

ROLFE from 1

raised about \$400,000 in pledges to save the barn and was on the verge of asking the Concord City Council to take the barn and surrounding property by eminent domain in 2003 when a deal was struck with the new owner which enabled the society to acquire the historic barn.

The purchase of the Rolfe homestead proved to be less challenging, as the society was dealing with a willing seller, Henry Simonds, who said many of the original features of the 1834 building are intact, including brick arches in the basement that support the fireplaces, an old woodstove and an original copper basin water heater.

And this time around the society had the support of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, which anted up \$350,000 to help with the purchase and start-up costs for the museum.

"It really made sense to have the two properties together," said Foss, who said that the 30-foot by 85-foot barn is a one of a kind, the only double-doored English style barn in the state, according to historians.

English barns, unlike those later developed by the early colonists, had their doors on the side instead of at the end of the building. The Rolfe barn



A double-doored English style barn, the largest of its kind in New Hampshire and which dates to the 1770s, was acquired by the Penacook Historical Society in 2003 and will be the site of a farmer's market this summer. ROGER AMSDEN PHOTO

is also unique because it is twice the size of an ordinary English barn.

Foss said the barn and a nearby home, which dates to 1774, were built by descendants of Henry Rolfe, who oversaw one of the first meetings of settlers to pick officials for the plantation in 1731, according to James Lyford's History of Concord.

She believes that Henry's grandsons, Nathaniel and Benjamin, built the first house on the Penacook Street property, at the confluence of the Merrimack and Contocook rivers. Nathaniel stayed, while his brother left for Rumford, Maine. Foss said Nathaniel's grandson built the 1834 house. He never married, but a brother of his came to live in the house and Foss is descended from that brother.

space until it acquired the homestead property. Now it plans to turn it into a "study house" to display carpentry of that era.

The historical society hopes to have a farmers market at the barn starting in the spring and is currently working to fix the foundation of the barn. The work will see two bays on the north side dismantled so that the foundation can be shored up. The barn will be put back together once that work is completed.

Foss says that a studio apartment in the 1834 homestead will be rented and that the society will have office space in the building as well as rental space for functions with the revenue which is raised going into an endowment fund for preservation of the property.

The Rolfe family has

many branches in and around Penacook with the most famous family member being the late Red Rolfe, a Dartmouth College grad who played third base for the New York Yankees from 1934 to 1942, and managed the Detroit Tigers for several years, narrowly missing out to the Yankees for the American League pennant in 1950, and later was athletic director for Dartmouth College.

Foss said family members have Red Rolfe memorabilia and furniture that was once in the house which she hopes will be displayed in the museum with the society's collection, which includes old photographs, Fisherville Fire Department helmets, and Penacook High School yearbooks - which are now in storage.

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1STAN-AD4C-A-1/08