Old Queen" of the Narragansett, is a natural stone fortification that the English were never able to discover during King Philip's War.

Location — Less than four miles from Smith's Castle, west 3 miles on Stony Lane to the intersection with Narrow Lane.

Across the road, just to the north of the state police station, is Stony Lane. Traveling west about three miles, just beyond the intersection with Narrow Lane, is the noted Queen's Fort, the only 17th century structure built by the Narragansett Indians that remains intact to this day. The entrance is not marked, just an old dirt road where you can park, but the fort is only a few hundred feet from the road atop a rocky glacial deposit. There is no record of a battle taking place here, as the old Queen and her entourage were taken and killed during King Philip's War while they were away from the fort's protection. But the bastions and boulders are fascinating, and it's a fun place for children of all ages to reflect on our complex heritage. The property is owned by the Rhode Island Historical Society.

Other Tefft sites — Wilbur Hill and Tefftweald



Wilbur Hill, in Richmond, is one of several properties in the "Vacant Lands" sold to the Tefft family in 1709 as part of the Shannock Purchase, after a tentative agreement with Connecticut regarding the boundary had been reached. Now owned by the Nature Conservancy, which has provided moderate hiking trails, most of Wilbur Hill was once owned by Samuel Tefft, John's son, while his nephew, Peter, Joshua's orphan son, owned land adjacent to the present site of the Washington County Fairgrounds.

Wilbur Hill is located off Route 112, on a dirt road less than a mile south of the Richmond Town Hall.

Finally, there is Tefftweald in North Stonington, Conn. This is in close proximity to land Peter Tefft purchased in a highly controversial land deal in 1716; although, the exact location of his property is yet to be determined. While not historic Tefft property, Lois Tefft purchased the site and donated it to the Avolonia Land Conservancy. The nature preserve has several beautiful trails and many historic features. Permission is required to visit. Please call 860-887-5878 or 860-535-3634.

Swamp Yankee

From page 3

Wampanoags, the South County settlers learned local survival skills from the Narragansetts, such as hunting, shellfishing, and hiding in the swamps. These skills survive in Swamper families even to this day.

I can think of several personages of means who take great joy, nay, even consider it their birthright, to don old tennis sneakers, clam pants, potato sack and a potato hook, and seek out Steamers, the soft-shelled clams used by the Wampanoags and the Narragansetts in their original clambakes, as well as the mighty hard-shell clam, the qua-hog or quo-hog, feeling for them with their feet in the shallow tidal ponds of South County, whose purple inner shells, cut into quarter-sized disks, were made into Indian money wampum. Just as certain shoreline encampments of the Narragansetts contain significant clam dumps, where discarded shells accumulated over the years, so many a Swamper cabin or farmhouse can be identified by the accumulation of shells, from eating this cheap and convenient source of protein.

Some here have suggested that Swamp Yankees are considered to be *of a lower class* than New Englanders, who settled in the cities. I can only say that much intermarrying occurred in South County, R.I., as it did in the Plymouth, the Massachusetts Bay, and the Connecticut colonies of the period, and *great* cotton mill families of South County's 19th century are inextricably entwined with many

old-line South County families who would now consider themselves Swampers. While it is true that many Swampers are of humble roots — small farmers and Block Island fisherfolk — nevertheless, many of these same families are descended from the *great* families of Newport, and of the *great* Narragansett Planter estates.

At one time it might have been correct to say that Swampers were uneducated, or of limited economic means. However, today I know several who would call themselves Swampers who have attended Brown, Wellesley, Smith and other Ivy League colleges. Still others own over 1,000 acres apiece, and one in particular, is on at least three bank boards. The ownership — and coveting — of farmland is an inherited trait. Others of the genre will proudly live in their family-line farmhouses generation after generation, cutting the wood for the woodstove, wearing serviceable but well-used woolens, and painting the bathroom floor, although of more than sufficient means to install the best of ceramic tile.

Swampers seem to take pride in retaining an accumulation of ancestral objects, and in modified fashion, living as their ancestors did — codfish cakes for supper and whitecap flint cornmeal jonnycakes with cube steak for Saturday supper — but underneath that front of apparent penury, often lies a substantial securities portfolio and the willingness to pay, very well indeed, for the *right* education for their progeny.

In the final analysis, Swamp Yankees are self-labeled. I have proudly called myself one and have had other relatives chastise me for it. As for others, well IMASWAMPER was perhaps the most spirited vanity plate I ever saw.

— Barry Hale Browning



TRIP TIPS for the 4th annual Tefft Family Reunion



Nearby places to stay

Metcalf's B&B 401-783-3448

The Manor (B&B) 401-792-8234

Sugar Loaf Hill B&B 401-783-8837

Admiral Dewey Inn 401-783-2090

The Larchwood Inn 800-275-5450 or
401-783-5454

Holiday Inn South County 401-789-1051 or
worldwide reservations 800-465-4329

Useful Web sites to visit

South County area cschell.com/aboutsc.html

South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce
skcc@netsense.net (401-783-2801)

Cheap Air Faires ual.com; priceline.com;
travelocity.com





Reunion 2002

South Kingstown, R.I., Oct. 12 - 14

The following is a preliminary look at the itinerary and is subject to change. Schedule changes, places to meet, dinner menus and prices, and cost of the bus tour will be announced on the Tefft Family Association Web site and by mail. (See footnote at the end of this section for cost estimates.)

- Fri., Oct. 11** 6 - 10 p.m. — "Glad You Made It!" dinner at Richmond Country Club
- Sat., Oct 12** 9 a.m. - noon — Walking tour of the Tefft Historical Park (Tefft Homestead)*
 ALTERNATE: Visit/research at the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society Museum*
- 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. — Tefft Family Researchers Project — Session 1: Tracing the Tefft's English Connection (Where did John and William immigrate from?)*
- 7 - 10 p.m. — Tefft Family Association dinner/Annual meeting at Larchwood Inn
- Sun., Oct. 13** 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. — Tefft Historic Site bus tour
- 2 - 4 p.m. — Tefft Family Researchers Project — Session 2: Tracing the Tefft's English Connection (Where did John and William immigrate from?)*
- Mon., Oct. 14** 8 - 11 a.m. — Cemetery cleanup*
- 1 - 4 p.m. — Canoeing/kayaking on the Narrow River (depending on interest)

*Indicates there is no cost to attend.

Estimated per person costs of other activities: Dinner and cocktails at Richmond Country Club — \$12 - \$25; dinner, cocktails and program at Larchwood Inn - \$20 - \$35; and bus tour \$15 - \$20. Cost yet to be determined on canoeing/kayaking trip.

Please complete the following information and mail as soon as possible to: **Lori Horton, TFA Reunion 2002, 99 Stonehenge Rd., Kingston, RI 02881.** Deadline for reservations is **Oct. 4.**

For more information, please check the Tefft Family Association Web site at geocities.com/tefft_family or contact Lori at 401-782-2078 or at Lori.Horton@LoriHorton.com.

Tefft Family Reunion 2002 Reservation Form

1. Your name _____

2. Mailing address _____
 Street _____
 City/State/Zip _____

3. Home phone _____ 4. Business phone _____

5. E-mail address _____

6. Names of all others in your party: _____

7. Total in your party including yourself _____

8. Please consult the schedule above and place a check mark in the box next to each activity you and your party currently plan to attend:

<input type="checkbox"/> "Glad You Made It!" dinner/ Richmond Country Club	<input type="checkbox"/> Tefft Family Association dinner/Larchwood Inn
<input type="checkbox"/> Tefft Park walk	<input type="checkbox"/> Tefft Historical Site bus tour
<input type="checkbox"/> Pettaquamscutt Historical Society	<input type="checkbox"/> Cemetery cleanup
<input type="checkbox"/> Tefft Family Research Project — Session 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing/kayaking on the Narrow River
<input type="checkbox"/> Tefft Family Research Project — Session 2	

9. Comments/additional information: _____



We've been on the lookout for you!

The Tefft Family Association welcomes new members. Benefits include the TFA quarterly newsletter and information of interest to genealogists, historians and others who are curious about Teffts, Tiffts, and other spellings of the surname. For more information, visit our Web site at www.geocities.com/tefft_family.

Come out of hiding to join us.

Just complete the enrollment form below and mail to:

The Tefft Family Association
3535 West Avenue J-13
Lancaster, CA 93536

About the Tefft Family Association

Who can join?

Descendants of John Tefft (Tift) of Rhode Island and his brother, William Teffe of Boston, including all the various spellings of the Tefft surname.

Others who wish to join as associate members are also welcome.

What are the annual dues?

Dues are \$10 per year/per member.

Contributions to cover mailing costs and other organizational costs for the TFA would also be greatly appreciated.

The TFA has not yet filed for nonprofit status.

Tefft Family Association Individual Membership Enrollment - 2002

1. Your name _____

2. Mailing address _____
Street _____
City/State/Zip _____

3. Home phone _____ 4. Business phone _____

5. E-mail address _____

6. Are you a Tefft descendant? Yes No Unsure

7. Are you applying for membership as a family (Tefft descendant) or associate member?
 Tefft descendant Associate member

8. My primary interest in joining the TFA is: (please check one ONLY)
 Preserving Tefft Homestead Attending Reunions Researching Genealogy Preserving Tefft Cemeteries Other _____

9. In addition to my annual membership dues of \$10, I wish to make a contribution to the TFA in support of the following:
 Management of Tefft Historic Park in South Kingstown, R.I. Unspecified Dues ONLY at this time

Please make checks payable to the Tefft Family Association

Thank you! Please mail to: TFA Enrollment, 3535 West Avenue J-13, Lancaster, CA 93536

Tefft Family Association

Board of Directors

Brenda Arms
Jeannie Tefft Clark
Hans Hammer
Scott Bill Hirst
Sandy Lemkin
Darlene Tefft Norwood
Henry Oatley
Charles Tefft

Interim Officers

President *Darlene Tefft Norwood*
Vice-President *Timothy N. Tefft*
Treasurer *Otis Wyatt*
Communications *Kathleen Tift Cooper*
Genealogist/Archivist & Cemeteries
Timothy N. Tefft
Homestead Preservation *Rick Norwood*
Membership *Lori Horton*

Tefft Family Association
3535 West Avenue J-13
Lancaster, CA 93536-6320

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED