

# The Farmington Historical Society

*Preserve to Educate. Educate to Preserve.*

Newsletter September, 1995

The Historical Society continues its lively participation in the celebration of Farmington's 350th anniversary.



**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 7:15 P.M.** "SMALLPOX, FARMINGTON AND ELI TODD M.D." Community Room, Farmington Library, Monteith Drive. By popular demand, a repeat of last May's presentation by Ralph Arcari, PHD, of the UCONN Health Center's Stowe Library and by Charles Leach, MD, the Historical Society's president.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 7:30 P.M.** "NATIVE AMERICAN USE OF THE LAND" Community Room, Farmington Library, Monteith Drive. Kenneth Feder, professor, Department of Anthropology, Central Connecticut State University. Co-sponsored with the Farmington Library through a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 11:00 A.M. - DARK.** FARMINGTON FESTIVAL Visit our booth in the History Tent.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14 2:00 - 4:00 P.M.** "ALGONKIAN USE OF THE LAND" The Day-Lewis Museum of Indian Artifacts, 158 Main Street, will open for a special exhibit of artifacts discovered on the adjacent site where Tunxis Indians lived. Guided tours of this archaeological site will be offered as well. (See more about last spring's dig below.)

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15 12:00 NOON.** "MEMENTO MORI" We present again the popular cemetery walk conducted by Barbara Donahue and Charlie Leach at the old burying ground on Main Street. Chills and thrills!

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15 1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.** HARVEST FESTIVAL AT THE OLD STONE SCHOOLHOUSE. See below.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 23 7:00 P.M.** "OUR ITALIAN ROOTS" Farmington's rich Italian heritage and its debt to Lenola, Italy, will be examined in the framework of the Italian immigration to the United States. Speakers: Jonathan D. Galli of the Italian Genealogical Society of America and Ercole Labadia of the Farmington Lenolese Society. Co-sponsored by the Farmington Lenolese Society.

**Coming Attractions:** In January, Jean Johnson will present her memorable illustrated talk about the China Trade in Farmington. We are seeking a speaker for the same program to discuss Chinese Export ware and other artifacts from this trade. In March, genealogy. Is there interest in a family history/genealogy study group?

**Are your 1995-96 dues due? These programs must be funded! Send dues to the Historical Society, P.O. Box 1645, Farmington, CT 06032.**

## RAFFLE TO BENEFIT SCHOOLHOUSE

Send in your tickets (enclosed) and you may be the lucky winner of one of the three prizes: a beautiful schoolhouse-pattern quilt, an antique appraisal by Tom McCarthy of Antiq's, or a nicely refinished school desk and chair. You may win, but you will surely benefit the Society's Old Stone Schoolhouse, our very active museum of local history. The quilt will be displayed at various sites in town during the next month. Victoria Gerent heads the raffle committee. For more information call her at 676-9593.

## NEW LIFE FOR THE FARMINGTON FOUNTAIN

Thanks to board member Jim Calciano, the 82-year-old fountain at the intersection of School and Main Streets once again offers refreshment to all. This corner was, not too long ago, the "center" of the village, with the town clerk's office (razed for an addition to the Porter Memorial), the classic white post office (razed for an addition to the firehouse) nearby as well as the Meeting House. As we pause for a sip we can tune out the traffic and thank Jim for the return of this symbol of community. Jim enlisted the generous support of the Unionville Water Company (a connection directly to the main will prevent freezing problems), Fletcher's Plumbing and Heating, and the Lauretti Construction Corp (both of Bristol). The Historical Society funded other costs of about \$2500.

## THE DAY-LEWIS DEMONSTRATION ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG

Thanks to Evan Cowles who helped coordinate this fully subscribed dig, and who gave us this account.

The holes are all grassed over now, and only a few iron spikes remain, pushed deep into the dirt to help locate the site at some future time. But last May, the field behind the Day-Lewis Museum was filled with busy beginner archaeologists. We were supervised closely and strictly by Dr. David Starbuck, who came back to the site he had so thoroughly dug during the 1970's.

The first day, Friday, May 26, was filled with instructions: slow down when you reach the sandy subsoil, because any artifacts found there will be relatively undisturbed and must be very carefully catalogued, compared to those found in the dark brown plow zone which had been disturbed many times during the 200 years of European style farming. Keep the sides of your pits square, the bottoms absolutely level! No one is allowed to step into another's pit without permission. And if you find something, don't grab it and jump up and down, as the two people who found the first and most beautiful artifact did--leave it where it is, very carefully clean it off with a paint brush, and call Dr. Starbuck.

That first artifact was a very smooth ax head, or celt, perhaps 4000 years old. We didn't find anything as nice during the rest of the weekend, but we dug and carefully mapped several extensive hearths. We found many flakes which were the scraps left over from making

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points. We found a rough projectile point, and several small pieces of early pottery.

All the artifacts are currently being cleaned and identified by Dr. Starbuck for Yale's permanent collection, most of which is held at the Day-Lewis Museum. At the end of the weekend, we carefully covered the most extensive hearth with plastic, then refilled all the holes, and smoothed and raked the site. We refilled Dr. Starbuck's truck with his paint brushes and clip boards, shovels and trowels, sifting screens, surveying equipment, and fancy cameras.

We said thanks to Peg Yung who had worked so hard to organize the dig, Francis Quigley and Carol Leonard who monitored the Museum while we were all out in the field, Billie Salter and the Lewis Walpole staff for their lemonade, cookies, and their much appreciated help and support. We thanked everyone else, including all the eager beginner archaeologists, who had made the weekend so successful. And we said good-bye to Dr. Starbuck, who we all now called David, promising that we would do it again soon.

#### FARMINGTON PRESERVED

On August 6th, a small group of FHS members travelled to Ashfield, Mass, in the hills west of Deerfield, and explored the collection of Howes Brothers photographs preserved by the Ashfield Historical Society. George, Walter, and Alvah Howes travelled central New England at the turn of the century, recording scenes of small town life on glass plate negatives which they developed in their covered-wagon darkroom. Their last work was done in 1907. 25,000 of their negatives were lost for almost 50 years, but nearly 4/5ths of the number were rediscovered in 1963 and preserved through the dedicated work of the little town's Historical Society.

The Howes brothers visited Farmington and took many pictures of buildings, family groups, and individuals. In the collection, one finds the old Creamery (Waterville Rd), Gay's store (middle of Route 4), Hurlburt's blacksmith shop (Garden St), the Hillstead and its many farm employees, and other scenes of the village. There are also gaps: Unionville scenes undoubtedly exist, but have not been identified. Isolated photos suggest the existence of lost series.

Several scenes were newly identified as a result of our visit. Farmington denizens Elevation Mason, Carol Leonard, Peg Yung, and Frances Williamson contributed a good deal of additional history and anecdote to the archives. Elsa Morse compiled an index of Farmington views, particularly of Garden Street. Perhaps best of all, we shared some exciting primary historical research and a picnic on a beautiful New England summer afternoon. Charlie Leach planned and led the trip, and gave us this account.

#### THE SCARECROWS ARE COMING AGAIN!

Save Sunday, October 15, 1 to 4 p.m. for our fifth annual harvest festival at the Old Stone Schoolhouse.

The drawing for our raffle will highlight the afternoon while scarecrows of all descriptions cavort on the lawn to celebrate Farmington's agricultural heritage. Once again, we invite individuals, families and groups of any kind to put their imaginations to work in creating scarecrows. (The only rule is not to use anything new.) Prizes will be awarded for scariest, prettiest, funniest, most creative, and best in show. Bob for apples, paint pumpkins, drink cider and eat home-made goodies.

The Schoolhouse Committee needs volunteers to help with events or bake. Call Harriet (677-0059) or Carol (677-4217).

#### SCHOOLHOUSE NOTES

While most schools close for the summer, our Old Stone Schoolhouse becomes a lively place, welcoming visitors from near and far each Sunday afternoon - this year from as far away as Japan!

We've been complimented often on our hands-on operation. Children and adults alike enjoy and learn from becoming actively involved, using slates, quill pens, primers, hornbooks and toys and dressing up in period costumes. Second and fourth graders from West District School filled the museum during the last week of June, making history come alive. And the learning goes both ways - long-time neighbors and visiting former residents regularly add to our knowledge of the school, the chapel, and the community.

Sunday afternoon openings continue through October 15, and the Schoolhouse is open by appointment and for limited rentals throughout the year. Next March, for the first time, we'll be participating in a "Warm Up to Winter" event that also includes Avon's Living Museum and Simsbury's Massacoh Plantation.

The Schoolhouse Committee, headed by Harriet Margolis (677-0059) meets the first Monday evening of each month. Anyone interested in any aspect of Schoolhouse work is invited. Or call for work at home.

Newsletter contributors also include Carol Leonard. Ann Reed, editor.

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