

Woodstock Historical Society hosts free concert

LOCAL FOLK MUSICIAN TO PERFORM

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Jeff Davis says sometimes accidents just happen in life, and one of those happy accidents is that, for more than 30 years, he's been playing a very unusual type of music.

Described as a collector and interpreter of old-style, traditional American music — not the type of music people hear very often anymore, he explained — Davis, 63, is adept with the fiddle, banjo, mandocello, guitar, spoons, jaw's harps and a number of hand-made instruments.

Though the Woodstock resident performs throughout the world, even now just recently home from a month-long tour in England, he will give his first public performance in Woodstock at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 16. Hosted by the Woodstock Historical Society in Palmer Hall, the concert is free and open to the public.

With selections collected from "source singers" who remember the tunes sang by generations before them, Davis will tell how the music was found, who the musicians were and what the songs meant to them.

"It's very interesting to reintroduce people to music that was absolutely commonplace just a couple generations ago," Davis said.

Raised in Long Island, Davis earned a degree in history at Duke University. While there, his love of history collided with an interest in folk music, largely inspired by the parents of college friends who discovered what became the 1958 hit song "Tom Dooley." The two, Frank and Anne Warner, traveled extensively, gathering more than a thousand other songs. The collection is now held by the Library of Congress.

The Warners' son, Jeff, formed a musical partnership with Davis that resulted in CD recordings titled "Two Little Boys: More Old Time Songs for Kids" and "Days of Forty-Nine." Davis has since released his own CD, "Some Fabulous Yonder."

Davis and his wife, New Zealander Lisa Davidson, moved to Woodstock from Cambridge, Mass.

"She wanted to get out of the big city, so we left the cultural hub of the universe and stumbled on a place out here," he said.

Although he can be seen just about every

January at an annual food bank benefit held at the Vanilla Bean Cafe in Pomfret, Davis tends to take his music on tour throughout Europe, Canada and the United States.

Woodstock Historical Society member Bet Zimmerman said Thursday's concert should prove to be entertaining. Refreshments will be served, and while donations are welcome, there is no admission charge.

"It's just a great opportunity for people to see a local artist," she said.

The Historical Society hosts half a dozen programs each year on a variety of topics relating to history. For more information, contact Program Chairman Douglas Zimmerman at (860) 974-3020 or visit www.woodstockhistoricalsociety.org.



Courtesy photo

Woodstock resident Jeff Davis performs old-style, traditional American music internationally. He will play at a free concert Thursday, April 16, at the Woodstock Historical Society's Palmer Hall.