



The Courier

FEBRUARY 2007

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A quarterly publication of the Manchester Historical Society, Inc. / 106 Hartford Road / Manchester, Connecticut 06040 / (860) 647-9983

Dream Weavers

Planning Begins on Permanent Installation of Scalamandr  Looms

Last month, about 25 people attended a brainstorming meeting concerning the Historical Society's vintage looms. Purchased from the world-famous Scalamandr  mills in New York by Anthony Viscogliosi and donated to the Society (see the May 2005 issue of *The Courier*), the looms have occupied the first floor of the History Center since then.



Anthony and Paula Viscogliosi

The purpose of the meeting was to initiate the Loom Interpretation Project, the mission of which would be to answer these questions:

- How will the Society "interpret" the looms for the public? In other words, how will the public understand and make sense of both the operation of the looms and the significance of the machinery and the people who operated it, set it up, fixed it, and designed it?
- How will the Society display the looms to the public? What building changes need to be made to accommodate the public?
- How will the Society incorporate the looms into our mission of educating the public about the history of Manchester and the Industrial Revolution?
- Who will take charge of the process and "own" the project during its inception and as it becomes a viable component of our History Center? Where will funding come from?

At the meeting, members and staff of the Historical Society as well as newcomers to the History Center toured the first floor to see the looms in their temporary home, and the sky-lighted space designated for their future home. Back on the upper level, a number of discussions ensued:

What is our vision for the looms?

Participants agreed that the loom exhibit would be a "destination," a significant museum experience that attracts people from the

Northeast to come to Manchester specifically to see this unique attraction. The loom exhibit could become a learning center for students and international experts, with college students in textile programs, student interns, and students involved in exchange programs. It could be the basis for learning via the Internet, too. The loom exhibit needs to connect with other significant stories

*(See **WEAVERS**, page 2)*

Paris, Madrid...Manchester?

Art Auction, Fashion Show Come to Town

This spring will mark two special events organized by the Society that will showcase local talents in the arts and fashion worlds while underscoring the Society's mission to educate the public about Manchester's rich history.

On Saturday, March 10, will be our first Art Gala Auction and Sale, to be held at the History Center, which will support the development of our future exhibit of Cheney Brothers-era silk looms. An elegant evening of wine and hors d'oeuvres will showcase original works by local and regional artists. Artists will be on hand to talk about their work which is available for sale. The evening will feature a live auction of original art. Reservations, at \$25, are required by March 3, and the event will be from 7 to 10 p.m.

On Friday, May 4, the History Center will be home to the Silk City Runway Project, a fashion show featuring the spring 2007 collection of local, internationally known designer Jennifer Stern. *(See ad, pg. 6)* Fashion accessories, including original hand bags and scarves, will be sold by silent auction, and proceeds will support the development of a new hands-on children's exhibit. The evening will also include a special exhibit of Cheney Brothers silks and fashions. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Reservations, at \$35, are required. The event will be from 7 to 10 p.m.

To make reservations, or for more information, call 860-647-9983.

Keeping the Lights On Through the Annual Fund

By Mary Dunne, Executive Director

For years, the Society has regularly benefited from the generous donations of members, non-members, and businesses that are ear-marked for specific purposes: programming, exhibits, and upkeep of the Cheney Homestead, to name a few. We have also succeeded in obtaining hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants from government agencies and private foundations, for such projects as replacing the roof to organizing the Hispanic Experience and Manchester Road Race exhibits. We are deeply grateful to all the individuals, businesses, and granting agencies for their support.

The fundraising described above typically falls under the category of “restricted funds”—which means that the funds are slated for specific purposes only. One category of fundraising that usually receives far less attention, by comparison, is that of “unrestricted funds.” And that’s where the Annual Fund comes into play.

The Annual Fund helps the Society operate on a day-to-day, need-by-need basis. Donations to the Annual Fund are not earmarked for a specific use; rather, they are allocated as the Society deems they are necessary: to help pay the high heating bills in winter, staff salaries, office supplies, replacement of equipment, and countless other needs. Obviously, the myriad and amorphous uses of Annual Fund donations are not as distinctive as those restricted for just one cause, but they are nonetheless vital to the daily running of the organization. They aid the Society immensely in its daily operations, which, ultimately, permit us to pursue the many, many projects supported by restricted donations.

Thus far, this year’s Annual Fund donations are less than they were at this point in previous years. Please help change this trend! As the table included in this issue shows, you have been very generous in the past. This year’s goal is \$30,000; we’re only a quarter of the way there!

You may not readily “see” where your Annual Fund donations are being spent, as you would with a restricted donation; but rest assured, they are used in countless, meaningful ways. With that in mind please consider contributing to the Society’s Annual Fund. There is a tear-off form in this issue to help facilitate donations to the Annual Fund. Please help us meet this year’s goal!

WEAVERS, from page 1

in Manchester: the town’s industrial heritage, the Cheney Mills’ heritage walking trail, even a loom-punch-card/computer connection. To attract and engage children, the exhibit must have interactive elements, along with interpretive photos and signs. For example, enlarged photos of loom workers on foam-core boards could be placed near the looms. The Society has received donations of original Cheney fabric that would enhance the exhibit. The exhibit must tell stories of the times, the society and culture, and the actual people whose jobs revolved around the mills. For instance, one participant mentioned that such looms needed humidity to operate, and her grandmother, who was a weaver, explained that the temperature and moisture in the workplace were stifling in the summertime. Exhibit-related items, such as gowns made from Cheney fabric, parachutes, tools, etc., could be incorporated into the exhibit.

How can we organize the implementation of a loom plan?

Participants agreed to establish a loom committee along with various subcommittees; such subcommittees would focus on research, building and machinery, and educational programs. Local schools and teachers could be involved in working on exhibits and programs. A special fundraising/publicity group (“Friends of the Looms”) would need to be established specifically to promote the looms, and possibly to form relationships in the textile design community throughout the world. The exhibit would have to be installed in steps, starting with the simpler looms, which could be up and running sooner than the others.

Who will contribute significant time? Money?

The Society would need to look for contributions of time, money, and expertise from corporations in the fabric design business, including equipment manufacturers. Local and regional technical schools could work on the exhibit as part of their school work. Former employees and their families

(See **WEAVERS**, page 6)

The Courier

A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

Web page: manchesterhistory.org

E-mail: manchesterhistory@juno.com

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“I Swear”—To Help Out with the Boy Scouts Exhibit

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts, the Society is planning an exhibit that will touch base on the Scouts’ Manchester activities. Any Scout veterans or supporters are invited to submit memorabilia for this exhibit. Contact Society Curator Dave Smith at 860-647-9742.

Be One of the “Partners in Crime”

On Saturday, March 31, Cheney Hall will sponsor a fundraiser, “Partners in Crime Murder Mystery Theater,” which will entail a dinner and murder mystery theater presentation. Attendees will be treated to a full course dinner while enjoying and actively participating in solving the murder mystery highlighted in the theatrical production presented to the audience. For tickets and additional info contact Arlene LeRoy at 860-646-4294.

Be a True New England “Yankee”

In his 1842 travelogue *American Notes*, Charles Dickens dubbed New England “Yankees” as being a thrifty and bargain-hungry people. In 2007, we can confirm Dickens’s observations by taking out a subscription to *Yankee* magazine through the Society. By going to the History Center or the Old Manchester Museum and picking up a special form, you can subscribe to *Yankee* magazine at \$20 for the year, which will include a year of the magazine, a *Yankee* cookbook—and a \$10 donation to the Society! Come in for the special subscription form!

Learn about the Dinosaurs of Buckland

On Saturday, April 28, geologist **Christine Witkowski** will provide commentary on a walking trail of the red sandstone of the Buckland Hills area. Participants will learn about the diversity of Manchester’s geology, and of the history of the Buckland area and its dinosaurs, Native Americans, quarriers, and tobacco farmers. (See calendar.)



Start Spring Cleaning Early—for Our Tag Sale!

Beginning on March 6, the Society will be collecting items for its spring tag sale in April. On Tuesdays and Thursdays at the History Center, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., volunteers will be available to check in such desired items as unupholstered furniture, books, collectibles, dishware, and others. For more information, call 860-647-9983.

We Will Miss...

The Society regrets the recent passing of several of its valued members.

A valued member of the Society and loyal supporter of the Cheney Homestead, **Evelyn (Peterson) Clarke** passed away in October. Evelyn was the last owner of the Timothy Cheney House, located on East Center Street, before it was demolished; the fight to save that property resulted in the formation of the Society over 40 years ago.

A native of Toronto, Canada, **Dr. Leo Charendoff** passed away in December. A resident of Manchester for over 40 years, Dr. Charendoff was husband of Society Life Member and active volunteer Elaine Charendoff.

An active member of the Society, **Marianne Hamstra** passed away in December. Among her many volunteer efforts for the Society was her involvement in the Cheney Homestead Committee.

Marianne demonstrated her appreciation of Manchester’s architectural history through her membership on the Cheney Brothers National Historic District Commission and, more notably, with her loving restoration of one of the former Cheney homes into the Mansion Inn Bed and Breakfast, a project that took six years to complete—and which she affectionately parodied in a memorable presentation at one of the Society’s annual meetings.

Manchester native **Herbert Keeny Seymour** passed away in January. A decorated veteran of World War II, Herbert led an active life in business and civic activities, from Maine to Pennsylvania. In 1992 he published a memoir, *Growing up with Gramp Keeny: Reflections on a New England Family in the 1920s and 1930s*, a work that is still available through the Society.

The Historical Society as well as the town will miss these special individuals.

We Give Thanks to Our Donors

The Historical Society has literally hundreds of reasons to be thankful: during our last fiscal year, October 2005 to September 2006, hundreds of donations were made to the Society's various causes. Without this help, we would not be in existence to preserve and showcase Manchester's rich history. As but one of the many ways in which we can show our gratitude to our donors, we are delighted to honor them all by listing their names below. These donations were made through our Annual Fund, membership applications or renewals, and individually throughout the year. Please continue—or consider increasing—your generosity!

ANNUAL FUND

Up to \$49

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MEMORIAL DONATION

Donations were received in memory of the following:

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Donald Richter
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RESTRICTED DONATION**\$100-\$500**

Elaine and Leo Charendoff
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Matilda Millard
Rockville Bank
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Faith and Tim McCann
Harry Radding
Gregg Schuyler
Constance Walker

WOODBIDGE**FARMSTEAD****\$1000 or More**

Thelma Woodbridge

**Welcome,
New Members!**

The Society welcomes new members who joined between November 15 and January 31.

FROM MANCHESTER

Tracy S. Aho
Cynthia Barlow
James and Jacqueline Britton
Mary Chappell
Pam Craparotta
Rocky and Michelle D'Angelo
David Ganes
Edwin and Millicent Koski
Kenneth and Dorothy Marti
Michael McCarthy
Jon and Laura Reichelt
Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Richmond
Wilma Schlehofer
Dawna Smith
Robin Starkel
Loren and Bernadine Stolp
Michelle Vadenais
Lucille Vincek
Richard and Beverly Witham

FROM ELSEWHERE

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MaryAnn P. Satryb
Tarpon Springs, FL
Christine Witkowski
Lebanon, CT
Althea Wojcik
South Windsor, CT

The Silk City Runway Project



Join us for a fashion show fundraiser to benefit **The Hands-On History Corner for Children** at the Manchester Historical Society.

Manchester resident and award winning fashion designer, **Jennifer Stern**, continues weaving the thread of Manchester's rich textile history as she presents her Spring 2007 Collection of classic contemporary fashions with vintage flair.

Enjoy music, wine, hors d'oeuvres and delectable desserts while bidding on original purses and fashion accessories in the Silent Auction. All proceeds will benefit the Manchester Historical Society.

Renowned for its highly skilled, "high tech" work force, early 20th century Cheney Mills attained a reputation for producing the finest Jacquard woven silk in the United States! Explore Cheney Mills manufactured fabrics and fashions and discover its Hollywood connection!

For more information and reservations contact:
Manchester Historical Society. 860.647.9983.

Friday evening May 4, 2007 at 7 pm.

Admission: \$35

Manchester Historical Society is a 501C3 nonprofit organization.

Preview of Purse and Fashion Accessory Auction

Be the first to see the stylish Purses and Fashion Accessories that will be featured in the silent auction at

The Silk City Runway Project Fashion Show on May 4th.

Enjoy some designer biscotti as you peruse these wonderful items.

Enter to win two front row seats for the Fashion Show on Friday, May 4.

Friday, April 27 from 6:30-8:00 pm at Manchester Sewing Center

(There is no fee, but space is limited, register early!)

WEAVERS, from page 2

could contribute their expertise and stories. Gifts "in memory of" former weavers would be encouraged. A committed fundraising group would be needed to raise funds for the project and to apply for grants. Ideas for fundraising included: sell fabric, crafts, photos, and books from and about the exhibit; sell reprints of Cheney Mills booklets and newsletters; establish a Museum Shop to sell related items; and establish a cafeteria for visitors.

With such an ambitious agenda, the participants determined that the next steps will entail greater involvement of volunteers, especially in the following areas: operating/setting up looms, exhibit/display, telling loom story to public, building/grounds, and fundraising. This is a tremendous challenge, but the wheels have been set into motion! For more information about volunteering, please call 860-647-9983.

WINTER/SPRING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, admission to all lectures and walking tours is \$1 for Society members and \$3 for non-members. All lectures will take place at the Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street.

February 18

Sunday
1 p.m.

80th Anniversary of the Manchester Garden Club

Joan Kelsey will speak on the 80-year history of the Manchester Garden Club and its contributions to the community. Mark Sutcliffe will give a lecture on the Cheney gardens in Manchester.

March 3

Saturday
1 p.m.

Historic Hilliardsville Walking Tour

Led by Susan Barlow. (Rain date Sun. Mar. 4.) Starts at the parking lot at the corner of Hilliard Street and New State Road. We will walk along the Hockanum River trail to get to the old Hilliard Mills, where the new owners will give us a tour of the property they are renovating. Guest speaker: Peter Bonzani.

March 5

Monday
9 a.m.-1 p.m.

20th annual Interpreter Training Symposium: Slavery in Connecticut:

Complicity to Abolition. Great Hartford Association of Historic Houses and Museums, 200 Main St. Wethersfield (GHAHHM members FREE—the Historical Society is a member of GHAHHM) Non-members \$20. For more information call 860-529-7656.

March 10

Saturday
7-10 p.m.

Art Gala Auction and Sale

History Center. Event will showcase original work by local artists. Live auction. \$25/pp. Call 860-647-9983 for reservations

March 18

Sunday
1 p.m.

Visual Tour of Manchester's Cheney Mill District

Led by David Smith.
History Center

March 31

Saturday

"Partners in Crime Murder Mystery Theater" — Cheney Hall Fundraiser

For tickets and additional info contact Arlene LeRoy at 646-4294.

April 20

Friday
6-9 p.m.

Manchester Historical Society Annual Dinner

Manchester Country Club
John Spaulding will lead a presentation on "Documenting Venture Smith." \$28 p/p.

April 21

Saturday
9 a.m.-1 p.m.

TAG SALE

History Center
Books, toys, antiques, furniture, household, vintage items, & collectibles.

April 28

Saturday
1 p.m.

Red Sandstone Walking Tour

Led by Susan Barlow, with geologist Christine Witkowski
Meet at Burger King on Buckland Road.

May 4

Friday
7-10 p.m.

Silk City Runway Project to benefit the Manchester Historical Society's New Children's Hands-On History Corner.

History Center.
Fashion show including silent auction. \$35 p/p, reservations required

May 12

Saturday
9 a.m.-11 a.m.

Quarterly Volunteer Coffee and Business Meeting

History Center
New members and people interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities welcome!

Manchester Historical Society Gift Membership

I would like to give a Historical Society membership to:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone () _____

This gift is from:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone () _____

Category:

Individual (\$15) Contributing Individual (\$45)

Family (\$25) Contributing Family (\$75)

Life (\$250) Life Couple (\$400)

Student (\$5) (age 18 and under)

Make checks payable to: *Manchester Historical Society*

Mail to: *Manchester Historical Society*

106 Hartford Road, Manchester, CT 06040

HELP SUPPORT THE ANNUAL FUND

Yes, I/we want to be part of the Manchester Historical Society's continued growth and transformation!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$250

\$500 \$1000 Other \$ _____

I/we prefer to pledge \$ _____ over _____ months.

Please make check payable to Manchester Historical Society
and mail to 106 Hartford Road, Manchester, CT 06040

(To be paid in full by September 30th 2007)

Pay with check, or: Visa MasterCard

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Credit Card #: _____

Name on Card: _____

Card Exp. Date: _____

Thank you for your support!