



"50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY"

The Courier

FEBRUARY 2018

VOL. 53, No. 2

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



President's Corner

by Jack Prior

There are many reasons to be part of a Historical Society. Sometimes, remembering the past with someone special is all the motivation you need. Other times it is looking at art work by the several Cheney family artists, or it may be seeing the machinery used in making silk fabrics. Researching family history is often another motivating factor. Each experience is worth the trip. The Manchester Historical Society is a place to investigate all about Manchester's past and is the place to come for enjoyment, enrichment, sharing with family and friends, and creative stimulation.

We gain exciting insights about ourselves and other times and cultures through special exhibitions, and weekend and other special events, such as the Frederick Douglass speech reenactment at our Cheney Homestead, and implements and tools used in farming at our WoodbridgeFarmstead. Your experiences and your support shape what the Manchester Historical Society can be, making us more meaningful and transformative.

We continue to build on and restore our past. This is evident in our recent purchase of the Cheney Brothers Silk Vault, which is one of the most unique buildings and which has an elevator powered by water. To preserve the past and make it relevant to current and future generations, we need your support. It is more important than ever to donate with your heart and mind. We also seek out your help with volunteer time as well.

Our Annual Appeal has started and we need your support to continue to have events at our properties and to continue to maintain and grow our museums, and provide a place to remember and learn and to gather at our Sunday history lectures each month. Hopefully the new tax changes are favorable to you and your family. Please consider giving a little extra to the Society so that we can carry on our collective history.

Furnished Woolen Blankets for Wars of 1812 and 1861

Oldest Woolen Mill in the United States

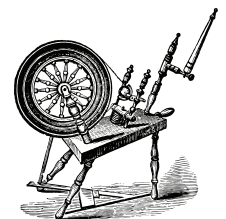
A modest structure, situated in the western limits of Manchester, in what is known as Hilliardville, is generally supposed to have been the first woolen mill in the United States and came into existence about 19 years after the close of the Revolutionary War in 1794. It has been in operation continuously since that time and engaged in the manufacture of woolens exclusively. There is another woolen mill in the country which started earlier but did not continue in the manufacture of woolens.

Elisha E. Hilliard, after whom the company is named, came to this town in 1824, 99 years ago. He worked with the company at first, became a partner soon after and later sole owner of the plant. At that time about 45 hands were employed. It was incorporated in 1893 at which time the interests of E. C. Hilliard, who was owner at the time, were taken over.

In 1901 the property of the Peter Adams Company was acquired and the plant was equipped to generate electric power for the main plant. It is also used to store raw materials.

Lately a new addition to the dye house was started and will be completed this fall. The company employs more than 200 hands and manufactures men's and women's wear woolens and overcoatings. During the War of 1812 the mill supplied blankets for the American forces. Khaki cloth of all descriptions was made for the soldiers in the World War.

Originally printed in the Manchester Evening Herald, October 4, 1923





Drop Us A Line...

You can contact Society President
Jack Prior at
president@manchesterhistory.org,
or our Executive Director
Eileen Sweeney at
executivedirector@manchesterhistory.org

The Courier

*A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society*

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The Manchester Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the generous donations of time, effort, talent, goods and services, and financial support contributed by the following individuals and businesses:

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Welcome New Members

We wish to extend a warm welcome to the following new members who joined the Society during the last year. We hope you will take full advantage of your membership and join us for our upcoming events and visits to our properties. We also encourage you to volunteer as you are able.

From Manchester

David Biddle
Leonard Bjorn
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Todd Foster
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From Elsewhere

Brandy Culp – Hartford
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Roger Ristau – Willimantic
Leslee Sage – Andover
Jamison Miller – Virginia
Nan Millett - Massachusetts

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.

With a Grain of Salt - Barns

by Bob Kanehl

I have been volunteering at the Woodbridge Barn Open Houses. This opportunity has caused me to reflect on barns in general and Manchester barns in particular. The town was founded as a farming community. Its agricultural past is often overlooked by the study of the number of mills and industries which came to settle in Manchester.

The Woodbridge property located on the northern edge of the Manchester Green was a working dairy farm until 1949, but the farm's barns remained long after their economic livelihood had ended. The restored barn the society believes dates from at least 1774 and is neighbored by another un-restored barn.

Driving around Manchester you can still see various examples of our agricultural history. My own parents' property on East Center Street, just up the road from the Green has a large red barn from the 1800s. This property has been connected to the Cone/Wadsworth Carriage Firm. The old carriage shop, a blacksmith shop and the barn all remain today to speak of early Manchester industry.

Other barns near the Green include the impressive gray barn nested on its stone foundation, of the old Wickham property. This was the home of Horace Wickham, the inventor. He is also credited with helping to bring the trolleys to town. His son Clarence Wickham would give us Wickham Park.

Along the fringes of the town you can locate other agricultural oriented barns. Some still in operation as farm outbuildings, others showing their age and collapsing in on themselves. These dinosaurs speak of a time when families may have worked in factories but also maintained a cow, horse and some pigs for food.

As you venture near the East Hartford and South Windsor lines, you can retrace the time when Connecticut was a major producer of shade tobacco. Several examples of the multi-louvered sided tobacco barns can be found. I'm sure many of you remember working tobacco in the summers.

My parents met each other because of the local crop. My mother was one of the "Georgia Girls" brought north to work the fields. Hollywood captured this bit of Connecticut history in its movie "Parrish" If you look closely at the drama, you'll see my mother, one of the many extras they hired while filming in the area.

The barns or carriage houses that truly fascinate me are the large buildings still actively used right in the middle of the residential and business zones of Manchester. These former livestock homes now shelter the family auto and business supplies. Many are located just off of our main



streets, these structures have been modified from their original design, but still sing of their original purpose.

Like the Woodbridge barn which clearly shows the New England habit of reusing and recycling materials, Manchester residents have reassigned the farm barn to a new occupation providing added years to these structures' lives and providing us with living fossils of the past.

Take a moment to ride around town and find these fossils. You may be surprised by the number. My wife suggested that maybe we should make a picture book of these dinosaurs before time finally buries them.

What do you think?



See Calander of events for March 4th - Adeline Gray.

Homestead News

by Pete Millett

In January we started 2018 with a simple open house with Brendan Venne demonstrating blacksmithing outside on a warm day, and our weaver, Susan Stoppleman giving visitors an opportunity to weave. These smaller events give us the chance to talk to visitors more personally, and this day gave us the opportunity to get to know a chair seat weaver (cane/rush/cloth) who will be joining our weaving event in March, and to make a connection with Doug Edwards to speak at our February Black History Month event.

Sunday Feb 11th we celebrated Black History Month with an event entitled "Manchester, Frederick Douglass and The Battle to End Slavery". Former MHS vice-president Doug Edwards, in costume, provided a fiery speech "What to a Slave is the 4th of July" a speech originally made by Frederick Douglass. 2018 is the 200th anniversary of Douglass' birth. Channel 8 requested a live TV interview, which we did at the Homestead at 7a.m. that morning. Vivian Carlson and Jenifer Bussa dressed in Civil War period costume and presented the role of local women's leagues and the US Sanitary Commission (forerunner of the Red Cross) in supporting the soldiers welfare. Additionally, we honored the 29th CT Colored Regiment's role, and the 6 residents of Manchester who served in that regiment, in bringing the war to its conclusion with the fall of Richmond in early April 1865. The 29th was the first regiment to make it to the steps of the Confederate capitol building.

Why I volunteer...



I was gifted with a membership to the Manchester Historical Society in 2013. Several months later I received a letter in the mail inviting me to consider becoming a member of the Board of Directors.

After interviewing with a long-time member and board member, Terry Parla, I was notified that I had been nominated, and later accepted to serve on the Board. In my capacity as a volunteer board member, I have served as the Society's Treasurer after the sudden passing of the Society's beloved president John Dormer. I continue to serve as a member of the Finance Committee and assist with the Events Committee, as well as our Educational Outreach Committee.

I am passionate about giving back and believe that volunteering has value that impacts others as well as self in positive ways. I value volunteering at the Manchester Historical Society because I believe in giving back to the community. MHS has a special place in my heart because of its educational endeavors in conserving historical artifacts and providing teachable lessons that spark a curiosity and fill a void



Looking forward, on Sunday March 11th we again will partner with the Hartford Artisan Weaving Center to provide hands-on weaving demonstrations. We will begin our "community" rag rug project, and craftsperson Sue Muldoon will demonstrate the art and craft of seat weaving.

Opportunities: while we look forward to members enjoying the events, you are always welcome to bring your interest and skills to participate. We are glad to have extra docents, crafts people, gardeners and researchers. We do have an important need for help gathering all possible facts, publications and artifacts connected to the life of Ednah Dow Cheney, wife of Seth Cheney. Also, we could use research and tangible help documenting the landscape plan prepared by Frederick Law Olmsted for the property to help guide us in future use/landscape decisions. Please contact Pete Millett if you are interested.

Thanks so much for your support!

in areas that are seldom spoken about in traditional classroom environments.

It is a place full of friendly, knowledgeable people who work diligently to provide the best in services to the community of Manchester and all who visit, near and far. As a volunteer I have contributed as a member of its Board of Directors, where we strive to make the best decisions as stewards of the organizations assets.

Our greatest assets are our volunteers because they make the events and tours, as well as daily operations, successful. I have met a lot of genuinely friendly and knowledgeable people and I believe as more people identify the value in volunteering their time and talents, Manchester Historical Society's volunteers will grow in numbers. And it is with an optimistic hope that others who share my passion for "giving back" will join us at Manchester Historical Society as future volunteers ---continuing to maintain the Society's greatness!

Sincerely,
Dr. Mya T. Bowen, Ed. D, MBA, MSPA

Calendar of Events – Spring 2018

Walking Tours, Lectures, Fundraisers, and Other Activities

Lectures usually take place at the Manchester History Center at 175 Pine Street. Parking is available along Pleasant Street and along Forest Street next to the building; parking for people with disabilities is available in the small lot next to the History Center. The building is accessible.

The admission for lectures and walking tours varies; some events are free. Many of our walks are free for children under 16 accompanied by parents or other adults.

► **The Old Manchester Museum** at 126 Cedar Street, open by appointment -- phone 860-647-9983. The research facility is available year round. For an appointment phone 860-647-9742.

► **The History Center and Museum Store** are generally open weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., where you can purchase local history items such as books, copies of vintage maps, Manchester Herald cookbooks, t-shirts with historic scenes of Manchester, original high school yearbooks, vintage business directories, mugs, notecards, 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, surveys, high school yearbooks, and booklets. Please check to make sure the building is open before coming! 860-647-9983.

► **The Cheney Homestead House** at 106 Hartford Rd. is open the second Sunday each month from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Guided tours include history of the house and its contents, and of the family who lived there. Also the Keeney one-room schoolhouse is open the same day, weather permitting.

► **The Woodbridge Farmstead Barn** at 495 Middle Tpk. East will be open from May through October from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. This new museum highlights Manchester's agricultural past and includes displays of farm tools from the Woodbridge farm as well as equipment from other Manchester farms. The barn itself is an artifact from over 225 years ago. Parking available at the nearby Senior Center.

History Center Exhibit Celebrating Black History Month, with a temporary exhibit of the 29th Connecticut Black Regiment, including a number of men from Manchester. Learn how the 29th and Manchester men influenced the outcome of the Civil War.

Sunday, February 11, Homestead open 1:00 to 4:00, with program at 1:30 and 3:00: "Manchester, Frederick Douglass and the Battle to End Slavery."

Former Manchester Historical Society vice-president Doug Edwards will deliver a fiery speech by Frederick Douglass, **"What to a slave is the 4th of July?,"** and we will honor the black Civil War soldiers from Manchester who fought in the 29th Regiment U.S. Infantry. In the 1840s, Douglass delivered a speech at the Methodist church in Manchester against slavery, in a community and state that had mixed opinions on the subject. Costumed reenactors will also share the vital role of the Sanitary Commission (forerunner of the Red Cross).

Tuesday, February 13 the Historical Society's Genealogy Group

meets at 10:00 a.m. -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists. Members of the Genealogy Group will be available to meet with any attendee who has questions or needs help regarding their research. Meet at the Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street. The Genealogy Group consists of Historical Society members, but non-members are also welcome (\$3.00 fee for non-members). The group usually meets on the second Tuesday of the month.

Sunday, March 4 at 1:00 p.m., "Amazing Adeline Gray – Pioneering Parachutist"

-- presented by Jim Reuter. Learn the story of the first person to jump from an airplane using the newly developed nylon parachute. In 1942 silk was no longer available from Asia for parachutes so Cheney Brothers and DuPont were forced to adapt nylon for that purpose. Adeline was the "guinea pig" for those first human tests.

Thursday, March 8 at 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., Movie Night at the History Center

, the first of our monthly series of movies for the family. We will be showing old-time and classic movies, including some famous comedy films. Refreshments, including popcorn will be available. Admission by donation.

Sunday, March 11 Cheney Homestead Open House

Featuring, for all ages, hands-on weaving with instructors from the Hartford Artisan Weaving Center, a chair-weaving demonstration, and the introduction of a community rag rug project on a historic loom.

Tuesday, March 13 at 10:00 a.m., the Historical Society's Genealogy Group

-- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists. This month's theme to be announced.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Sunday, April 8 at 1:00 p.m., "The Terrible Flu in Manchester, 1918" -- a lecture on the hundredth anniversary of the influenza epidemic of 1918, at the History Center. Former State Senator Mary Ann Handley will present this informative talk. A retired Manchester Community College history professor, Mary Ann has conducted research on this topic, and at the lecture will establish a foundation for understanding the medical and statistical aspects of the flu, as well as typical flu death rates of this time in American and local history. She will present information about Manchester's response to the flu. The talk will be followed by a question-and-answer period. The public is invited. \$5 for non-members, \$3 for Society members, and free for children under age 16. Light refreshments served.

Sunday, April 8 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead Open House, 106 Hartford Road. Special program to be announced.

Tuesday, April 10 at 10:00 a.m., the Historical Society's Genealogy Group -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists. This month's theme to be announced

Thursday, April 12 at 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., Movie Night at the History Center, enjoy another evening of family friendly old-time and classic movies.

Sunday, April 15 at 1:00 p.m., the Annual Membership Meeting will be held at the History Center. Election of officers and board members and annual reports of the President and Executive Director. Refreshments will be served.

Friday, April 20 the Annual Members Dinner at the Manchester Country Club. The evening will begin with a Social Hour from 5:30 to 6:00 followed by dinner. Watch for your mailing describing dinner choices and prices. Program announcement to follow.

Sunday, April 29, a "Jewelry Tea" at the History Center, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m., Brewed tea and light fare, both savory and sweet. All welcome to this entertaining and elegant afternoon -- bring a friend and neighbor.

Sunday, May 6 at 1:00 p.m., "Flying Tigers" -- illustrated presentation by Tom Pandolfi at the History Center. Tom's background includes Green Berets, 27 months in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, beginning in 1961. While in Thailand, he met farmers who helped Gen. Claire Chennault build airfields for the "American Volunteer Group" (AVG), later to be known as the "Flying Tigers." He has collected memorabilia and made airplane models of the "Flying Tigers" and has visited China twice, courtesy of the Chinese Government where the "Flying Tigers" are still considered national heroes for helping China defeat the Japanese. He lives in Woodstock, CT with his wife and is a retired flight

manager. The talk will be followed by a question-and-answer period. Light refreshments will be served.

Sunday, May 6, the Woodbridge Barn Museum at 495 Middle Tpk East opens for the season. Hours are 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. Featuring antique farm tools and photos of the farming operations of the late 1800's and early 1900's. The Woodbridge family was the prominent family of the Manchester Green area. Parking at the Senior Center

Saturday, May 12, Family History Day at Manchester's Town Hall from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., free and helpful as you learn how to do genealogical research. Manchester Historical Society will have a booth, so please drop by! All are welcome -- beginners, advanced, non-residents and residents. Out-of-towners welcome. The Town Clerk's office and vault will be open for records of birth, marriage, death, probate, land, and military service. Other booths will provide information about research and resources. Come and meet experts in the field. The Town Hall is located at 41 Center Street, with plenty of free parking behind the building. Park and enter at back. Cameras and other electronics and photographic devices not permitted.

Sunday, May 13 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead Open House, 106 Hartford Road. Special program to be announced.

Sunday, May 20 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Barn Museum at 495 Middle Tpk. East. Parking at the Senior Center

Movie Night at the History Center

Beginning Thursday, March 8 and once a month thereafter we will be showing some old movies that the whole family can enjoy. Show time is from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Popcorn will be available from our old-time popcorn machine. Movie titles are not known ahead of time but they will definitely be entertaining.

Volunteers Make Our World Go Round

Since we depend so much on our volunteers to make the Society work and for the events and tours to take place, we wish to acknowledge those who are the key to our success. They serve on committees, keep our properties maintained, plan events and programs, host the many school tours, receive and catalog artifacts, operate the museum stores and greet visitors to the museum and history center. Thank you for all you do. The following persons volunteered during the year 2017. If you volunteered last year and your name does not appear here please let us know and we will acknowledge your participation in the next issue of the Courier.

Gail Adams	Timothy M. Devanney	William Johnson	Neal Narkon	Audrey and Earl Schaefer
Mike Agostinelli	Jamie Donohue	Marilu Joslin	Virginia Narkon	Edith Schoell
Nathan Agostinelli	Aysa Dunne	Katherine Kamerer	Elaine Neubelt	Dale and Tom Schuetz
Susan Allely	Annlinda Dustin-Bray	Bob Kanehl	Peg Newton	David Shapard
Cynthia Barlow	Kathy Dyer	Caillin Keeler	Liz Nyser	Dave Smith
Malcolm and Susan Barlow	Marilyn Eastwood	Ann Kibbie	Christiane O'Brien	Lynn Sottile
Adam Bawwab	Kevin Ferrigno	Jean Lamenzo	William O'Brien	James St. Pierre
Yusuf Bawwab	Ed Firestone	Fred Lea	Armando Orsorio	Claire and Richard Spiess
David Beal	John Fletcher	Eileen Leahy	Mary and Sandy Ostrinsky	Deborah Starkel
George Beauregard	Andrew Fogarty	Sydney Ledoux	Ilker Ozbelli	Robin Starkel
Ginny Bennett	Dave Frost	Clair Leighton	Sevi Ozbelli	Irene Swenson
John Bereuter	David Garnes	Dianne Bordeaux-Lenti	Xiomara Padilla	Jennifer Tetreault
Rita and Dick Borden	Linda Gates	Beverly and Al Logan	Debbie Palmer	Dorothy Tomlinson
Mya Bowen	Robert Gauthier	John Long	Len and Terry Parla	Kryste Tougas
Ruth Shapleigh-Brown	Jill Gelinas	Cayle Love	Catherine Pearson	Mark Tweedie
Diane Sheehan-Burns	Dennis Gleeson	Ann Lucente	Emma Perlitz	Mara Upenieks
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The Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT 06040

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