

Hidreth family reunion comes to Westford Meetinghouse

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD - The Hildreth Family Association, with a membership of nearly 350 from 35 states and five foreign countries, has selected Westford for its annual reunion.

Coinciding with the town's observance of the 250th anniversary of its founding, the old meetinghouse at the common will be the focal point of the gathering, according to Mrs. Kathryn B. Hildreth of Harvard (Mass.), the society's president.

The association was founded in Boston in 1893 and includes the descendants of all Hildreths in the United States, especially those descended from the Richard Hildreth who settled in Westford and Chelmsford. The last time Westford hosted the group was fifty years ago.

Richard was received in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1643 as a free man at the age of 35. First living in Cambridge, he moved to Chelmsford. Then, several of his descendants moved to Westford where they occupied a sizeable tract of land of some 500 acres on the east side of the town.

Six Hildreth homes, most of which are gems of early Colonial architecture, still survive along Hildreth Row, known today as Hildreth Street. Three will be open to members.

The reunion starts on Saturday with registration and an exhibit of Hildreth memorabilia, along with a select collection of items from the private museum of Allister F. MacDougall. The bronze plaque at the center post office, listing the 250 Westford men who fought in the Revolution including ten Hildreths, will be shown.

Stephen D. Hildreth of Hudson will be moderator at the 10 o'clock meeting in the sanctuary with a welcome to Westford on its 250th birthday by the only non-Hildreth on the program, Gordon B. Seavey.

Other speakers are from Garden City, N.Y., Dry Fork, Va., and Chelmsford. A buffet lunch will be served in the parish hall.

The afternoon program will include a

description of a Hildreth Mansion known as Borderland in Easton, with Chairman George Adams Parkhurst as the speaker. The annual meeting and election of officers will conclude this program.

The group will then leave for the Minuteman National Park in Concord with dinner at the Colonial Inn.

The chairman and his wife, Barbara Hildreth Parkhurst, will entertain the group with a Sunday brunch at their home in Chelmsford, near the Westford line.

A guided tour later will take the group into three Hildreth houses in Westford. These will include The Saltbox, built about 1658 by James Hildreth; Hickory Acres, built by James II and occupied by Mrs. Jahde Collins; and the Ephraim Hildreth house constructed in 1687.

The latter is owned by Mrs. Parkhurst, a 9th generation Hildreth, and the farm contains 148 of the original acres.

Stops will be made at Fairview and Westlawn cemeteries to view graves of early Hildreths, then to Chelmsford to that of Richard.

A final stop on the Sunday tour is to the Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which is headquartered in the so-called Spaulding House. It was built by Robert Hildreth in 1761 in what was then East Chelmsford and now Lowell.

A similar reunion was held in Chelmsford last year with an attendance of 125 from twelve states.

The membership naturally includes many from this area, including Mrs. Virginia Hildreth Jennings of 10 Patten Road, whose father manufactured for many years Hildreth's Velvet Molasses Kisses and which still are being produced in Cambridge.

The Harkhursts reactivated the association three years ago and its membership list has expanded greatly through their efforts. The late Arthur G. Hildreth of Westford was president from 1952 to 1961.