

Felton 2/17/95

# Dr. Farmer dolls raise funds for Felton hall

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FELTON — Dr. Jessie Campbell Farmer was the driving force in the five-month effort to raise \$5,000 to build the Community Hall in 1920.

The pioneering doctor died in 1950, but, through the magic of doll-making, Farmer is helping raise money to replace the hall she loved so much.

Twenty-five Victorian-style dolls in Farmer's likeness are being sold by the Felton Community Club to defray the \$500,000 cost of rebuilding the hall, which burned down in August 1990.

"She (Farmer) intended it as a place for World War I veterans to gather," said Leah Frost, the club member who came up with the idea to sell historic dolls. "She was concerned about the social and psychological effects of war on these people. ... She actually went door-to-door. She wouldn't take no for an answer."

In addition to the Farmer doll, Frost has come up with two others, which are a composite of a typical person who might have lived in Felton at the turn of the century.

Frost said Farmer had no living relatives, so there was no legal problem using her likeness. But other pioneers they considered still had relatives living, and the legal constraints made it necessary to create composite characters.

"I wanted to make them real, and I had done a lot of research into Felton's history," said Frost.

The "Felton Fannie" and "Felicity Felton" dolls will be given to winners of a monthly raffle that the club will begin conducting at its next meeting on March 13. The



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Leah Frost displays Victorian-style Dr. Jessie Campbell Farmer dolls that she hopes to sell for funds to construct Felton Community Hall.

goal is to entice more people to attend club meetings to get fresh ideas for raising money to rebuild the hall.

The Dr. Farmer doll, which will be more valuable because only 25 are being made, is available for a \$90 donation to the community hall. The Fannie doll also can be purchased for \$50, while the Felicity doll is being sold for \$60.

Farmer, who grew up in the Santa Cruz Mountains, earned her medical degree from the University of California in 1888. She practiced in San Francisco for many years, but returned to her roots in Felton in 1917.

"She was the first woman to wear knickers in town," said Frost. "The community loved her."

Farmer helped the town survive the influenza plague that swept the

world in 1917, and headed the Red Cross and war loan drives in the Felton area during World War I.

Farmer was the first president of the Felton Community Club, which met in a spare room before the rent rose too high. So, in October of 1919, Farmer gathered members together to come up with ideas to raise \$4,000 to build their own community hall.

When construction was completed in 1920, the bill was \$5,000, so Farmer staged a cabaret night at the new hall. She invited her friends from San Francisco, and the extra \$1,000 was raised in one night.

Farmer also was president of the County Medical Association and active in the San Lorenzo Valley Chamber of Commerce. She died on Feb. 20, 1950, at age 83, and was

buried in the Felton Cemetery.

The three dolls are the work of Pat Lui, a friend of Frost's and owner of the Basement Brats and Yesterday's Dolls line of dolls. She works out of Corona.

"She used to be a portrait artist," said Frost. "She just incorporated these historic dolls under her patent. They'll be numbered, dated and signed by her."

All the money raised goes to rebuilding the community hall, an effort which is about \$200,000 short of its goal. The shell of the building will be finished in September, but there's no money to complete the interior work or furnish the hall.

*For more information on the dolls, call Frost at 335-2941. The community club meets on the second Monday of each month at the Felton Fire Hall at 7:30 p.m. It costs \$5 to become a member.*