

Taking a peek at another Farmington

By David L. Litogot
special writer

I did something silly this summer. I drove 700 miles from home and ended up in Farmington. I visited the city hall, the high school and the Polo Grounds. Polo Grounds? Here in Farmington, Mich.? No, in Farmington, Conn.

It was bizarre driving around another Farmington. There was the Farmington Bakery, the Farmington River, the Farmington central business district. I even got lost!

This New England city is just eight miles west of Hartford and has around 19,500 people. Originally settled in 1640, the town's first name was "Tunis Sepus" — Indian for "at the bend of the little river." In 1645, the name of the town and the river was changed to Farmington.

At one time, Farmington was the largest town in the colony of Con-

footprints in history

necticut. Remember, the New England "town" is equivalent to our Midwestern township.

The town of Farmington then contained 225 square miles and was divided into nine parishes. In 1775, seven of those parishes broke away and became independent: Southington, Berlin, Bristol, Burlington, Avon, New Britain and Plainville.

The present Farmington community is 28.7 square miles and is really a merger of two small villages: Unionville and Farmington. Unionville was a blue-collar area up the Farmington River, famous for its textile mills.

THE COMMUNITY has four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Its most famous institution, however, is Miss Porter's private school for girls. Farmington also has the Tunis Community College and the Medical-Dental School of the University of Connecticut.

The area is served by a hospital, a health center, four volunteer fire companies, and two public libraries. With a budget of \$18 million, Farmington, Connecticut is administered under the council manager form of government.

Note the similarities. There are others. Both the New England and Michigan cities have classic old homes. Our "sister" in Connecticut, naturally, has older, more elegant style homes. Here in Michigan, our Farmington homes reflect a simpler, cleaner look.

Farmington, Conn., has two historical museums. The Hill-Stead Museum is the former home of millionaire Alfred Atmore Pope. The attractions include its attractive furnishings and "objects de" art. The Unionville Museum features more of the area's history. Last summer, it

had a photographic display of some of the 500 historical homes in the Farmington area.

Annually, the Polo Grounds hosts one of the largest outdoor antique markets in the country.

RUMOR IS that the earliest settlers of Farmington, Mich., came from Farmington, Conn. This may be true if one goes back far enough. The earliest settlers of our community came from Farmington, N. Y. The people who first settled Farmington, N. Y., came from Berkshire, Mass. If the people of Berkshire came from Farmington, Conn., then the rumor is true and the connection is complete.

(Farmington, N. Y., by the way is a small rural hamlet just off the New York Thruway. There are few historical buildings and few similari-

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ties to either its Michigan or Connecticut namesake).

If you travel to New England, you might want to stop and see another Farmington, one that is older but just as concerned about keeping a dual personality. Both communities are growing rapidly while still trying to stay in touch with its past.

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