



The Courier

SEPTEMBER 2007

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BIG CHANGES

Society Awarded Town and State Grants for History Center

Over the summer the Society was awarded nearly \$200,000 from two grants that will be used in the continuing restoration of the History Center.

According to Society President John Dormer, "The Town of Manchester has recently agreed to provide the Society with a \$50,000 Community Development Block Grant for the purchase and installation of a heating and air conditioning system for two of the large rooms at the History Center." He added, "The installation of this system will allow for the use of these rooms for events during all twelve months of the year." At present, these rooms are virtually unusable during the summer months, when interior temperatures are often in the 90-degree range; and in winter it has been difficult to host lectures due to the noise of the current heating system. Installing a new HVAC system will have the additional long-term benefit of maintaining a steady climate control, which is necessary for the preservation of exhibits and other artifacts.

The Society also received a \$140,000 matching grant from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism for the restoration of some of the windows at the History Center. Restoring these windows will not only add to the attractiveness of the building but will generate savings in energy costs. The Society has a two-year time frame within which to use the grant funds.

Society Executive Director Mary Dunne was responsible for securing both grants, which occurred shortly before she resigned from her position. (See related story, page 3.)



Let There Be Light

Allied Restoration workers on the roof of the History Center restore two skylights which overlook the future exhibit area of the Scalamandr  looms. (See related story.) The skylights had been covered for several decades. The skylight restoration marks the completion of the roof replacement at the History

Center. Thanks to a Save America's Treasures Grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior and other grants and individual contributions, as well as funds

earmarked by the Society, the \$400,000 project will keep the building free of water leaks and generate savings in energy costs.

(See **BIG CHANGES**, page 3)

Making Ends Meet While We Grow

by John Dormer

The work level of the office of the President has increased dramatically since June 21, when our Executive Director, Mary Dunne, left to work at the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. I have temporarily assumed the majority of the work normally done by the Executive Director.

The replacement of the roof on the History Center building at 175 Pine Street started May 30. This work was made possible because of a matching grant from Save America's Treasures, which is administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Substantial matching grants were also received from the Connecticut Office of Budget

Management as a result of the efforts of our elected Representatives, the 1772 Foundation, the Manchester Road Race Committee, and the H. Louise Ruddell Charitable Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Also, several specially designated gifts from members were received for the roof project. Acting as the Historical Society project supervisor, I was required to arrive at the work site at 6:30 a.m. and be available to answer questions and resolve problems that may have arisen during the renovation project. Jeff Bailey, of Bailey and Johnson Architects, the company which created the drawings for the project, was also on site for periodic inspections and to discuss problem resolution by phone. The project was substantially completed on July 3. The replacement translucent panels that will make the skylights functional again after many years of being covered were ordered by the Allied Restoration Co., roofing contractor, and they are now on site. Installation of these panels is occurring in September and the project will then be completed. The total cost of the roofing project will be approximately \$325,000, half of which will be paid by the Save America's Treasures grant. The other half will be paid by the Historical Society from savings and matching grants that have been set aside since the building was purchased in May of 1999.

Two additional grants for other major projects were received by the Society in the last month. The first was from the Town of Manchester Community Development Block Grant program, which is funded by the Federal government. The \$50,000 grant will be used to purchase and install modern, quiet heating and air con-

ditioning systems for Rooms #2 and #3 on the second floor of the History Center. This new system will allow these rooms to be used throughout the year by the Society and by other groups in town which will provide some additional income for the Society. This work will start after October when the funding becomes available, and it is planned to have the system in place before the summer of 2008. The second grant is from the State of Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. This \$140,000 matching grant is for the restoration of windows in the History Center building. All work related to this grant must be completed within two years. Both of these grants were applied for by Mary Dunne prior to her leaving the position of Executive Director of the Society.

As you can see, the upgrading of the old Cheney Brothers Machine Shop into the History Center of the Manchester Historical Society is now progressing at a rapid pace. The savings used for the matching grants are no longer available to generate income for the operation of the daily activities of the Society. The membership dues from the approximately 700 members do not cover the operational costs of the Society, which will average approximately \$500 per day during the fiscal year from October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007. This cost is comprised of the money required for electricity, natural gas, oil, telephone, WEB service, water and sewer services, insurance, salaries, programs, artifact acquisitions, office material expenses, postage, and grounds maintenance costs for snow removal and grass cutting for three of the four properties used by the Society

(See **WHILE WE GROW**, page 4)

The Courier

*A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society*

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Executive Director Resigns; Search for a Replacement Begins

When she began work as the Society's first full-time executive director nearly four years ago, Mary Dunne had to share a desk in the Old Manchester Museum, because the History Center was not yet ready for occupancy. When she resigned from her post in June, not only was the History Center the established home of the Society's administrative offices and events, but a \$400,000 roof replacement was nearly completed, and funding was secured for restoring the building's windows and installing a new HVAC system.

Mary resigned to take up the position of National Register Specialist, Architectural Historian, for the History Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. She has vowed to remain involved with the Society as a volunteer.

During her tenure as executive director, Mary secured over half a million dollars in grants for such diverse needs as restoring the History Center and implementing many new educational programs. She coordinated a range of activities that helped expand the reach and appeal of the Society, including the Old House Fair, the wreath auction, art and fashion shows, the Society's 40th anniversary event, and exhibits that reached out to community groups, such as the Association of Puerto Ricans and Latinos United of Manchester. She was an outspoken advocate of preserving Manchester's architectural treasures, including the Bennet school complex and other buildings.

"I am very proud of my accomplishments as executive director," she said. "With the grants I secured we were able to transform the History Center into an attractive, viable location. And with the help of many new volunteers, we were able to broaden the scope of the Society's many programs. As a result, membership has increased significantly, and the prospects look very good for the Society's continued growth as a cultural destination in the region."

Since Mary came on as director almost four years ago, the Society has benefited from a confluence of fortunate circumstances: under her administration, volunteers helped expand the Society's walking tours to all across town, new volunteers came on board to try out events that the Society had never sponsored before; and a wide number of events have taken the Society beyond Manchester's Cheney era into the twenty-first century.

Society President John Dormer has stepped in to assume many of Mary's former responsibilities while the Board of Directors has been meeting to discuss plans for hiring a new director. "Mary, being the first paid staff member, had to create the position based on the original job description," he said. "She worked many extra hours to promote the work of the Historical Society and obtained grants of significant number and monetary value which have allowed the Society to undertake the much needed upgrading of the History Center."

Meet Our Intern

By Dave Smith

Over the summer we have had the pleasure of having Ashley Reichelt working at the museum as an intern. Her job has been to help us organize our Cheney family collections. She has been cataloging photographs, documents, and other items and entering the information into our computer database, using the museum software program into which all of our collections will eventually be entered. During the 12-week period during which she worked part time, about 2,000 items were added to what had been previously catalogued.

Ashley attends Quinnipiac University and is studying history and secondary education. She hopes to become a teacher of history at the high school level. Ashley credits her high school teachers for fostering an interest in history, and in particular the American colonial period. There were a few documents from that period which she found among our holdings. When it comes time for her senior thesis, she may write on the early Cheneyes, including Timothy and Benjamin Cheney, and utilize some of the information she found.

During the project, Ashley noted that her two biggest headaches were trying to decipher some nearly illegible handwriting,



and identifying the many photographs of unknown people. Her advice for others doing this kind of work is to have patience and stay focused. It is so easy to get sidetracked upon finding some interesting story or other piece of information and very tempting to follow wherever that may lead.

This project was made possible by a grant from the Cheney Family Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. As we are one of only a few places where there are significant holdings of Cheney family and company materials, it is important for us and for researchers to have all of the items catalogued and made easily accessible. Although the family portion of the project is not quite complete, eventually all of our holdings related to the Cheney Brothers Silk Manufacturing Co. will be included in the database.

NewsNotes

In Search of: Volunteers

The Society will host a meeting for new and old volunteers on Saturday, September 22 at 9:30 a.m. at the History Center, 175 Pine Street. New volunteers are needed to serve as docents, tour guides, work crew members, and event coordinators. There is something for everyone. Brenda Paullo, the coordinator of volunteers, will present information on these opportunities. The Society is particularly looking for help for its Thursday night work crew, which works on building projects, preservation of windows, etc. Light refreshments will be served. Questions may be directed to Brenda at 860-643-2413.

WANTED: Books, Books, and More Books

The Society is seeking books for an upcoming book-sale fundraiser on November 17. Clean, usable books may be brought to the History Center on Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., starting October 5. Volunteers will be available to assist donors in carrying books inside. The actual book sale, Saturday, November 17, will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., with prices of \$1 for most hardcovers, and 50 cents for regular paperbacks. There will also be some specially priced books for possible gift-giving. For more information, call 860-647-9983.

Childhood Memories of "E.L." Bidwell (1859-1932)

The Society is producing an intriguing booklet of the experiences of Edward Lincoln Bidwell (1859-1932). As a child in the 1860s, E.L. roamed the woods and fields, attended the old South School, met Civil War veterans, and enjoyed many old-fashioned activities with friends and classmates. In his later years, E.L. wrote about his schoolboy days, and these memoirs were published as columns in the *Manchester Herald* in 1921.

Customs and Incidents of Early Days in Manchester: Reminiscences about a South Manchester Boyhood in the Post-Civil War Era contains reprints of those columns, with vintage and contemporary photographs. The booklet is being compiled, edited, and designed by Brenda Paullo, Roberta Lusa, and Susan Barlow, with assistance from other volunteers and members of the Society. They plan to have it ready this fall, in a small printing, for \$8.

Knitters, Hold on to Those Needles!

The The Knit-a-Thon, which was scheduled to take place this month, has been postponed until next spring. Stay tuned, and keep knitting in the meantime!

We Will Miss...

The Society regrets the passing of several of its important members over the past few months

Long-time member **Mario Frattaroli** passed away in May. Mario was a Korean War veteran and his wife, Bernice, was Secretary of the Society for seven years.

A resident of Manchester for over 40 years, **Rita (Mierzejewski) Egan** passed away in June. She was the wife of Dick Egan, who served as Society President from 1989-93.

Society Life Member **Dr. Dorothy Cheney Goodwin** passed away in June. Dorothy led an active life, having served in World War II, worked in India and Japan, earned a doctorate and taught at University of Connecticut, and served as a State Representative.

A Manchester resident for nearly 60 years, **Jean (Goslee) Moore** passed away in June. An active volunteer, Jean served as Society Secretary.

Life-long Manchester resident **Richard Carter** passed away in August. An active volunteer in numerous organizations, Richard was past Treasurer of both the Society and Pitkin Glass Works Foundation.

Bernice (Livingston) Rieg, the founder and owner of Shady Glen Dairy Store, passed away in August. A founding member of the Pitkin Glass Works, Bernice was a generous supporter of the Society, having made significant contributions for many years.

The Society will miss these active members.

WHILE WE GROW, *from page 2*

In order to meet these operational expenses, I am asking all members to assess their ability to participate in three activities for the Society. First, can you help the Society by volunteering for activities that raise funds for the Society or provide a service that we now pay for? Second, can you increase your donation to the Annual Fund by making several monthly payments which could substantially increase your total contribution to the Society to help meet its operating budget? Third, can you explain the activities of the Society to two or three friends, neighbors, or co-workers and encourage them to join the Society or provide "Gift Memberships" to them? Remember, there are no restrictions of age, residency requirements, or number of years your family has resided in Manchester to be a member of the Manchester Historical Society. With the help of all of our members, I am confident that the Society will continue to be a vibrant, educational and enjoyable asset to the residents of the Town of Manchester.

Loom Project Progress Report

*Exhibit's Centerpiece: Jacquard Looms
from the Scalamandré Mills*

By Susan Barlow

Exciting meetings have kept Loom Committee members busy with plans and research for the loom exhibit at the History Center (lower level of former Cheney Machine Shop). The exhibit will include photographs, hands-on displays, as well as the Jacquard and other looms. The goal of the project is to exhibit looms and related artifacts in a learning environment that illustrates the significance of textile mills in New England's history, from cottage industry to Industrial Revolution to today, as well as the importance of the Cheney silk mills nationally and internationally.

Since our last report in the *Courier*, here are some further developments:

- Paula and Tony Viscogliosi, who were generous and instrumental in securing the looms, continue to work on the project, through plans for fundraising events, design, and web development.
- John Carter heads the committee working on the exhibit and preparation of the building to welcome visitors. He's in the process of creating a time-line with tasks and costs.
- Society President John Dormer reports near completion of the roof project, including skylights in the loom exhibit area. (See related story.)
- Others are working on research and cataloguing of our current collection. In our modern, fast-paced world, visitors to museums want excitement with their education, and the loom volunteers are working toward that end.
- We welcomed visitors during Manchester's Heritage Day in June.
- A fundraiser and preview of the exhibit will be held in May 2008 to celebrate our progress.

Want to get involved? Donations are always welcome at the Historical Society—your volunteer time and talent, too! Please phone 860-647-9983 to volunteer.

History on Your Television

By Susan Barlow

Check out local history every Saturday on public television in the Manchester area. In our show for October, we visit the Hudson Street area of the North End to learn more about this charming neighborhood and its many examples of Victorian architecture.

Recent shows have included:

- *Return to Hilliardville*, where we take a Hockanum River walk and visit the Hilliard Mills with the new owners.

They are renovating the mills for office space and archival storage. Hilliard Mills are on the National Register of Historic Places.



Depot Square area, circa 1958

- *The North End Then and Now* presents pictures and stories about the northern section of Manchester, including pictures of Depot Square, Union Mills, the trolley and the old railroad station. We are always interested in your old photos, including those of the North End. We can borrow your pictures and return them intact after copying.

Future shows will include a film of the World War II veterans panel discussion, footage which had so many technical difficulties that we have spent months trying to retrieve it from digital format.

Our Society's TV show airs every Saturday on channel 15 at 8 p.m. Each show runs for a month, so if you miss it on the first Saturday of the month, you can catch it on subsequent Saturdays. Some of our tapes are available at Mary Cheney Library and some are for sale at the museum gift shop.

Your comments on the shows are welcome. Call the Society at 860-647-9983, or call me directly at 860-643-9776

New Exhibits at Old Manchester Museum

Two new exhibits have recently been installed at the museum.

The Manchester Bicentennial Band Shell exhibit celebrates the 30th anniversary of the band shell. It traces the early history of the band shell and features many photographs taken during the planning and construction. The photos are from the Carol Kuehl Collection. Also displayed are a series of panels telling the story of the people involved from the beginning of the project. A three-dimensional model and architect's drawing are also included. Thanks to Band Shell Committee members and volunteers Lillian Legier and Sandy Bursey for organizing this exhibit.

The 100th Anniversary of the Boy Scouts is the subject of another new mini-exhibit. Uniforms from the 1920s and 1950s are on display as well as other memorabilia from Manchester scout troops. Although scouting began in 1907 in England due to the efforts of Lord Baden-Powell, it did not arrive in the U.S. until 1910. Here it has been known as the Boy Scouts of America.

Scouting in Manchester began in 1911 under the leadership of Fred Verplanck. Some feared that the local troop would be an adjunct to the National Guard. Those fears were quickly dispelled, and scouting has thrived in Manchester over the years.

Thanks to Florence Johnson for her assistance in putting this exhibit together and to Keith Carriere for loaning some items for the exhibit.

Because our Boy Scout collection is not very comprehensive, this display only touches on various aspects of local scouting. It is hoped that in the next two years we will be able to build our collection so that by the 100th anniversary of Boy Scouts of America, in 2010, we will be able to mount a major exhibit pertaining to scouting in Manchester. If you have artifacts related to Manchester scouting, or know someone who does, please let us know by calling Dave Smith at 860-647-9742.

From the Files...

50 Years Ago in Manchester—1957

June '57

Class of '57 is first to graduate from the new Manchester High School. All of 338 Seniors graduated. Rev. Ralph Ward delivered the main address. Concordia Lutheran Church purchased 5-acre Pitkin farm on Pitkin Street for site of new church.

July '57

Town suffered prolonged drought, outside water use banned. Site search for new Howell Cheney Technical School began.

August '57

Joseph Flood, publisher *South Manchester News*, and Howell Cheney died.

September '57

Construction of new North Methodist Church on Parker Street began.

October '57

Outside water ban continued. Thousands of fish killed in Union Pond due to pollution. Russian satellite Sputnik seen by townspeople.

November '57

Fred Verplanck, first principal of Manchester High School, died. John Kelley, school teacher from Groton, won the Manchester Road Race in record time.

December '57

Ban on outside use of water lifted. Skywatch Post on roof of police station ceased operations at end of year.

Cheney Homestead News

The Cheney Homestead Committee has been restored and is busy making plans to implement the recommendations made by former Committee Chairperson Mark Sutcliffe before he stepped down several years ago. Top among these recommendations is the installation of a heating, ventilation, and cooling system to protect Homestead acquisitions and the extensive art collection. The Committee is currently investigating other historic properties and the companies hired to install their HVAC systems. In addition, autumn plans include roof repairs of the Homestead garage by

students at Howell Cheney Technical School, a walk-through of the property led by Mark Sutcliffe, as well as plans for the holiday open house and Heritage Day 2008.

The Committee members are a mix of veterans and newcomers, all with a keen interest in preserving and protecting the Homestead, Keeney Schoolhouse, and its grounds. Members include Anne Beechler, Mary Frink, Eileen Griffin, Jean Lamenzo, Rob Laughlin, Dorothy Olcott, James Olcott, Brenda Paullo, Ed Rowe, Michelle Vadenais, Carole Walden, Connie Walker, and Chris Wallen. Society members Fred

Lea, Mark and Carol Sutcliffe, and Frank Welch will serve as consultants to the Committee.

The Committee is seeking historical artifacts called "smalls" for display (dresser set, china, glassware, etc), gently used oriental rugs to replace the current worn ones, and a theatre-style curtain for use in the room formerly called the "dormitory" where the Cheney family hosted theatrical events. For donations, tours, and information about the Committee's future work call Jill Mack, Committee Chairperson, at 860-643-2596.

FALL & WINTER 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 and events will take place at the Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street, unless otherwise noted.

September 22

Saturday
9:30 a.m.

Volunteers Meeting

(See related story, News Notes, page 4)

September 28

Friday
7-9 p.m.

Exhibit Celebrating MARC's 55th Anniversary

Roundtable conversations commemorating MARC's 55th anniversary
Free admission, with refreshments

September 30

Sunday
1 p.m.

MARC Panel Discussion

Free admission, with refreshments

October 7

Sunday
1 p.m.

Annual Meeting

With special program by Chris Ambrose
Free admission

October 14

Sunday
1 p.m.

Dinosaurs in Manchester's History

Slide lecture by Brendan Hanrahan

October 27

Saturday
1 p.m.

Buckland History Hike

Led by Susan Barlow
Meet at 1075 Tolland Turnpike

November 17

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

Book Sale

Free admission

November 18

Sunday
1 p.m.

Road Race Slide Show

Slide lecture by John Long

November 24

Saturday
1 p.m.

Bidwell Walking Tour

Led by Susan Barlow. *(See below for related slide lecture.)*
Meet at Prospect Street and Hartford Road

December 9

Sunday
1-4 p.m.

Annual Holiday Open House

Cheney Homestead, History Center, & Old Manchester Museum
Various activities at each location. Free admission

December 16

Sunday
1 p.m.

Lecture on E. L. Bidwell

Slide lecture by Susan Barlow
(See related story, News Notes, page 4)



The Manchester Historical Society
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