

The Courier

SEPTEMBER 2006

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The Products of Pitkin

by Rick Ciralli

(Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles on the products made at the Pitkin Glassworks.)

The Pitkin Glassworks, Connecticut's first successful glass works, was formed in 1783 and lasted until about 1830. The romantic ruins are still intact and "Ol' Abbey," as it was called back in the day, can still be seen, toured, and enjoyed today. Amongst the earliest of the wares they produced were large glass vessels used for all types of storage, called "demijohns." The particular form of these bottles is referred to as "kidney" shaped. They originally held molasses and rum and



were used extensively in the West Indies trade, going back and forth on large ships. Some were wrapped in wicker rattan and some were also wrapped in leather animal hides.



Speaking of leather, legend has it that thick hides of leather were constructed and formed to make a temporary mold for the bottles. The hides

were drenched in cold water, so they would not burn when the glassblower inserted the hot molten glass on the end of his blow-pipe. This may explain why crude seams and leathery effects are on the surface of some

(See PITKIN, page 3)

Avast! All Aboard for New Bedford Trip



Discover the heritage of the world's pre-eminent nineteenth-century whaling port, New Bedford, Massachusetts, during the Society's autumn day trip on Saturday, October 14.

Immortalized in Herman Melville's novel, *Moby-Dick*, New Bedford was the capital of the

American whaling industry, which greatly contributed to America's economic and political vitality in the nineteenth century.

(See NEW BEDFORD, page 3)

Load Those Glue Guns for Annual Festival of Wreaths!

The Society is gearing up for its third annual Festival of Wreaths, which will take place on December 1 this year.

According to Mary Dunne, Executive Director of the Historical Society, "We have revamped the event and hope that the individuals and organizations that donated the last two years are ready for more fun this year." The highlight of the event will be an evening gala. "During the last two

(See WREATHS, page 5)



The Courier:

When We Publish

The Society's newsletter is published quarterly, in November, February, May, and September. Submissions of articles or news about Manchester's history are always welcome: items should be submitted by the 15th of the month preceding publication. For more information, call 647-9983.



The Courier

***A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society***

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Curator's Column:

Don't Throw Away Those Family Photos!

by Dave Smith, Curator

Among our own possessions at home we all have some unique things that no one else has. They may be family heirlooms such as samplers, quilts, paintings, correspondence, or photos and home-movie films. These items may have been in the family for several generations. They may also have interesting stories that go with the object. Sometimes the item itself can provide us with information that is not available anywhere else.

Over the past several months we have learned of several collections of family pictures that have been thrown out in the trash. This is always disheartening to us, especially when we know that the discarded photos were particularly interesting. Some of these lost pictures showed local sports teams from the early 1900s. Some included views of houses and other buildings that are no longer standing. Others showed fathers or uncles as they served in the military. And still others proudly showed the family automobile, sometimes the first car owned by the family.

All of these recently lost photos, and many others (including the many family movies) that have been tossed out in the past would have made wonderful additions to our museum collections. They all depicted people, places, and events that are not recorded in any of the history books or were not written up in the newspapers. They make up our local history. They are unique to Manchester, and to us.

We would like to think that if a family photo album (or other object) is not going to be passed to future generations of the family, it would still be considered valuable. We hope that it would be offered to the Society to be preserved for the future. This is one way of offering a form of immortality for the person who is in the photo, or the maker of the quilt, or the driver of the automobile, or the child on the bicycle.

Once an item has been accessioned into our collections it is most likely to remain with us for generations to come. It will be viewed by people one hundred years from now and may be used by future researchers to help determine what life was like one hundred years ago, or even in the very recent past. We strive to preserve as much as possible that will permit future generations to be able to learn about our ancestors and about us and our life and times.

When you are cleaning out the attic, cellar, or closet, please think in terms of saving those things that are unique. If you do not wish to keep them, then please remember your local historical society. If they are deemed appropriate to be preserved they will find a good home at the Society.

One last tip: One of the best gifts that you can give your children and grandchildren is to write on the back of your photos the dates and people and events depicted. (Remember to write with a soft pencil, not with a felt tip pen!) Your grandchildren may not appreciate it now, but they certainly will when they get older.

History of Manchester Girl Scouts on Public Access TV

This month the Society presents a history of local Girl Scouting, including a visit to “On My Honor,” an exhibit held in the spring at the History Center. The 63-minute TV show includes pictures old and new, and an interview with Kitty Wicks, who has led scouting activities for 40 years. Viewers can take a pictorial tour of Camp Merrie-Wood, which has provided outdoor adventures for young people since 1947, when the Cheney family gave the scouts a 7.1-acre parcel at Gardner and Line Streets in Manchester.

The show airs at 8 p.m. on Cox cable channel 15 on Saturdays, September 23 and 30. Channel 15 broadcasts in Manchester, Glastonbury, South Windsor, Wethersfield, Rocky Hill, and Newington.

Some previous local-history shows can be borrowed at Mary Cheney Library, or purchased at the Society gift shop. Comments from the public are welcome. Call 647-9983, or visit the web site www.manchesterhistory.org and click the “contact us” button.

Pitkin, *from page 1*

examples of these types of bottles. They came in wonderful earthy colors of greens and ambers. These large bottles make wonderful display items.

The examples on page 1 are from the collection of the author and other examples can be seen at the Old Manchester Museum. In the next article, I will discuss the early Chestnut and Globular bottles produced at the Pitkin Glassworks.

(Rick Ciralli is the President of the Pitkin Glassworks and an expert on Pitkin and Connecticut glass. He can be reached via email at rciralli@eqcorp.com.)



Fire in the Hills

by Susan Barlow

Walter Landgraf, historian and woodsman, will present a program about the old-time process of making charcoal in the hills of Connecticut on Sunday, November 12. Depending on the weather, a hike to charcoal mounds near Case Mountain will follow the slide lecture.

Walter will describe the energetic era when Connecticut’s hills were cloaked in smoke and stripped of mature forests. There was the rumble of giant trip hammers and the ring of blacksmith hammers striking iron. Connecticut’s forests were intensely managed and harvested to support the extraction of iron to transform it into useful products. The ecology and composition of Connecticut forests were dramatically altered between 1734 and 1923. The production of large quantities of high-quality iron smelted with charcoal set the stage for Connecticut’s development of a specialty machine and tool industry.

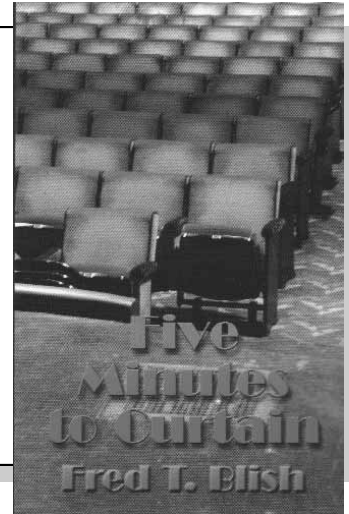
Walter will provide a display of iron ores, a charcoal hearth model, and a collier’s basket.

The one-hour program is sponsored by the Society and the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA), and will take place at 175 Pine Street at 1 p.m. Free parking available beside the building, and along nearby Pleasant Street. The optional hike will use the Town parking lot off Birch Mountain Road, about one-tenth of a mile from Camp Meeting Road. Participants should wear sturdy shoes, and dress warmly. Cost for the whole program is \$3 for non-members, \$1 for members of the Historical Society or of CFPA. Questions may be directed to 647-9983, or www.manchesterhistory.org.

Walter retired from teaching biology and environmental technology in Winsted. He is the naturalist for Peoples State Forest, president of the Barkhamsted Historical Society, and a CFPA Trail Chairman. His current areas of research interest are Native Americans, charcoal production, colonial life and history, iron industry, natural history, and geology of northwestern Connecticut. He lives in Pleasant Valley with his wife Linne, where they have made their home since 1964.

Local Author's New Novel Now Available at the Museum Shop

Society member Fred Blish has just published a novel inspired by his love of the theater. *Five Minutes to Curtain* follows its protagonist's love affair with the theater from childhood through summer stock performances, to performing in a touring company, and finally to his debut on Broadway. For the theater lover in all of us, the book is available for \$16.95 at the museum shop in the History Center. All profits from the sale of the book will support the Society. Stock up for holiday gift-giving!



Welcome, New Members!

The Society welcomes new members who joined between May 1 and August 31.

From Manchester

Alexandra Jodaitis
Joseph Dumas
Martha Fowle
Maureen Gregoire
Dana McCarthy
Eric Prause
Frances Pyka
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rohan
Mary Spaulding
Bonnie Stevenson

From Elsewhere

Barbara Kehrhahn (Cromwell)
Cathleen McElligott (West Springfield, MA)
David Nutter (Salisbury, MD)
Arlyne Brainard (Vernon)
Carol and Bob Schmartz (Glastonbury)
Beverly Tarbox (Hebron)
Joseph Vernali (South Glastonbury)

New Corporate Members

Royal Ice Cream
Highland Park Market

New Bedford, *from page 1*

We will spend the morning exploring the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, created in 1996 and encompassing 34 acres spread over 13 city blocks. The Park offers a variety of cultural landscapes, historic buildings, and museum collections, which collectively recount the stories of a remarkable era. After stopping for lunch at Freestone's Restaurant and Bar, we will proceed to the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the largest museum in America devoted to the history of the American whaling industry and its greatest port. The museum brings to life the whaling era and the history of the local area.

We will finish the day with a guided tour of the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum, a 28-room Greek Revival mansion built for whaling merchant William Rotch, Jr., in 1834. Attributed to Richard Upjohn, the house and formal gardens chronicle 150 years of economic, social, and domestic life in New Bedford. The grounds encompass a full city block of gardens, including a Wildflower Walk, a formal boxwood rose parterre garden, a cutting garden, a boxwood specimen garden and an historic wood lattice pergola.

Participants will meet at Cheney Hall at 8 a.m. and return by about 6 p.m. The trip costs \$65 per person for Society members, \$75 for non-members, and includes transportation, entrance fees, lunch, and gratuities.

For more information, contact Tanyss Ludescher at 860-643-9650.

NEWS NOTES

No Wrecking Ball for Bennet Complex

Town Directors acted upon the recommendation of the State Attorney General's office to preserve three buildings in the Bennet School complex and work with town historians as to best make use of the buildings. (See related stories in recent issues of *The Courier*.) Society Executive Director **Mary Dunne** expressed relief that the buildings will be spared, and once again offered the Directors the guidance and support of the Society in future planning efforts of the complex. "I'd like to partner with the town so that everyone can win," she said.

Manchester Cooks!: The Sequel

Just in time for the holidays will be a new, special edition of the Society's cookbook, ***Manchester Cooks!***, which will contain all new recipes from members, centering on the theme of special occasions. Such events include holidays, pre-Road Race dinners, vegetarian meals, special desserts, and others. Start filling the pantry: the book will be available by November 15, at the History Center gift shop or by phone orders. Town Historian **Vivian Ferguson** will help kick off the book with a related talk on December 3. Check the calendar for details.

Also available at the gift shop are **Manchester Historical Society tote bags**. The handsome black canvas tote bears the Society logo and the slogan, "Preserving the best of times." Each tote bag is \$15.

World War II Veterans Exhibit

From November 4 through Memorial Day next year, a new exhibit will be on display at the Old Manchester Museum. Organized by **Florence Johnson**, this special exhibit will be of interest to veterans and non-vets alike. The OMM, located at 126 Cedar Street, is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays.

06040? 06042?

The Society needs to update its files for Manchester members whose zip code has changed to 06042. Please call (647-9983) or email the Society (mdunne@mhs.necoxmail.com) with this information. Thanks!

Put Pen to Paper— '60s Style



Just in time for the holidays will be the Society's new, 40th Anniversary Edition note cards, featuring attractive photos of Manchester in the 1960s. Each box (\$10) contains eight note cards using four images from the former *Manchester Herald*. This ideal holiday gift will be available on October 1. *Order now!*

Sidewalk Sales Day on downtown Main Street, July 1964—one of four images captured on new gift note cards.

Wreaths, from page 1

years, we held the wreath auction in conjunction with our holiday open house and found that these amazing and creative wreaths did not receive the attention they deserve."

This has been a popular event but Mary hopes to attract a record number of 100 donors this year. Donors register to participate and receive a free artificial wreath to decorate in any manner they choose and then donate it back to the Society, which sells them by auction. This year, offerings will also include table sprays, candle rings and artificial evergreen as well as grapevine wreaths. The Society hopes this will increase the variety and broaden the year-round appeal of the items.

The Society will be sending notices and registration forms to as many individuals, organizations, and civic groups it can think of, but anyone who is interested can call the Society at 647-9983 to obtain a wreath or other items for decorating. They will be available for pick up the first week in October and are due back by November 10. A preview will begin November 20 and the festival will culminate in the auction and evening gala on Friday, December 1.

All proceeds support the Manchester Historical Society whose mission is to educate the public about the history of Manchester, Connecticut; collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit information and artifacts about the town and its diverse population; and advocate for the preservation of significant historic resources.

NEWS NOTES

We Will Miss...

Take a Walk on the North Side

The Manchester Historical Society and the Manchester Land Trust will lead a free Cheney Rail Trail walk on Saturday, September 30, starting at 1 p.m. Leaders will comment on the history of the railroad, and we will welcome guest speakers, including **Tom Lewis**, author of *Silk Along Steel*, a history of the South Manchester Railroad. Meet behind Farr's Sporting Goods, 2 Main Street. Parking is available at the nearby shopping plaza and at Eighth Utilities office building. Rain or shine. The former South Manchester Railroad was built in 1869 and connected the Cheney silk mills to the main line in the North End.

. . . Keep on Those Walking Shoes

In addition to the Cheney Rail walk, **Susan Barlow** has organized three additional walking tours around town. A new tour, "In the Public Eye," will entail visits to several municipal buildings as well as the Masonic and Orange Halls. See calendar for more information.

The Society regrets the recent passing of several of its members. Martha Jeanne (Paige) Adams passed away in May at the age of 81. Married to former Society President Milton Adams, Jeanne was also a past Board Director and long-time volunteer of the Society. Born in Albany, New York, Jeanne was a Manchester resident for most of her life and quite active in a number of other organizations in town.

Another member, Judith Ann (Fuqua) Perry, passed away in May at the age of 63. She was a resident of Manchester for 35 years.

Long-time member and Manchester resident since 1943, Doris Belding (Hastings) Gorsch, 96, passed away in June. Doris was Society Editor of the Manchester Evening Herald, in which capacity she edited the popular From Your Neighbor's Kitchen cookbook series for many years. The Society will miss these dedicated members.

FALL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

September 30

Saturday
1 p.m.

Cheney Railroad Walk

Led by Tom Lewis. Rain or shine.
Meet at Farr's Sporting Goods, 2 Main Street. FREE. (*See related story.*)

October 14

Saturday
8 a.m.

Day Trip to New Bedford

Meet at Cheney Hall, 177 Hartford Road. (*See related story.*)

October 15

Sunday
1-3:30 p.m.

Family History Workshop

Led by Town Clerk Joe Camposeo and Brenda Paullo.
Pre-registration required; call Brenda Paullo (643-2413).
History Center. \$5.

October 21

Saturday
1 p.m.

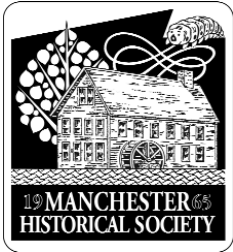
"In the Public Eye" Walking Tour

Led by Susan Barlow, with guest speakers.
Meet at steps of Town Hall, 41 Center Street

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| October 29
Sunday
1 p.m. | Manchester Historical Society Annual Meeting
Featuring slide lecture on Manchester's North End.
Manchester History Center. FREE. |
| November 4
Saturday
9-11 a.m. | Quarterly Volunteer Meeting
Manchester History Center. FREE. |
| November 4
Saturday
1 p.m. | Veterans of World War II Exhibit
Opening of exhibit.
Old Manchester Museum, 126 Cedar Street |
| November 11
Saturday
1 p.m. | Oak Grove Hike
Led by Susan Barlow with possible special guest.
Meet at Nature Science Center at Oak Grove Street.
Rain date: Sunday, November 12 |
| November 12
Sunday
1 p.m. | "Fire in the Hills"
Lecture by Walter Landgraf, with possible walking tour of Case Mt. |
| Nov. 20-Dec. 1
Mon-Fri.
10 a.m.-2 p.m. | Third Annual Festival of Wreaths Preview
Preview of decorative wreaths; early bids accepted.
History Center. FREE. |
| December 1
Friday | Third Annual Festival of Wreaths Gala and Silent Auction
History Center. \$25 p/p. |
| December 2
Saturday
1 p.m. | History Hike at Highland Park
Led by Susan Barlow. Rec. for rugged hikers.
Meet at Spring Street trailhead, with overflow parking at Glen Street lot.
Rain date: Sunday, December 3. |
| December 3
Sunday
1 p.m. | "Manchester Cooks for Special Occasions"
Introduction to Society's new cookbook by Vivian Ferguson. |
| December 10
Sunday
1-4 p.m. | Holiday Open House
Events at History Center, OMM, and Cheney Homestead. FREE. |



The Manchester Historical Society
106 Hartford Road
Manchester, Connecticut 06040

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Home Phone () _____

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Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone () _____

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 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

High-Style Tour for a Highest Bidder



(Photo by Susan Barlow)

Midge and Kate Sinnamon (left to right) enjoy a tour of Manchester in a 1940 LaSalle, chauffeured by classic-car owner and Society Vice President Marshall Lamenzo. Kate was the highest bidder for the ride at a Society auction, and treated her grandmother to the tour. Society Board Director Susan Barlow provided historic commentary on the July 31 tour.