



Although the markers are new, part of the East Farmington Cemetery, the Utley plot (left), is the oldest cemetery in Farmington Hills. Surrounded by a black wrought iron fence and gracious trees, the plot was the site of Farmington's first burial of a settler, Mrs. Sanford Utley, who died as a result of a fall from a wagon upon completion of her pioneer journey from New York. The Philbrick Tavern (right), now the home of the Juliano family, is one of the most gracious structures in Farmington Hills. Legends surround the history of this home, which dates to 1827 and reveals its name from tavern owner Nathan Philbrick.



## Marking time Hills historical plaques outline former times

By LYNN ORR

A touch of history will kick off Farmington Founders' Day celebrations next week when the Farmington Hills Historical Commission presents seven historical markers to the city.

The seven markers, all commemorating historic sites in the city, will be presented by City Clerk Floyd Cairns, chairman of the historical commission, to the city's new mayor, Joan Dudley at 2 p.m., July 20 in City Hall.

Mistress of ceremonies Kathryn Briggs will preside as local dignitaries, including Rep. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington) and County Commissioner Robert McConnell, gather for the celebration.

Dr. Lynn Bartlett, professor of history at Oakland Community College, will present the dedication address. Former Farmington resident Perry Jamison, a fourth-generation worshiper at the Universalist-Unitarian Church in Farmington Hills, will lead the invocation.

Historical Commission members, as well as local residents, have chronicled the sites chosen for the markers, and a brief description of each site's historic significance is included on the plaques.

"WHERE FARMINGTON began," the southeast corner of Eleven Mile and Power, will be the site of a non-structure plaque.

"On March 8, 1824, five men, led by Arthur Power, a Quaker from Farmington, New York, came into this area," reads the marker. "They built a log house about 1/4 mile to the southeast from this point on the bank of a small run which can still be seen."

"The permanent village, now the 2 1/2 square miles of the City of Farmington, as established within six months, about 1 1/4 miles south of here along the Shiawassee Trail. In 1972, the remaining 33 1/2 square miles of the original township area was incorporated into the City of Farmington Hills."

THE PHILBRICK tavern, on the northwest corner of Eleven Mile and Power, now the Juliano home, has long been recognized as an historic site in Farmington Hills.

"The attractive home dates from 1827," reads the marker. "In the 1830's and 40's, it was a tavern operated by Nathan Philbrick and was known for the high quality of its entertainment for weary travelers."

"It also served as a meeting place for the early township government. In

the 1850's, according to a strong and persistent local legend, the place possibly served as a station on the Underground Railroad, helping escaped slaves get into Canada.

"It is now a private, well-kept home."

THE UTLEY CEMETERY, a portion of the East Farmington Cemetery, on Twelve Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster, is remembered as the burial site of the first white person to die in the Farmington area.

"This cemetery, now known as the East Farmington Cemetery, is the oldest in Farmington. Mrs. Sanford M. Utley, who died as a result of a fall as she alighted from a wagon upon completion of her long trip from New York, was the first settler to be buried here."

"She was laid to rest on Sept. 26, 1824, which also, co-incidentally, was the birthdate of John Collins, the first white child to be born in the community."

Many of Farmington's earliest settlers are interred in this land, donated by Mrs. Utley's son, Poleg S. Utley, according to the marker.

A black wrought iron fence surrounds this well-kept cemetery with some original burial markers. The

Utley markers, however, are new, according to Mrs. Briggs.

THE MINNOW POND, one of the lesser-known sites in Farmington, is located in the Randlewood subdivision south of Fourteen Mile and east of Halstead, now under construction.

"This pleasant little valley and the pond at the bottom of it, have been here since the retreat of the last ice sheet about 12,000 years 'go,'" reads the marker.

"For centuries, it was a camping spot for Indian parties traveling across the state. Many artifacts and stone tools have been found in this area. It is the subject of a beautiful Indian legend. 'The Potawatomi Curtain.'"

"An 1817 map shows an Indian trail around the pond."

The minnow pond creek flows through the subdivision, and the marker may be placed in the meadow preserve area or near the entrance to the subdivision.

The legend of the Potawatomi curtain is derived from the smoke of Indian campfires settling over the valley in the evenings, according to Paul Schreiber's account in "Farmington: An Original Entity," published by the

Historical Commission and available at the Hills treasurer's office for \$2.50.

NORTH FARMINGTON, once a small village located near the corner of Farmington Rd. and Fourteen Mile, will also have a commemorative plaque.

"Established here around 1850, this was a small village containing a post office, a blacksmith shop, a cheese factory, general stores, and about 10 homes," reads the marker.

"It was a collecting point for milk from the surrounding farms. A cemetery, south of here, still owned and controlled by an association, was incorporated in March, 1837. With the coming of Rural Free Delivery, the post office was closed."

"With better transportation available, the businesses and stores also closed, and North Farmington was a ghost town by 1850."

THE UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, now located on the west side of Halstead, between Eleven and Twelve Mile, has a long history, researched by Perry Jamison, a 1965 Farmington High School graduate.

The Farmington Union Society began the planning of this New England style Meeting House in 1849. Uni-

versalist services were held here prior to its dedication on Aug. 26, 1853," the marker reads.

"Pledged to a free religion, its pulpit has been shared, not only by other denominations, but also by politicians, and by poets. Now known as the Universalist-Unitarian Church, it was moved in 1967 from Warner St. near Thomas St. to the Gibson Centennial Farm on this site."

In addition to being the oldest church building in Farmington, the front portion of the building is the oldest Universalist Church in Michigan.

THE GERMAN SCHOOL, as its better known, or Fractional School District No. 1, as the marker reads, is located on Middlebelt near Northwestern Highway.

"It was built on land donated for a public school and later named for George German, one of an English group who settled here in 1835."

"It provided education for grades one through eight for many years. After all of the school districts in Farmington were consolidated in 1944, the building was used for kindergarten classes. This site, and the one-room schoolhouse, is now owned by the Hillel Day School."

Staff photos by Harry Mauthe



The stone portion of this school house, now owned by the Hillel Day School, dates to the mid 19th century. Located on Middlebelt near Northwestern, it is the only existing one-room schoolhouse in the area used continuously for educational purposes.



The structure on the right, the oldest part of the Universalist-Unitarian Church in Farmington Hills, is the oldest church building in Farmington and the oldest Universalist Church in Michigan.

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NIGHTS IN BARE  
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WITH A  
STRAPLESS  
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