



“50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

The Courier

DECEMBER 2018

VOL. 54, No. 1

A quarterly publication of the Manchester Historical Society, Inc. • 175 Pine Street • Manchester, Connecticut 06040 • 860-647-9983

President's Corner

2018 In A Nutshell

by Jack Prior, President

Can you believe that we are wrapping up 2018 already! This fall has been a very exciting one for the society with many special events being held.

The Woodbridge Farmstead has been open every second and fourth Sunday from early May through late October. During those times attendance has been steady at each opening. The subcommittee, with much enthusiasm, is focusing on events for the coming 2019 season. I am excited about these events so keep an eye out in the early spring for their season calendar.

The Cheney Homestead has been just as busy with events held on the second Sunday of the month. Events such as Friday night storytelling by a campfire to exhibits at our new art gallery within the Homestead, have seen a steady stream of visitors. The word from the public is one of amazement, “the Homestead has so much history in such a tiny house, with its treasure trove of artifacts, that one keeps coming back for more”. The Cheney Homestead is open year round with many activities planned for the winter season including, historic readings and “Decking the Halls” for Christmas by the Manchester Garden Club.

Let's not forget the History Center at 175 Pine St. This year we have had many wonderful Sunday afternoon lectures. Along with the loom room, we currently have on display on the upper floor three new exhibits. The Manchester Road Race Committee has featured an exhibit on the history of the annual Thanksgiving Day race. This past year saw the 180 year anniversary of the Cheney Brothers Silk Company and the local silk industry. Come see textiles, clothing, learn about some of the early employees and what benefits the Cheneys provided their workers.

Continued on page 3

With A Grain of Salt – Actors

by Bob Kanehl

From the Little Theater of Manchester to the stage at Manchester High School or East Catholic High School, the draw of the footlights affects the visions of many young residents of Manchester. Over the years countless students and adults have dreamed of that life as a matinee star or more serious Broadway, opera or musical fame.

Manchester has not been immune to the entertainment bug, but who can we set as models for our children?

Howell Cheney frowned at the thought that his son would have succumbed to the bite of the bug, but now we as a society look on with hope and encouragement.

My own grandfather was a cornet player in the Manchester German American Band; his son went on to play with the big bands of the 30's and 40s. My aunt followed the bug to New York, but ended up teaching music in Irvington, New Jersey for 40 years.

Other want-to-be-star residents have set out on the road, only to fall victim to that saying “so many have great talent but few have the luck to be the one.” It is that way in the business of entertainment. You're surrounded by extremely talented people, and it comes down to the lucky. One of the lucky came from Manchester.

Continued on page 3

Save the Date!

Membership Meeting Sunday, Feb. 3, 2019
at 1:00 p.m. at the History Center.

Snow Date: Sunday, Feb. 17, 2019

PAR AVION
AIR MAIL
CORREO AEREO

Watch for more information
and proxy form in your mail.



Drop Us A Line...

You can contact Society President
Jack Prior at
president@manchesterhistory.org

The Courier

*A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society*

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We encourage our members to support the
Corporate Members of the Society.

Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.
Highland Park Market
Manchester Road Race Committee
Royal Ice Cream Company
Lofts at the Mills

Statement of Financial Position

For year ended September 30, 2017 (as audited)

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Current Assets | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | \$ 91,692 |
| Grants and contributions receivable | 29,103 |
| Other | <u>13,419</u> |
| Total Current Assets | 134,214 |
| Investments | |
| | 1,375,684 |
| Fixed Assets | |
| (real estate, buildings & equipment net of depreciation) | <u>1,207,644</u> |
| TOTAL ASSETS | 2,717,542 |
| Current Liabilities | |
| | 5,095 |
| Net Assets | |
| Unrestricted | |
| Operating and board designated | 397,047 |
| Fixed Assets | <u>1,207,644</u> |
| | 1,604,691 |
| Temporarily Restricted | |
| | <u>1,107,756</u> |
| TOTAL NET ASSETS | 2,712,447 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS | 2,717,542 |

Christmas Holiday Hours

The History Center will be closed for the holidays from Sunday, December 23 through Sunday, December 30. Our museum store will be open for last minute gift buying Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. We wish everyone a Happy and safe Holiday.



Holiday Shopping at the Museum

The museum store at the History Center has a variety of items that would make great Holiday gifts. Books, maps, mugs, t-shirts, videos, and holiday ornaments are available along with many other items related to our town's history. The

store is available Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Financial Report

Statement of Activities for year ended September 30, 2017 (as audited)

Change in Unrestricted Net Assets

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Operating revenues, gains, and other support: | |
| Contributions and grants | \$ 94,692 |
| Fundraising events | 22,058 |
| Memberships | 12,355 |
| Rental income and reimbursements | 44,825 |
| Other | 3,227 |
| Interest and dividend income | 24,030 |
| Net assets released from restrictions | <u>58,785</u> |
| Total operating revenues, gains, etc. | 259,972 |

Operating expenses:

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Program services | 177,681 |
| Supporting services | 35,866 |
| Fundraising services | <u>9,056</u> |
| Total operating expenses | 222,603 |

Income from operations 37,369

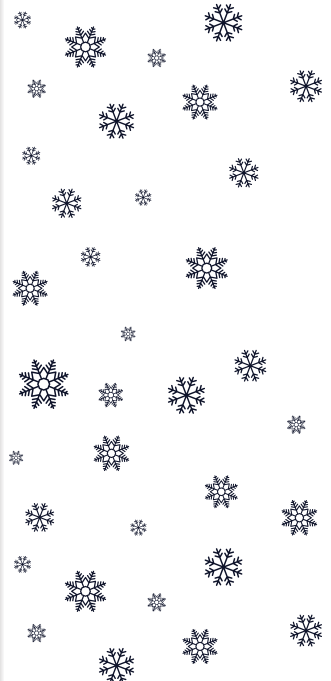
Other changes in unrestricted net assets

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Net realized and unrealized gains (losses) | (11,329) |
| Depreciation | <u>(66,389)</u> |
| Change in unrestricted net assets | (40,349) |

Change in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Contributions and grants | 56,432 |
| Net realized and unrealized gains | 73,286 |
| Net assets released from restrictions | <u>(58,875)</u> |
| Change in temporarily restricted net assets | 70,933 |

TOTAL CHANGE IN NET ASSETS 30,584



To Our Readers

If there is something you would like us to write about, please contact Dave at 860-647-9742 or at info@manchesterhistory.org.

Presidents Corner Continued from page 1

Our newest exhibit is our tribute to the gallant men and women of Manchester who participated in WWI, and those that kept the home fires burning. Walk the path of what the war was like, how the citizens of Manchester did their part for the war effort, and what was Manchester's war legacy.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about the Old Manchester Museum. Here you will find many artifacts and exhibits on permanent display. It is a smattering of who we are and how did Manchester grow. Our town Sports Hall of Fame is also displayed within its walls.

Have you ever wondered what is lurking in the basement and attics of our buildings or what other fabulous artifacts we have tucked away waiting for the next exhibit to unfold? If that interests you, let us know. We will plan a day of adventure to journey behind the scenes of the Manchester Historical Society. Information will be forth coming.

The expression "It takes a village..." is so fitting when one speaks about our Historical Society. Manchester is a "village" of diverse people, past and present, and it is the responsibility of the Historical Society to preserve our diverse cultures for future generations. We as a society, depend on our "village" to give of their time and talents through volunteering, donations of town and family memorabilia, and through monetary donations. We are a nonprofit organization, not funded by the town or major sponsors. It is with the support of our "village" that we can offer these programs and exhibits and preserve artifacts. Consider inquiring if your employer has a giving program, contribute to the Historical Society by leaving a legacy in your or your family's name, or encourage others to become a member or to make a donation. If you feel as I do, that Manchester has so much to offer past, present, and future, help us celebrate our diversity and our "village" through your generous donations.

Remember, "it takes a village..."



With a Grain of Salt Continued from page 1

Growing up in Manchester, I had never known the name, but remembered the face from the flickering screen of my parents' TV, yes originally black and white and then color.

The face I recalled in black and white, but it didn't have to be. Born in South Manchester about the same time as my own aunt, this woman grew up to shine down from the motion picture palaces of the 1930's and 40's.

Astrid Allwyn was her acting name.

Ok, you may not know that name.

She appeared in over 20 films, including three academy award best picture nominations and one of the most famous motion pictures of all time.

Because of her foreign sounding name Astrid was pitched as a Swedish beauty along the Greta Garbo model. But she was born in Manchester in 1905 the daughter of Ernest and Albertina Chistofferson.

Astrid followed her call to the stage and then movies. By the 1930s she had solidified her position in the industry as the rival love interest character but rarely as a star level character. She did play opposite some of the top talent including Shirley Temple, Humphrey Bogart; James Stewart; Irene Dunne and Loretta Young.

She does appear in the most demanded film of the 1940s – *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. This film, which pits a small town senator against a corrupt political machine was the most requested film throughout Europe after the occupying Nazi governments announced one last importation of Hollywood films.

An interesting fact is that she left the screen when she was a young lady to do something that seems to have been forgotten in the modern world, to raise her children. This retirement ended her appearance in movies in the early 1940s.

One wonders if there had been a demand for older women parts, which dominate the screen, if Astrid would have made a comeback. But we can always enjoy her talent as Susan, the daughter of Senator Paine, each time we watch the often presented classic *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.



Homestead News

by Peter Millett, Chair

Cheney Homestead: Art, Ingenuity & Early American Life. This Fall we have been trying to practice our own ingenuity at the Homestead, presenting the rich history in deeper and more meaningful ways - storytelling, or telling our story well.

First, in September we shared framed, copied works by John and Seth Cheney with the Wood Memorial Library in South Windsor for their annual art exhibition and dinner fundraiser, and our pieces were some of the most beautiful. This was to help promote our new gallery's focus on art. In November, we continued our story of art with Barbara Solomon, a 39 year veteran of printmaking at Manchester Community College, who demonstrated the exacting and technical art of engraving, as Dave Beal presented John Cheney's life story. Artists attending were invited up to Dorothy Cheney's studio on the third floor, and there were excited discussions about reviving classic art teaching and art making at the Homestead in the future!

We have focused on trying to tell our American story as well, demonstrating Early American crafts and skills at the Homestead Harvest, farrier/blacksmithing on a beautiful gray Appaloosa, nearly completing our community rag rug project, making a delicious 1700s meal over an open fire, and inviting

the children to help dig and harvest the potatoes from the History Garden.

And we practiced true storytelling at our first October Friday Night Campfire Storytelling events. Every night was cool and crisp and dry, and more than 100 children and adults attended, gathered around our warm fire, listening to Native American stories and local legends, and sharing stories of their own! We shared the Mathias Spiess story of Peter Hager and Wunnee Neetunah, our own legend of the Podunk Indians. But the highlight of our campfire stories was creating and sharing dramatically our own story of "Ichabod Crane: Hop Brook Schoolmaster", using our 1751 Keeney Schoolhouse as the setting for a scary prequel to Washington Irving's Connecticut schoolmaster from the 1780s.

Finally, we will gather on Friday evening, Dec 7th for a dramatic reading of Charles Dickens 1843 "A Christmas Carol". This event will be a fundraiser and has limited seating, so please reserve your place early. The following Sunday afternoon, Dec 9th, at our last event of the year we will have a community fireside reading of the same story, guests and others participating, with the Homestead richly decorated for Christmas by the Manchester Garden Club.

Please join us as we tell our stories!

Who Do You Think You Are?

Have you heard about DNA testing for genealogy but you're not sure what it can do for you? Need help deciding which test to take? Learn about the different types of DNA tests and how they might help you to knock down tough brick walls and connect branches of your family tree.

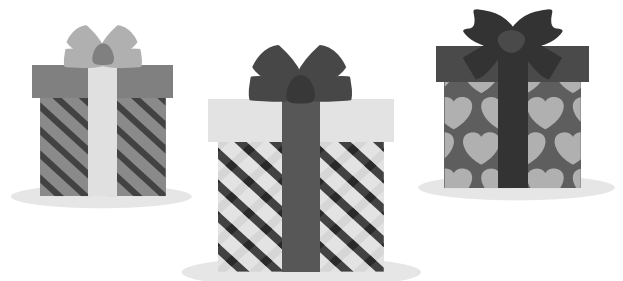
Join the Genealogy Club when Jennifer Zinck, a professional Genealogist who specializes in incorporating DNA evidence into genealogy, comes to the History Center for an enlightening presentation. Jennifer is an instructor in the Boston University Genealogical Research Certificate Program.

What a great way to start the new year! So save the date, January 8, 2019, at 10a.m. at the History Center. The program is free to members and \$3.00 for all others. See you there!

A Gift Membership for Christmas

A gift membership in the Society makes a great gift for someone who is interested in history.

You can send in the membership form on the back of this newsletter to make a gift for the person of your choice. We will do the rest and send the membership card either to you or to the recipient of your gift. The new membership comes with the colorful reproduction booklet "[The Miracle Workers](#)" which describes what it was like living in Manchester and working for Cheney Brothers 100 years ago.



Calendar of Events –

- ▶ **Old Manchester Museum** at 126 Cedar Street, open the first Saturday of the month, from 12:00 noon. until 2:00 p.m. year round, depending on the weather. Also by appointment -- phone 860-647-9983. The research facility is available all year round -- to make a research appointment, please phone 860-647-9742. In addition to a wide variety of exhibits covering Manchester's history there is also a museum store.
- ▶ **The History Center and museum store** are located in the former Cheney Machine Shop, 175 Pine Street at the corner of Forest Street -- where you can purchase local-history items such as books on local history, copies of vintage maps, t-shirts with historic scenes of Manchester, copies of high school yearbooks, vintage business directories, mugs, note cards, and limited-edition ceramic tree ornaments with images of Cheney Homestead and other landmarks. There is also a study area where visitors can conduct research by browsing through old Manchester directories. There is also an exhibit of the Russell barber shop, with barber pole, and vintage barbering tools and furniture, as well as a standing exhibit about Cheney silks. Please check to make sure the building is open before coming! 860-647-9983.
- ▶ **Cheney Homestead museum** at 106 Hartford Rd. is open from 1 to 4 p.m. on the second Sunday of the month year round. Also by appointment – please call 860-647-9983. The Homestead, built in 1785, is where the Cheney brothers grew up and it remained in the Cheney family until it was donated to the Manchester Historical Society in 1968. Exhibits include Cheney family furnishings and a new art gallery featuring artwork by John and Seth Cheney and other family members.
- ▶ **Woodbridge Farmstead Barn museum** at 495 Middle Turnpike East is open May through October from 12:00 until 2:00 p.m. on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. It is closed during the winter.

Upcoming Events

Friday, December 7 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m., Lightly dramatized fireside reading of "A Christmas Carol," at the Cheney Homestead. After the reading, we'll sing carols and share holiday cheer. Reservations required by emailing Cheney

Homestead chair Peter Millett at peter.m.millett@gmail.com, with CAROL RESERVATIONS in the subject line. \$10 per person, \$5 for children under 16. The 1785 house was donated to the Manchester Historical Society by the Cheney family in 1968 for use as a house museum. As with many New England homesteads, the house is built into a hill, with doors opening out to the yard on both the upper and lower levels. We plan Open Houses generally on the second Sunday of the month. Donations welcomed for the upkeep of the Homestead.

Sunday, December 9 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Open House and fireside reading of "A Christmas Carol," by Charles Dickens, at the Cheney Homestead. The reading will be followed by singing carols and sharing holiday cheer! Tour the 1785 homestead and visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John and Seth Cheney. The 1785 house was donated to the Manchester Historical Society by the Cheney family in 1969 for use as a house museum. As with many New England homesteads, the house is built into a hill, with doors opening out to the yard on both the upper and lower levels. We plan Open Houses generally on the second Sunday of the month. Donations always welcome for the upkeep of the Homestead.

Tuesday, January 8 at 10:00 a.m., the Historical Society's Genealogy Group welcomes Jennifer Zinck, a professional genealogist who specializes in incorporating DNA evidence into genealogy. Jennifer is an instructor in the Boston University Genealogical Research Certificate Program. Learn about the different types of DNA tests and how they can help you connect branches of your family tree. The public is invited! Our genealogy meetings are for both amateur and more experienced genealogists, as we explore topics in genealogy, helping each other with research and in overcoming roadblocks. Meet at the Manchester History Center. The Genealogy Group consists of Historical Society members, but nonmembers are also welcome (\$3.00 fee for nonmembers). The group usually meets on the second Tuesday of the month, except December, July, and August.

Sunday, February 3 at 1:00 p.m., Meeting of the Society Membership at the History Center. Snow date will be Sunday, February 17 at 1:00 p.m. Meeting Notice and proxy to follow.

Woodbridge Farmstead 2018 Happenings

by Ann-Linda Dustin-Bray, Chair

This year we are pleased to report that the historic Woodbridge Farmstead has undergone many improvements. We have updated and remodeled the tenant's apartment including an updated kitchen with new oven, cooktop and flooring. After months of scraping, sanding, painting and cleaning all the rooms look fresh and comfortable.

We added a wheelchair accessible stone dust path leading from the street to the barn and the temporary portable toilet.

The fence along Woodbridge St., which had been damaged by an automobile in the spring, had several sections replaced after waiting several months for the insurance company to agree to pay for it. Gardens were weeded, and landscape improvements made.

This being our second year open to visitors we had a number of events. Children were invited to participate in "Kid's Craft Day," creating bugs from pipe cleaners, painting animal puzzle pieces, and rolling pine cones in peanut butter. I'm sure the squirrels enjoyed those. They also participated in ring toss and pitching horseshoes.

Another Sunday we made butter from fresh pure cream. Little hands repeatedly shook those mason jars until butter was created, then spread on crackers. That was followed by picture painting.

Halloween would have been our biggest event, but was rained out. We had planned Halloween music, pumpkin decorating, and potato sack races among other events. Our special happening was "Can you make it through the barn?" with haunted and ghostly figures revealing themselves to the brave souls who dared to try it in the true spirit of Halloween. Next year will be even better.

This winter when snowflakes swirl and snow accumulation begins to mount, we hope to have ice sculpturing and snowman contests. Perhaps even some cross country skiing and igloo making.

Looking forward to 2019 we plan to have a Farm Day with live animals, Painting in the Garden, A Day in the Life of the Woodbridge Women, period artisans, a Fiddle Contest and maybe a Beer Festival.

As chair of the Woodbridge Farmstead committee, I feel privileged to work with a wonderful group of volunteers. As stewards of the Woodbridge property and legacy our mission is to share, create, educate and provide the best possible experiences to all who visit the Farmstead.

Research Library Update

by Janet Prior

We are on our way! A map case is in now place so that everyone can access the maps we have for research. A cozy sitting area beckons for you to enjoy, and the old bookcases have been removed and we await the setup of library shelving that originally came from Bennet Middle School. Now all we need to do is fill our shelves with books, and several people are now working on cataloging the books we do have.

Volunteers are the backbone of our historical society. They are an essential key to our success as we begin to build our library. We would like to take this time to welcome our newest subcommittee member, Scott Clendaniel.

Scott is retired. He attended both Barnard Junior High School and Manchester High School. Come join us and Scott, become a part of this exciting adventure by becoming a volunteer. Contact Kris Miller at 860-432-0307 for more information about joining us.



1918 Flu Epidemic and Manchester Memorial Hospital

It was just 100 years ago that the influenza epidemic swept throughout the United States, Europe, and much of the rest of the world. It has been estimated that one in four persons in the United States came down with the flu, and many developed pneumonia, which caused many deaths.

As reported by William Buckley in his book "A New England Pattern" there was a shortage of doctors (Manchester had 8 doctors then) and there was not yet a hospital in town. Cheney Brothers offered the use of Cheney Hall as an emergency hospital to the Red Cross. It was filled with cots and suffering residents. This arrangement resulted in alleviating much suffering from families at home who would otherwise

have had to care for their sick family members and most likely expose the whole family to this insidious disease.

The local epidemic began in early fall of 1918 and peaked soon thereafter. It diminished in ferocity relatively quickly, and by late fall had pretty much abated.

Because of the epidemic and the struggles to care for and treat the sick, it was obvious that Manchester needed its own hospital. In early 1919 discussions were held to decide on an appropriate memorial to recognize the sacrifice of the many Manchester men and women who served during the Great War, and especially the nearly 50 men who died during the war.

A committee recommended that a 50 bed hospital be built at an estimated cost of \$150,000. Within a week of the beginning of the fund raising campaign nearly \$200,000 was raised from 4,000 donors and local businesses, including Cheney Brothers which contributed \$65,000.

The cornerstone was laid on November 22, 1919 and the hospital was completed and dedicated a year later on Armistice Day, November 11, 1920. As a tribute to the Manchester men who died during the war, 43 trees were planted in front of the hospital. In addition, two bronze plaques were installed in the hospital lobby listing the names of all the men and women from Manchester who served in the war. Those plaques are today still prominently displayed inside the hospital entrance.



Hospital showing Memorial trees in honor of Manchester's War Dead



*Dedication of Hospital
November 11, 1920*



The Manchester Historical Society
175 Pine Street
Manchester, Connecticut 06040

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Your Membership Expires on:

MANCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill out this form, and mail it with your check to:

The Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT 06040

Name: (Mr.) (Mrs.) (Miss) _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: () _____ Email: _____

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|-------|--------------------------------------|---------|--|-------|
| Type of Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Individual | \$60 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Individual (65+) | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Couple | \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Family | \$100 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under age 18) | \$5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Couple | \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate | \$500 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Individual | \$500 | | | | |

I would like to make an additional contribution for

| | | | |
|---|----------|---|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manchester Historical Society Building Fund | \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Woodbridge Farmstead Endowment | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manchester Historical Society Endowment Fund | \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Keeney Schoolhouse Fund | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheney Homestead Endowment | \$ _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Appeal | \$ _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have enclosed a matching gift form | | | |

Make checks payable to: Manchester Historical Society