

The Farmington Historical Society

Preserve to Educate. Educate to Preserve September, 1998

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGEby Ron Bernard

Three years ago the Bernard family moved to Farmington, this most charming and livable town. As a native of Hartford who spent much of my 30 years of working life outside of the United States, I returned to the area looking for a dignified, stable and friendly new home. We found it here, a place where townspeople respect and honor the contributions made by proud and hardworking citizens over more than 350 years.

The Society's #1 objective is to serve the membership. During my term in office I look forward to working with an energetic and committed board to help fulfill our mission to *preserve and protect and promote* Farmington's invaluable historic legacy. The board has developed a Strategic Plan which outlines our immediate objectives. Come read this Plan at Society Headquarters (or borrow from any Board member). I welcome all comments and suggestions. Support our goals and take part in the year's varied activities!

As the Society completes its 44th year, we are anticipating an exciting period. At long last it appears that we will have a permanent home in the heart of the Village. As we go to press, the executors of the estate of Mr. James Thomson, a long time member of the Society, are completing the transfer of the 18th century Gridley-Case cottages at 138-140 Main Street to the Society.

We are extremely grateful to Mr. Thomson, one of Farmington's true visionaries. Jim purchased the cottages (known affectionately as "the two little houses") in 1970 to protect them from further deterioration and possible doom. He recognized that these workman's cottages, once ubiquitous here, were perhaps the last of their kind in the state. He knew that these survivors are a special and integral part of Main Street. Mr. Thomson was an outstanding leader, citizen, benefactor and neighbor who cared very much about the community and its future. This gift will stand in tribute to his stewardship, commitment and generosity. Thank you, Jim.

We will turn to you, our members, and to the citizens of the town as we begin the restoration and beautification of this property. We will ask for financial help, for materials and in-kind services, and for advice. We will share the satisfaction of restoring the building and grounds to the standard established by Winchell Smith the 1920's and 1930's. Thank you for helping in any way you can.

September is Freedom Trail Month in Connecticut. This Trail commemorates African-American history in the state. This summer towns along the trail have celebrated this history through a cooperative quilt-making venture which will culminate in the delivery of the quilt squares to the Old State House by bicyclists on September 20. Farmington, of course, as a major station on the Underground Railroad and as the home of the Mendi captives from the Amistad will play a major role in these activities. Peg Yung, FHS vice-president, has coordinated the Society's contribution. Because Farmington boasts twelve sites on the Freedom Trail (each marked by a granite post erected by the FHS), Peg has supervised the design and sewing of twelve squares. The 15 inch squares were designed by Michael Aiezza, Cynthia Cooper, Norma Francini, Jean Johnson, Diane Rose Lipari, Dick Pandora, Sara Prentis, and Peg Yung. Assunta Aiezza, Ruth Bermaat, Penny Davidson Heinlein, Betty Kelly, Diane Rose Lipari, Ruth McCarthy, Priscilla Warren Pyatt, Laurie Regish and Peg Yung were the quilters. The assembled quilt will eventually hang in the Connecticut State Library. Bicyclists will carry quilt squares from Litchfield County to Farmington on Saturday, September 19 where they will be welcomed by a FHS sponsored reception at the Porter Memorial.

Prior to that 3:00 p.m. reception, we will exhibit the Farmington quilt squares and selections from the FHS Black History project "Speaking for Ourselves" at the Porter Memorial. At 1:30 p.m. the Freedom Trail Video will be screened. This tape shows Farmington's role in the Underground Railroad and in the support of the Mendi captives. There will be activities for children as well, with 19th century games and Freedom Trail Quilt coloring squares! And Walking Tour Brochures will be available for self-guided tours of Farmington's sites.

Steve Noble, of the Farmington Valley Trails Council, is recruiting and coordinating the bicyclists. Call him at 658-4065 if you can join the riders who will deliver the squares to Hartford on Sept. 20. We should have a good showing from Farmington.

We need homemade cookies, muffins, or other high-carb finger goodies to sustain the bikers and the children. Call Victoria Gerent, Hospitality Chair, at 676-9593 if you can help.

THIRD ANNUAL AUCTION. OCTOBER 17, 1998

From the sale of everything from fine antiques to white elephants, this auction will enable your Society to raise much needed funds. The popular event will be held again between the Main Library and the Staples House (Monteith Drive). Come and preview the offerings between 10:00 a.m. and Noon. Enjoy lunch and a festive atmosphere. The auction, under the brisk direction of auctioneer Tim Chapulis, will begin at noon and continue through the afternoon under a tent, rain or shine.

Rack your brains and search your attic. The Society receives 100% of the proceeds of items donated (10% from those brought in by Mr. Chapulis). Tax-deductible donations may include furniture (Country, Victorian, Empire etc.) , Collectibles (Hummels, Clocks, Glass, Lamps, Local Memorabilia, Autographs etc.) or other items of interest.

Jim Calciano is the coordinator and driving force behind our auction. Call him if you have a donation (676-8558). Or leave a message at Society Headquarters (677-1645). Could you help? Pick up donations; supervise a white elephant table? Let Jim know or leave a message at Headquarters.

OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS INSTALLED

At the annual meeting in June the Society elected several new officers including President and Second Vice President. Mike Cicchetti and Phil Sampson joined the board. Please feel free to call on these enthusiastic leaders if you have questions or comments.

Ron Bernard	President	677-2870	Executive Committee
Peg Yung	1st Vice President	677-2754	Programs and Activities
Peter Bartucca	2nd Vice President	677-5305	Accessioning
Marvin Anderson	Treasurer	673-5842	
David Holmes	Secretary	677-1132	
Jean Johnson	Director	677-7422	
Ann Arcari	Director	673-2478	
Jim Calciano	Director	676-8558	Bldg. & Grounds; Auction
Cynthia Cooper	Director	677-5464	Publicity
Victoria Gerent	Director	676-9593	Social & Hospitality
Joanne Lawson	Director	676-2762	Membership
Charlie Leach	Director (past Pres)	677-8076	
Elsa Morse	Director	676-1745	
Fred Mullen	Director	676-2974	
Ann Reed	Director	677-0611	Newsletter
Mike Cicchetti	Director	677-0704	Old Schoolhouse
Phil Sampson	Director	677-6648	New Hq Fund Raising

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

From Farmington: Mr. and Mrs. Edward Fisher, Mr. Mike Cicchetti, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Mann, Mrs. Mary-Jane Mastrobattista, Kerry and Wink Tharp, Mrs. Roberta Beyer, Ednalou and Norman Ballard, Tim Burke, Beth Grey and Robert Fetherston, June Cramer, Helen Ellis, Cynthia Mackay, Dr. Thomas Peters.

From Unionville: George E. McGovern, Nicholas Scata, Jane Livingston. Charles and Margaret Paradise.

From Avon: Irene Engel

From Whitefish Basin, WI: Mr. and Mrs. Charles Porter

**All members: Check your mailing label to see if you renewed membership in June.
Use the form below if needed. Share this form with a friend and help
enlarge our membership.**

Membership Form

Individual \$15 Family \$25 Contributing \$50 Sustaining \$100 Life \$300

Checks should be made payable to the Farmington Historical Society and mailed to P. O. Box 1645, Farmington, CT 06034

The fiscal year runs June 1 to May 31. New memberships received after March 1 are extended through the following fiscal year

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

I am interested in actively supporting the Society. Please call me to discuss how I might help.

AMISTAD DESCENDENT VISITS FARMINGTON

Dr. Michael Pieh, great grandson of Singbe Pieh, the heroic leader of the Mende captives, first came to Connecticut last spring to assist in the awards ceremony at which the FHS was recognized for advancing the study of African American history. Dr. Pieh is a graduate of the University of Liberia Medical School and has a Master's in Public Health from Tulane. Thanks to Charlie Leach, board member, and his wife Joan, Pieh was able to return for a month's externship at New Britain General hospital in July. During that time he lived with the Leaches, and Charlie has passed on news of the family.

Mike and his three brothers are active members of Tegloma, a Mende organization which is attempting to bring some relief to their troubled homeland. Sierra Leone expatriates are now spread across the world in their country's time of crisis. At the month's end, Mike flew to Sierra Leone to distribute \$30,000 worth of rice provided by Tegloma. He also took with him a large quantity of medical and surgical supplies provided by New Britain General, funds donated by the First Church of Christ, Farmington, and journals and books for the devastated medical school in Freetown. He has now returned to Maryland, but hopes to continue graduate medical studies at UCONN next year.

Leach suggests that Dr. Pieh exemplifies a special kind of enthusiasm for history - that of the historian-activist who reveres the past, but is deeply engaged in the struggles of the present. How appropriate that he has returned, though briefly, to Farmington where his ancestor shared with abolitionists here a similar commitment. We can be proud that our Society has helped strengthen the historic bonds which join Farmington and Sierra Leone.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

The FHS Office is open every Tuesday from 10:00 to 2:00. Drop in and give us a hand We can use computer skills, and help with filing and accessing new materials. We teach! The Day-Lewis Museum of Indian Artifacts is open Wednesdays 2:00 to 4:00 through November.

Sat. Sept. 10 Freedom Trail Tour led by Peg Yung for author Suzanne Freedman.
10:00 - Noon Public Welcome. Meet at Congregational Church, 75 Main Street.

Tues. Sept. 15 Quentin T. Snediker, "Building the Freedom Schooner Amistad"
7:00 pm Slide Program. Community Room. Farmington Main Library.

Thurs. Sept. 17 Freedom Trail Quilt Squares due at Peg Yung's, 54 Garden Street.

Sat. Sept. 19 Freedom Trail Activities, Porter Memorial, 75 Main Street
1:30 pm Freedom Trail Video, exhibits, games
3:00 pm Bicycle Couriers Reception

Sun. Sept. 20 Amistad Sunday at the First Church of Christ, Congregational.
10:00 am Service followed by a reception for bicyclists on the Church lawn.
Help cheer our bicycle couriers as they depart for Hartford.
1 - 4 pm Quilt squares from the entire state on display at Capitol Rotunda.

Sept. 21-25 Week-long quilting bee at Faith Congregational Church 2030 Main Street, Hartford, 8:00 am to 9:00 pm. Meals and secure parking provided. Beginners come ready to iron and pin on Monday and Tuesday; experienced quilters come Wednesday to Friday to quilt. The quilt moves to the Divic Center on Saturday to finish work. Call Heather Williams at 203 624-5899 to sign up.

Sun. Sept. 27 Connecticut Freedom Trail Quilt Gala at Legislative Office Building. Call Peg Yung if you can go. Let's send a Farmington group!
2 - 4 pm

Thurs. Oct. 15 Amistad Tour for Friendship Force Ambassadors 9:30 am.
Amistad Tour for Union School group 12:50. Docents-in-training are welcome on these tours. Meet at Congrega. Church.

Sat. Oct. 17 Third Annual Auction and White Elephant Sale. Monteith Drive.
Noon Previews 10:00 am to Noon.

Thurs. Oct. 29 West Haven High School Amistad Tour

Fri. Oct. 30

Halloween Graveyard Tours. Join local historian Ernest Shaw for a memorable evening learning about the fascinating and unique gravestone carvings in town cemeteries: "death heads", winged angels, messages! Tours depart at 3:30, 5:30, and 7:20. The last tour includes a dinner at a 1789 Tavern. Tours are rain or shine. First two tours: \$15.50 per person. Dinner tour: \$32.95. Call Heritage Tours at 860 677-8867 to register. Bring flashlight!

First week in November. Approximately 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. We are arranging a bus trip to the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. This will be an all-day adult trip to hear researchers and archivists speak as well as to see the museum. There will be time to visit the Casino for a while before returning home. More later.
