

# THE FARMINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"Preserve to Educate. Educate to Preserve."

## ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 12. 5:00 p.m.  
Old Stone Schoolhouse.

Join other members to vote on a slate of officers and directors and on a revision of the by-laws. Enjoy refreshments and an opportunity to inspect our renovated school. Have you ideas for programs for next year? Members of the Program Committee would welcome a chance to hear them. Learn more about society activities at the Indian Museum, the Stone Schoolhouse, and Society Headquarters.



THE OLD STONE SCHOOLHOUSE  
1790-1872

THE CHAPEL  
1875-1956

## DUES!!!

Our costs run ahead of our income. Almost all of our income derives from dues. The membership year extends from June 1 through May 31. Please don't forget. Use the enclosed envelope to renew or join NOW.

## THE OLD STONE SCHOOLHOUSE

Chair Harriet Margolis reports that the Old Stone Schoolhouse will hold its opening party on Sunday, June 9th from 2:00 until 4:00 p.m. There will be a spelling bee again between West District School and Noah Wallace School children. Farmington children, who have learned the 18th century nursery rhymes which were put to music for the 350th celebration, plan a singing performance as well.

Community support is vital for the schoolhouse. Sign up now as a volunteer and join those who serve as guides. Seven new schoolhouse scholars from the West District School second grade have recently been recruited. There will be a "training day" for them in late May or early June. Projects for them may include making craft items that can be sold in the museum store. A special thanks to Sam Fey for cleaning up the garden and yard around the schoolhouse this Spring.

The season this year runs from May 26th through October 27th with our annual "Scarecrows at the Schoolhouse" on October 20th. We still have Schoolhouse T-shirts, old fashioned toys, candy sticks and other items for sale in our store. Call 677-0059 anytime for unusual gifts.

## DAY-LEWIS MUSEUM ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG

On May 24 and 25, Dr. David Starbuck will conduct an archeological demonstration dig on the site of the Day-Lewis Museum of Indian Artifacts, 158 Main Street. A prominent archeologist who led major digs at this site in the 1970s, Dr. Starbuck participated in a similar demonstration here last year and returns by popular request.

This site, inhabited for well over 10,000 years, is rich with relics and other signs of human activities. The Day-Lewis Museum, owned by Yale University and operated by the Farmington Historical Society, displays artifacts excavated by Dr. Starbuck and teams of Yale students. Other artifacts were found by William Day, gardener for Wilmarth S. Lewis, who brought the site to the attention of his colleagues at Yale.

The dig, scheduled for 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., is limited to 18 persons (over the age of 18) per day. A limited number of openings remain: interested persons may register by calling Peg Yung, 677-2754. Checks for \$6.00 per day per person should be written to the Farmington Historical Society and mailed to the Society at P.O. Box 1645, Farmington, CT 06034. Participants should bring a bag lunch.

## AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN FARMINGTON

The Farmington Historical Society is about to launch an exciting new project. Long aware that there is much more to the story than the Amistad incident and the town's role as a station on the Underground Railroad, we are beginning to research the less-famous history of the day-to-day African American presence in Farmington. Our eventual goals are a data base which can be continually updated as new information and understanding come along; an exhibit which can travel to schools, businesses, etc.; and a computer program accessible to school children and other researchers.

Information, photographs, etc. will be needed. Have you information about African-Americans in Farmington? No matter how slight, it may help fill in the puzzle. If you would like to help with research in any way, please call one of these people: Charles Leach, Jr.-677-8076; Lisa Johnson and Ted Lindquist-673-6775; Barbara Donahue-677-0864. Thank you.

## VISIT HOSPITAL ROCK

Another new project for the society is an effort to preserve Hospital Rock. Far out in the scrubby second growth woods of Rattlesnake Mountain, a rounded ledge of traprock is barely discernible amid the brush and duff of the forest floor. On it are inscribed the names or initials of at least 66 Farmington youngsters, carved there between 1791 and 1794. They were quarantined at the nearby "pest house", deliberately isolated on

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the borders of Farmington, Plainville and New Britain where the old road to New Britain crested the mountain. They had been "variolated" with the smallpox virus in order to render them immune, and were among many immunized at similar facilities.

The pest house at Hospital Rock was established by Drs. Eli Todd of Farmington and Theodore Wadsworth of Southington. Dr. Todd was a much respected practitioner, and in later years founded the Hartford Retreat (now the Institute of Living). His work with smallpox came just prior to Jenner's discovery of vaccination with cowpox, which eliminated the need for smallpox hospitals.

Hospital Rock is a unique and tangible link with another era - a time when life was more precarious and savage outbreaks of infectious disease could and did abruptly end young life in Farmington. However, the Society faces many obstacles in its efforts to preserve this link. It lies on littered ground in the open woods, just off a pathway travelled by dirt bikes and motorcycles. Its exact location must be determined by survey; assistance must be asked of property owners and potential developers. Technical problems - how to preserve an exposed stone surface; how to discourage vandals - will require the assistance of experts. It is our hope that with the Society's leadership, increased awareness of this treasure will lead to successful conservation.

For those with an interest, archeologist David Starbuck and President Charlie Leach will lead us on a rugged walk to Hospital Rock on Sunday, May 26. This tour is limited to 25 people and will leave at 10 a.m. from Post Office Square, Main Street, Farmington. A registration fee of \$6.00 is required. Call Peg Yung, 677-2754, and mail checks, as above, to the Society.

#### FHS TO STATE HOUSE; "HAPPY BIRTHDAY"

It was time to celebrate, and our Society was there to assist. Saved from destruction, the 200 year old Bullfinch-designed gem welcomed a parade with balloons, bands, and dignitaries. Hartford's desolate Main Street vibrated with old time energy as nearly 140 towns and cities of Connecticut put their best foot forward.

Directed by Nick Scata, the Farmington Parade Committee assembled a handsome float on a farm wagon pulled by imposing dark Percherons with silver accoutrements. On the float were displayed models of the First Church and the Stanley-Whitman house, an old plow and cultivator lent by Jerry Wadsworth and embedded in rich Farmington soil, while a Kelly green banner proclaimed our 350th anniversary. Ahead went our drummer, Mike DeRoberts, with Henry Mason's old Farmington band drum. Then came town council members led by Bea Stockwell while alongside and behind came Farmington notables of the past: Theodate Pope Riddle (Sharon Stutz), Sarah Porter (Burch Ford), Judah Woodruff (David France), Cinque (Aisha Jordan), Noah Porter (Freeman Reynolds), and a curiously Hibernian red-headed

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Farmington Indian from the High School (Marie Gladis). Reflecting Farmington's diversity, two of our major national groups were represented by Ed Barrieau (Acadian) and Patty Labadia Lebouthillier (Italian, Lenolese). Charlie Leach portrayed Eli Todd M.D. with swallowtail coat and black doctor's bag, and Jean Martin was a farm wife in billowing skirt, bonnet and apron.

Your Society helped with the town's presentation. Happy Birthday indeed to the "New Old State House" from our community and from the Farmington Historical Society.

#### NEW ENGLAND HISTORICAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY TO MEET IN FARMINGTON

The Farmington Historical Society welcomes the NEHGS which will meet in Farmington at the Marriott July 12 and 13. The NEHGS is the oldest and arguably the most distinguished such organization in the United States. Scholarly presentations by world-class experts will include regional history, family history for various national groups, "how to" sessions and special invited lectures. Exhibits will include computer-assisted genealogy and book displays.

The FHS is arranging with NEHGS to offer a local history display. Local hospitality will also include walking tours focusing on Farmington history, especially the Amistad story. Assistance with this project is most welcome. For more information write NEHGS, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116. Phone 617-536-5740.

Contributors to the newsletter include Barbara Donahue, Charlie Leach, Carol Leonard, Harriet Margolis, and Peg Yung. Ann Reed, editor. *May, 1996*

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