

“50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

The Courier

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Seasons at the Woodbridge Farmstead Where the Past Meets a New Present

By Peggy Newton

Spring has blessed us with some wonderful weather although a bit cool. Friends and volunteers of the farm are anxious for our delayed first Open House, now scheduled for Sunday, June 28 from 12 noon until 2:00 p.m. The grounds will be open and hopefully the barn and house will also be open. We are complying with the State guidelines, requiring everyone, visitors and volunteers alike, to wear face masks and keep 6 feet apart from others. Hand sanitizers and gloves will be available.

During this period we have not been idle. Volunteers have been working at the farm during the spring on the gardens and lawn. We are planning a Summer Re-Opening Celebration which will include the second annual Bigelow Brook Duck Race for kids (ducks provided), and an Egg Hunt with prizes. Hopefully we will be able to enjoy summer treats such as ice cream, lemonade and popcorn!

One of last year's goals has been realized with volunteers preparing and planting a vegetable garden using the Native American system of planting the “3 Sisters” consisting of corn, squash and beans. Visitors during the summer will see the growth of these plantings, as well as giant sunflowers.

Our committee has planned future events as well as the return of some of last year's popular programs. Bruce Perry, our antique tool collector has promised to return hoping to stump us with tools we probably have never seen before and teaching us how they were used.

Upcoming events being planned include a musical concert and art show and sale, old fashioned games such as croquet, badminton and horse shoes and the return of farm animals including hopefully, baby pigs.

In August we will honor the heroic women of the Suffrage Movement, who 100 years ago realized the goal of obtaining for women the right to vote when the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified August 20, 1920. This day will also include a hat contest for women.

Watch our email blasts for updates on our programming. If you do not yet receive them every Friday morning you can sign up by visiting our web site and clicking on the “sign up for free e-news” button on the home page.

For more information on volunteering at the Woodbridge Farm please call the History Center (860-647-9983) or Peggy Newton (860-649-4420) or email her at peggynewton47@att.net.



Photos show the spring flowers among the stone walls in front of the barn. Also shown is volunteer Dick Borden tilling the vegetable garden.



Drop Us A Line...

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

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*A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society*

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Society Looking for Volunteers for Board of Directors

The Manchester Historical Society is looking for volunteers to serve on our Board of Directors. If you have any interest in discussing the Society's needs and your interests, please contact Director Chris Malone at cmalone2259@gmail.com.

The Society is a great place to become even more connected with this very special place that we call home.

Recent Additions to the Collections

By Dave Smith

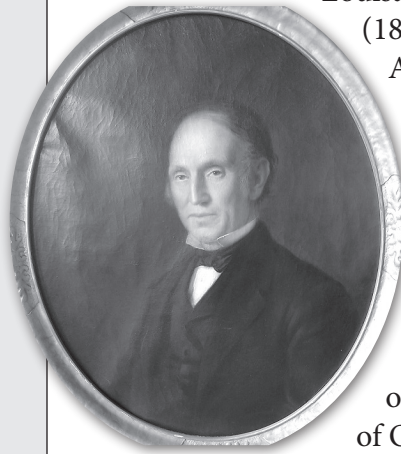
Among items added to our collections this past year are two portraits (oil on canvas) of Peter Henry Adams (1807-1889) and his daughter

Louisa Adams Booth (1835-1891). Peter

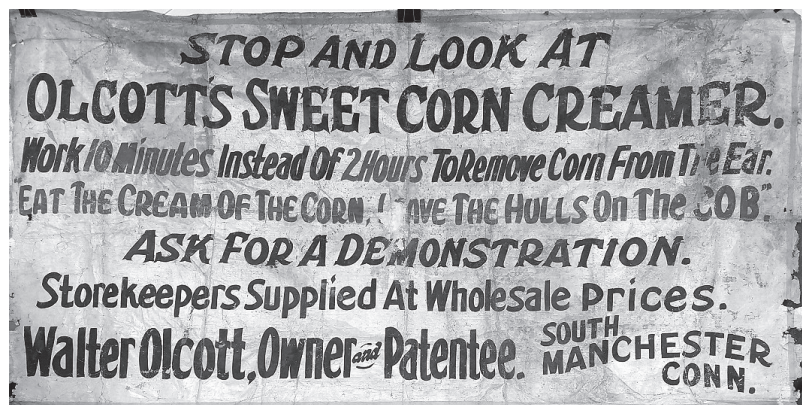
Adams owned the

Adams Paper Mill located

on Adams Street, and which until recently was the Adams Mill Restaurant.



The oil cloth sign shown here was used by Walter Olcott to advertise his invention of a corn creamer which was patented in 1920. There are several corn creamers on display at our museum. This sign used to hang on the side of Olcott's barn on West Center St. It measures 3 ft by 6 ft.



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.



Update on the Manchester Evening Herald Digitizing Project

by Noreen Cullen, Project Manager

We have been working away on the Manchester Evening Herald (and South Manchester News) digitizing project, in which 431 microfilm rolls have been converted to a digitized archive. This archive will be fully searchable when it is available online.

As you may imagine, we have had to navigate around many challenges, beginning with copyright issues, fundraising, finding a digitization vendor that wouldn't charge an exorbitant amount, borrowing some rolls from the State Library, organizing the rolls from the Historical Society collection, boxing up the microfilm rolls to mail to Kansas, and then working with the digitized images to clean up the archive and convert it to a useable form. We have just passed the two-year mark for this important project!

Covid-19 has affected our project. Our vendor, Scanning America, gave us a wholesale price, half of what all the other vendors quoted. It took a long time to cull through and contact 24 vendors and find one that was willing to charge us an affordable price. It wasn't long after we sent the rolls out for processing that Covid-19 began to creep into our country. The Northeast got hit first and that had an impact on how we could manage the project, including the returned microfilm rolls. Worst of all, Kansas also had to ask businesses to close down on site and work from home as best they could. This included Scanning America.

Scanning America has now sent us the hard drives with the digitized images. Now comes the IT (Information Technology) part, including carefully reviewing the images and correcting errors that were on the microfilm rolls, which got converted to images on the digital archive. Some images were out of order, misdated, or repeated on the original microfilm rolls. There was no way to correct those on the microfilm, of course, but can only be handled in digital form.

We have a team of experts working hard on the scrubbing of the digital archive, including Susan Barlow, Jim Hall, Bob Gauthier, and Sirkka Johnson. They truly are spending hours on the work.

The archive has OCR layering (Optical Character Recognition), allowing a search of the actual words in a PDF file, which otherwise looks like random lines and squiggles to a computer. Microfilm lacks this layer and therefore is can only be read and searched by using a microfilm reader (which the Mary Cheney Library has) and scrolling page by page.

Despite the challenges and roadblocks, we remain very excited about the project and cannot wait until we can post an announcement saying that it is ready for the public's use.

The archive includes the Manchester Herald newspapers for the period 1882-1991 and also the South Manchester News for the period 1893-1923, including special editions. For the early years there are many gaps in the issues and therefore some issues were never available for microfilming. An important goal is to allow individuals to find their family's and loved one's records, such as births, deaths, marriages, hospital stays, parties, gatherings, parades, bowling league scores, real estate transactions, military articles, sports results, school events, whatever was published. The history alone will be riveting. Much local news did not make the larger papers, such as the Hartford Courant and Hartford Times. There are so many historical questions that we are hoping can be answered in this local newspaper archive.

Many thanks to the Manchester Historical Society for sponsoring the project, and to each and every person who encouraged us and supported the project by cheering us on and by donating funds to make this succeed. It has been inspiring to see how many people, organizations, grantors, and foundations are enthused about the project and have been willing to help.

We will keep you posted on the progress. We are now in the gritty, detailed part of the work. This is a gift for now and also into the future. It has been our goal to do the best job we can to bring it into public view successfully.

The project is being led by Noreen Palladino Cullen, with help from Susan Barlow and Dave Smith.

One Hundred Years Ago

By Dave Smith

When Motoring Was an Adventure

Exactly one hundred years ago this month a Manchester man set out to visit relatives in Oregon. He traveled with his wife and two children and 100 pounds of luggage in their new Hupmobile touring automobile.

Hupmobile was a well known and not too expensive car that was produced from 1909 until 1939. A touring car was the equivalent of a four door convertible, with side curtains for use when the weather was not conducive to open air motoring. The side curtains greatly limited visibility and were not usually used unless absolutely necessary.

Alfred Maggs and his family left Manchester in early June and headed west expecting fine weather and good conditions for motoring. Remember, the first time an auto crossed the United States was only 17 years before this. Maggs encountered some terrible weather and trying conditions on his cross-country jaunt. He wrote home to friends about his journey.

The car finished the trip with its four original tires which at that time was considered a remarkable feat, as flat tires were common then. The rear tires were in shreds and he did have a broken spring. On many occasions the car was stuck in the mud which he described as “heavy gumbo mud that is just like concrete.”

For the first nine days Maggs averaged 253 miles of travel per day. He reported that he had fairly good luck in road and weather conditions until he hit the middle west. Out of Wyoming he mostly followed the Oregon Trail. On the toughest part of the road over the Rocky Mountains they covered such rough going that two sets of tire chains were worn out fighting the mud and slush. In some places he was forced to jack up the rear wheels and fill in the holes with sagebrush in order to get traction to drive ahead.

A snow storm blew up as they were crossing the Continental Divide and he could scarcely see far enough ahead to guide his car through mud and snow of such quantity that it required three hours to cover one stretch of two miles.

“The trip through the Rockies none of us will ever forget. It was one continuous nightmare. We were driving early and late to get to Ogden (Utah) before it rained again. Biffo! Down we went into a real mud pocket and the axles were resting nicely on the mud.

*A 1920 Hupmobile
Touring Car*



Ten o'clock!
Well, you can
imagine I did

not do anymore that night. We just curled up in the car and made camp for the rest of the night, stuck in the mud. We dug ourselves out the next morning at daybreak and traveled 200 miles the same day.”

In Oregon a number of detours forced Maggs to take seemingly impossible climbs up grades that appeared too steep for any car to successfully negotiate.

At the end of the trip he said he believed he had “the best automobile in the world.” To a friend in Manchester he wrote “The Hup came through fine and if you ever buy a car buy a Hupmobile.”

Today one can drive from Manchester to Portland Oregon, a distance of just over 3,000 miles, in less than 48 hours driving time using Interstate highways the whole distance.

Some Manchester Roads Were Not That Great Either

According to a newspaper article in May 1920, Birch Mountain Road residents complained about the condition of that road. Several months earlier the highway department had placed a coating over the gravel road. It had washed away leaving a rock surfaced road “which is almost impassable.” Residents say “there will be heavy travel over this road during the summer.” Back then Villa Louisa was a popular place for locals and out of town visitors.

Manchester Was The Second Largest Town in the United States

The 1920 Census revealed that Manchester’s population was 18,370 (about 60,000 today). This was an increase of nearly 5,000 in ten years and over 10,000 since 1890. Much of that increase was due to the growth of the Cheney Brothers Silk Company.

The above excerpts were taken from the May and June 1920 issues of the Hartford Courant.

Calendar of Events

PLEASE NOTE that the Historical Society has suspended all public events until further notice except for the events listed below. However, staff continue to be available by phone (860-647-9983) and email, or by appointment. The History Center is staffed Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 to 2:00. The Old Manchester Museum and Cheney Homestead are closed until further notice. Woodbridge Farmstead will reopen the grounds for outdoor activities beginning June 28. Please remember to bring your mask. Social distancing will be required and hand sanitizer and gloves will be available.

When conditions allow we will reopen our museums and History Center to the public. Watch the news for an announcement.

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 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 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. 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.

Genealogy Group meetings are suspended until further notice

CANCELLED: The Spring school tours for Manchester school children who every year tour the historic district, including the Cheney Homestead, Keeney Schoolhouse, Old Manchester Museum, History Center, and Cheney Hall.

Things You Can Do From Home

"1918, The Flu Hits Manchester," a 62-minute television show filmed at the History Center on April 7, 2018. Historian and retired State Senator Mary Ann Handley spoke about the terrible flu that killed millions of people worldwide in 1918. Many of Manchester's doctors were in Europe with the troops as the U.S. had entered World War I the previous year. Manchester used Cheney Hall as a sort of hospital, setting up cots for flu patients, there being no hospital in Manchester at the time. At the presentation, newly appointed Town Troubadour Bill Ludwig sang two vintage songs about the flu. The show airs at 12:00 noon and at 8:00 p.m. on Cox cable channel 15 on all the Saturdays of the month. Each month features a different program.

"Bob Gorman, 94 Years of Manchester Memories," a 56-minute television show featuring Manchester resident Bob Gorman telling of his early life in Manchester, the Gorman family's history, and interesting tales from his 94 years of living in the Manchester area. A World War II veteran, Niagara College graduate and early entrepreneur as a Manchester Herald paperboy, Bob relates stories of the past with humor and gusto. You can watch this show on the Public Access website "[94 Years of Manchester Memories.](#)"

These events are still on the schedule as of the writing of this Courier.

Other events such as walking tours may be scheduled this summer if conditions allow. Watch for news of these events via the newspaper or email blast.

Sunday, June 28 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead open to the public in accordance with State guidelines. The grounds will be open and the barn may also be open if allowed according to phase 2 of the guidelines. Outdoor events will include the Second Annual Bigelow Brook Duck Race for kids (ducks provided) and an egg hunt with prizes. Refreshments provided too. Vegetable garden is underway as well as a new herb garden.

Sunday, July 12, 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farm open with outdoor events planned.

Sunday, July 26 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farm open with outdoor events including a demonstration of antique tools by Bruce Perry.

Sunday, August 9 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farm open

Sunday, August 23, 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farm open

continued on page 6

Calendar of Events *continued from page 5*

Sunday, September 20 at 2:00 p.m., tentative date for the annual meeting of the Historical Society, at the History Center. Details to come.

Saturday, October 10, the 45th annual walking tour of the Cheney Historic District with commentary by Dr. Christopher Paulin of Manchester Community College, 1:00 p.m. Popular history walk starting at Fuss & O'Neill, 146 Hartford Road (plenty of parking in the lots west and south of the building). Find out about those huge brick buildings that remain from the days of the world-famous silk mills. Who worked there? Who owned the mills? Where did workers and owners live? This event is co-sponsored by Manchester Community College, the Cheney District commission, and the Manchester Historical Society. We'll see Cheney Hall, the former silk mills, the location of the former South Manchester Railroad, the Loom exhibit at the former Cheney machine shop, neighborhoods of worker housing, and Washington School. The walk takes about two hours with a distance of a mile or so. No rain date, so bring umbrellas if weather is iffy. Extreme weather

cancels. The walk is free, but donations to the Manchester Historical Society are welcome. The District walking tour began in 1976 under the leadership of Manchester Community College faculty members John Sutherland and the late Tom Lewis. Christopher Paulin has continued the tradition.

Sunday, November 1 at 1:00 and 3:30 p.m. "The Day the President Came to Town" -- an original one-act play presented at the History Center. The play is set at Manchester Green, where President George Washington stopped on November 9, 1789. Deodat Woodbridge, tavern keeper, said in his diary: "... before resuming his journey to Hartford, he asked my little Electa [Mr. Woodbridge's daughter] for a glass of water from our well and gave her a sixpence for her pains." During this visit the President may have spoken with local residents, and the play imagines what those conversations might have been. The Historical Society is proud to host this third play by Walt Scadden. Tickets will cost \$10 for members, \$12 for non-members, and will be available online.

With a Grain of Salt

By Bob Kanehl

Memories are the basic unit of historians as words are the basic unit for writers and numbers are the basic unit for accountants and math teachers.

The most prominent problems historians have are when those memories disappear with time because they are not recorded or remembered. Unfortunately, memories like eyewitness events are unreliable as time passes. Many things affect memories, changing them, reworking them until what is considered truth does not appear anything like primary source descriptions.

But memories are essential for the society's cultural history. It is from the communal memory that we get our accepted norms of history and culture. Old Hollywood movies portrayed history as if these norms were factual.

Looking across from my writing desk, I see a framed set of medals. They are service medals and awards presented for actions conducted in war. These medals were not given to me by the federal government or passed on to me by my father concerning his activities in Korea.

Inside the box is a Good Conduct Medal. There is a Presidential Unit Citation ribbon with two oak leaves, meaning that this person was awarded that distinction three times, and a European Theater service ribbon with sleeve strips showing four tours of duty. Alongside these ribbons and medals are patches from the old air corps, showing rank and unit designations.

These were not the awards of a front line infantry soldier but instead speak to the actions of a Manchester resident,

who traveled across the Atlantic Ocean during the 1940s to serve in North Africa, England and even Russia maintaining the bombers that wreaked havoc on the German industrial complex.

Looking at this framed collection, I recall a similar display gathered by my nephew to highlight the duty my father performed for the country during the Korean Conflict. I have seen other framed collections in homes throughout the town, state, and nation.

The collection I see from my desk haunts me, however, because they initially were not presented to a member of my family. They are the awards of a man I knew in his post-war life. They represent a time in his life that affected everything after that and even brought him to Manchester.

The skills the military gave him, lead to his employment at Pratt and Whitney. The skills allowed him to be the father and community member that I remember.

But why do I have them? Why are they in my house?

They should be with his family, his son, his grandchildren, but they are not. That connection has been broken; there is no son, no grandson. I possess them because his wife gave them to me. She knew I would appreciate them, that I would understand them. I am in charge of preserving his memory.

I look at them and wonder are there other families that have lost a place to hand down their legacy? Can we at the historical society create a memorial room where the families of Manchester can pass on their service ribbons?

What do you think?

Cheney Homestead / Keeney Schoolhouse News

By Peter Millett

There's Still A Lot Happening On The Inside!

These wonderful old structures have each experienced a lot in their 235 and 268 years of existence: births and deaths, years of bounty and years of loss, students at recess and study, and even wartime and pestilence.

At the Cheney Homestead we have re-gathered our thoughts and goals, after a time of confusion, and continue to build for the future and to share the unique Manchester legacy, lived and inspired here, of "Art, Ingenuity & Early American Life". It is befitting now for us to practice the same resourcefulness, creativity and innovation demonstrated by the many generations of Cheney Homestead residents.

With this pragmatic spirit, we have given away most of our supply of cotton rag rug cloth to those making masks for front-line workers. With the help of our latest committee member, Maude McGovern, we have been diligently researching, gathering and documenting the lives, artifacts, and information about our historic structures, to better be prepared to present and interpret our treasures. We have begun an online video series documenting our garden preparations and planting with Bettylou Sandy & Trudy Mitchell, and plan to add a schoolhouse lesson with Headmistress Jamie Donahue and a Homestead tour, as we become better acquainted with the technology! Our apartment tenant since last September, Sean, has helped us to oversee the property and provide needed income.

Our continued goal is to **show** our fascinating artifacts and buildings, **tell** stories that develop the people and their times, and provide **hands-on** opportunities to touch, feel and to be inspired by history. In this way, we hope our visitors carry away with them the very best historical ideas and knowledge. The lives of our artist brothers John & Seth Cheney are centrally important in this goal. Born and raised as sons of a practical farmer (George) and a resourceful mother (Electa), we want to understand better how they developed and were inspired to eventually train as classical portrait artists and engravers in Europe, and to become well known for their talents. The same questions concern their brothers who founded Cheney Brothers Silk Manufacturing. For 2020, we are focusing a lot of our attention on their influential Cheney parents, and hope to share more of our interesting findings.

Through 2020, we hope to present the following activities, in-person, outside or online:

An introduction to the person, thoughts and time of George Cheney through a study of his commonplace book, held in the CT Historical Society archives.

Provide further classes and workshops through **Cheney Homestead Arts**, with instructors trained in the historical Classical Realism techniques, to teach, demonstrate and interpret the life and works of John and Seth, and insure that this critical, foundational art knowledge is again preserved and passed to a new generation. As John and Seth were inspired in art at the Homestead, and then learned their craft in studios in Boston and Europe; we hope to inspire visitors with the art now at the Homestead, and then to provide the opportunity for genuine, historic classical art training at the new studios in the History Center, to more fully bring the lives and contributions of John and Seth to life.

We hope in the Summer months to begin our reproduction of Electa Cheney's three foot wide flannel cloth on our large loom. This will give visitors, children, and adults the opportunity to sit at a loom, learn weaving basics, and share in an important activity of early American life, alongside Electa. For those inspired to learn more, classes in hand weaving led by the Hartford Artisan Weaving Center instructors at the History Center will also help to keep this craft alive into another generation.

Finally, in addition to caring for and expanding our herb, kitchen and sunflower gardens (each allowing the sharing of historic knowledge, Early American wisdom and hands-on activities), we are preparing for a simple print-making activity at the Homestead. Using the earliest, childhood image engraved and printed by John Cheney, we plan to create a reproduction printing plate to allow visitors themselves to prepare and press the image onto paper using a small printing press.

We hope to see you soon, when it is again possible, and please be watching as we try to innovate and inspire using the fascinating histories of the Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse Museums.

We Will Miss

Leonardo Parla - Lenny has been a Life Member of the Society for over 35 years and has volunteered at many of our events with his wife Terry. He also volunteered with other organizations including UNICO and the Manchester Land Conservation Trust. He enjoyed traveling with Terry and on occasion with his extended family.



The Manchester Historical Society
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| | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Individual (65+) | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Couple | \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Family | \$100 |
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