

*The more one knows about the place where one lives,  
the more meaningful living there becomes.*

THE FAIRFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

## Preserving Our Past

Chartered in 1903, the Fairfield Historical Society is a not-for-profit, privately supported, educational institution dedicated to collecting, preserving, and interpreting the history of the Town of Fairfield, Connecticut.

A tribute to Roger Ludlow and the other founders of the 365-year-old Town, and to centuries of Native American tradition, the current museum's collection of nearly 15,000 artifacts is a priceless microcosm of history from the prehistoric era to the present, and reflects the industrial and social mores of a thousand years. It includes fine and decorative arts; clothing and textiles; furniture, silver, brass, pewter, ironware, glass, and ceramics; architectural elements; shipbuilding and woodworking tools; nautical instruments; and agricultural implements.

In addition to operating a museum and a distinguished library, the Society presents a variety of programs for schools and a broad range of offerings for the community-at-large. Visited by professional historians and researchers, school children, area residents, and distant visitors alike, the Historical Society serves as a connection to the past, a bridge to the future, and a welcome to all who cross its threshold.

In 1954, the Society constructed a new museum that doubled in size in 1961, reflecting both its success and rapid growth. In 1974, the Society acquired the Ogden House, a circa-1750 saltbox farmhouse, and transformed it into an historic-site museum.

In 1996, the Town and the Historical Society entered into an agreement under which the Society would manage four historic structures owned by the Town on the Town Green: the Burr Homestead, the Sun Tavern, and the Victorian Cottage and Barn. Later, the Bronson Windmill and the 1812 Powder House were also brought under the Society's management.

# For Our Future

Over the past 100 years, the Fairfield Historical Society has grown in three significant directions: as a museum, an educational center, and a research library. In addition to its own museum and Ogden House, it is the steward of six important historic buildings owned by the Town. Our mission now is to expand the educational and programmatic initiatives that link us to the region, while maintaining the physical and historic integrity of the structures that are now under our care.

The new Fairfield Museum & History Center will be a merger of new technology and high-level curatorial expertise. The combination of educational space, museum, and library in a multi-use structure will be a truly unique tribute to the tradition of the region, as well as to all those individuals who have played a part in New England's rich history.

For these reasons and others, it has become evident that the present site and building no longer serve our mission and expanded role. The existing building lacks sufficient land for adequate expansion; its current "footprint" already exceeds the town coverage limitations and horizontal expansion is not possible. By moving to the Town Green, the Fairfield Museum & History Center will be instrumental in transforming the Green into a cultural historic campus and visitor destination.

## *A New Location*

Historically, the "Town Green" was the center of government, land distribution, and religious meetings for a much larger region stretching from Norwalk to Stratford, including modern-day Weston, Easton, half of Redding, Bridgeport, Southport, Greens Farms, and Westport. A 23-acre tract that was part of the original lots laid out at the founding of Fairfield in 1639, the Green is comprised of the Old Burying Ground and town-owned buildings that are among Fairfield's most historically treasured and architecturally significant structures.

The new Fairfield Museum & History Center is located on the southeast corner of the Town Green, directly south of the Sun Tavern. This area of the Green has hosted such historic figures as Washington, Franklin, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock. As the anchor of an integrated campus, the new Fairfield Museum & History Center will occupy a leased land area of more than an acre, with the building's main entrance on its south side, adjacent to an improved road and parking lot.

## *A New Facility*

Demand for additional programs and space moved the Society's Board of Directors and Staff to plan for the Fairfield Museum & History Center. A subsequent series of architect-led workshops with Society members, users, neighbors and community leaders confirmed that expansion and renovation of current facilities would not provide necessary space—and would be more expensive than construction of a new building.

This new facility will contain three distinct public areas: one devoted to the Museum and its collections; another to the Library; and a third to Educational and Community Programs. The three areas will be connected by a spacious Reception Hall, which will house the Museum Shop. The overall look of the new structure will be in harmony with and enhance the other historic properties on the Green.

The new, modern Center will occupy 13,000 square feet, all on one level—a vast improvement over the current 9,600-square-foot building distributed over three levels—and will be fully handicapped-accessible.

### **The Museum**

- The new structure will allow us to increase our museum exhibition space, so that we can expand both the number and quality of our exhibits, reaching a wider audience than even before.
- Changing exhibits will introduce visitors to the fascinating history of the Town of Fairfield in a dynamic and interactive way, showcasing this community's position as a focal point of rich New England tradition and American history.

### **The Library**

- The Library will house the 10,000 volumes of books, genealogies, local manuscripts, business papers, maps, and more than 2,000 photographs in its collections—increasing significantly the stack capacity of our current building.
- A new Reading Room will allow patrons to conduct research, in a comfortable environment and with the latest in library technology.

## **Education and Community Meeting Space**

- The Classroom will allow us to maintain a distinct area for school programs and small-group presentations.
- The Meeting Hall will accommodate larger groups in a formal setting with state-of-the-art multimedia capabilities, and can be used for lectures, films, performances and assemblies.

## **The Reception Hall and Museum Shop**

- Visitors will be welcomed through a large, formal lobby and reception area.
- An expanded Museum Shop will offer books, publications, maps, stationery, with additional space for specialty items and exhibits.

To facilitate vital behind-the-scenes tasks, the new building will provide secure and climate-controlled storerooms. A modern new kitchen located near the meeting space will allow for more efficient catering of activities and programs.

## ***A New Challenge***

To make this ambitious project a reality and to increase the endowment to support the costs associated with the new building and programs, it is necessary for the Society to conduct a Capital Campaign to raise \$6 million.

Our goal is to open the Fairfield Museum & History Center in late 2007. We invite you to read further about how you can be a part of this exciting and historic project.

# The Leadership Challenge

The decision by the Board of Directors to undertake a capital campaign to meet the Society's needs has been carefully considered. We fully understand and anticipate that it will be the response of the relatively few individuals with the capacity to make the Leadership and Special Gifts set forth on Page 7 over a three-to-five-year pledge period that will determine the campaign's ultimate success.

## *Why Your Commitment is Important*

Leadership gifts set the pace and help build the kind of enthusiasm that is essential for a successful campaign. Gifts of support at a Leadership level are vital for two compelling reasons:

- Leadership support will constitute the highest percentage of total dollars raised. Your Leadership commitment—and that of your peers—at this crucial stage of the campaign, will motivate many others to participate.
- Your support now will send a strong message to others about the importance of the campaign and the need for every member of the Society's greater constituency to give according to his or her ability.

It is in this context that we invite your consideration of the Scale of Gifts on Page 7. Your Leadership Gift will help drive the momentum needed to carry the campaign to others in a convincing and compelling manner. Whatever your decision, please accept our profound thanks for your past support and for your thoughtful consideration of a role in the Campaign for the Fairfield Museum & History Center.