

Town News

Historic Amherst



The Hiram D. Leavitt House (1825) was home to two ministers in its early years

Hiram D. Leavitt House – in the Beginning

BY KATRINA HOLMAN

Those who enjoy old houses tend to want to know just when they were built, but that date is often elusive. Not so with this house at 154 Amherst Street: its earliest deeds are an historian's treasure, clearly indicating who built it and giving particulars of its construction. And because the young builder, also its first owner, ran into financial difficulties, newspaper advertisements, offering it for sale or to let, reveal its genteel early tenants as well as original dimensions.

In 1824, joiner Hiram D. Leavitt (abt 1800-1842) started building a two-story main house 41 by 20 feet with a two-story kitchen ell 25 by 18 feet, on the southern part of his father's house lot in the desirable location near the new courthouse, erected the previous summer, and on the road leading to Boston. The Jan. 1825 indenture deed (143:297) whereby Hiram borrowed money from attorney Charles H. Atherton is unusual in that it spells out exactly how the house was to be finished: the front portion of the house painted and papered, "blinds" put on the windows, a kitchen and "necessary" and wood shed to be built; and soon after May 1, the exterior was to be painted, a garden space enclosed by a fence with gates, and a well sunk. Leavitt went back to Atherton for more money seven months later but, in spite of his three-year mortgage, had lost the house the following year, unable to find a buyer before the sheriff's sale, due to sundry legal "executions" against him, presumably for unpayable debts.

Early Occupants

Two ministers rented the residence in its early years. The first occupant was Rev. Edmund Q. Sewall (1796-1866), a Harvard graduate, who was ordained in Jan. 1825 as first pastor of the Christian Society in Amherst, a "modern Independent Unitarian church." This was before they had an edifice. He lived here only til 1826. (In 1838, Rev. Sewall,

then pastor of a church in Scituate, Mass., made medical news when he underwent trepanning surgery at Mass General Hospital in Boston to relieve years-long head pain and epileptic fits.)

Rev. Silas Aiken (1799-1869), who was ordained in 1829 as fourth pastor of the Congregational Church here, lived in this house about two years before moving in 1831 to 13 Carriage Road where he and his family lived till 1837. Rev. Aiken was the brother-in-law of future First Lady Mrs. Franklin Pierce. His son Edward was born in 1830 in the south-east corner room of the Hiram Leavitt House. (Dr. Edward Aiken returned to town 35 years later and lived in the house at 13 Church Street for decades, where he practiced medicine and ran the telegraph office.)

This house served as the Amherst Botanic Infirmary from 1835 to about 1837.

Look-Alike House

Have you noticed that this house is essentially the same style and size as the one at 6 Main Street: 2 over 2 rooms with a hipped roof and two interior chimneys at the back. Although just one room deep, its rooms are gracious in size. The look-alike house was built more than two decades earlier and was the home of David Holmes, one of the founders of the Christian Society in 1824. Next door stood the house of Ephraim Barker (1732-1800), the housewright and churchbuilder who had taught Hiram's uncle Andrew Leavitt the trade. Hiram's pa Joseph was also a joiner. Coincidence or connection?

A tip for homeowners: don't rely on the "built" dates for antique houses listed on the property tax record or on the National Register of Historic Places – they are too often just plain wrong.

Thanks go to genealogist Jackie Marshall of the Historical Society of Amherst for searching and transcribing the old deeds for this house.

AMHERST RECREATION/Fall – Early Winter

PO Box 960, Amherst, N.H. 03031
603 673-6248 ~ 603 673-2032 (FAX)
Peabody Mill Environmental Center
603 673-1141
www.amherstrec.org ~ www.PMEC.org

Adult & Senior Programs

“Dare to Write” presents Creative Short Fiction

Join instructor Anne Kelsey and try your hand at creative writing. Adults of all ages, whether they are first-time writers or seasoned word-smiths, will enjoy Ann's unique group exercises, which they will do together each evening.

Let Anne help you express yourself in this creative short fiction workshop. Dare to Write will inspire you to put pen to paper and find that creative spark inside. A “no red pens allowed” approach makes Anne's classes innovative, instructional, and most of all, fun for everyone.

Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

When: Tuesdays, 11/10 - 12/15
Where: Souhegan High School Annex Bldg.
Time: 7:00-8:30pm
Fee: \$75 Amherst Resident, \$85 Nonresident

Game Daze

The game play is continuing so won't you join a fun group of seniors? Amherst Recreation offers a fun afternoon of table or card games for Seniors. Bring along a few friends and enjoy the afternoon challenging yourself and others at dominos, bridge, pinocle or whatever game interests you.

When: Thursdays
Where: Amherst Central Fire Station
Time: 1:00-3:00pm
Fee: Free

Youth Recreation Options

Fall Youth Wrestling

Come out and learn to wrestle or work on your skills. Join in the fun and competition against other local teams!

Who: Grades 5-8
Where: Souhegan High School
When: 11/16-2/18, Mon. & Thurs. 6-8pm
Fee: \$50 Amherst Resident (fee incl. singlet & head gear), \$60 Nonresident
Shoes required & tournament entry fees are an additional cost. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Horseback Riding Lessons

Join us for another fun season of horseback riding lessons held on the grounds of Walnut Hollow Farm, a traditional New England horse farm. Come and learn the anatomy of a horse, barn management, tack, grooming and riding in their outdoor or indoor ring. Wear heeled boots or shoes and helmets are provided. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141

Children's Lessons:

This is an after school program, choose Wednesday or Thursday and either the 3:30, 4:30 or 5:30pm session. Classes will run one day a week for 4 weeks in each of these 6 sessions;

Session - Wednesday, 11/11-12/2
Session - Thursday, 11/12-12/3
Fee: \$140 Amherst Resident, \$150 Nonresident (4 lessons per session, minimum age 7)

Leave No Child Inside - School Vacation Day Programs

Are you wondering what your children will do on their school vacation days? Send them to PMEC where they'll spend the day learning about and enjoying nature! Content topics vary from day to day depending on weather. Enjoy indoor & outdoor activities such as Hiking, Fishing, Animal Tracking, Nature Crafts, Songs,

Stories, and Games! Bring a snack, drinks, and lunch (if staying all day). Dress your child in appropriate clothing including layers for outdoor activities. Please pack an extra set of clothing, shoes, and socks. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

When: Monday, 12/28 – Thursday, 12/31 Holiday Recess; Monday, 2/22 - Friday, 2/26 Winter Recess; Monday 4/26 - 4/30 Spring Recess
Where: PMEC
Time: 7:30AM-5:30PM
Fee: \$40 Full Day Amherst Resident, \$50 Full Day Nonresident, \$175 Full Week Amherst Resident, \$185 Full Week Nonresident

1st & 2nd Grade Hoops

Passing, dribbling, shooting skills taught & reinforced through informal games. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Where: Wilkins School
Who: Grades 1 & 2
When: Sat. 1/9 - 2/13
Fee: \$24 Amherst Resident, \$34 Nonresident
Registration Deadline: 12/31/09

Kids Needle Arts

Sewing For the Young Child*

Using fleece fabric students will learn how to measure and cut fabric and piece it together to make a hat. Sewing machine and hand sewing basics will be taught, as well as a few decorative stitches. Materials will be provided. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Grades 2-4, Tuesday 4-5:00pm, 11/10-12/22
Fee: \$75 Amherst Resident, \$85 Nonresident

Basic Sewing*

Using fleece fabric, students will learn the basics of machine and hand sewing. Each student will make a hat and pair of mittens while learning how to measure, cut, hand and machine stitch, and embellish a finished product. Materials will be provided. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Grades 5 & 6, Tuesday 2:30-3:45pm, 11/10-12/22
Fee: \$85 Amherst Resident, \$95 Nonresident

Sewing 101*

Students will learn the basics of machine and hand sewing as they complete a book bag and small zippered pouch. Each student will learn how to measure, cut, hand and machine stitch, and embellish a finished product. Materials will be provided. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Grades 7 & 8, Wednesday 2:30-3:45pm, 11/18-2/23
Fee: \$85 Amherst Resident, \$95 Nonresident
*All classes held in the AMS Life Skills Room!

Kids Culinary Arts

Kitchen Magic Cooking Classes

Bring a camera to document the birth of your culinarian because your budding cook will learn that the kitchen is where all the magic happens! With the support of an adult joining each child, each budding chef will enjoy many of the following cooking activities: spreading, pouring, peeling, rolling, tearing and tossing, and adding ingredients. We will introduce safety, manners, nutrition and healthy eating as part of fun in the kitchen to your 3-5 year olds. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Where: AMS Life Skills Room
Who: Ages 3-5 (w/adult)
When: Saturdays 11/21-12/19
Time: 9-10:30am

Fee: \$100 Amherst Resident, \$110 Nonresident
Let's Get Cooking!

Looking for an enrichment program which gives your student a meaningful activity that is creative, active and useful? If so, join us each Tuesday afternoon for Let's Get Cooking! Your student will learn how to read a recipe as well as identify and use the proper cooking tools and ingredients needed in recipes. Cooking terms, equipment handling and the all-important safety rules required in all cooking environments are an important part of this class. All of these topics will help your student understand what it takes to create a healthy and yummy breakfast, lunch, snack or dinner . . . and when it is appropriate to play with their food! Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Where: AMS Life Skills Room
Who: Grades 5 & 6
When: Tuesdays (Holiday Session) – 12/1-12/15/09
Time: 2:15-4:30pm
Fee: Holiday Session \$90 Amherst Resident, \$100 Nonresident

What's for Dinner?

Here is your chance to turn the tables on your student and ask them what they are making for dinner! In this class each student will learn the skills and effort required to prepare a balanced, nutritious meal for a family of four and bring it home to enjoy with the family. Students pour, peel, chop, roll, tear, sauté, braise or bake nutritious rich ingredients and learn, first-hand, the effort and rewards that go into nourishing a family. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Where: AMS Life Skills Room
Who: Grades 7 & 8
When: Thursday (Holiday Session) – 12/3-12/17/09
Time: 2:15-4:30pm
Fee: Holiday Session \$105 Amherst Resident, \$115 Nonresident

Many Additional Cooking Classes & Sessions Are Available Online!!

Let's Get Outside!

Under the Moon Hikes

Let us help you around the night sky. Join us for stories and a walk in the woods along easy paths that accommodate people of all ages. Bring a flashlight to help you navigate uneven terrain. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

Full Moon Hikes—Join us for monthly moon lore and discover how well you can actually see during a full moon.

Friday, 12/4 7:00pm
Where: PMEC
Fee: \$6 Amherst Resident, \$8 Nonresident, \$15 Resident family (3+ people), \$20 Nonresident family

Stargazer Strolls—Join us during the “new” moon to learn some basic astronomy and discover which constellations you can identify.

Saturday, 11/14 7:00pm
Friday, 12/18 7:00pm
Where: PMEC
Fee: \$6 Amherst Resident, \$8 Nonresident, \$15 Resident family (3+ people), \$20 Nonresident family

Monthly Creature Feature

This monthly program is geared towards people of all ages who want to learn about and/or visit with local and exotic animals. Those brave enough might even get the chance to hold or touch the creatures. A different critter will be featured each session. Register at www.amherstrec.org or call us at 673-6248 or 673-1141.

When: Saturdays, 12/5, 1/9, 2/6
Where: PMEC
Time: 2:00-3:00pm
Fee: \$1 Amherst Residents, \$2 Nonresidents

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