

Preserve to Educate. Educate to Preserve September, 1999

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ron Bernard

Welcome back everyone! Over the summer we made significant progress towards the restoration of our new HQ building and grounds at 138 Main Street. The first phase was research. Working with architectural and landscape history experts was truly exciting and informative. Slowly but surely the cottages and garden are giving up their "secrets". Here's what we have learned so far:

■ Architectural historian Anne Grady inspected every nook and cranny of both buildings. Her delightful presentation at the Society's annual meeting concluded that the smaller building (#140) is indeed an 18th century structure probably dating to c. 1787 as we thought. There is also evidence that it

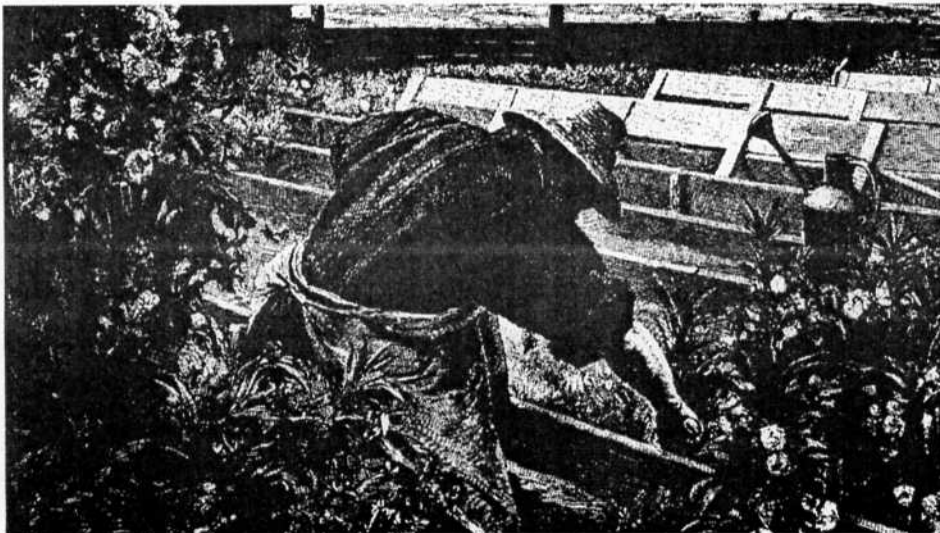
was used for some time as a hatter's shop. Meanwhile, scientific analysis of nails taken from various points and other clues from #138 suggest that it was constructed as a single building on that site between 1810-15, making it a bit younger than we once thought. On the other hand, we were thrilled to learn that most of the structure is probably original, making it one of the most completely preserved buildings in the Village and a wonderful and unique link to the Federal period here.

■ Jim Grant, a highly respected historical structural engineer, performed a careful analysis of #138. His conclusions will allow the Society to plan for use of the building as a hospitality gateway, a research center (by appointment), the administrative headquarters, and as

a meeting place for small groups and functions. We will soon commission an architectural historian to advise on preservation, restoration and renovation. Interior restoration should get underway this year.

■ Landscape history expert, Sarah laCour, left no stone unturned in her research of the grounds. Sarah believes that several formal garden elements still visible probably date to the 1930s, perhaps late in the Winchell Smith ownership period. The iron fence has probably formed the perimeter since the 1920's. Last month new segments were connected to the restored decorative stanchions and the gate. We expect to make additional improvements to the entrance area this Fall. Most of the landscaping should be completed next Spring.

Anne Grady prepared an excellent fascinating report and video tape which is available for members to review. (Call for an appointment.) The Society also thanks local professional photographer and long time member, Bob DeFosses, for making a complete first-rate photographic record of the buildings and grounds, pre-renovation. ♡



OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We are pleased to report that so far the 1999 capital campaign raised over \$135,000 in cash and securities and we have pledges or matching opportunities for approximately \$85,000 bringing us to about \$220,000 or 2/3rds of the goal of \$350,000. Our total to date reflects several very generous contributions and pledges, especially from the Lidgerwood family (over \$30,000), the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (\$26,000 with a matching contingent pledge of an additional \$65,000), and an anonymous donation of over \$40,000. Thanks also to the Farmington Savings Bank for its \$10,000 pledge and its leadership and commitment!

Approximately 100 gifts have been received so far including several corporate matching grants. (What a great

idea!) Grateful thanks are extended to those generous and concerned members and friends. We also appreciate the volunteer labor and support of a number of local tradesmen and businesses for materials and expertise.

However, the Society has nearly 300 members. That means that the majority of you have not yet met our call for help. Many gifts, while appreciated, were for modest amounts of under \$100. Frankly, in order to both restore and provide for a secure future for the Gridley-Case property we must have both wider and more generous support. Historical preservation and maintenance is by its nature costly, but the results are so gratifying and visible and special for future generations. Please clip the form below and consider a generous tax deductible donation today. Share in our community pride! ♣

Enclosed is my donation to the Farmington Historical Society for the amount of \$ _____ for the restoration and preservation of the Gridley-Case cottages and grounds.

I hereby pledge \$ _____ for the restoration and preservation of the Gridley-Case cottages and grounds

I would like to add \$ _____ to my previous donation for the restoration and preservation of the Gridley-Case cottages and grounds.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE

Our year runs from July 1 to June 30 and it's easy to overlook the renewal envelope included in our June News Letter. So, in case you forgot, clip the form below and mail it in now! A note on the label of your copy of the News Letter means we have not received your renewal check.

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 _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

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

FARMINGTON EVENTS:

FOURTH ANNUAL AUCTION

To be held in late October. Please save furniture, collectibles etc. that you might donate. Leave a message on the Society phone and you will be contacted and your donation picked up. Phone: 678-1645.

FREEDOM TRAIL MONTH

September has been designated as Freedom Trail Month in Connecticut. The Farmington Historical Society is offering free tours of town sites to Farmington residents and to visiting church choirs, who will participate in a day-long Gospel Fest at Bushnell Park on Saturday, September 18. The tours last approximately 1½ hours; please call 678-1645 or 677-2754 for reservations.

Sept. 17, 4:30 p.m.:

Choir of Martin Luther King's Church, Ebenezer Baptist of Atlanta, GA
Tour begins at First Church of Christ, Cong. 75 Main St. Farmington

Sept. 18, 10:00 a.m.

Choir of King Memorial Baptist Church, Montgomery, AL
Tour begins at First Church of Christ, Cong. 75 Main St. Farmington

Sept. 18, 10 - dusk

Visiting choirs will join in a day-long gospel festival at Bushnell Park.
The festival is free and the public is welcome

Exhibit

After traveling the state for two and a half years, *Speaking for Ourselves*, the Farmington Historical Society's exhibit on Farmington's African American residents, is finally coming home to the Society's new headquarters at 138 Main Street. The exhibit traces the lives of some of the African Americans, both free and slave, who lived in our town from 1650. It will also feature some *Amistad* and Civil War artifacts from the collection. Parking is available on Winchell Smith Drive. For group reservations, call 677-2754. ♣

SCOUTS CONDUCT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG AT GRIDLEY-CASE COTTAGES

by Peter Bartucca

On Saturday, August 21, the Farmington Historical Society sponsored an archeological dig at the Society's new headquarters, the Gridley-Case cottages at 138/140 Main Street. The dig was the project of David Schmidt, a Farmington resident and Eagle Scout candidate. David is a member of Unionville Troop 170, Nutmeg District of the Connecticut Rivers Council. The dig was planned by David Schmidt, with Mike Cicchetti, his Eagle Scout project advisor and Historical Society representative Peter Bartucca. Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni, the Connecticut State Archeologist, served as the supervising archaeologist. Several members of the troop, adult volunteers and Peg Yung and Joanne Lawson of the Farmington Historical Society Board also participated.

The dig began at 8:00 AM with the marking of five, randomly selected, two and one half foot pits. Before any actual digging began, Dr. Bellantoni instructed the group in proper digging and record keeping techniques. He explained that the cottages are located on a portion of the terrace above the Pequabuck and Farmington Rivers that is recognized as one of the richest Native American sites in New England. The Lewis Walpole Site, only a short distance from the cottages, has produced Native American artifacts for a considerable period and the Day-Lewis Museum, which is staffed by Society volunteers, has amassed a significant collection of such artifacts.

As Dr. Bellantoni had predicted, the participants discovered that the soil had been disturbed and was unevenly layered, probably as a result of farming, gardening and building that had been conducted on the site over more than two hundred years. The pits uncovered numerous historical artifacts very close to the surface. These consisted of nails, pieces of metal, bits of broken glass and bottles and pottery that all dated from the period of modern habitation. However, even in this level, occasional flakes of chert and quartz, the waste product of stone tool making, were found. One of the pits showed evidence of sand that may have been used for some construction project and was later discarded as fill. The pits were worked to varying depths and one pit produced a mid-section of a projectile point or possible perforator/drill of

blackish chert material. The age of the object was estimated at over 2000 years.

Unfortunately, rain that had been sporadic through the morning increased in intensity by mid-afternoon and Dr. Bellantoni halted the dig. Heavier rain threatened to wash into the pits and make it impossible for the participants to conduct the dig properly and maintain the necessary records. In spite of the abbreviated nature of the dig, it was clearly demonstrated that the site has significant potential and warrants further investigation. Each of the pits reached the layer of reddish sand that is characteristic of the conditions at the Lewis-Walpole site, which offers the promise of additional

discoveries. Before filling the pits, Dr. Bellantoni had the participants cover the bottom of each pit with plastic, to mark the depth to which each had been dug. He indicated his desire to return to the site and resume digging.

All artifacts removed from the site were bagged and properly recorded with the pit number and the depth at which each was uncovered. Dr. Bellantoni will examine the artifacts and return them to the Historical Society with a report. The Society expresses its gratitude to David Schmidt, Dr. Bellantoni, and to the scouts and volunteers who assisted in the project. ♣

FINDING ISRAEL FREEMAN

by Ann Arcari

A man named Israel Freeman was one of the African Americans who appears in the Society's exhibit *Speaking for Ourselves*. The exhibit, which has been traveling the state for over two years, is finally coming home to our new headquarters at 138 Main Street, and will be on view September 17, 18 and 19 from 1 - 4 pm.

Israel Freeman was a complex man, as we can infer from the records he left behind. The first record I found for him was his marriage record, dated June 16, 1763. The minister who married him, Ebenezer Booge of West Avon, states that Israel was a "mulatto." He married "Mary Mausank, half Indian." The original hand written record also says that "he is from Avon, she from "this place" meaning, I believe, West Avon, Booge's parish. What can we extract from these bare bones? The name *Freeman* says that Israel was not a slave, but a free man. Possibly his father was also a free man, but we know nothing at all about Israel's parentage. The name *Mausank* almost certainly is a variant of the name *Mossock*, which was the name of one of Farmington's prominent Indian families. Solomon Mossuck, we know, is buried in Farmington's Indian Cemetery. Where Mary fits into this family is another unknown.

Surprisingly, baptismal records reveal that in May of 1763, Reverend Booge baptised Anne Hancox, daughter of Israel Freeman. Unless Mary was a recent widow, this child was born out of wedlock, a punishable offense. Court records name numerous individuals and couples who were guilty of

fornication, or for having a child born too soon. Nowhere do Israel and Mary appear in those records—they were not cited for a breach of law or conduct. I did two years of research on Israel and Mary as part of the *Speaking for Ourselves* project, and for my thesis in American Studies for Trinity College. I have to admit that only in writing this article did it occur to me that Mary may have been a widow.

Over the next decade, several other children were born to them, and two more bore the middle name Hancox. This is indeed curious in an era when middle names were rarely used. Was Mary's first husband named Hancox, hence the daughter's name? Why then would later children also take that name, when they clearly were Israel's children?

There was a family named Hancox in Farmington, from the Kensington area. Thomas had several sons and daughters, one of whom, Rachel, died in 1737. Rachel's will stipulated that after her debts were paid and bequests made, the remainder was to be used for the poor. Could Israel Freeman have received some money from her estate? We don't know, but it's an intriguing thought. Imagination plays a great part in trying to put together the puzzles of the past, especially when we don't have enough facts at hand. Historical research is like a jigsaw puzzle—you start with the pieces you can identify like the edges— and put them together, trying to make a picture, even though there are big holes in it.

More about Israel later. Come to the exhibit and start building your own puzzle! ♣

TALES FROM THE PAST

by Carol Leonard

Farmington's history is full of schools, roads, civic activities of all sorts, and lots of men whose names are as familiar to us as our own. But the town has always been blessed with notable women, too — women who lived in ways that made them legends, but who may be little known to today's Farmington residents.

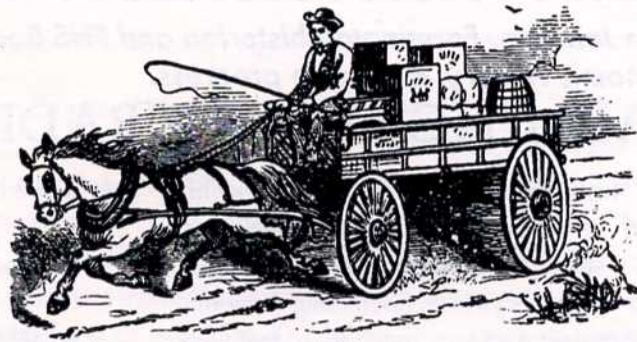
Let me tell you about Miss Julia, a lady I would have loved to know. The information is taken from a newspaper article written in 1957 by another Farmington lady, Grace Hale, whose writings have happily preserved so much for us.

While libraries were an important part of Farmington life as early as 1712, the various libraries (and there were several) formed by town citizens were usually housed in the home of the current librarian until 1882 when Miss Julia Brandegee opened the first library building, known as the Tunxis Library.

It was in the old Daniel Curtis house, then located at the west end of what is now the Parsons car dealership, across Farmington Avenue from the home (the Phineas Lewis House) Julia shared with her widowed sister, Sarah Brandegee Barney, in whose honor the present Village Branch Library was given.

The Curtis house, built in 1745, had gone from good tenants to bad ones: it was in a sad state of disrepair. Miss Julia paid for the repairs herself and, when the building was usable, she went to Canton to buy old furniture, driving the ten dusty miles with her horse and buggy and piling it high with odd pieces. She paid 50 cents for some Bannister chairs, one of which later saved a good dog from starvation.

Marcus, beloved pet of the Barneys, failed to come home one Wednesday night. A search was made of the neighborhood and he was advertised for, with no result. On Saturday evening when Miss Julia opened her



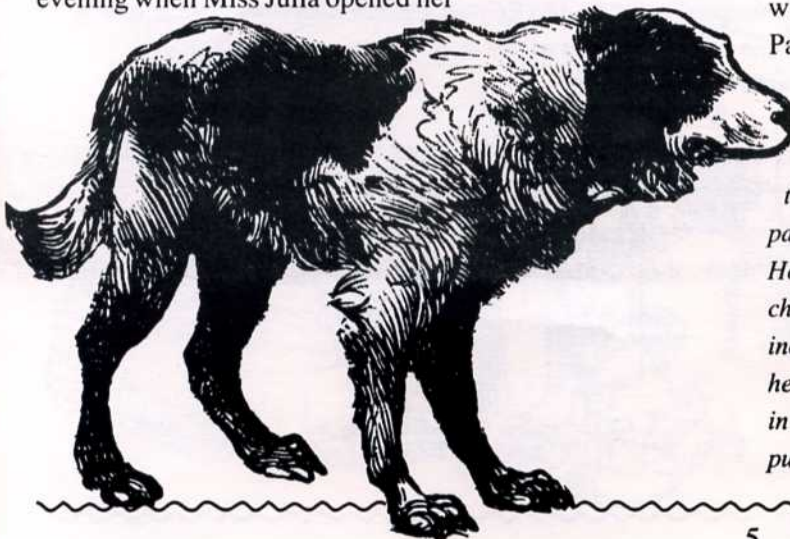
library, all was far from serene. Poor Marcus had been locked in for four days, finally chewing off an arm of a Bannister chair for sustenance. Happily, both Marcus and the chair survived. (During the blizzard of '88, two snowbound boys and found haven in the library. The chairs remained intact this time.)

Miss Julia's purpose, in addition to making good reading matter available to the community, was "to teach the illiterate to read and prepare them for citizenship so they may vote." Her classes attracted a group of rough men, many of them Irish immigrants drawn here for factory labor in Unionville. Envisioning a free library for the illiterate of the town, she more than fulfilled her dream. The bright little room with its great fireplace, its shelves bulging with books, its comfortable chairs and its air of welcome was the favorite meeting place of young and old.

In 1890, the Farmington Library Company and the Tunxis Library combined and became known as the Village Library, with more than 3,400 books. The little Tunxis Library could hardly accommodate so many volumes, so once more a move was made, this time to the Farmington Town Hall on Main Street. (The Town Hall, a Greek Revival Classic, was destroyed in the 1960s to make way for a larger fire house. *See p. 92 of Green Book.*)

We can be grateful to Dr. Walls Bunnell, whose far-sighted plans preserved the little old Tunxis Library building when it was threatened with demolition by the expanding Parsons dealership. He moved it, along with other old buildings, across the street where it remains today in the Brick Walk Shops.

Notes for the curious. Miss Julia's library is pictured in the 1906 "Green Book" on page 8, #4 with an interior view on page 9, #5. The building itself is still identified as the Daniel Curtis House. On page 151 of the "Green Book" is a photo of several old chairs, identified as the property of Miss Julia Brandegee; they might include some she bought for the library. And, to meet Miss Julia herself, look for her portrait - painted by her brother - which hangs in the Village Library. A new edition of the "Green Book" can be purchased at the FHS headquarters. ♣



Jean Johnson, Farmington historian and FHS Board member, shares with us Chapter One of her *Economic History, a work in progress.*

FARMINGTON'S TRADING HISTORY

Farmington's nearly 360 year old history can be recounted from many perspectives. One approach is to explore the town's history via its fascinating economic development. And how much more real to us this history is when we can chart it through our town's own diaries and account books, its museums, buildings, and cemeteries.

Farmington's history begins with the first settler's trek over the mountain into the valley of the Tunxis Indians. These explorers from Hartford were seeking land on which to settle and to find prosperity. Here the Native Americans had built their villages on the hill-sides and farmed the fertile flood plain. Their agriculture highlighted the value of the broad meadows, and their welcome allowed the English from Hartford to settle peacefully. The 1640 agreement between the two launched the ventures of those first proprietors who "purchased" the Tunxis land, both for settlement and investment.

Excerpts from the 1650 copy of the original Agreement with the Tunxis and later deeds reveal the economic compass that steered the new Farmington entrepreneurs. They wrote what they considered to be a good contract. The differing cultural concepts, however, of land use, "owning", or "renting" it, as well as language interpretations, gave to the English far greater economic advantage.

The trade document was signed by Governor John Haynes and Stephen Hart of Hartford. Pethus, the Tunxis Sachem, and Ahamo, his son, added their symbolic marks, while the English sealed the compact with a few coins.

The following excerpt is from "Ten Trading Tales" by Jean Johnson

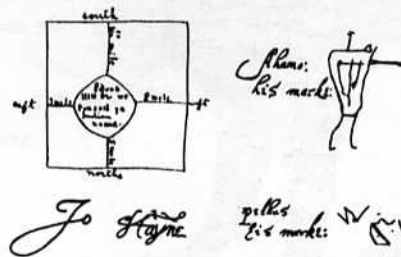
"Agreement: Indians of Tunckses Sepus"

It is "taken for granted that the magistrats (English) bought the whole country (as far as) the moohaks Country of Sequases . . . the chief Sachem . . . In a friendly maner come to terms with the Tunckses Indians that som English might Com & Live amongst them . . . that the Indians should yield: up all the ground . . . Composed about with a creke & trees, & now also be staked out . . . the English weare: to have: the use of the grass for their cows . . . to plough up the land for the Indians. (The Indians) . . . have liberty to sell wood for fuell . . . nor: shall they be hindered of fishing; fowling, or hunting . . ."

"Item: That the peace and plenty that they (Indians) have enjoyed by the presence of the English in . . . protection of them and trade with them, makes more to the advantage and comfort of the Indians though they (English) hier (hire, rent) some land, than even they (Indians) enjoyed before the coming of the English . . . (their) corne and skins will give a good price . . . and therefore the Indians have reason to live lovingly among the English, by whom their (Indian) lives are preserved and . . . we the chief Indians in the name of all the rest acknowledge . . . (and) make no quarrels about this matter . . ."

Twenty-three years later, in 1673, the Indians asked for the agreement to be written up again. Perhaps they had never understood what the English had meant by "hiring" land. This time a map of the land which the Indians had "sold" to the settlers was drawn on the deed which they all signed. The Indians walked over the boundaries with the settlers – "five miles north from Wepansock or Round Hill, (Round Hill was in the meadows) three miles to the east, ten miles to the south, and eight miles to the west. The Town of Farmington freely giving to the Indians . . . 200 acres of upland within the lands of their (Farmington) plantation as also three pounds in other pay." Twenty-one Indians and five squaws signed. The word "hire" was not used. By this time the English has assumed that the land now belonged to their Town of Farmington and they, the English settlers were now "freely giving" 200 acres to the original owners of the land, the Indians! The English "renters" were now the owners!

Two more times the Indians asked for deeds to be written. The English idea of "buying" and "owning" land was strange to them.



Nevertheless, the Tunxis and the settlers did coexist without controversy and engaged in business with one another. Deacon Thomas Bull, a blacksmith, noted in his 1682 account book some trades with the Tunxis:

- Cherry gets 2 hoes for 5½ bushels of corn at harvest time.
- John Indian, for 1 broad hoe, gives 1 buckskin well dressed.
- Taphow, loaned 1 bushel of grain, get back 1/2 bushel,
- Mentoo, 1 hunting hatchet for 10 pounds of tallow, mending of gun, for 4 pounds of tallow, 1/2 bushel corn for 4 pounds of tallow

In at least one 1688 trade, John Wadsworth gained 32 acres of land in return for food during a bad winter and for helping the Tunxis choose a new chief!

As the Farmington farmers expanded their crop fields,

grazing land, and fencing, the Tunxis way of life suffered increasingly. By the late 1700s most had left for New York State. Today a stone marker in Riverside Cemetery honors the memory of the town's first residents.

This first, expansive "trade" which gave the Farmington settlers the land and its resources, launched the town upon the course of its intriguing history. Other currents merged to shape that economic voyage through time: the proprietor system, the town's status as a "mother" town, and its entrepreneurial leadership.

Future issues will describe the historic ventures of what once was called "The Port of Farmington." ❖

For more information about the Tunxis in Farmington, see the Historical Society's newly published copy of the 1906 "Green Book".

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

From Farmington/Unionville:

Clifford Alderman, Diane Castaldi & family, Douglas Curtiss & family, Robert B Dube (son of Robert H Dube who donated School House land), Bruce and Peggy Hall, Peter and Peggy Morse, Dr/M James O'Rourke, Gordon Phelps/Kyung Chung, Victoria and Timothy Price, Mrs. Werner Roosen, Richard Sheldon & family, Robert and Marion Slater, Donna Striebel, Mary and Robert Villanova.

From New Britain:

Michael Pieh & Family (descendant of Singbe Pieh)

From Middletown:

Rev. and Mrs. James Silver

From Avon:

Don Kreutzer & family, Susan Nuzzolillo

From New York City:

Barbara Walczyk

FHS News:

Ann Reed, editor;
Cynthia Cooper, graphics
Jean Johnson, illustrations
on pages 6 and 7.



Remember to renew your membership.

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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