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Annual house tour showcases Hingham's historic homes

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HINGHAM — The South Shore is home to a large number of historic buildings.

However, not all of these places are open for the public to see.

The Hingham Historical Society works to change that with its annual Hingham Historic House Tour, now in its 94th year.

The tour, held Sunday, included seven historical houses open throughout the town. Also open was the Hingham Heritage Museum at Old Derby Academy, the 1688 Old Ordinary, the First Parish Meeting House and the Second Parish Meeting House.

“The house tour is a longstanding tradition. Our homeowners do it of their own generous spirit,” said Sarah Goldman, a member of the society. “It’s letting people into a little bit of Hingham history. It’s to hopefully awaken their curiosity about the town we live in.”

Goldman explained that some people who attend the tour do so because they are interested in the history of the area, while others attend because they’ve “just always wanted to see inside the house, driving by and seeing the placards” marking the house’s historical significance.

“It’s an opportunity to see how people lived and continue to use historic homes,” said Hingham resident Catherine Matthews, who attended the tour with friend Susan Eddy.

The group tries to include many types of homes on the tour, Goldman said.

One house on the tour is the more-modernly decorated George Tilden House, built in 1870. Originally a smaller house, the structure was first added to in the 1960s. The current owners also added to the house in 2012. Inside the house, modern decor with bright colors and vibrant patterns create contrast to some of the original elements of the building, such as wood molding and mantles above fireplaces.

One of the more historically decorated houses is the General Benjamin Lincoln House, built in 1665. The owners, Charles and Rosie Woodward, are related to Gen. Lincoln, whose portrait is hung in the main stairwell of the home.

Around the house, historic portraits, pictures and other relics remind visitors of its connection to an important family. Items include a copy of a letter written by George Washington to Lincoln, - the original is in the care of the Massachusetts Historical Society - Mary Cushing Lincoln's wedding dress, and Lincoln's clock, which stands in the main stairwell and, still working today, is regularly hand-wound by Charles Woodward.

The descendants of the homes' original occupants are noticeably proud of their connection to Hingham's history. Rosie Woodward is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Lincoln.