

“50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

# The Courier

MARCH 2020

VOL. 55, 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

Greetings one and all.

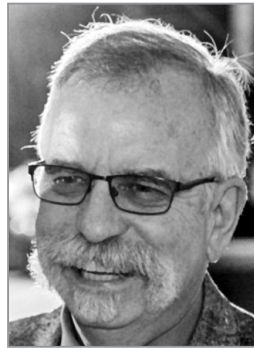
Winter is winding down and many of us have been dormant over the long days. However, that is not the case with our historical society. Spring has arrived early and we are busy as bees. Many projects have either been completed or in the process of being completed.

Projects completed or in the works are the multiple modifications being made to the first-floor space. Rooms are being refreshed and rearranged to expand the usability of the space as well as some restoration work being done to the infrastructure. A space has been created for our new Mill Studio, which conducts classes in the fine arts. For class information please visit our website. Upon entering the Mill Studio area, one will be greeted by an inviting lobby. Rental space has been expanded and refreshed. In the springtime, watch for an open house to view this newly renovated space.

We have been busy with securing the required documentation and approval to update our HVAC infrastructure. We have successfully acquired the approval of the design from the Cheney Historic District Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office. We are in the process of securing the last piece of documentation required by the town which includes the Structural Engineer's report of the roof support as well as an Electrical Engineer's assessment of our current and future electrical needs. By the time you read this, all necessary documents will have been submitted to the town for approval. Our request for bids will commence the beginning of March and the project has a projected completion date of June 2020.

This winter, safety improvements were completed at the Cheney Silk Vault building. Installed were upgrades to the electrical infrastructure and new safety upgrades to the railings on the second and third floors. The perimeter of the building is being enhanced by the removal of brush and trees. Come by and check it out. Future needed building improvements include painting, brick pointing, roofing, and concrete deck work. Our building will be an added point of interest on the newly expanded Cheney Rail trail.

At this time, we hope all members have had a chance to review our new revamped bylaws and have had your questions answered. Thank you again for the fantastic teamwork of Attorney Geoff Nabb, Dianne Lenti, Attorney Malcolm Barlow, and Carol Caffazo, who rose to the undertaking of this monumental task. It was a pleasure working with you. Before the approval



## Annual Dinner

Our Annual Dinner will be held at the Manchester Country Club on Friday, April 17.

It will begin at 5:30 p.m. with socializing and a cash bar, with buffet dinner to follow at 6:00 p.m. After dinner Beth and Mike Ringo, owners of Silk City Antiques on Main St., will tell us about the antiques market and current trends in prices of antiques. They will try to predict what will be popular collectibles in the future.

There will be a Tea Cup Auction with interesting items available for you to bid on.

The cost of the buffet will be \$35 per person for members and \$40 for nonmembers.

Invitations to members with more details will be sent about mid-March.

*Continued on page 3*



## 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)

E-mail: [info@manchesterhistory.org](mailto:info@manchesterhistory.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/  
ManchesterHistoricalSociety](http://www.facebook.com/ManchesterHistoricalSociety)

**ManchesterHistoricalSociety**

**Tel. 860-647-9983**

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Design & Printing by Fusion Cross-Media

## Volunteers needed in May!

Do you like positive feedback from teachers and students? Do you like to participate in a worthwhile and fun program? Do you have mornings free during a few days in May? Then, consider volunteering for the “Walking Through History” tours for third-grade students! This wonderful program introduces children to our Homestead, Schoolhouse, Old Museum, and Loom Room. The children walk from place to place through the Historic District and learn about Manchester history through their visits to our properties and to Cheney Hall. This is a fun and gratifying opportunity to bring history to the new generation – the future historians of Manchester. About 600 children will visit this year.

We need eleven volunteers per day, times eight days. Volunteers can choose one, two, or more days. Some of the volunteers are docents/guides, with a prepared speech to give. Some volunteers are helpers, assisting in directing groups and adhering to the schedule – no public speaking and no experience required! The visits are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, 9:30 to noon, from May 5 to May 20. You can sign up at the school-volunteer meeting on Thursday, April 16 at 3:00 p.m. RSVP to the School Tour committee via email to [sbarlow627@aol.com](mailto:sbarlow627@aol.com) or phone the History Center at 860-647-9983.

Thank you from the School Tour Committee: Marilyn Eastwood, Clair Leighton, Art Pongratz, Robin Starkel, Susan Barlow.

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## We Will Miss ...

**Mary Jane (Pitkin) Cooper** was a long-time member and volunteer at the Society. She was born at her ancestral Pitkin family home on Pitkin St. in Manchester and for many years until her death lived in a home that was built on the original Pitkin farm. She was a valuable member of the cataloging team at the museum and assisted with the school tours for many years.

**Marles Deveau** was our greeter and all round volunteer for many years at the History Center. She joined us after retiring from 30 years working at the Life Insurance Marketing Research Associates

**Joan Kelsey** known for her extraordinary gardening passion as exemplified by the Children’s Butterfly Garden in Northwest Park, Communitas Gardens at MCC and the Sensory Garden in Wickham Park. She was an active member of the Pitkin Glass Works committee for many years. Joan was a beacon of Hope for many others.

**Ed Richardson** Connecticut’s tree expert, chronicled the state’s biggest trees and documented and measured thousands of trees throughout the state. He was a Manchester native, World War II veteran, and long-time member of the Society.

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

# The Seasons at Woodbridge Farmstead

by Peggy Newton, Farmstead Chair

In the midst of a mild winter (so far) the Farmstead Committee is already thinking of new ideas for the 2020 season. Our season runs from May through October (Sundays from 12 noon to 2 p.m.). The first Open Barn Day will be Sunday, May 10, Mother's Day. Moms will be treated to fun, food and flowers, but all are welcome to come.

Some of our popular programs from last year will be returning: farm animal visits, the Second Annual Duck Race in the brook, egg hunt, and antique tool collector Bruce Perry will visit with his popular "What



Is It?" quiz and tool display. Imagination Playground will be visiting with their giant foam building blocks which delight both adults and children. Think Junior Ninja Warrior!

New events will hopefully include musical concerts, square dancing and old fashioned games and contests such as badminton and croquet. One main goal for 2020 will be the planting of a small vegetable garden with the help and expertise of our own farmers. In that vein I came across a farm poem I'd like to share:

Let the wealthy and great  
Roll in splendor and state  
I envy them not, I declare it  
I eat my own lamb  
My own chickens and ham.  
I shear my own fleece and I wear it.  
I have lawns, I have bowers  
I have fruits, I have flowers  
The lark is my morning alarmer  
So jolly boys (& girls) now  
There's God speed the plough  
Long life and success to the farmer!

*(Poet unknown)*

For more information on volunteering at the Farm, please call the History Center (860-647-9983) Tuesday through Friday or call Peggy Newton (860-649-4420) or email [peggynewton47@att.net](mailto:peggynewton47@att.net). We need volunteers in many areas: gardening, Sunday Open Barn Days, and special event coordinators.

## President's message

*continued from front page*

and implementation of the bylaws, the new board had the opportunity to interject their input into the document. Due to their input, clarification of the society's different committees was made. All committees have been opened to non-board members, as well as non-society members. We encourage all to join the society and to participate on a committee. Our new bylaws are available for viewing by anyone on our website. If you are interested in joining one of our committees, of which you will find a listing on our website, you are encouraged to call the History Center or email me directly at [president@manchesterhistory.org](mailto:president@manchesterhistory.org)

Through the generous donation of time and funds from Carol Cheney, the new decade will see a new look and feel to our website. In collaboration with Susan Barlow and a group of society members, Carol and her team of professional designers will begin to create our redesigned website. The Historical Society looks forward to this exciting endeavor.

Our past and future events have kept us busy as well. A grand time was had by all at our December Holiday Gala. This year we did something a little different, an intimate gathering and silent auction event was the theme. Hors d'oeuvre by Villa Louisa Catering of Bolton and signature libations were served amid a votive lit setting. Our guest list was numerous and new friends were made. A special thank you to all the volunteers who worked many hours to provide us with this wonderful, festive function. The once a month Thursday night classic movie night continues this year with our guest host David Garnes leading the pre movie discussion. We hope you all get a chance to enjoy this special night out. With Spring just around the corner, we are very excited to announce our new upcoming event, "Swing into Spring". Get your dancing shoes ready and join us for an evening of music, lessons, and dancing! If you prefer to attend to just listen to the music that is fine as it is fun to watch and socialize. More information to follow as the event becomes finalized so watch our website, Facebook, e-Blast, and local flyers.



# Mysteries from the Basement of Bennet Academy

by Tanner Pierce

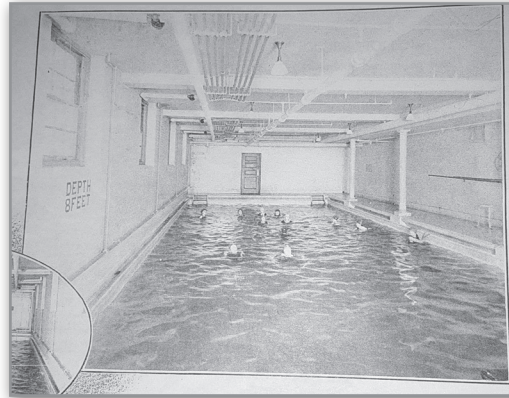
Bennet right now is how we see it. 5 big buildings (Franklin, Barnard, Rec, Cone, and Cheney). But what was the past of the five buildings we as students and teachers walk through 5 days a week? Bennet has more history than most other schools. Today you will hear about one of those buildings that you walk through everyday.

## #1: The Rec Building

The Rec building has probably the most secrets out of all five of the buildings. Back in the early 1900's, the Rec building wasn't used for school like it is now, it was used for recreational purposes just like how the Washington gym and Washington school is used for rec purposes. The Rec building has lots of history and secrets.

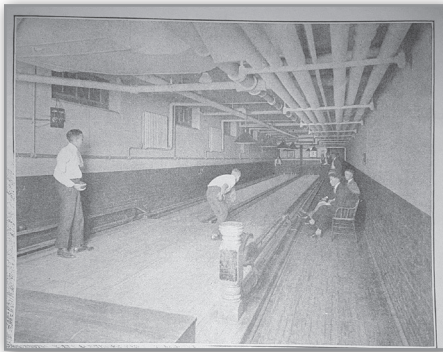
Starting off with the basement there is still a pool, locker rooms, and a bowling alley. The bowling alley and pool are under the main part of the building, which is the cafeteria in the basement. The pool is about the size of two classrooms, and is 8 feet deep. On the other side of a wall there is a two lane bowling

alley. The pool and bowling alley are now used for storage. You can still see the tile pool deck and the wooden ball return, but the pool and bowling lanes are now covered with wood.



That is all for the basement of the Rec building, but there is more in the Rec building to be told. You

may already know about the elevated track in the gym, but there was also a reading room, auditorium, men's game room, and cafeteria. That's all for the Rec building and mostly for the whole school except for the 2 tunnels that go under the courtyard.



*The author, Tanner Pierce, is a fifth grade student at Bennet Academy who became enamored with the history of his new school. This article originally appeared in the school newsletter.*

## World War II Artifacts and Letters

We are in the process of creating a new display commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. We would like to augment the items in our collection with photos, objects and paper records that represent Manchester men and women who served during the war. We are interested in all branches of the service, including the Coast Guard, Merchant Marine. Correspondence from servicemen is also sought.

If you have an item that you would be willing to loan to us for the duration of the exhibit we would like to hear from you. Please call us at 860-647-9742 and leave a message. We will return your call.

## 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. There is a study area where visitors can conduct research covering Manchester. Currently there are exhibits about Cheney silks and cravats, and a display featuring the Russell Barber Shop (formerly on Spruce St.) with barber pole, equipment 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 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 late 1700's barn and the first floor rooms in the 1830's 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 usually at the History Center. 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.

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**Sunday, March 8 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.

**Tuesday, March 10 at 10:00 a.m., the Historical Society's Genealogy Group** -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists, as we explore topics in genealogy, helping each other with research and in overcoming roadblocks. This month, we'll welcome again professional genealogist Meagan Cairns, Adult Programming Librarian at the Rockville Public Library in Vernon, CT. Before moving to Connecticut, she worked for the East Baton Rouge Parish Library in Louisiana, where she began teaching genealogy classes in 2018. She currently specializes in Connecticut, Louisiana, DNA, and Deep South African-American Ancestry research. She is a member of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists. 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, except December, July, August.

**Thursday, March 19, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., Movie Night at the History Center**, last in our "Third Thursday" series -- "Winter Classics: Frank Capra's Enduring Legacy," following the format of classic movie and discussion. This month showing the 1938 "You Can't Take It With You," with Jimmy Stewart and Jean Arthur. Hosts David Garnes and Peter Millett. Suggested donation \$2 per person; \$5 per family of 3 or more. Refreshments available for purchase.

**Sunday, April 12 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 Homestead Art Gallery, where you can be inspired by Manchester's rich history in art.

**Friday, April 17, Annual Dinner 5:30 p.m.** at the Manchester Country Club, 305 South Main St., with socializing and cash bar at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m., followed by a history program. Details soon. The public is welcome.

**Saturday, April 18, Swing Into Spring! at the History Center 7:00 to 11:00 p.m.** Music provided by a Swing Band, Lessons starting at 7:00. Dress in your best 30's - 40's style. More details on our web site.

**Sunday, May 10 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 Homestead Art Gallery and be inspired by Manchester's rich history in art.

Sunday, May 10 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead Open House  
Mother's Day festivities and flowers for moms.

**Sunday, May 24 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead Open House**

Second Annual Children's Duck Race (Ducks will be provided)

**Saturday, June 13 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Museum Day Open House at all our museums.** Pitkin Glass Works also open with archaeological digs for children



## Cheney Homestead Arts

*“Seth Wells Cheney Art & Culture Center”*

What’s happening at the History Center in the rooms below the offices and museum store?

Exciting things are happening! Renovations are underway for art studios, workroom and gallery space; and now art classes and workshops are already taking place!

This past September the Cheney Homestead Arts program was developed to: 1) promote creative opportunity in the community, 2) secure the legacies of Homestead early 19th century classical artists John & Seth Cheney, 3) and to provide a new source of income to help sustain the museum. Since then we have hosted classes and workshops in classical drawing, painting and printmaking, and have engaged classically trained instructors to provide top-level art workshops.

Interest in the program and enrollment has grown more rapidly than we expected, and in the fall the Society Board of Directors approved expansion into the under-utilized space in lower Room 1 at the History Center. Renovation, improvement and cleanup is underway, preparing for the first major workshop in March with Florence, Italy trained classical art instructor, Christina Mastrangelo.

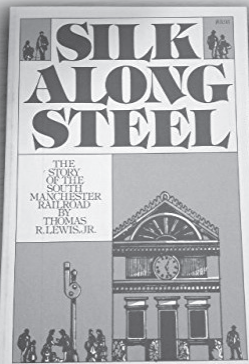
With the renovated third floor “Dorothy Cheney” art studio at the Homestead (primary studio of artist-in-residence & instructor Trudy Mitchell), and the new space at the History Center, the Cheney Homestead Art program is positioned to advance financially and contribute significantly to the artistic legacies of the Cheney family and give visibility to the good things the Manchester Historical Society is doing.



We are referring to the expanded History Center art space as the “Seth Wells Cheney Art & Culture Center”, and it consists of two art studios, a workroom and an entrance gallery with comfortable seating. Our inspiration is Seth Wells Cheney, artistically trained in Paris, Rome and Florence, and who worked primarily out of Boston. He was admired in his lifetime for his humility, technical skills and sensitivity toward his subjects and peers. James Russell Lowell stated that he was the finest gentleman he had ever known.

Through partnerships with local and regional art and cultural organizations, and with our growing community of talented instructors and students, we hope to revive interest in classical art and culture, and to re-discover Manchester’s early role in American art-making.

A dedication of the Seth Wells Cheney Art & Culture Center is targeted for early June, and information about the classes, workshops and prospective events will be published on the ManchesterHistory.org website and in the weekly eblast.



## Silk Along Steel

We are now reprinting the book “Silk Along Steel” written by Thomas R. Lewis, Jr. It recounts the story of the South Manchester Railroad, the shortest passenger and freight railroad in the United States, which operated from 1869 until 1933 when the last passenger train was discontinued.

The book was last printed over 40 years ago. It contains photos of the locomotives that were known as “The Goat” and maps and other images. This reprint includes a testimonial from Dr. John Sutherland, colleague and friend of the author. Watch our web site for when it will be available for purchase.



The Manchester Historical Society Invites You to the

# Annual Dinner & Antiques Talk

On Friday, April 17, 2020, 5:30 p.m.

**Manchester Country Club**, 305 South Main Street, Manchester.

♦ Social time at 5:30, cash bar ♦ dinner at 6:00 ♦ Antiques talk at 7:15.

Wear your favorite antique item! Prize for judges' favorite clothing, jewelry, or handbag.

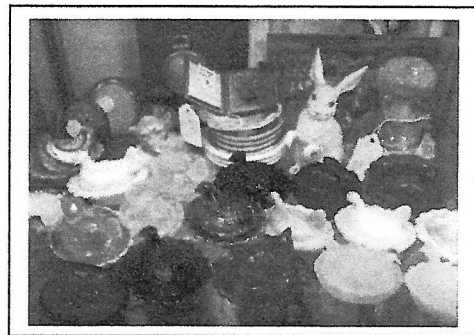
### *Buffet Menu:*

♦ Garden salad ♦ Beef carving station ♦ Chicken Marsala ♦ Grilled Salmon ♦ Vegetarian Entrée ♦ Vegetables ♦ Potatoes ♦ Rolls ♦ Coffee, Tea ♦ Dessert



### *Following dinner:*

**ANTIQUES THEN AND NOW**, a talk about what's happening in Manchester antiques and how antique collecting has changed in the last couple of decades. • How do old objects enhance our understanding of the past – do they tell a story or give a glimpse into times gone by? • What are younger people interested in collecting now and is that going to be lucrative? • As older people down-size, what should they not toss out in the garbage? Beth and Mike Ringo of Silk City Antiques will answer these and other antiques questions. They'll bring along some examples to demonstrate their points. Their shop is in Downtown Manchester.



❖ PRINT EACH GUEST'S NAME ❖

Print name of guest <input type="checkbox"/>

Please include your e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ & phone number \_\_\_\_\_

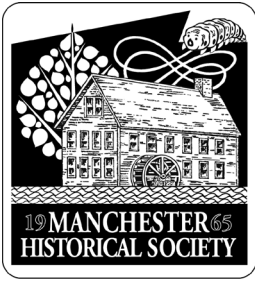
Members \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$35.00 each. Non-members \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$40.00 each

Optional additional Donation \_\_\_\_\_. Grand total: \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Return this portion with check payable to **Manchester Historical Society** 175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT 06040 by April 10 (or bring in person). Please write **DINNER** on the outside of the envelope!

For information, phone 860-647-9983 – Credit/Debit Phone Reservations Accepted





The Manchester Historical Society  
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## Your Membership Expires on:

## Welcome New Members

We wish to extend a warm welcome to the following new members who joined the Society during the last year.

### *From Manchester*

Pam Morton Brannick  
Paige Calhoun  
Douglas Carly  
Michael Connolly  
Marianne Cornish  
Casey Coyne  
Paula Darby  
Sarah Darby  
Cheryl Duncan  
Barbara Farrand  
Gwen Feder  
Ashley Gurzler  
Sarah Karstaedt  
Patricia and Bob  
Kilpatrick  
Joyce Lindsey  
Giovanni Lurenzo  
Kurosh Marvasti  
Dr. Jamshid Marvasti  
Kimberly McAuliffe  
Maude McGover  
Francine McKinney  
Theresa and Richard  
Moore  
Karen Mursko  
Sonya Owen  
Kelly, Derek and Tanner  
Pierce

Lisa and Richard Plavin  
Joyce Porter  
Lily Rainville  
Pamela and Karl Reichelt  
Matthew Reichelt  
A. Philip Robenhymmer  
Joan and Mark Smith  
Colleen Temple  
Stephen Temple  
Barbara and Robert Willis  
Roxane Wilson

### *From Elsewhere*

Debbie and John Bailey  
Columbia  
Suzanne Bedell  
Glastonbury  
Carol Cafazzo  
Enfield  
Katherine Cutter  
Bristol  
Phyllis Draghi  
East Windsor  
Gerry Gallo  
Vernon  
Rose Goldsher  
East Hartford  
Thomas Jamroga  
Glastonbury

Marion Knight  
Coventry  
Linda Landry  
South Windsor  
Andrew Leyland  
Colchester  
Emily Leyland  
Colchester  
Patricia Leyland  
Colchester  
Rachel Leyland  
Colchester  
Don Magnuson  
Vernon  
William McManus  
Vernon  
Trudy Mitchell  
Bolton  
Kevin O'Brien  
Clinton  
Sally O'Brien  
Clinton  
Mike Oehler  
Willington  
Nathan Oehler  
Willington  
Howard Pitcher  
South Windsor  
Kim Pitcher  
South Windsor

Michelle Pitcher  
South Windsor  
Roger Pitcher  
South Windsor  
Cynthia Prior  
Glastonbury  
Kristen and Christopher  
Ramsey  
Glastonbury  
Lee Saundry  
Rocky Hill  
Shirley Smith  
Marlborough  
Stephanie Summers  
Willington  
Virginia Tewksbury  
Coventry  
John Toomey, Jr.  
Bolton  
Mary Ellen Wiczorek  
Lebanon  
Bill Woodbury  
Hampton  
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