



“50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

# The Courier

DECEMBER 2020

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## The Manchester Historical Society, A Center for History and Culture

By Jack Prior, President

I hope this finds you and your family well.

This is the last newsletter of the year, and who would have guessed back in January what a year 2020 would become! Covid 19 has had a large impact on all our lives, from quarantining, shortage of goods, wearing masks and social distancing, just to name a few. I am happy to report that the workings of the Historical Society have continued throughout the pandemic.



Our annual meeting was much different than in past years. We used the WebEx application to hold our virtual meeting. I understand some people had difficulty viewing the meeting and for that I am sorry you were not able to participate. Hopefully any future virtual meetings will be easier to navigate. The election of directors was done solely by proxy this year. The total number of proxies received was one of the largest, if not the largest, vote returns. Thank you for being engaged in our society.

The new board consists of members who bring additional synergy to the society. This board is represented by lawyers, former town managers, politicians, mayors, college professors, grant writers, project managers, and various disciplines from the private business sector. I am excited to lead this group of very experienced and diverse directors.

Since the election, the board has been meeting to build the framework to propel our society into the future. Some

*continued on page 4*

### Amazon Smile

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## 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*

Online at: [www.manchesterhistory.org](http://www.manchesterhistory.org)

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*100 Years Ago...*

## Arrest of Boys for Theft of Toys

*As reported in The Hartford Courant September 28, 1920*

“Children in Manchester do not know just how near they came to being cheated out of their Christmas presents. Only for the quick work of Chief of Police Samuel Gordon of the Manchester police department, whom all children like, they might have been in a bad way about Christmas time. Santa Claus, it is said, keeps in touch with things all over the country and when he learned that Manchester’s population had increased thirty-three percent over ten years ago he realized there must be many more boys and girls in Manchester than was the case a few years ago. He also knew that there has been a lot of trouble because of freight embargos and the like and rather than disappoint them this Christmas he gave orders to have a large portion of his Christmas toys shipped from his storehouse up near the North Pole to South Manchester. These he had shipped in care of the J. W. Hale Company. The boxes arrived about a month ago. Everything was supposed to be all right until last week. It was found, however, that sixteen boxes had been broken into and many story books were gone.

It was only a short time before the five boys were run down. They were told to appear in the town court this morning and all five were there. Four had never been in trouble before but a boy of 11 years had twice before been before the court.

Four of the boys were given a good talking to by Judge Arnott, but one who had been in trouble so many times before and who was the leader, the one who had broken open the door, was sent to the Connecticut School for boys until he reached the age of 21 years.”

## Genealogy Group News

The Genealogy Group meetings are on hold through March 2021. In March there will be an announcement about meetings in 2021. Look for that announcement on Facebook or via the eBlast messages which come out on Fridays to those who have signed up for them.

## Museums Closed

**Old Manchester Museum and Woodbridge Farmstead Museum** closed for the season. Scheduled to reopen in May 2021, conditions permitting.

**Cheney Homestead Museum** closed for months of December and January. We will reevaluate the situation at the end of January.

**History Center** closed until further notice. Interior renovations ongoing and exhibits closed. Office and Museum Store open by appointment. Please call 860-647-9983.

**Virtual Events** will be scheduled throughout the winter. Please check our website, our eBlasts and our Facebook page for topics and schedules.

## 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](mailto:info@manchesterhistory.org).

**Your ad could be here!**

*Contact us for details*

## Historic Preservation Through Craft Education

In the history of Manchester, colonial America, and early industrial America, weaving represented technological innovation, artistry, and of course the important effort to meet a critical community need for clothing, blankets, rugs and hand towels. We plan to continue to offer weaving classes at the History Center in 2021, helping to share and preserve this important historical craft for another generation to enjoy.

It all started on handlooms in the home, with the skills and knowledge being passed down from one skilled and experienced weaver to another wanting to learn. At the Cheney Homestead (“Art, Ingenuity & Early American Life”) we can only speculate how Electa Woodbridge Cheney’s weaving knowledge, combined with her husband George’s skills as a millwright, inspired and informed their sons to venture into a weaving enterprise that became the successful Cheney Brothers Silk Mills.

At the History Center since 2017, we have partnered with instructors from the Hartford Artisans Weaving Center to offer hand weaving evening classes, supporting our shared vision of preserving this important historical knowledge, and having creative fun doing it!

Based in Hartford, the Hartford Artisans Weaving Center enriches lives through hand-weaving, teaching an ancient craft for modern good. They run a one-of-a-kind weaving program for the blind, visually-impaired, and senior populations and teach classes for all ages, and sell equipment and supplies to fellow weavers. They serve over 35 artisans with 30 regular volunteers in their growing studio space on Woodland Street in Hartford.

In March 2017, to meet the increasing demand for adult instruction in our area, the Weaving Center began

to offer evening classes at the History Center in Manchester. The partnership of the Weaving Center and the Manchester Historical Society has been a valued relationship, combining the teaching and



preservation of hand weaving in this historical weaving space. A 9 week Fall Floor Loom class finished in November, led by instructor Wendy Bestor, and Winter 2021 classes are planned. Registration will be limited because of the need to comply with COVID directives. Social distancing and face masks will be required. Depending on COVID-19, Spring and Summer classes will be held, including kids classes. For more information about classes visit [weavingcenter.org](http://weavingcenter.org) or email us at [ha@weavingcenter.org](mailto:ha@weavingcenter.org).



# President's Message

*continued from page 1*

of the topics being examined include: How can we continue to build on the society's success? What activities, exhibits and educational programs should we bring to the community? How can we fund these initiatives and continue to be good stewards of our properties, with ongoing maintenance and support staff? Determining the answers to these questions is a large undertaking for any society. I have confidence that we are moving forward and will continue to preserve our past, making it relevant to today.

By the time you read this we should be close to completing our new office space and expanding the research library, including a separate secure room to store our fragile and rare reference materials. This added space will allow all reference materials to be housed in one location. In addition to these modifications, we have continued with general

maintenance of our windows, including the repair of sash and broken glass. As with any old building, like our History Center and our other properties, this is an ongoing task.

In the coming months, as we have been doing all through the pandemic, we will be making sure everyone is safe. Any activity held by the Historical Society, be it hosting virtual events or outdoor gatherings, will follow all CDC protocols with limited numbers, social distancing and wearing of masks. To receive notifications of our events and other happenings, be sure to visit us on Facebook, at our website [www.ManchesterHistory.org](http://www.ManchesterHistory.org), and/or sign up for the weekly eblast newsletter.

I wish you all a happy holiday season. Be safe and well.



## Seasons at the Woodbridge Farmstead Fall at the Farm

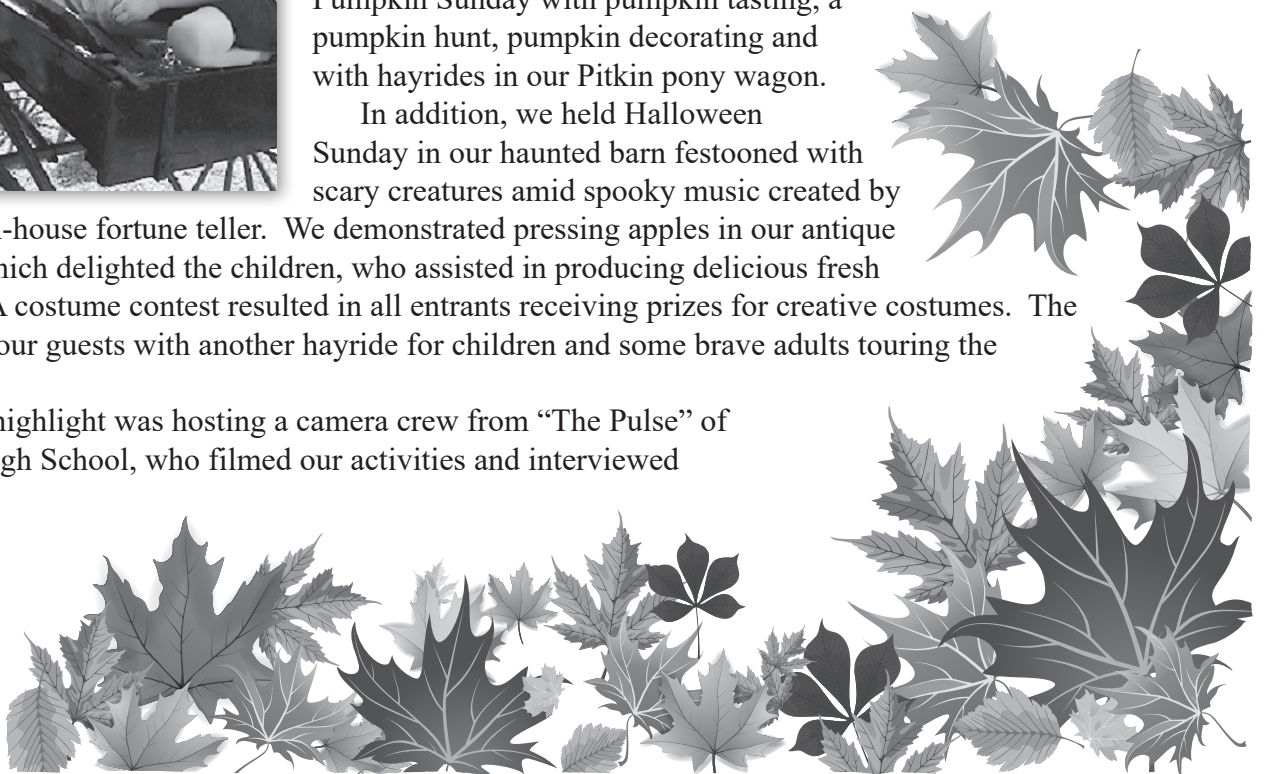
*By Peggy Newton*

Our Open Barn season ended with a busy October! We held Pumpkin Sunday with pumpkin tasting, a pumpkin hunt, pumpkin decorating and with hayrides in our Pitkin pony wagon.

In addition, we held Halloween Sunday in our haunted barn festooned with scary creatures amid spooky music created by

Melissa, our in-house fortune teller. We demonstrated pressing apples in our antique apple press, which delighted the children, who assisted in producing delicious fresh cider for all! A costume contest resulted in all entrants receiving prizes for creative costumes. The day ended for our guests with another hayride for children and some brave adults touring the grounds.

An added highlight was hosting a camera crew from "The Pulse" of Manchester High School, who filmed our activities and interviewed us about the history of the Farmstead.



## Recent Donations

In September we received two photographs from Lynn Hainge of Arlington, VA. from the collection of Helen Wippert Satryb. Both photos show a man pushing a cart with no identification whatsoever. On one of the photos we were able to make out a handwritten sign “Joe Bell Express” and it appeared that a man was sitting in the cart.

Upon searching The Hartford Courant online it was found that these pictures were taken in April 1908. The story behind the photos is rather interesting. As reported: “In the presence of a large gathering, Joseph Bell, at 7 o’clock this morning, started from in front of Cheney Brothers machine shop with a wheelbarrow with Charles Saunders, Sr. aboard intending to make the west end of the Hartford bridge at 10 o’clock and by so doing to win a wager of \$5. He was pushing a barrow that is used in gas houses and Mr. Saunders, who is sufferer with rheumatism, was seated on a comfortable seat of bags and hay. The weather was cold, but before the Pine street station was reached Bell was showing that it was not as cold as it appeared to be, but Mr. Saunders was almost blue in the face and those who

ran along side of the barrow saw that it was going to be a test for both men. The course was through the South Manchester freight yards and then straight into Hartford, by the trolley line. At McKee switch there had elapsed but twenty minutes. A number went along on bicycles and when they caught up to



the contestants at Love Lane they found both busy trying to fix up the barrow, which both claimed had broken down. Some were so unkind as to say that the barrow had been broken on

purpose, but which ever side of the story was true it remained a fact that the rest of the journey was not made. From the starting point to Love Lane is about two and a half miles. The whole party waited for a car and then went to Hartford where the money that was bet was spent.”

Joe Bell was a motorman for the trolley line and died in 1933. The starting point, the Cheney Brothers machine shop is now our history center building.

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## World War II Flag Returned to Japan

*By Dave Smith*

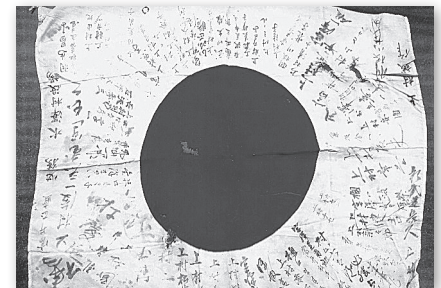
A “Good Luck” flag carried by a Japanese soldier who died in 1945 was recently returned to Japan.

In 2005 the Lutz Children’s Museum transferred to the Manchester Historical Society a number of military related items. One of the items was a small Japanese flag with many handwritten notations in Japanese characters.

After searching through old Lutz’ records it was discovered that it had been donated to the Lutz in 1954 by Marcus Parla. It is not clear how Parla came into possession of the flag. He is not shown in the 1954 Manchester Directory, nor in the 1945 Directory.

We recently learned that there is an organization in Oregon which attempts to return battlefield flags to family and relatives of Japanese soldiers who died during the war. The Obon Society, is a nonprofit founded in 1995 and has had considerable success in returning these flags brought home by returning soldiers as souvenirs. Many of the stories are shown on their website.

Our flag was sent to Oregon in August of this year along with information about the Historical Society and the Lutz Museum. The Obon Society found that the soldier to whom the flag was given as he went off to war was Syunichi Kamimura and he died on Luzon Island, Philippines in June 1945, just two months before the end of the Pacific war. By October the soldier’s family had been located in Niigata Prefecture and it was discovered that his younger sister, Sen Yamagishi was still living there. After receiving the flag, the Yamagishi family conveyed their appreciation to us for the return of this emotional connection to their long lost brother.





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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
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<input type="checkbox"/> I have enclosed a matching gift form			

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