

Flag-raising kicks off Botsford Inn salute

The raising of an 1836 American flag Jan. 2 heralded the beginning of a year-long celebration of the sesquicentennial anniversary for the Botsford Inn, Farmington Hills.

The nationally registered historic site is the oldest operating lodging facility in the state.

The year-long celebration is intended to showcase the inn, which innkeeper

John Anhut characterized as "a mini-museum of living history and a repository of many fine objects of art and antiques."

The American Legion, the Farmington Community Band Brass Ensemble and the Farmington Hills Police Department honor guard assisted Anhut with raising the 25-star flag, a duplicate of the one that flew over the inn in 1836.

"We chose to begin our sesquicentennial anniversary by unfurling Old Glory because it is a symbol of our country and of the love and respect we have for it and for the protection it provides," Anhut said.

ANHUT ADDED: "We hope it will be an enduring symbol throughout the year ahead of the pride and deep appreciation we feel toward the heritage passed on to us by the early settlers of Farmington and Farmington Hills. They left their homes and came here to hew out a new one in the wilderness."

"They built the roads, the bridges and the places of rest for weary travelers, one that was to remain for 15 decades — the Botsford Inn. Even then,

men traveling long distances through the forest knew by the flag whether they were meeting friends or foe."

In introducing Anhut, Farmington Hills Mayor Joe Alkatech pointed to the city's "rich heritage" and said, "We're quite proud to have the Botsford as one of the richer histories of our past."

Alkatech also read congratulatory letters from Gov. James Blanchard and U.S. Congressman William Broomfield. The inn originally was a stagecoach stop on the Old Post Road (now Grand River) between Lansing and Detroit,

before Henry Ford put the country on wheels. After Ford met his wife, Clara, at the inn, he bought it in 1924 as a romantic gesture.

FORD'S ZEAL for historic preservation was demonstrated when he prevented the inn from being demolished during the widening of Grand River. Under his supervision, the inn was moved 300 feet back from the road and scrupulously renovated.

Ford operated the inn until his death in 1948. Anhut Hotels Co. bought the inn in 1951, after Clara's death.

With an eye toward maintaining the inn's rustic charm, Anhut made 13 major additions to the original structure. It now has 11 meeting-banquet rooms and 75 lodging rooms, a restaurant, tennis courts and a garden courtyard.

Touche of Americana and five wood-burning fireplaces mark the interior. Many of the furniture pieces were brought from Henry Ford's Fairlane Estate in Dearborn.

Public tours will be available throughout 1986.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Officers (from left) Gary Malloux, Gilbert Kohle, Brian DeGrande and Don Fradette, part of the Farmington Hills Police Department honor guard that raised the old-time American flag above the Botsford Inn.

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