

## **ODK Circle to recall Alfred University's history during Founder's Day**

3/15/01

Early in the fall of 1836, two friends made a pledge: If Amos Coon of Alfred could sign up 20 students, each willing to pay \$3, then Bethel C. Church of Rensselaer County would come to Alfred and open a school. That's the story of Alfred University's founding, recounted in *Fiat Lux*, an AU history written by a former president, the late John Norwood Nelson. And that's the event that the Alfred University circle of Omicron Delta Kappa, the national leadership society, will be celebrating by reintroducing Founder's Day to the campus. The all-day event is planned for Thursday, March 22. Throughout the day, say ODK leaders, they will be trying to recapture the atmosphere of 19th century Alfred. Needless to say, Amos Coon was successful in recruiting those first students, and Bethel Church arrived in Alfred to begin his school; the first classes were held in December, 1836. At 8 a.m. on March 22, there will be a re-enactment of the arrival of Church in Alfred during a continental breakfast, open to the campus and the community, in Alumni Hall, originally built in 1851 as the chapel. Later, it became a classroom, an auditorium, and a gymnasium before being literally rebuilt within its original "skin" in 1986. Alumni Hall now serves as the home of Alfred University's admissions and financial aid offices. During the day, the actors portraying Church and Coon will be walking around campus, visiting buildings, trying to recruit their first class. Walking tours of Alfred, led by Dr. Thomas Rasmussen and Margaret Rasmussen, will be held at 10:45 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. Those wishing to join the Rasmussens for the tour are asked to meet in the lobby of Powell Campus Center. A Founder's Day luncheon, featuring specialty foods dating back to the 1800s, will be served in the Ade and Powell dining halls from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. At 12:15 p.m., Dr. Susan Strong, interim provost, and Laurie McFadden, University archivist, will deliver the Bergren Forum with their lecture detailing the founding of Alfred. The Bergren Forum will begin at 12:15 p.m. in Nevins Theatre, Powell Campus Center. At 4 p.m., the Alfred University baseball club will take to Merrill Field for a game, recalling Alfred University's first sport. A Remembrance Celebration, sponsored by the Counseling and Student Development Center, will be held at 6 p.m. in Powell Campus Center. Also at 6 p.m. in Nevins Theatre at Powell Campus Center, prizes will be awarded in the Founder's Day Trivia Game. The day-long Founder's Day celebration culminates with "Alfred in 1836: A Social Revue," a presentation of speeches, music and plays which harken back to Alfred's early days, scheduled for 8 p.m. in Alfred's Seventh Day Baptist Church. Included will be speeches delivered by Dr. Charles Edmondson, Alfred's current president, and Professor Carol Burdick, portraying, respectively, Jonathan Allen, president of Alfred University from 1867 to 1892, and Abigail Allen. Omicron Delta Kappa will host the closing reception at 9:15 p.m. at the Union University Church Center. All events are open to AU faculty, staff and students, as well as members of the Alfred community. Organizers include: Dan Napolitano, director of Student Activities, and senior Stephanie Webster, co-chairs; Christa Nyman, ODK Circle president; Jodi Parker, atmosphere committee chair; Dr. Fiona Tolhurst, faculty chair; D.J. Hampton, student activities committee chair; Doug Clarke, community committee chair; and Tricia Debertolis, director of Powell Campus Center, student affairs committee chair.