



“OVER 55 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

The Courier

DECEMBER 2023

VOL. 59, No. 1

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President's Message

By Dennis Gleeson

The Historical Society's fiscal year ended September 30th. The Board of Directors was voted in at the Annual Meeting on September 24th. I was pleased to report that the Annual Appeal for the past year resulted in donations of \$16,000, which was a significant improvement over recent years. I want to thank everyone for the support you have given the Society. Since the meeting two new members have been added to the board of directors; Dr. Maria Cruz and Denise Boratgis. A brief biographical description of each is provided elsewhere in this newsletter.

We are in the process of significantly revising our website. This has been made possible by a generous donation from the Cheney family. This will include revising our corporate logo. Separately, donations have been received for the digitization of the South Manchester News newspaper which was published from 1893 to 1923. Although it was published weekly, it covers the period where the Manchester Herald newspapers are mostly missing. This will greatly enhance your ability to research Manchester news from your home computer.

Activity over the past quarter included several more of the 23 History Walks, monthly openings of the Woodbridge Farmstead, Cheney Homestead, and the Old Manchester Museum, and even a

wedding reception at the History Center. The Then and Now exhibit at the History Center continues to draw visitors, including visitors from out of state. Outside talks on Manchester history were given by Bob Kanehl. Many thanks must be given to our volunteers who give their time for these and other activities.

Twenty three members of the Society participated in our October 18 discussion on the future of the Society. Bolstering membership and developing more events were most often mentioned for improving the organization. But it also comes down to volunteers and younger members getting involved.

Our town has a great history and we must try to develop an interest in it for future historians. Our nation's 250th birthday is coming up in 2026 and event planning must start soon. The history of Connecticut and of Hartford County (before we became Manchester we were a part of Hartford) needs to be taught. In our cemeteries are the graves of people involved in the fight for our freedom. Their stories should be told. Their families were the founders of Manchester.

So join us in the journey of our and your history. Try to get others interested and involved in our Historical Society.

For the holidays we will be closed from Friday December 22nd until Wednesday January 3rd. We wish you a Happy New Year.



HOLIDAY SHOPPING

Our Museum Store has many items that make great gifts for any Manchester native or resident!

The Courier

A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

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Woodbridge Farmstead News

By Peggy Newton

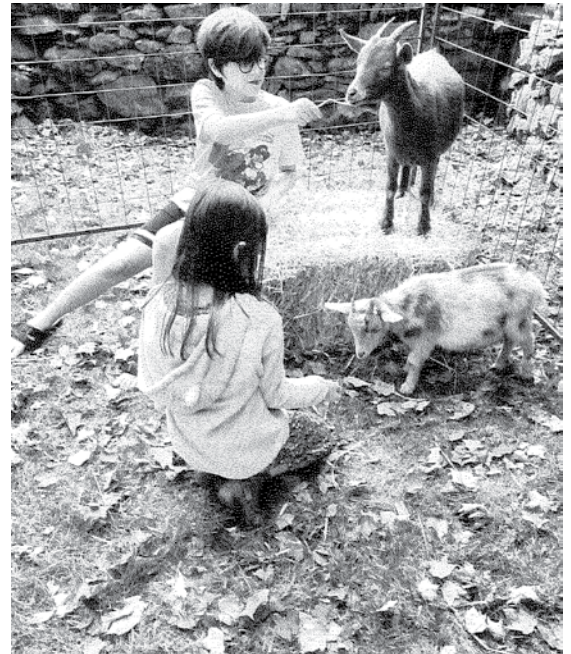
As winter descends on the Farmstead we take time to rest and review the past year. We're so thankful for so many hardworking volunteers who make our Open House days successful. Some of our new volunteers thought of some new activities, such as a Scavenger Hunt, old-fashioned games and our spectacular painted rock display in celebration of Manchester's 200th Anniversary.

Of course we also enjoyed some old favorites such as the Duck Race, hay wagon rides, visits from baby goats and homemade apple cider production using an old apple press in the barn. We want to continue to add new programs for next year. Look for surprises at the Farmstead for 2024 which involve our Old Barn and our gardens, and maybe even the Farmhouse basement.

If you have any new ideas or wish to become a

volunteer please contact the History Center (860-647-9983) or Peggy Newton at peggynewton47@att.net.

The accompanying photo shows two of our young visitors being entertained by the baby goats.



Our Next Big Project

By Dennis Gleeson

We have been advised by our insurance carrier that we need to replace the wood roof shakes on the Cheney Homestead. The roof on the Homestead was installed about 25 years ago and has now reached the end of its service life. We are considering replacing it with steel roof tiles that look like wood shakes to preserve the period look. The steel tiles are projected to last at least 100 years, which will result in considerable saving over the life of the roof.



Manchester's Dog Sled Musher

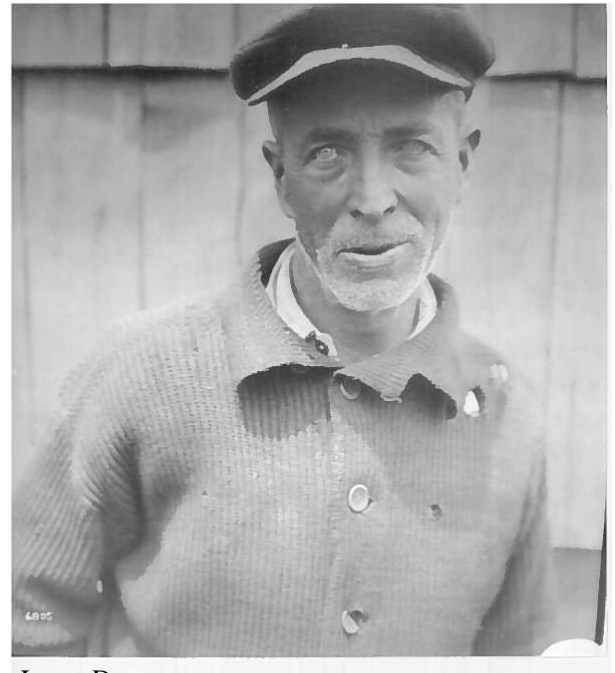
By Dave Smith

You probably know of the annual Iditarod Dog Sled races from Anchorage to Nome Alaska. They memorialize the "Race of Mercy" effort to get medicine from Anchorage to Nome in the middle of a diphtheria epidemic during the winter of 1925. That event brought home to many people the important role that dog sleds hold for many people of the far north.

Jerry Dwyer spent much of his life in Alaska and Yukon Territory. He was born in Tipperary, Ireland about 1869 to Mary and James Dwyer. It appears that the Dwyer family came to the United States in 1885 and settled in Waltham, Mass. Jerry, one of several children of Mary and James, shows up in the Manchester town directories beginning in 1890 living on Church St.. He worked at Cheney Brothers for several years, until 1897. His older brothers Patrick and Edward also came to Manchester. Edward died in Manchester in 1936. Patrick's fate has not yet been discovered.

In the 1890's the Alaskan Gold Rush was underway and the lure of that yellow metal proved to be too much for several Manchester men. Jerry was one of several men who decided to try their luck in Alaska. After months of planning the party of men, consisting of Charles O. Treat, George Smith, Paul Hayes, Arthur Brennison, Clarence Heidacker, Jerry Dwyer and six other men from nearby towns, left for Stamford. There they joined a party of some 50 men and headed for New York. They left New York for Seattle and arrived there after a train ride of 5 days. It must have been an interesting trip, traveling by train in the middle of winter, passing through Chicago, the northern plains states and the Rocky Mountains. But that was only the beginning of their adventures.

They arrived in Seattle on January 29 and were scheduled to

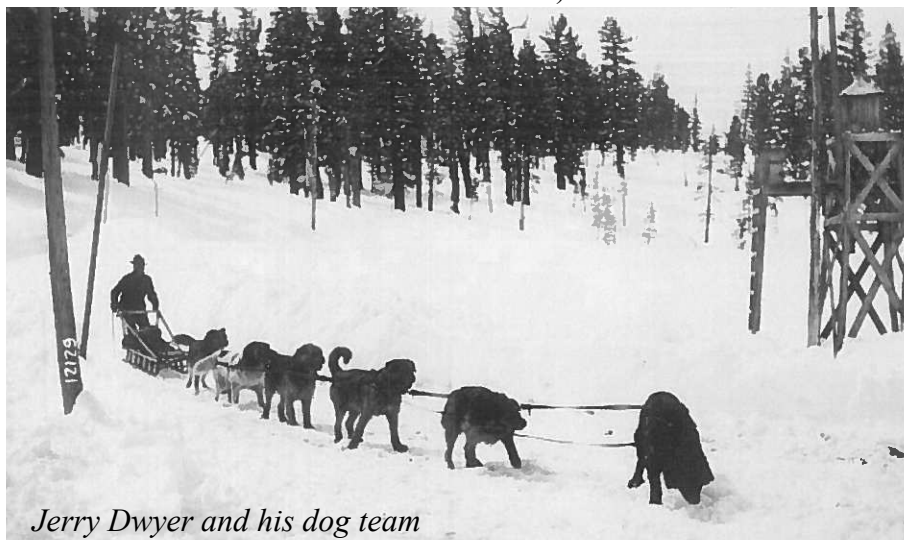


Jerry Dwyer

depart on a schooner on February 4, which they had previously chartered, to take them to Alaska. After several weeks of sailing they reached their destination at Yakutat Bay. The trip must have taken its toll on some of the men, who decided soon after arriving in Alaska to return home. Among those returning in April was George Smith. Charles Treat had returned a few weeks earlier.

However, Jerry Dwyer stayed on and tried his luck at prospecting. From Yakutat Bay, Dwyer made his way inland some 250 miles to the interior of Alaska. There he met with limited success, but the food he had brought with him became unfit. He returned to Manchester October 1, 1899.

About 16 months later, Jerry decided to try his luck again. A new company (Manchester Mining Co.) was formed which included Byron Darling as treasurer, Charles Norton as secretary and Clarence Heidacker and Jerry Dwyer as members of the board. On February 12, 1901 Dwyer, Darling and Heidacker along with several others left for Alaska and expected to stay there about one year.



Jerry Dwyer and his dog team

continued on next page

Manchester's Dog Sled Musher *(continued from page 3)*

However after a while in the gold region they came upon another party of gold hunters that were destitute and starving. So Dwyer's party decided to share their supplies with the unfortunate ones, with the result their own supplies gave out before they expected them to. They had no choice but to return to Seattle earlier than expected. Darling and Heidacker decided to return to Manchester, but evidently Dwyer did not.

Jerry Dwyer seems to have been reclusive and details of his life for the next 20 years are nearly nonexistent. We do know that on May 30, 1913 he was a passenger on the SS Princess May, which sailed from Victoria, Canada for Juneau, Alaska. He is listed as a miner with last permanent address at Dawson in Yukon Territory. The next reference we can find for him is the 1920 US Census. It shows him working as a miner at the Perseverance Mine near Juneau, Alaska. However, he was known well enough as a dog sled owner and musher.

In 1920 the Southern California Edison Company found Jerry and his seven dog team in Alaska and hired him together with his dog team to work for them in California. At that time the Edison Co. was working on the huge San Joaquin River hydroelectric project in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The men worked on the project year round even though the snow in the higher elevations could get as much as 20 to 30 feet deep. Jerry and his dogs were a lifeline for the workers and they made daily trips from Huntington Lake post office to the workers at the higher elevation snow camps.

During the fall of 1923, Dwyer and his dog team were on display to the public in Visalia, CA. They spent a week, 12 hours a day, as part of an educational exhibition. Over 12,000 adults and school children from the surrounding area came to see the dog team.

Often referred to as "Silent Jerry" he was reluctant to talk about himself, which is partly why so little is known about his private life. But he was effusive about his dogs, telling people about their pedigrees and habits. He was very close to his dogs and in telling about his long time lead dog "Babe" said that her death hurt him more than he could have



Jerry Dwyer and his lead dog Barney

imagined. In fact, there is a sign on Kaiser Pass in the Sierra Mts. paying tribute to the famous dog.

After his time working for the Edison Co. he most likely returned to Alaska. However, in the 1930 Census, there is listed a Jerry Dwyer, 61 years old, living in Seattle. In 1936 when his brother Edward died in Manchester, Jerry was reported as living in Nome, Alaska. From there the trail ends, at least for now.

Thanks to Debby Bailey for the research she did for this story and to Noreen Palladino Cullen for making us aware of Jerry Dwyer. Thanks also to Terry Ommen of "The Good Life" for the information about Visalia, CA.

Winter Calendar

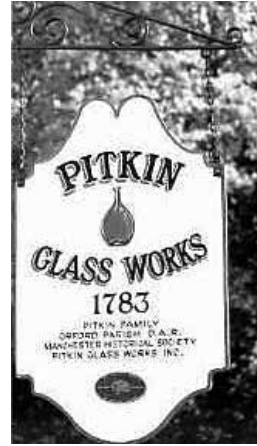
History Center will be open throughout the winter on its regular schedule: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Saturday from 12 noon to 4 p.m. unless winter weather causes it to be closed. If in doubt please call ahead (860-647-9983). Please note the History Center will be closed for the holidays beginning Friday, December 22 and will reopen Wednesday, January 3, 2024. The research library will be open when the History Center is open.

Cheney Homestead, Woodbridge Farmstead and Old Manchester Museum will be closed during January, February, March and April.

The Genealogy Group will continue to meet at the History Center throughout the winter on the second Wednesday of the month. Meeting dates will be December 13, January 10, February 14, and March 13. Meeting time is 10 a.m.

Pitkin Glass Works

By Dave Smith



The Executive Council of the Pitkin Glass Works, Inc. is looking for a few people who would be interested in serving on the Council. The function of the Council is to preserve the structure and educate the public about the glass factory and its place in local and state history. Members also conduct research and host the public when the site is open (once or twice a year). The Council meets four times a year, usually the fourth Tuesday of January, April, August, and October.

Anyone who is interested should contact Dave Smith at info@manchesterhistory.org or call the History Center at 860-647-9983 Wednesday through Saturday.

Meet Our New Directors

Denise Boratgis has been a member of the Society for the past 2 ½ years, serving the needs of the Society in Special Projects, Administrative duties and Strategic Planning. Denise has worked at Travelers Insurance for the past 18 years and plans to go to a 3-day work week starting in March. Her background is in Project Management, Events Planning, Ancestry research, and is very computer savvy, a skill we have needed more of. She is a resident of South Windsor and lives there with her husband Ernest.

Dr. Maria W. Cruz is the Town of Manchester's first female, first woman of color and first Latina to serve in the role of Town Clerk. She was appointed to the position following the untimely passing of Darryl E. Thames, Sr. and will serve for the remainder of the 2021-2025 term. Dr. Cruz's professional career includes nearly thirty years working for the State of Connecticut in various human services roles advocating for the preservation of children with their families as well as the safety, well-being and permanency for children, and ensuring the service delivery for children with complex mental health needs. She also continues to serve on various local commissions and boards for the Town of Manchester. Dr. Cruz holds degrees from Springfield College, Springfield College School of Social Work, and Capella University (Ed.D.) She is the founder of the Manchester Latino Affairs Council, Inc., which was established in 2007 and addresses social issues with a focus on diversity, inclusivity, and equality within our Latino community.

We would like to welcome both Denise and Maria to our board of directors.

Annual Meeting Report

The Annual Member Meeting was held September 24 at the History Center. There were about 25 members present/ President Dennis Gleeson reported on the activities and accomplishments of the past year, including the success of the Annual Appeal, completion of the 2021-2022 review of the financial status, the return of the Genealogy Group meetings, and the addition of the Poetry Group meetings. steps taken to revise our website, and success of the walking tours. He also reported on improvements at the Cheney Homestead including rebuilding the driveway, removal of many dead trees, painting of the exterior of the building, and new exhibits on Women of the Cheney Homestead and on the Cheney clock making significance. At the Woodbridge Farmstead he reported on the painting of the house exterior, removal of dead and dying trees and the upgrading of electrical wiring in the basement of the house. At the Silk Vault it was noted that the mortgage was paid off and the elevator cable replaced.

Two new directors were elected by overwhelming majorities; Joseph Camposeo and Kevin Drake. Combined with continuing directors the board increased to eight members. (Since the Annual Meeting two additional members have been added to the board; Dr. Maria Cruz and Denise Pesce-Boratgis. See accompanying descriptions)

After the meeting a catered lunch was provided.

Holiday Shopping

This holiday season we have a number of items in our Museum Store at the History Center which will make any history buff happy.

The store is open Wednesday - Friday from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm and Saturday from 12 noon to 4:00 pm.

Christmas Ornaments featuring our various properties. \$13/ each OR 5 for \$60

T-shirts- various designs \$15

Coffee Mugs featuring our museums. \$13

Pitkin Necklaces -featuring glass from Pitkin glassworks. \$20- \$35

Framed pictures of local landmarks

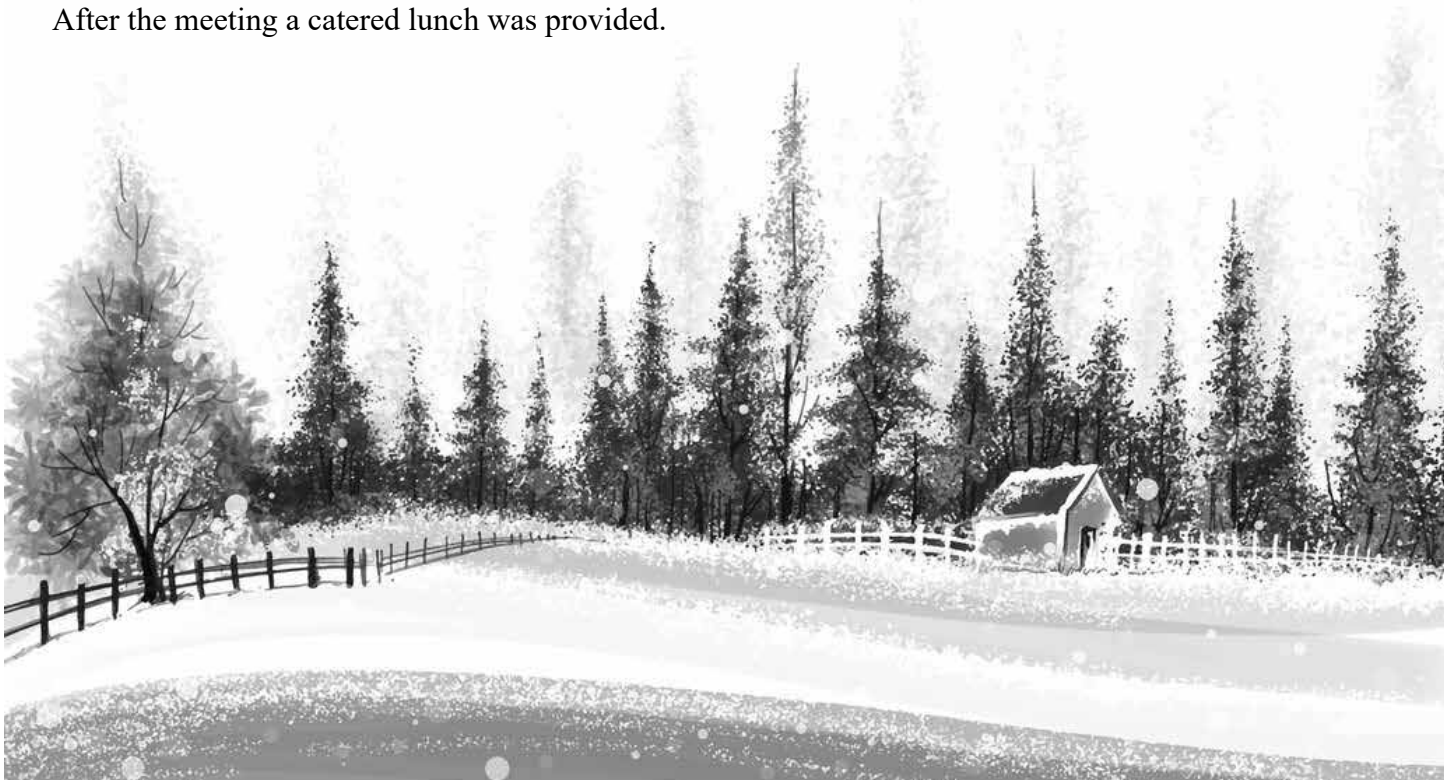
DVD's of many local history topics

Samples of Cheney silk \$4

Somanhis yearbooks

Books make great gifts.

1. Old Manchester....a Picture Book
2. Old Manchester II- The Storytellers
3. Old Manchester III- Manchester Green....a Picture Book
4. Connecticut 169 Club- Your passport and guide to exploring Connecticut
5. A New England Pattern, by Dr. William Buckley
6. World War II History of Manchester Connecticut



Cheney Homestead

By Kevin Drake

The third quarter of 2023 saw the Homestead debut an additional exhibit – the Ingenuity and Industry Room. This exhibit displays the impact Timothy Cheney and his brother Benjamin had on the popularization of wooden gears in clocks, making them more affordable than clocks with brass gears, in Revolutionary America. The exhibit shows how these innovations connect to the first instances of mass production, the Industrial Revolution, fair wages and how we utilize and manage time.

The room helps display how the Chenneys, like many Americans who helped develop America, were inquisitive, creative, and valued education, ingenuity and building community. Further development of the room will show how the family mills were part of a drastically changing America in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Manchester Garden Club is generously volunteering their time and artistry to decorate the museum for the holidays! The property will be open two Sundays, December 3rd and 10th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. for visitors to enjoy. Please join us! We will be closed for the winter and will reopen next Spring.

Happy New year to all, and thank you for your support of our wonderful piece of Manchester history.



Tom Vaughn of Sturbridge Village and the wood gear clock he made for this new exhibit.

Did You Know

Longest Wait at a Stoplight in Manchester

Thirty five years ago it was reported in the Manchester Herald that the longest-running stoplight in town was at the intersection of Center, Broad, Pine and Arch Streets. Traffic from every direction had to wait up to two minutes for red to turn green. This was the intersection everybody loved to hate.

For years it was rated as one of the worst things about Manchester! In fact the intersection was renowned among state traffic engineers for having nothing going for it. It was on the DOT's list of the 400 most dangerous intersections in all of Connecticut and at one time ranked number 215.

Things at that intersection have improved considerably since Moriarty Brothers left and now there is no traffic entering Center St. from Moriarty's car dealership and gas station.





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

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City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: () _____ Email: _____

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|--------------------|--|-------|--------------------------------------|---------|--|-------|
| 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

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|---|----------|---|----------|
| <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 | | | |

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