

# The Hartford Courant

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## EDITORIALS

### Preserving the Amistad slaves' home

#### OUR TOWNS

##### Farmington

A significant piece of Farmington's history is for sale. The new owner should preserve the historical value of the residence and the carriage house at 127 Main St.

The Farmington Village address is where most of the 39 adult slaves who commandeered the Spanish schooner Amistad in Long Island Sound in 1839 lived for several years.

While the 11-room Greek Revival house has architectural worth, the carriage house, where the slaves lived, is the link to Farmington's role in the abolitionist movement that opposed slavery in the United States.

The carriage house was built on property owned by Austin Williams, a merchant and leading abolitionist. The Amistad slaves were freed by a precedent-setting U. S. Supreme Court ruling

that they did not have to be turned over to their Cuban masters. The Amistad saga has become an increasingly prominent part of Connecticut history.

The property remained in the Williams family for three generations until purchased in 1945 by Robert and Emily Pope Hoffman. The Hoffmans were well aware of the historic nature of their property, which is among several old houses in a historic district that encompasses most of Farmington village.

Inclusion in the historic district requires that any proposed changes to the exterior of a structure be approved by the district. This safeguard and the watchfulness of the Farmington Historical Society would be helpful.

But the responsibility of preserving the house and particularly the barn rests largely with whoever becomes the new owner. That owner ought to be willing — eager and proud, too — to be the latest caretaker of history.