

# CAPE ANN Museum

## Cape Ann Museum reveals newly-renovated and carpeted historic Captain Elias Davis House



Photos courtesy of Cape Ann Museum. ©2020 Steve Rosenthal.

GLOUCESTER, MASS. (February 2020) – In recent years, the Cape Ann Museum has worked diligently to preserve and restore its historic Captain Elias Davis House (1804), an integral part of the Museum featuring four fully furnished period rooms that explore the history of life in Gloucester and Cape Ann during the early Federal period.

The investment has helped secure the structure and safeguard the artifacts displayed within the House, as well as allowing docents and staff members to more effectively interpret the space and the lives of the families who once inhabited it. On January 29, 2020, the Davis House re-opened its doors to showcase its latest round of renovations with the introduction of plush period-designed carpeting on the floors.

While floor coverings were relatively rare in New England homes in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, they became fashionable in flourishing seaport communities like Gloucester when construction of the Davis House began in 1796. During his career, Capt. Davis traveled frequently to Europe including several voyages to London, where popular and stylish carpeting was readily available. Following his passing in 1821, an inventory taken of his house's contents reveals that in addition to rugs and mats, the first and second floors also featured carpeting, proven by the existence of nail holes surrounding the perimeter of these rooms.

Although no traces of the original carpeting remain, the Museum worked with J.R. Burrows & Co. to select four types of Brussels carpeting woven in period patterns known to have been used in other historic structures in the region which have now been installed in the House's dining room, front parlor, back parlor and central staircase. As scholar Nina Fletcher Little once wrote, the term *Brussels* refers to the carpeting's weave (rather than place of origin) that "was composed of colored yarn drawn in up close, uncut loops to form the pattern."



Photo courtesy of Cape Ann Museum.  
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The selected samples are rich in color and feature vibrant designs incorporating flowers and vines, as well as geometric and architectural shapes. A decorative border was also installed in the front parlor, the *best room* in the House, to complement the paper board on the room's walls. While 21<sup>st</sup> century tastes may be that the carpet patterns clash with the wallpaper, the Davis family and their friends would have found the overall effect very pleasing.

“We are thrilled that the renovations have brought the house back to life so present-day visitors can appreciate how homes were decorated at that time,” said Oliver Barker, Cape Ann Museum’s director. “We are so proud of the careful and thoughtful work that has made this a beautiful addition to our collection.”

The Davis House is shared with visitors through docent tours, available Tuesday through Saturday at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and on Sunday at 2 p.m. The trained docents discuss the architecture of the building, the social and economic history of Cape Ann during the early 1800s, the families who lived in the house and the significance of the artwork and artifacts displayed in the period rooms.

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*The Cape Ann Museum has been in existence since the 1870s, working to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of the area and to keep it relevant to today's audiences. Spanning 44,000 square feet, the Museum is one of the major cultural institutions on Boston's North Shore welcoming more than 25,000 local, national and international visitors each year to its exhibitions and programs. In addition to fine art, the Museum's collections include decorative art, textiles, artifacts from the maritime and granite industries, three historic homes, a Library & Archives and a sculpture park in the heart of downtown Gloucester. In June 2020, the Museum will open a new 12,000-square-foot collection storage and public exhibition space in Gloucester as part of its Cape Ann Museum Green campus. The campus will also include three historic buildings – the White Ellery House (1710), an adjacent Barn (c. 1740), and the recently acquired Babson-Alling House (c.1740) which are located on the site at the intersection of Washington and Poplar Streets in Gloucester. Visit [capeannmuseum.org](http://capeannmuseum.org) for details.*

*The Cape Ann Museum is located at 27 Pleasant Street in Gloucester. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is \$12.00 adults, \$10.00 Cape Ann residents, seniors and students. Youth (under 18) and Museum members are free. Cape Ann residents can visit for free on the second Saturday of each month. For more information please call: (978)283-0455 x10. Additional information can be found online at [www.capeannmuseum.org](http://www.capeannmuseum.org).*

*For a detailed media fact sheet please visit [www.capeannmuseum.org/press](http://www.capeannmuseum.org/press).*

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**Print quality images are available upon request.**