



"50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY"

The Courier

DECEMBER 2019

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

President's Corner

Celebrating the Old, Ringing in the new

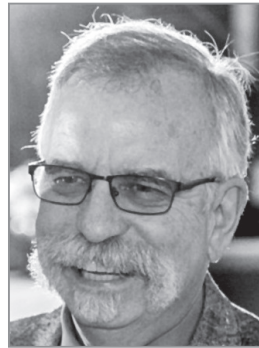
by Jack Prior

As they say, "time flies by" and 2019 is no exception, where did it go? As we look back on the year and prepare for the new decade to come, the Historical Society has seen many changes and has generated much enthusiasm for the new year ahead.

Both our Cheney Homestead and Woodbridge Farmstead have continued to offer wonderful programs spearheaded by our committee chairs Peggy Newton, at the Farmstead, and Peter Millett, at the Homestead. The backbone of our programs continues to be the wonderful volunteers that work along side Peggy and Peter to insure that these programs are a success. We look forward to what will be offered in the coming year.

In true Cheney family fashion, we have seen a resurgence of art that was so present in their lives. The Cheney art gallery in the old homestead has drawn the attention of the outside art world. Under the direction of Trudy Mitchell, there has been keen interest in the painting and drawing classes that are being offered at the homestead. New to next year will be the establishment of an artist studio in the History Center. Here students will have the opportunity to take classes in various forms of media including those reminiscent to the style studied and utilized by the Cheney's.

Bob Kanehl has not only seen to the opening of the Old Manchester Museum the first Saturday of the month, but has written many wonderful articles for the Journal Inquirer about our town history. His articles help to spark interest in our past, enticing



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Holly & Ivy Gala

Invitation to our 2019 Fund Raiser

This year our 15th Holiday Gala and Fundraiser will be held Sunday, December 15, at our History Center. The event will run from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

The Gala will be a festive cocktail party with hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer, a signature cocktail, soft drinks, Christmas cookies and a coffee bar. All included in the \$45 per person admission. Silent auction items include gift certificates to our nearby neighbor Labyrinth Brewery, Little Theater of Manchester, for the first time ever Cheney silk fabrics including 4 yards of yellow silk organza with several smaller textiles, and many others.

As you mingle with friends old and new, music will stream from our vintage player piano. There will be some fun surprises. So dust off your holiday finery and join us for a joyous celebration.

Reserve early as we are limited to 150 guests. Watch for a mailer or fill in the accompanying form. The deadline for reservations is December 6, 2019! *See back page for Reservation form.*



Save the Date!
Sunday, December 15
3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Holly & Ivy Gala

Holiday Shopping at the Museum

Please remember that we offer many items in our museum store that are great gifts for lovers of Manchester and its history. There is a wide assortment of books, maps, mugs, ornaments and other unique items. A gift membership makes a wonderful gift too!

The store is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.



Drop Us A Line...

You can contact us at
info@manchesterhistory.org or
President Jack Prior at
president@manchesterhistory.org

The Courier

*A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society*

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Meet Our New Board Members

We would like to introduce you to our recently elected board members.

Carol Cafazzo

Carol was born and raised in Hartford and made her career in the insurance industry where she worked her way up from rater to underwriter and into management and then into the information technology side, where she did project management and business analysis. During her career she developed and honed a wide range of skills including people management and problem analysis. She and her husband enjoy participating in Revolutionary War reenactments as part of a Loyalist Ranger Unit. She has always been interested in old buildings and believes they should be preserved or repurposed while keeping the integrity of their style. Her interest in Manchester history stems from her childhood as she had relatives who lived here, and she spent 5 years living in the Ribbon Mill Apartments and on Center Street.

Sarah Cieglo, PH.D.

Sarah Cieglo received her B.A. in History with a Classics minor and B.M. in Musicology from Northwestern University and her Ph.D. in History from Yale University with a focus on Early Modern European and Colonial American history. She is currently Assistant Professor of History (tenured) at Manchester Community College, where she teaches World and Western Civilization courses. Igniting a passion for history in others by showing its connection and relevance to their lives is one of her greatest personal and professional goals. She was the founding advisor for the Manchester Community College History & Art History Club in 2016 which has been active ever since with fieldtrips to the Cheney Homestead and many other sites. She is also the program coordinator for the Manchester Community College Liberal Arts & Science degree programs where she oversees the curriculum and program advising Liberal Arts & Science degree students.

Robert Kanehl

A native of Manchester Robert has been a very active member of the Society over the past five years. A long time newspaper reporter, teacher and author, Robert has had a lifelong interest in history. This love of history has appeared in his classroom teaching as well as his writing. Over the past few years Robert has been a teacher and Math Coach in Windham, Connecticut. He has thirty years of teaching and twenty years of newspaper work in both Maine and Connecticut. He is noted for writing the town history column for the local paper and participation at the Old Manchester History Museum. He also has been a volunteer at the Woodbridge Farmstead and a member of the Pitkin Glass Works Executive Council.

Your ad could be here!

Contact us for details

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.

Meet Our New Board Members

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Jamshid A. Marvasti, M.D.

Jamshid was born in Iran where for 20 years, he was a student. For eight of those years he was in medical school. In 1973, he moved to the US for his higher medical education. He opened a medical practice in Manchester in 1979, and for 40 years has practiced at Manchester Memorial Hospital. His attraction to the town of Manchester stemmed from the presence of a general hospital, a mix of different socio-economic population where all classes got along with each other, and the welcoming of refugees and immigrants. He has published multiple articles in two history/psychology journals. He looks at history as a science as it should be analyzed for the purpose of learning valuable lessons from the past, and possibly helping to predict future events.

Stephen Penny

Stephen is a former mayor of Manchester. He subsequently served on the town's Pension Board for 15 years, chaired several Charter Revision Commissions, co-authored the report of a Racial Balance in Schools, and continues to serve on the Cheney Hall Foundation. He also serves on the State Elections Enforcement Commission. In 2018, he was awarded the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce Community Achievement Award. A graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University and the UConn School of Law, he has been engaged in the general practice of law in Manchester for over 45 years. A past president of the Manchester Rotary Club, he is also a Mason and Shriner, and was the public address announcer for the Manchester Road Race from 1984 to 2017. An enthusiastic student of history, Mr. Penny has developed a comprehensive presentation on the Native Americans of Southern New England that has been well-received by numerous local historical societies.

Louis A. Spadaccini

Louis A. Spadaccini is a lifelong resident of Manchester with a long record of public service to the community. From 2007 through 2011, Lou served as Mayor of the Town of Manchester. He also served as a member of the Manchester Board of Directors and as member of the Manchester Board of Education. Lou presently volunteers his time as a member of the Manchester Redevelopment Agency, Presiding Justice of Manchester Elks Lodge 1893, Treasurer of the Manchester Chapter of UNICO National, a member of the Board of Directors of the Manchester Bicentennial Band Shell, a member of the Knights of Columbus – Father Martin J. Scholsky Council #1155, and a member of the Connecticut Republican State Central Committee representing the Fourth Senatorial District. He previously served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, a Corporator of Eastern Connecticut Health Network, and a Corporator of Rockville Bank. Lou works as an attorney with the law office of Blackwell & Spadaccini, LLC. His office is in a Queen Anne style house that was once owned by the Cheney Brothers.

President's message

continued from front page

those who are able to come and explore our museums and participate in our programs.

This year saw the emergence of our new free eBlast on social media. Through the hard work of Susan Barlow, we have heard many positive comments from the public that subscribe to this informative weekly media. In this busy world, everyone seems to enjoy staying in touch with the Society happenings through this short, easy access venue.

Our History Center has also taken on some new changes as we prepare to transition exhibits from the Old Manchester Museum to much needed new exhibit space in the History Center. The store has been moved and has a new redesigned look, new small exhibits have been added to our lobby, and a new conference room is now occupying the former store location. There is space now to accommodate our board meetings and conduct small conferences or interviews and is available to the public to rent. The library subcommittee has been working very hard to bring the new Research Library to our members and the public. Continued to be offered at the History Center are the Genealogy Group, guest lecturers, special society functions and outside public venues.

Through the efforts of Operations Director Gerry Gallo, one of next year's goals will include the installation of a new HVAC system, as necessary approval has been obtained allowing this project to move forward. Another goal is the landscaping of the area surrounding the silk vaults, of which removal of trees and brush has already begun. This will allow for a return of the original landscape that the public would have seen during the period that the silk mills were functioning.

Reflecting back on 2019, it was a wonderful year! Our volunteers deserve all our gratitude and praise for without them we would not have the Historical Society that we all know and love. Here's to 2020, may we be blessed with continued success.

Cheney Homestead News & Cheney Homestead Arts

by Peter Millett

We hope that you were able to join us during the summer and fall, which were full of memorable events and experiences.

In August, Meteorologist Tim Lavigne shared his knowledge with us about “1816: The Year Without a Summer”. Sculptor Robert Shure shared his story and presented our repaired 1850’s bust, Venus de Cnidus. In October we again gathered for the Homestead Harvest, and each Friday night shared stories, including Native American, colonial, Afro-American, Russian, and our own “Ichabod Crane: CT Schoolmaster”. We had a lot of fun, and hope you did, too!

But most significantly in 2019, we began formal art instruction with the Cheney Homestead Arts program. Drawing classes started in the restored Dorothy Cheney Art Studio in the Homestead in September, along with printmaking in the Keeney Schoolhouse.

This program both honors the memories and talent of the Homestead brothers John and Seth Cheney and their training and work in classical realism, and it is providing an exciting opportunity for us to help fund museum activities and maintenance. The program has a direct goal of fully developing the “art” heritage of the Homestead’s mission to uniquely present Art, Ingenuity & Early American Life.

In 2020, with permission and support from the Historical Society board, we are developing additional art studio space in the lower level of the History Center to expand the program. This will allow offering classes to more students, and allow us to engage other artists, such as Florence, Italy trained classical realist artist Christina Mastrangelo, to provide instruction.

The opportunities for income, promoting creativity in the community, and honoring the memories and talents of John and Seth Cheney are very exciting. Please let Pete Millett or Trudy Mitchell (Cheney Homestead Artist in Residence) know if you are interested in participating in or supporting this important program at CheneyHomesteadArts@gmail.com

In closing, a special thanks is given to Dave Beal, for many years of service on the Homestead committee; to the gardeners who have made the Homestead even more beautiful this year; and finally, a special thanks to the volunteers of the Homestead, including the Homestead weavers, Susan Stoppleman and Susan Scoville!

Join us for the Holiday Open House on Saturday Dec 7th and a reading of “A Christmas Carol” on Friday Dec 13th!

Newspaper Digitization Project

Thanks to many generous donors we have reached our goal of \$10,000 to digitize the microfilms of the Manchester Herald newspaper as well as the South Manchester News. The Herald began life in 1882 as a Saturday paper only. Over the years the name changed and publication increased from once a week to twice a week and finally daily (except Sunday). The last Herald newspaper was printed June 29, 1991. Unfortunately, most of the early papers were lost when the newspaper offices burned in 1922. However, over the years some scattered issues have come to light and have been donated to the Society or to the Connecticut State Library. These have mostly been microfilmed. The State Library has microfilmed every issue of the paper from 1926 to the end of publication, and these will be digitized and made available for online research.

The South Manchester News was published once a week from 1893 through 1924. A complete run of them have been microfilmed and will also be digitized as part of this project.

We will let you know when the project is complete and how you will be able to search through the papers.



Calendar of Events

Old Manchester Museum at 126 Cedar St. is open the first Saturday of the month, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. May through December, depending on the weather and also by appointment. The research facility is available year round by appointment only. To make an appointment for a museum tour or to use the research facility please phone 860-647-9983. In addition to a wide variety of exhibits covering Manchester's history including Cheney Brothers, Bon Ami Soap, Spencer rifles, Pitkin Glass, and Manchester's elementary schools, and the Manchester Sports Hall of Fame, there is also a museum store. The building was the former two room Cheney School, built in 1859.

The History Center and museum store are located in the former Cheney brothers Machine Shop, 175 Pine St. at the corner of Forest St. Open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. You can purchase local history items such as books, copies of vintage maps, t-shirts, mugs, note cards and limited edition ceramic tree ornaments with images of our historic buildings. Currently there are exhibits about Cheney silks and cravats, and a reproduction of the Russell Barber Shop (formerly on Spruce St.) with barber pole and vintage barber tools and furniture. Parking is available along Pleasant St. and in the lot along the Forest St. side of the building.

Cheney Homestead Museum at 106 Hartford Rd. is open the second Sunday of the month year round from 1 until 4 p.m. 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 1969. Exhibits include Cheney family furnishings and a new art gallery featuring artwork by John and Seth Cheney and other family members. The house is built into a hillside with doors opening out at the upper and lower levels.

Woodbridge Farmstead Barn Museum at 495 Middle Turnpike East is open May through October on the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 12 noon until 2:00 p.m. The 200 year old barn and several rooms in the house are also open. It is closed during the winter. Parking is available at the Senior Center and in the lot behind the barns.

Board meetings of the Historical Society are held at 6:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month at the History Center, 175 Pine Street (except the July and August meetings, which are usually held at the Old Manchester Museum). Members are welcome to attend and may speak or ask questions at the beginning of the meeting. Questions may be directed to 860-647-9983.

Saturday, December 7, "Bah Humbug Hullabaloo," at the History Center. Futuristic Victorian/Steampunk Holiday Celebration with music, merriment, and Manchester history, hosted by Oddball Newt, with fun for the whole family. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Historical Society. Live music, games, a steampunk marketplace with over 40 vendors, and panels on Victorian-era traditions. Open house from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Ticketed event starts at 2:00 p.m. Oddball Newt adds, "Ugly Sweater, Woeful Waistcoat and Beastly Bustle contest. Show off your horrid holiday spirit and ungainly fashion sense." The Silk City Chorus and Town Troubadour Bill Ludwig will perform. Purchase early-bird tickets for \$20 online or \$25 at the door. For \$15 senior/teen/and Society member tickets. For questions, email oddballnewstuff@yahoo.com.

Saturday, December 7, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Homestead Holiday Open House, 106 Hartford Road -- decorated for the holidays by the Manchester Garden Club in both traditional and creative interpretations of seasonal decor. This open house takes the place of our usual second Sunday opening.

Saturday, December 7, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Old Manchester Museum open. Decorated for the Christmas season. Visit the former Cheney School and view exhibits on Cheney Brothers, Bon Ami Soap, Spencer Rifles, Pitkin Glass, Manchester's elementary schools.

Friday, December 13, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Lightly dramatized reading of Charles Dickens's "Christmas Carol" at the Cheney Homestead. Details to come

Sunday, December 15, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., "Holly and Ivy Gala" at the History Center. All welcome to this holiday celebration. See accompanying article.

Thursday, December 19, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., Monthly Movie Night at the History Center. A guided tour of Frank Capra's 1946 holiday classic film starring Jimmy Stewart, Donna Reed,

and Lionel Barrymore. Through selected clips, we will explore themes and truths that make this movie a timeless commentary on the human condition, and an interesting parallel to Manchester as a multi-ethnic mill town struggling through the Great Depression and World War II. Hosts David Garnes and Peter Millett. Donation \$2 per person; \$5 per family of 3 or more. Refreshments available for purchase.

Wednesday, January 1, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. History Walk featuring the "Great Lawn" starting at the Cheney Homestead, 106 Hartford Road. Park at Fuss & O'Neill, 146 Hartford Road. This one-and-a-quarter-hour walk will proceed along streets and lawn to view historic mansions and the nine-acre property purchased by the Town in 2005 for open space and historic preservation. Historical Society members Tom Ferguson and Susan Barlow will comment on the historic landscape and buildings. There is some steep and uneven ground, so participants should wear sturdy shoes or boots. Extreme weather cancels, but the walk will be held in light rain or snow flurries, so please bring an umbrella. \$10 for non-members, \$7 for members, and free for children under age 16. For a map and vintage photos of the District visit our web site. The Cheney silk mills were Manchester's largest employer in the early part of the 20th century. Please check weather forecast and dress for the conditions!

Sunday, January 13 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Open House at the Cheney Homestead, Traditional crafts for all as you visit this early American home, including the recently opened Homestead Art Gallery and be inspired by Manchester's rich history in art. Guided tours include the 1751 Keeney Schoolhouse, history of the Homestead and its contents, and of the family who lived there

Thursday, January 19, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., Monthly Movie Night at the History Center. Check our web site and watch for publicity about the film to be shown.

Woodbridge Farmstead News

by Peggy Newton

After a very productive year at the Farmstead which saw many events and visitors, our thoughts are already turning to 2020. We ended our fall season with a fun visit from our goat friends at Aussikita Farms. We hope to see them again next year, perhaps with some piglets and chickens. Our last Sunday at the Barn was met with a deluge of rain but we persevered and displayed photos of the fun and people who visited us in 2019. The house was open with a dining room display of Thanksgiving dinner, minus the turkey.

We have much to be thankful for in 2019. We are thankful for the many improvements to the House and Farm including a brand new sign in the front yard, new gutter installation on the house and much needed tree removal and plumbing repairs in the house.

An archaeological investigation was conducted near the small shed to determine if there are any signs of Native American or other early activity there. This is in preparation for removal of the shed and replacement with an old salvaged Manchester barn that will house a small exhibit space, handicap accessible toilet and storage space. The dig was conducted by Dr. Kevin McBride of UCONN and six of his students. The public was invited to participate and the most enthusiastic visitor was a fifth grader with a strong interest in town history. He was shown how even the smallest artifacts are found by sifting the dirt as it is excavated. While learning to use a metal detector he discovered some metal objects near the

open foundations connected with the dairy and a larger piece of farm equipment.

Many thanks go out to the hard working committee members who make these activities and improvements possible. Thanks to the farmers Jean Burr, Carol Zapadka, Jane Zadnik, Fred Lea, Dave Smith, Earl Schaefer and Jack Prior. Thanks also to our wonderful volunteers: Sandra Wilson, Kris Miller, Janet Prior, Bruce Perry, Jane and Rudy Zadnik, John Hovey, Gerry Gallo, Kathy Cutter, Peter and Karen Tullson, Yusuf Bawwab and the Manchester Garden Club.

It takes a Village! Please let me know if you are interested in volunteering for the committee or gardening or have ideas for a program. On to 2020!!



The photo shows a UCONN student and a fifth grader sifting through the screenings during the archaeological dig.

Annual Member Meeting

The meeting was called to order at the History Center at 1:00 p.m. on September 22, 2019 by President Prior.

We observed a moment of silence for members who had passed since our last meeting.

The minutes of the Membership meeting of February 3, 2019 were approved.

President Prior recounted the accomplishments and activities of the Society over the past year. He also described plans for the next year including planning for a new HVAC system in the History Center so that it can be used comfortably year round. Challenges include improving our membership base.

Dave Smith, treasurer, presented a report on the finances of the Society including tables showing income and expense items and the status of our

financial accounts, including the Society's endowment accounts.

The revision of the Society bylaws was described, which are subject to approval of the Board of Directors.

Chris Malone, chair of the Governance Committee, presented the slate of candidates for the Board of Directors. Twelve members were nominated, six of whom are new to the board. All were elected by the membership. He also presented the slate of officers: John Prior president, Peter Millett vice president, Carol Cafazzo secretary and Dick Borden treasurer. All were elected by the membership.

Members were given an opportunity to address the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m..

New information kindles a mystery solved

By Bob Kanehl

A notecard with a picture of the Edison Movie Theater sat behind the front counter at the Old Manchester Museum until the first Saturday in November. What makes the card so interesting is how it played a connection in joining two historical circles.

Earlier in the day, Curator Dave Smith pointed the card out, noting that at first he did not know if the theater was actually located in Manchester. He had been researching a request concerning the first movie theater in town. The original photo for the card was in the archives, but it was not labeled as to date and location. He felt that the Edison had been located on Main Street.

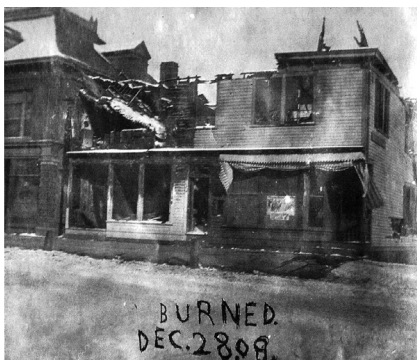
It was, and that fact was confirmed when Joyce Eknaian of Bolton came into the museum for a visit later that same day.

Joyce was a long-time resident of Manchester, who had been doing some research on her family. She explained that her relatives had run the Manchester Wall Paper Company on Main Street, in a building just below the Odd Fellows Building. The 1914 Aero View of Manchester lists the business along with a picture of the actual building.

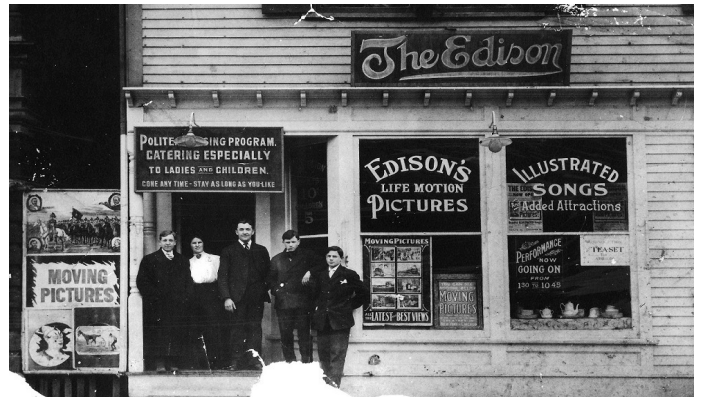
One of her distant relatives was Sam Massey, honored in the Sports Hall of Fame. It was to get a picture of his plaque, which drew her into the museum. While there, as is often the case, we drew her into a conversation and swapped stories of the families and history we knew.

Main Street history was the focus of our conversation on the present buildings and those not there anymore, including some that burned down. As a young man Joyce's grandfather – Paul Hausmann, helped fight some of these fires, she explained. He had been a volunteer member of Hose and Ladder Co. 4, located on School Street. As a member of this unit, he helped fight the 1913 Ninth District School fire. The family story has it that he lost his pants when the firehouse burnt down. The original station house on School Street was one of four buildings that were destroyed in the massive blaze. The pants most likely would have been a spare set left in the building.

I noted that my family had its own story about the fire, and that my aunt lost a brand new winter coat in the fire as well. The students were directed to leave the school immediately after the fire alarm sounded and could not stop to gather their coats.



Hausmann was also a responder to another Main Street fire, where he took a remarkable picture of a destroyed American Hotel building once located next to the Weldon building. This fire happened



on December 28, 1908, and is mentioned in a Hartford Courant article reported the next day. A copy of this article Joyce matched with the photo. It notes that the fire started in the Imperial Movie Theater.

Comparing the notecard picture and her grandfather's photo, the outline of the front door and windows clearly matched. The theater, which Dave Smith noted was the first in Manchester, had a name change, but physically had not changed.

The Edison, or the Imperial, advertised that it showed Edison Movies. It was even fined by the town for showing movies on a Sunday.

The original picture of the theater, which graced the notecard, is in the Society's collection. Now a copy of the 1908 fire shot will be located with it.

The accompanying photos show The Edison in its heyday and the renamed Imperial Theater immediately after the fire of December 28, 1908.



We Will Miss ...

Ruth Herbele who with her late husband Ken were long time members of the Society and very active volunteers. Ruth volunteered at many other organizations including Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Manchester Grange, Zion Lutheran Church and her MHS Class of 1944. Ruth especially enjoyed interacting with the children during our third grade tours and staffed many days at the Cheney Homestead and the Old Manchester Museum.

Petra Shearer has been a Life Member of the Society for many years and an active volunteer with several other organizations. She had a great deal of knowledge about her husband's auto business in Manchester and provided us with considerable information about that and several World War I artifacts currently on display at the Old Manchester Museum.



The Manchester Historical Society
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Mail a check (details below) or visit the History Center Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 to 2:00 to pay in person by cash or by credit card. ❖ IMPORTANT! PRINT EACH GUEST'S NAME ❖

Print name of guest	Email and/or phone	Total number of guests
Total payment at \$45 per person _____		Check number: _____

I can't attend – please accept my donation of \$ _____

Return this portion with check payable to **Manchester Historical Society by December 6** to:
 Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT 06040

Printable invitation also available on the events page of our website www.manchesterhistory.org

Please write **GALA** on the outside of the envelope! Thank you.