

The Courier

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Demolition in Historic District Yields Insights

by Mark Sutcliffe

In the history business it is always painful to lose an old building. Sometimes there is little that can be done other than to document the building and learn about it. The house at 91 Union Street was such a case.

The little blue house on the southeast corner of Union and Kerry Streets in the Union Village Historic District had been abandoned for several years and was severely deteriorated. A local contractor purchased the property from the Town of Manchester in a foreclosure sale and allowed the Historical Society to inspect it prior to demolition in late February 2004.

Initially misled by the single off-center front door, I soon discovered that the house was an early example of a 1 1/2-story duplex with a four-room apartment on either side of a central chimney. The house measured 32 feet long by 24 feet deep and sat on a foundation of red sandstone rubble topped with cut but not dressed sandstone from the "Jambstone Quarries" in Buckland. The front doors flanked a partition wall and an additional window in the front of each first-floor room made for a symmetrical façade. Each room in the house had a single window on the gable ends.

A striking feature of the two front rooms was a fireplace set diagonally in the chimney corner of each room. They were capped by 12-inch high by 36-inch wide sandstone lintels that were dressed on the front and set into the one-brick-thick beehive-like chimney. Any mantles had long ago disappeared.

The seven-foot diameter chimney supported the structural members of the house and as it deteriorated it took the house along with it. In the basement, three brick walls supported a platform of



6 x 6-inch hewn timbers that had begun to rot. The entire chimney was built atop the platform of timbers. At some time wood or coal stove flues had been inserted through the brickwork and, later, a "modern" furnace chimney had been built up through the center of the original chimney, no doubt contributing to its deterioration. The old chimney had at least one substantial vertical crack that allowed me to peer into its center. The beams that supported the second floor had about one inch of their ends resting precariously on the chimney stack.

The biggest surprise was finding an intact kitchen fireplace, complete with iron crane and adjacent beehive oven in the back room on the south side. The fireplace measured 44 inches wide by 36 inches high by 17 inches deep. Not a very big fireplace in which to cook dinner for a family of hungry mill hands! Anchored into the masonry halfway back was a flat iron crane 16 inches high by 34 inches long with a slight hook at the end. The crane was used to suspend pots over the cooking fire. To the right of the fireplace was a beautiful brick "beehive" bake oven in perfect condition.

In the back outside corner of each kitchen was a staircase leading to the second floor.

The frame was post-and-beam, made of a combination of hewn and vertical-sawn timbers, probably chestnut. A cellar hatchway with stone steps on the north end of the house appeared original. The plaster lath was made of thin vertical-sawn boards that were hand-split accordion-style. The nails were primarily machine-made with a few hand-forged examples. That, plus the fact that the house was originally heated by fireplaces rather than coal stoves, indicates a late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century construction date. The Baker and Tilden Hartford County Atlas of 1869 shows the house belonging to the Union Manufacturing Co. The Union Cotton Mills, begun in 1794, stood directly across the street. It appears likely that this house, as well as some of its neighbors, may date from the first quarter of the nineteenth century or even earlier, thus making them some of the earliest "mill housing" in the country. ~

"Where's That Photo I Donated?": Challenges We Face in Storing and Exhibiting Donated Artifacts

by Robert Dunne

Visiting the attic or basement in the Old Manchester Museum might take one back to childhood days of sneaking a peak in a grandparent's attic or basement and discovering a treasure trove of family memorabilia. Just as one's grandparent could not display every artifact in a parlor or den, so too does the Historical Society

(see **Artifacts**, Page 2)

Conservation Treatment of Soldiers Monument to Take Place This Fall

by Mary Savage

Soldiers Monument, located in Center Park at the intersection of Center and Main Streets, is Manchester's Civil War Monument. Dedicated on September 17, 1877, Soldiers Monument is historically significant because it is a symbol of the honor and respect paid by the community to its members who died in the Civil War. The monument stands in the southeast corner of Center Park facing at an angle towards the intersection of Main and Center Streets. The monument consists of a short bulky rock faced pedestal and bronze figure. A bronze tablet listing the names of the dead, some forty or fifty men, was planned for attachment to the dye but was never executed.

The monument is artistically signifi-

cant because it is an example of the work of the sculptor Charles Conrads and the entrepreneur James G. Batterson. Charles Conrads came to the United States from Germany and was employed by James Batterson, who operated a monument and stone business in Hartford. Manchester's monument is unusual for its rugged stone finish which combined with the raised smooth finished seals on the dye makes it an example of work that is seldom found elsewhere.

Today the effects of the 127 years of outdoor display are plainly visible on the monument. Light green corrosion and black pollution deposits cover the bronze figure. The light green corrosion is caused by acid rain and snow dissolving the bronze. The black deposits are from vehicle emissions. The corrosion and pollution deposits need to be removed and the monument should be restored to a more original color. The granite base has some failed joints that need to be repaired and cleaned, but for the most part is in good condition with only minor discoloration. The bronze anchoring bolt requires replacement.

BACKGROUND

The Town's Planning Department began working to secure grant funding for the monument's restoration in 1998, and was awarded a State Historic Restoration Fund (HRF) matching grant in 2002. Because of the state budget problems, however, this funding was not released by the bond commission until 2004.

The Town has allocated approximately \$14,000 for the project, and has retained ConserveArt, LLC, for the conservation treatment of the monument.

If weather conditions permit, restoration work will be completed before November. Discussions on a possible rededication ceremony are in the preliminary stages at this time; one suggestion is to hold a rededication ceremony for the monument in honor of Veterans' Day. For additional information, contact Mary Savage in the Planning Department, at 647-3046.


(*Artifacts*, from Page 1)

face similar problems of having so many special artifacts but too little space in which to display them all.

When an item is donated, there is a lengthy process involved even before that item may appear in a display case or stored for safe keeping. Every artifact must be researched and then accessioned, so that the Society has a permanent record of it for its catalogue and to ensure both the security and accessibility of each artifact. In an organization that operates predominantly through volunteer efforts, this process may take some time for each item.

The current display space in the museum is very limited: most of the available public space is dedicated to permanent exhibits, with a few sections reserved for revolving exhibits. The limited space in the current museum was a major reason why the Society purchased the former Cheney Machine Shop. When renovation of the Machine Shop into our new history center is completed, we will have more than four times the exhibit space than we currently have.

At present, however, we have to store myriad artifacts that are donated and accessioned, holding such items in climate-controlled storage in the museum's basement and attic, in the Woodbridge Homestead, and in the Machine Shop.

The Society is deeply grateful for everyone who donates items; after all, it has been people who have a close connection to Manchester who have allowed the Society to be the primary repository for Manchester's multifaceted and rich history. We continue to invite the public to donate artifacts that preserve a piece of the town's extensive history. But we do ask our friends to be patient while we work hard to transform the Machine Shop into the expansive history center that the town so richly deserves. 

The Courier

A newsletter for members of the
Manchester Historical Society

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

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Cheney Homestead News

by Mark Sutcliffe, Homestead Chair


I am very happy to report that we have received an additional \$10,000 grant from the Cheney Family Fund of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. This, in addition to the previous \$25,000 grant from the same fund, covers the cost of the roof replacement. We are challenged to match this \$10,000 grant with donations from others to recoup the cost of siding and trim repairs, and hope that you will help us. The repairs have been completed and painted and we hope that you will visit the Homestead to admire the workmanship of the Glastonbury Restoration Company.

It also gives me great pleasure to announce the receipt of a \$1,000 grant from the Mr. and Mrs. William Foulds Family Foundation towards the conservation and restoration of objects in the Homestead collections. We have spent some of the grant money to have a rare Volunteer Pattern Baker Rifle inscribed in memory of Timothy Cheney completely restored by gunsmith and MHS member Richard Meyer. The Beauregard Corporation of Vernon is donating a custom-made display case for the gun. Expect to read all about the rifle in a future issue of *The Courier*.

We are indebted to Val Prendergast, Branch Manager of the Webster Bank on West Middle Turnpike. Using his woodworking skills, he made and donated a new sign for the Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse Museum, on Hartford Road. The sign looks terrific and is made to last a long time. ~



Cheney Homestead Chairman Mark Sutcliffe and Val Prendergast in front of the new sign.


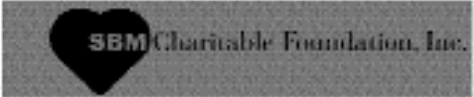




**OLD HOUSE
FAIR
2005**

**Saturday
February 5, 2005**
(some date February 6)
Doors Open at 8:30 a.m.
First Seminar at 9:00 a.m.

Registration at
Manchester History Center
(Former Cheney Home, 175 Madison Street)
**175 Pine Street
Manchester**

PRESENTED BY:


Featuring Bob Yapp host of *About Your House with Bob Yapp*
seen on PBS and nationally renowned preservationist as
Keynote Speaker

**Home Restoration Vendor
Workshops**
(including presentations from Carolyn Murray,
Preservationist and columnist for *Old House Journal*)

**Lighting • Time Management • Interior Design • Masonry • Home Research • Landscaping
Historic Designation • Windows and SO MUCH MORE!**

<p>Admission: Tickets Please \$7 Manchester Historical Society Members \$7 Adult \$30 Two Adults</p>	<p>Tickets at the Door \$7 Manchester Historical Society Members \$10 Adult \$15 Two Adults</p>
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All proceeds to benefit the Manchester Historical Society



Cheney Mill Worker Interviews Now Available to the Public

The Manchester Historical Society recently donated the transcripts from interviews with former mill workers for the Cheney Brothers Company to the Mary Cheney Library. On hand to help with the almost 70 volumes was Carol Cheney of Hamden Connecticut. The Cheney Family Fund of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving helped pay for transcribing the interviews, which were conducted by Dr. John Sutherland, Emeritus Professor of History at Manchester Community College. Dr. Sutherland recorded these interviews over a 20-year period, beginning in 1971. Douglas McDounouh,



Executive Director Mary Dunne with Mary Cheney Library Director Douglas McDounouh, Homestead Chairman Mark Sutcliffe, and Carol Cheney, standing in front of donated transcripts.

Director of the Mary Cheney Library, said that this was an incredible addition to the reference material available at the library, adding that the dozens of personal histories “provide invaluable information that can’t be found in secondary resources.” The Society, through the Cheney Homestead Committee, also contributed to funding the transcription project, in addition to the Cheney Cemetery Association and Lydall, Inc. This community resource will give residents of Manchester a deeper understanding of the town’s history and how it was shaped by the arrival of skilled workers from other countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

NewsNotes

Handy Volunteers, We Need You!

As work continues on renovating the former Cheney Bros. Machine Shop into a multi-use history center, the Society would like to invite all fixer-uppers who like to work on hands-on projects, such as carpentry, to form a new group of volunteers who will help continue this ongoing project. Contact Dave Smith or John Dormer, at 647-9983.

continued next column

Dozens of Helpful Hands Chip in for Cleanup Day at Machine Shop

The Society thanks the more than fifteen volunteers who carried out numerous cleanup tasks at the Machine Shop, in June.

The work that these able-bodied volunteers performed included yard work, picking up trash, mowing, moving construction materials, general house cleaning: window washing, bathroom cleaning, sweeping, vacuuming, dry mopping, even removing a kitchen sink!

The Society is grateful to its members who volunteered, as well as the many others who responded to stories about the cleanup in the local newspapers.



Creative People—We Need You!

The Society is in need of volunteers to join its Exhibits Committee. This committee helps to select and install new exhibits in the Old Manchester Museum. If you have a talent for displaying artifacts, please contact Dave Smith, at 647-9983.

Society Awards First Scholarship

Ryan Miller of Manchester High School is the recipient of the Historical Society’s first scholarship. Ryan is attending Quinnipiac College this year. The Society has established a scholarship fund through the Manchester Scholarship Foundation in order to give financial assistance to students interested in pursuing the study of history in higher education. The Society feels that encouraging this pursuit among young people will ensure a continued interest on the part of the community in its local heritage.

(see **NewsNotes** Page 5)

New Book Available at Historical Society Gift Shop

The Pathway from the Door, a history of Northern Ireland's county Armagh, including a chapter on the emigration of thousands of its citizens to Manchester in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, is now on sale at the Society's gift shop. The book was previously available only directly from the author, Thomas J. R. Glenney of Portadown, County Armagh, Ireland. Through a special arrangement, we are able to make available for sale several copies.

The book depicts life in Northern Ireland from 1640-1900, focusing on the development of skilled trades, including handloom linen weaving. Of interest to current residents of Manchester is a chapter sharing detailed stories of families who left Armagh to set up home in the Northeastern part of the U.S., particularly in Manchester, bringing their culture and weaving skills to work in the mills here.

Mr. Glenney made several trips to Manchester during the research of his book, and has a family connection to the town. His family was associated with Glenney's men's clothing store, which was for years on Main Street in Manchester, as well as Glenney's Lumber Yard.

The books are available for \$25 each.

Pick Up Your Copy of Hog River Journal

The *Hog River Journal*, a regional cultural heritage magazine published by a consortium of local educational and cultural organizations, is a journal dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of the Greater Hartford region's history. A new issue is now available at the museum.

Wish List

The Society is seeking donations of "Tober" baseballs. Contact Dave Smith, at 647-9983.

We Will Miss...

The Society regrets the passing of several members in recent months: In June, former Society President **Constance A. Adams**, Manchester native and long-time member **Mary E. (Zaremba) Ceaser**, and Manchester resident and World War II Army Captain **Frederick Gaal**, PhD; in July, **Edward Lambert Besser**, MD; in August, lifelong Manchester resident **Linda (D'Addario) McGehan**, and generous Society supporter **Louise A. Heller**. A special mention is warranted for the passing last month of the Society's charter member, **Lillian (Johnson) Gustafson**, a lifelong Manchester resident for 107 years and one of the first women to vote in Connecticut.

All Aboard!

Bus Trip to Vermont Museums



Join the Society during the height of Vermont's foliage season for a day trip to the Bennington Museum and Robert Todd Lincoln's Hildene mansion, in scenic Vermont, on Saturday, October 2.

The Bennington Museum is one of the finest regional history and art museums in New England and showcases the largest public collection of Grandma Moses paintings, as well as Bennington Pottery, antique glass and glassware, period New England furniture, and American folk art.

Hildene, in nearby Manchester, is the historic home of Robert Todd Lincoln, eldest son of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln. It is an impeccably restored Georgian Revival mansion with elegant formal gardens and commanding views of the Battenkill valley-which will be at the height of the foliage season at the time of the tour.

Lunch will be served at the picturesque Bennington Station Restaurant, where several entrees will be available.

The tour bus will depart promptly at 7:15 a.m. from Cheney Hall parking lot, and return at 5:30 p.m. The cost of \$64 pp for MHS (and Mansfield Historical Society) members and \$69 pp for non-members includes transportation, entrance fees, gratuities, tax, and lunch.

For more information, contact Society member Anthony Thibeau, at 860-649-4872. Act now, for seats are limited!

How Are We Doing?: **Some Conclusions from the** **Membership Satisfaction Survey**

Although fewer than 10% of members responded to the Society's Membership Satisfaction Survey distributed last fall, some interesting findings have emerged.

More than half the respondents have been members for five years or less, and nearly half of all respondents visited at least one of the Society's properties two to five times last year. More than 60% made use of *The Courier* or attended free exhibits; more than a quarter attended lectures, and over a third attended Society-sponsored social events, including the annual meeting.

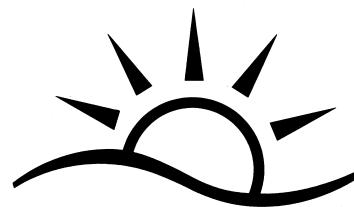
An overwhelming number of respondents reported that they visit the Society's properties to learn about local history and view real artifacts, and have access to historical expertise. More than half would like to see more exhibits that appeal to all age groups as well as more exhibits and programs that focus on Manchester's multicultural population. Over 60% would like to see more multi-media exhibits and outdoor tours.

More than 90% expressed satisfaction with the friendliness of the Society's staff, and more than 80% were satisfied with the overall quality of the Society.

Regarding *The Courier*, nearly every respondent wanted to read stories about the museums' collections, and a significant majority wanted to read stories concerning current news of historic interest and on neighborhoods in town. Curiously, substantially fewer numbers wanted information on giving opportunities, and more than half do not access the organization's web site.

Overall, respondents expressed satisfaction with the Society's programs and staff. If the number of respondents is a fair representation of the larger membership, then the Society needs to expand its museum programs to appeal to people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, and should develop more innovative, multi-media events and increase the number of outdoor tours of Manchester's neighborhoods. About the latter concern, we have already responded by increasing the number of our outdoor tours (see Calendar of Events). We will strive to address these wishes, as well as the concerns expressed in personal comments. Our thanks go out to all those who sent in their surveys. ~

A Lifetime Gift: Leaving A Legacy— ***You Too Can Leave A Legacy*** ***and Make a Difference***



LEAVE A LEGACY™

LEAVE A LEGACY Connecticut is a statewide public awareness effort to promote charitable giving through wills and estate plans. We are grateful to all of our donors; your financial support tells us that you think our mission is important and our work is valuable.

If you are considering making a planned contribution to the Manchester Historical Society, there is a way to achieve your financial goals while helping to ensure that the work of the Historical Society continues well into the future. A Charitable Remainder Trust is a gift arrangement defined by federal tax law that enables donors to provide income for themselves or others, avoid estate and capital gains taxes, reduce income taxes, protect the financial security of their heirs, AND make a lasting impression by giving to a favorite charity or charities.

The Society is undergoing 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, as a beneficiary of your life insurance plan, or through a charitable remainder trust. 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. If you want to learn more, we are prepared to talk to you and your financial advisor about this planned giving vehicle. Contact Mary Dunne, at 860-647-9983. ~

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Fall 2004

September 19 Sunday 2 p.m.	<i>Manchester's Cemeteries and Early Carvers</i> Speaker: Ruth Shapleigh-Brown Location: Old Manchester Museum
October 2 Saturday	<i>Bus Tour to Vermont</i> See related story on Page 5
October 17 Sunday 1 p.m.	<i>Manchester Historical Society Annual Meeting</i> Speaker: Mary Dunne, "Looking Back—Planning Ahead: The Manchester Historical Society Celebrates the Beginning of its 40th Year." Location: To Be Announced
October 20 Wednesday	<i>Pizzeria Uno Fundraiser (see insert)</i> Location: Pizzeria Uno Chicago Bar & Grill, 180 Deming St.
October 23 Saturday 1 p.m.	<i>Union Pond History Hike</i> (Rain Date October 24)
November 6 Saturday 1 p.m.	<i>History Hike of Oak Grove</i> Location: Oak Grove Nature Center, Oak Grove St.
November 21 Sunday	<i>Lecture—TBA</i>

SAVE THESE DATES: • Monday November 29 through Sunday, December 12:
Deck the Halls Parade of Wreaths (see insert)
• Saturday, February 5: Inaugural Old House Fair (see ad, page 3)

All lectures and walking tours are free to Society members and only \$2 to non-members

Cheney Historic District Still Deemed Most Charming

Final Votes Tallied on Question

"What Spot Makes Manchester A City of Village Charm for YOU?"

by Susan Barlow

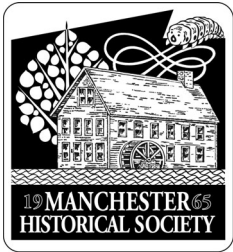
The latest ballots confirm previous voting: The Cheney Historic District makes Manchester live up to its nickname "City of Village Charm." Recent voters cited the Great Lawn and Cheney Hall as important features of the District.

These voters include folks who saw the recent Town of Manchester water-bill insert, which encouraged participation in the informal survey. They came to the Cedar St. museum to cast their ballots, and cast the most votes for

"View from Case Mountain, with spires of churches and Town Hall." However, averaging their votes with previous votes resulted in the District as top choice.

The group did sway the voting on the most popular write-in. Previously, it was Porter and Howard Reservoirs, in the southeast side of town, which the Cheney's constructed between 1889 and 1905. Now it's Center Springs Park - maybe we need to consider a historic walking tour there one of these days.

(see **Historic District**, Page 8)



The Manchester Historical Society
106 Hartford Road
Manchester, Connecticut 06040

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I would like to give a Historical Society membership to:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

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Category:

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

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

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106 Hartford Road, Manchester, CT 06040

(Historic District, from Page 7)

Other popular write-ins were churches and Hockanum River trails and scenery, including Union Pond, the park in Union Village, and Northwest Park. See the Calendar of Events for information about the October 23 History Hike around Union Pond.

Here are the overall results, with 172 votes:

1. Cheney Historic District
2. View from Case Mountain
3. Bridges & stone walls at Highland Park
4. Downtown Manchester
5. Center Park
6. Public libraries

The votes, however, were quite close. Many commented that we have lots to be proud of in our community. ~