

## "Odyssey of the Amistad: A Trail to Freedom" Walking Tour

The Farmington Historical Society is proud to present the fifth season of its acclaimed “Odyssey of the Amistad: A Trail to Freedom” tours, building on the growing momentum generated in recent years. Following increased interest from visitors and scholars from around the country, another strong season is anticipated along Farmington’s portion of the Freedom Trail.



The writing and research team — Sarah Jean Willett, Kim Silva, and Joanne Lawson — continues to deepen and refine the tour’s historical authenticity through extensive research and ongoing updates. This season also introduces new presentation elements and perspectives. Carla Dean of the writing team brings a unique take on her portrayal of Fannie Freeman as a researcher/writer after portraying Fannie in 2025.

Tour organizers closely evaluate participant feedback through weekly surveys and continue to consult with leading historians, writers, and researchers who have attended the program. Last season, the tour received praise from noted scholars and museum professionals for its educational and approachable presentation of the Amistad story.

Guests included Dr. William Yoo of Columbia University, author of *Reckoning of History*; Dr. Brenda Simmons, Founder and President/CEO of the Southampton African American Museum; Dr. Kathe Hambrick, Executive Director of the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University; and Dr. Georgette Grier-Key, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Eastville Community Historical Society in Sag Harbor.



**Among the most significant additions for 2026 is the introduction of Singbe Pieh — known in America as Joseph Cinqué — as a speaking figure in the opening presentation. While previous seasons referenced Pieh through images and narration, this year audiences will hear portions of the Mende language and gain a more personal understanding of the experiences endured by Pieh and his fellow captives aboard the Amistad schooner.**

Reenactors and storytellers continue to wear period clothing alongside Afro-centric garments and authentic African textiles, reinforcing the cultural connections between past and present. Organizers note that the use of African fabrics is intentional, highlighting both historical continuity and the enduring influence of African traditions within contemporary African American culture.

The 2026 season also marks a transition within the cast. After four seasons portraying Charlotte Cowles, head writer Sarah Jean Willett will retire from the role, with a new performer stepping into the character.

This year’s tours will place additional emphasis not only on the Mende Africans and the Farmington abolitionists who welcomed them, but also on the presence of anti-abolitionist sentiment within the community during the era.



The enhanced 30-minute opening presentation will provide visitors with deeper insight into the lives of the Mende people and the residents of abolitionist-era Farmington.

Following the presentation, guides will lead participants on a 1.5-mile walking journey through historic Farmington, retracing the footsteps of the Mende and exploring pathways connected to the Underground Railroad.

### Public Tour Dates

**June: 6**

**July: 11, 18, 25**

**August: 1, 15, 22**

**September: 12, 19, 26**

**October: 3, 10, 17**

Tours begin at 10:00am  
at First Church of Christ,  
75 Main Street,  
Farmington

