

The Courier

NOVEMBER 2003

VOL. 39, NO. 1

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

Ringling In the Holidays

Victorian Villages and Music Boxes featured at Holiday Open Houses

Visitors to the Society's Open House at the Old Manchester Museum, on Sunday, December 14, will enter a Victorian Village decked out for the holidays. Dozens of miniature collectibles will be on display, accompanied by vintage holiday tunes, to ring in the holiday season. While basking in Christmas scenes of the past, visitors will be able to start their holiday shopping at the Museum Shop, where numerous items are available for purchase, including the newly revised edition of the *Manchester Green* book (see accompanying story).

Decorated for the holidays and featuring festive music boxes, the Cheney Homestead will also be open to the public.

Enjoy a Good Evening of Great Music

The Manchester Symphony Orchestra and Chorale (MSOC) will host the Manchester Historical Society (MHS) at its winter concert, December 6, 8 pm at Concordia Lutheran Church, 450 Pitkin Street, Manchester. The Historical Society will display plans for the renovation of the old Cheney



Old Manchester III: Manchester Green...a Picture Book, has recently been revised and reprinted.

Machine Shop building after the concert and a short talk on the project will be given during the concert intermission. The MSOC will perform the "Mass In Time of War" ("Paukenmesse") composed by Franz Joseph Haydn to eulogize the suffering of Austria in its losing war with revolutionary France. The "Manchester Anthem," commissioned a few years ago by the MSOC will also be presented. Information will be available on the history of this anthem as well as several earlier Manchester songs. Mozart's "Ave Verum" and "Internatos Mulerium" will also be featured.

Tickets and subscription brochures will be available at the MHS office and museum, 126 Cedar Street [647-9983], Beller's Music, 50 Purnell Place Manchester, and Crandall &

Daughter, 544 Buckland Rd., South Windsor. General Concert information: 528 -0906

Available Again! MANCHESTER GREEN... A Picture Book

Just in time for the holidays, a revised edition of the Society's book, *Manchester Green...a Picture Book*, is now available! A consistent best-seller for the Society for many years, the book has been recently revised, and would make a great gift for any Manchester aficionado.

To kick off the book's release, Society Executive Director Mary Dunne will present a slide lecture on the history of the Manchester Green, at Mary Cheney Library, on Saturday, November 29, from 2 to 4 p.m. The book's author, Milton Adams, and photographer, Tony Thibeau, will be on hand to autograph copies of the book, which may be purchased at the event. The lecture and book-signing are a collaborative effort sponsored by the Society and the library.

As an added incentive, the book will be sold for the discounted price of \$25 until the end of the year; after that, the price goes up. Get your copy now!

Cheney Homestead News

by Mark Sutcliffe, Homestead Chair

At press time we were close to committing to a Spring 2004 roof replacement, chimney, and building repair project, estimated to cost close to \$55,000. We have received a commitment from the Cheney Family Fund of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for a \$25,000 grant toward the roof replacement. When you visit at the Christmas Open House you will probably notice the plastic tarp on the roof over Electa's bedchamber. This is not a project we have the luxury of deferring.

Some creative fundraising will be needed to minimize the effect on the

(see *Homestead*, page 3)

From the President

by Dave Smith



As our Society begins its 39th year, we have entered a new and exciting phase of our development. On October 1, we welcomed Mary B. Dunne as our new Executive Director. As reported in the last issue of *The Courier*, Mary brings a wealth of professional experience to our organization. She has many new ideas, which will help us grow and provide a variety of new services for members and the public.

We hope you will take advantage of the programs we will be offering, and that you will tell your friends who are not yet members about the Society. We will soon begin a drive for new members, to build on the momentum provided by the new members who joined as the result of the flyers included with the water bills earlier this year. That effort alone resulted in over 50 new members, who might otherwise have not known about the Historical Society.

Some of the new programming will include a collaborative effort with the Manchester Symphony Orchestra and Chorale for a concert scheduled on Saturday, December 6 at Concordia Lutheran Church. That concert will provide an opportunity for us to tell community members about our plans for the future,

including the Manchester History Center in the former Cheney Machine Shop building.

Another collaboration project is with the Manchester Arts Commission, to bring some of the Cheney art on display in our museums to other public venues, where it can be enjoyed by people who might not otherwise be able to see it. Several works of Seth Cheney and Russell Cheney have already been photographed in large format and are now being matted and framed. This was necessary because many of the original works of art are too fragile to be displayed in a non-museum setting. Corporate support is necessary for us to complete this project.

Beginning with the September issue, *The Courier* is now available for viewing on our web site. You can refer to the web site for other late news and upcoming events.

Our Antiques Auction was a great success, especially considering it was the first time we have tried a major fundraising event in many years. Look for it to happen again in two years. Heartfelt thanks are offered to the many volunteers who made it so successful, especially the co-chairs Susan Shanbaum and Tana Parseliti. Look elsewhere in this issue for other stories of volunteer contributions. We owe so much to the many people who make it all happen.



Vintage Clothing Needed

by Susan Barlow

Do you have any women's vintage clothing you can donate to the Historical Society? I would appreciate having our own "dress up" clothes for occasions such as the Third Grade Tours and Heritage Day.

(I borrowed a wonderful costume from the Little Theatre of Manchester, but borrowing requires a trip to the attic of Cheney Hall for each event, and it would be nice to have a selection at the museum.) If you have an interesting and historic dress or suit or wide-brimmed hat or fur jacket to give, approximately size 6 or 8, please call Susan Barlow at 643-9776.

The Courier

A newsletter for members of the Manchester Historical Society

Web page: manchesterhistory.org
E-mail: manchesterhistory@juno.com

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New “Century Club” Members

The Historical Society recently granted honorary membership to two Manchester residents, Marjorie McMenemy and Frank Rieder, who have the distinction of reaching the age of 100. They have both been interviewed by Susan Barlow as part of the Society’s oral history series. The following are excerpts from their interviews.

Marjorie McMenemy was born on June 26, 1903. She lives on Marble Street, off North Main Street, the very street where she was born 100

years ago. Her grandfather, Orrin Hollister, built most of the houses on this very short street, where at one time her relatives occupied five of the houses. Marje’s parents, Phoebe Hollister and John McMenemy, came from Scotland at the age of 19. Marje was the youngest of 6 children and has fond memories of growing up in Manchester near Depot Square. She attended Ohio-Wesleyan, and later worked at C.R. Burr nursery for about 20 years. She credits her longevity to really enjoying life and “making the best of it.” Marjorie accepted her honorary membership at the Annual Meeting in October.

Frank Rieder was born on January

9, 1898, and has lived on Riverside Drive, where he and his wife raised six children, since 1925. Frank was born in the Austria-Hungary Empire, and came to the United States in 1907. At the age of 14 he began working at Cheney Brothers as a “bobbin boy.” Frank enjoyed sports and played baseball for the local “White Sox” team. He remains active, often visiting the Senior Center and spends part of the winter in Florida with his daughter. He gave up driving on his 100th birthday!

Society President Dave Smith personally delivered the honorary membership to Frank.

Hundreds Turn Out For First-Ever Benefit Antiques Auction

The Manchester Historical Society’s first-ever Benefit Antiques Auction, on October 5, generated nearly \$20,000 in winning bids. Over 250 items were auctioned at Cheney Hall.

The highest winning bid was obtained for a desk formerly owned by General Sherwood Cheney. At the culmination of a lengthy bidding war, the desk sold for \$5,100.

Other notable items included a signed Tiffany vase, various pieces of furniture, vintage toys, and a working cash register used in the old Blish Hardware Store, for decades located on Manchester’s Main Street.

Auction items were either donated outright or consigned, with the Society receiving 30% of the price of consigned items. The Society netted nearly \$7500 from the event.

“This is the first major fundraiser the Society has held in a number of years, and we are very pleased with the results,” said Executive Director Mary Dunne. “It could not have been a success without our energetic and resourceful volunteers, and the tireless commitment of Auction Committee chairs, Susan Shanbaum and Tana Parseliti.”

R. J. Weston, of Weston’s Antique Auction, in Coventry, donated his services and conducted the auction, which ran for nearly three hours. The Society is grateful to Judy Taylor, Mary Boyle, and Sheila Sharos—as well as dozens of other volunteers—who helped make the event possible. Many happy people went home with treasures!



(Homestead, continued from page 2)

Cheney Homestead Fund. All donations are welcomed. Please contact me if you have any questions.

One component of the plan is to replicate the chimney that Seth Cheney built for his mother’s room in 1844. It had deteriorated and was removed during the last re-roofing in 1983. The recreated chimney will be based on an early twentieth-century postcard that shows the south façade in detail.

We hope that you will visit the Homestead during our open house to see the freshly restored cased ambrotypes of Seth Cheney and a stern-faced Jane Elizabeth Cheney, as well as a large daguerreotype of Seth. The ambrotypes have been professionally cleaned and the cases repaired. The glass over the daguerreotype has been cleaned of deposits and the photograph has been encapsulated to prevent further damage from oxidation. This work is part of our ongoing program of artifact conservation by the Williams-town Art Conservation Center.

We Give Thanks to Our Donors

In this season of Thanksgiving, the Historical Society has literally hundreds of reasons to give thanks. Last year, over 300 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, organized by fund and donation amount. These donations were made through our annual appeal, 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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Donations were received in memory of the following:
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Julius Ritter, Douglas Taft,
Margaret A. & Charles L.
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Mrs. John Mosely Williams
(some donations were directed to the Annual Fund)

Up to \$49

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\$1000 or more

Matilda Millard

SOCIETY FUND

Up to \$49

William Fraize
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Up to \$49

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Elise Seeley
Robert Smith

\$1000 or more

Thelma Woodbridge

NewsNotes

Eagle Scout Project Benefits Machine Shop

Michael Tinti of Boy Scout Troop No. 25 carried out a major project to earn his Eagle Scout award earlier this year. The project consisted of organizing, planning, scheduling and implementing the construction of 25 large storm windows for the Machine Shop building. Society member **John Dormer** acted as the contact person for this project. Michael was required to develop and carry out a project which would need at least 50 man-hours to complete and which used help from others. In the end, well over 50 man-hours was put in to finish the project. The Scouts proved to be able carpenters and model citizens in helping the Society and tackling such a demanding project. We salute Michael and the Boy Scouts who helped out: **Bill Simpson, Ben Fellows, Max Bowden, Nick Dickinson, Bob Schwartzberg, James Jankowski, Ian Kolesinskas, Jeff Roberts, Randy Kudra, Dustin Comeau, Ricky Simon, and Matt Stagh**. John's reaction was that the project was "well planned and executed."

Thelma Woodbridge Receives Yankee Magazine's "Barn Raiser" Award

At the Society's annual meeting last month, Yankee Magazine honored **Thelma Woodbridge** with its prestigious Barn Raiser Award, for Thelma's many decades of community work, including her long-time commitment to the Society. In accepting the award, Mrs. Woodbridge acknowledged the life-long involvement of her husband, Raymond, and expressed her loving fondness for her home town.

Volunteers of the Year

Working to prepare the Machine Shop for the Society's new headquarters is a herculean effort, and last month at the Society's annual meeting, two volunteers were honored for contributing such efforts through their time, talent, and brawn. **John Dormer** and **Ed Wait** were this year's co-recipients of the Society's Volunteer of the Year Award. John and Ed have been working diligently to prepare the new offices of the Society, from sanding floors, constructing office space, painting, doing electrical work, and a host of other jobs. Congratulations to them for being stellar volunteers!

Noted Author to Speak on New England Stone Walls

Scholar and author Dr. Robert Thorson will deliver a slide lecture at the Old Manchester Museum on Sunday, November 23, at 2 p.m. A professor of geology and geophysics at the University of Connecticut, Dr. Thorson will speak on "New England's Disappearing Stone Walls." Drawing upon his recent book, *Stone by Stone: The Magnificent History in New England's Stone Walls*, Dr. Thorson will discuss the "cultural geology" of this New England phenomenon, drawing upon science, oral history, and family traditions. The talk is free to Society members.

Upcoming Story

A future issue of *The Courier* will feature a story that discusses John Rieg and the place that his classic restaurant, Shady Glen, has had in Manchester's history. If anyone has a special story to relate about this Manchester institution, please contact us, at 647-9983. Stay tuned...

Please Return Those Surveys

Hundreds of surveys were sent out with the last issue of The Courier, but not many have been returned to us. Responding to the survey will allow us to better gauge the needs of our members, in terms of programming and what to include in the newsletter. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey; you may return it by mail or drop it off at the Old Manchester Museum. Thank you!

Newsletter Now Online!

Visitors to the Society's web site, www.manchesterhistory.org, may now enjoy perusing The Courier online. Our thanks go to Robert Shanbaum for taking on this project.

Yankee Magazine Partners with Historical Society

The Historical Society continues to work with Yankee Magazine's Community Partners program. Through this partnership, our Society receives \$10 from every \$20 subscription and renewal using the special subscription card available from us. You can pick up a card at the museum or call us (647-9983) and we will send it to you.

A subscription to Yankee Magazine makes a great gift for friends and loved ones, and for yourself. Not only will you enjoy a year's worth of interesting features, but you will also be helping the Society's future museum. All donations from Yankee are directed to the Museum Building Fund. So far, over \$1,000 has been received from this partnership!



A Lifetime Gift: Leaving A Legacy

The Manchester Historical Society is in the early stages of a major expansion that will make it an enduring and prominent historical and cultural resource in eastern Connecticut. Are you interested in making a gift that will stay with us well into that bright future? Then consider naming the Society in your will or as a beneficiary of your life insurance plan. Bequests will help ensure that the Society continues to carry out its mission of preserving the town's history and educating the public, all while acknowledging the generosity and support of your legacy. To discuss planned giving or other donor options, call or have your estate planner contact Dave Smith, President, at 860-647-9983.

Local History on Television

Susan Barlow and Kathryn Wilson of the Historical Society recently produced a TV program: "Hazel Lutz and Her Museum," summarizing the history of the museum and interviewing Lutz fans far and wide. Miss Lutz, 1902-1985, taught art in Manchester's elementary schools and served as art supervisor for over three decades. She was also an artist, author, community activist, and a founding member of the Historical Society. She was the first woman to win the Chamber of Commerce's "M" award for her major contributions to the town. Miss Lutz painted, stenciled, wood-blocked and lettered her own Christmas cards, one of which is shown during the program. She sent it during the 1940s to fellow-teacher

Calendar of Events Winter 2003



Nov. 23
Sunday
2 p.m. *New England's Disappearing Stone Walls*
by Dr. Robert Thorson
Old Manchester Museum

Nov. 29
Saturday
2 p.m. *Manchester Green Presentation & Book Signing*
Slide lecture by Mary Dunne, author and photographer will be available to sign copies at Mary Cheney Library

Dec. 6
Saturday
8 p.m. *Manchester Symphony Orchestra and Chorale Concert*
"Haydn's War Time Mass"
Concordia Lutheran Church (*see related story*)

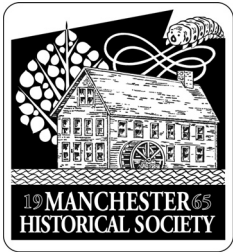
Dec. 14
Sunday
12 p.m. *Holiday Open House*
Old Manchester Museum
& Cheney Homestead (*see related story*)

Thelma Woodbridge, who kept all the cards. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Lutz Museum, which began even earlier, with Miss Lutz's collection of artifacts and pictures, carried in boxes in the trunk of her car.

The one-hour television show airs on Cox Public Access, Channel 15, at 8 p.m. on Saturdays, November 15, 22 and 29.

- Other recent shows include:
- "Cruisin' On Main," interviews with antique car enthusiasts at the car show in downtown during August.
 - "Historic Center Park," touring this frequently threatened treasure of Manchester, and interviewing concerned citizens who believe it should be preserved.
 - "History of Center Congregational Church" included interviews with members whose collective atten-

- dance totaled nearly 200 years.
- "Tour of Pitkin Glass Works" visited the archeological dig and interviewed Society member John Spaulding and state archeologist Nick Bellantoni. This short program was aired with the Center Church show.
 - "Shopping Then And Now," a wide-ranging history of stores in Manchester, culminating in a description of the construction and expansion of Buckland Hills Mall.
- Some of our previous shows can be borrowed at Mary Cheney Library, or purchased at the Old Manchester Museum, on Cedar Street.
- Your comments on the shows are welcome. Call the Society at 647-9983, or visit the web site www.ManchesterHistory.org and click the "contact us" button.



The Manchester Historical Society
106 Hartford Road
Manchester, Connecticut 06040

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Make checks payable to: **Manchester Historical Society**

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106 Hartford Road, Manchester, CT 06040

Annual Meeting and Election of Board of Directors

The Society's Annual Meeting was held at the Arbors on October 12, 2003. About 40 members attended the meeting. The Treasurer's, Membership, Cheney Homestead and Woodbridge Farm-stead Reports were presented. The following Officers and Directors were elected for the year 2003-2004 David Smith, President; Douglas Edwards, Vice President; Tanyss Ludescher, Secretary; Gertrude Sweeney, Treasurer; Directors: Susan Barlow, Gary Benson, Marian Camp, John Dormer, John Fletcher, Marsha Gunther, Hope Igdalsky, Marshall Lamenzo, Sean Lindsay, Leslie Nieves, Tana Parseliti, Susan Shanbaum, Mark Sutcliffe, Anthony Thibeau, and Edward Wait. Leslie Nieves and Sean Lindsay were welcomed as new board members.

The *Yankee Magazine Barn Raiser Award* was presented to **Thelma Woodbridge** by Jamie Trowbridge, President of Yankee Publishing Co. Volunteer of the Year Awards were presented to **John Dormer** and **Ed Wait**. A slide show was presented by Faith McCann on the old North End and Depot Square, which bought back fond memories to many in the audience.

Thanks to The Arbors for providing us with the meeting space.