



“OVER 55 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

The Courier

JUNE 2021

VOL. 56, No. 3

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

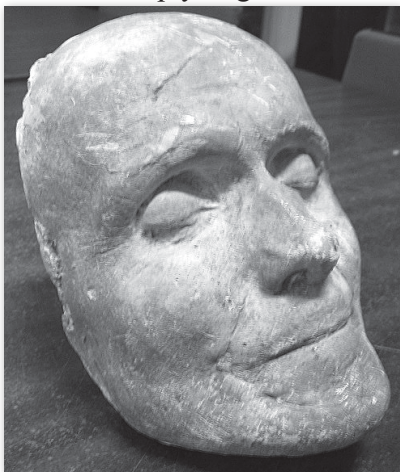
Finding the Real George Cheney (1771 - 1829)

By Pete Millett

With the help of Historical Society Vice-President Sarah Cieglo, the “commonplace book” of George Cheney (father of the artists John & Seth and their brothers the founders of Cheney Brothers) was re-discovered in the archives of the CT Historical Society. In May 2021, a digital version was delivered to the Manchester Historical Society with permission to share the very personal thoughts and opinions of this important figure in the historical fabric of early Manchester.

Little is directly known about this important person in the life of the Cheney Homestead, beyond brief descriptions and dates, the paper-cutting silhouette shown, and the description below, given in an 1881 memoir by daughter-in-law Ednah Dow Cheney (wife of Seth). Now, with the commonplace book, we have the rare opportunity of reading directly the thoughts of the man, George Cheney, and being able to open to the public the “life of the mind” of someone born before the Revolutionary War and who grew up in early America, here in Manchester.

Below is a little information to help you get to know George personally. As we study the 179 pages of his commonplace book, we will be sharing more about George at the Cheney Homestead Museum (1785), to help bring the building alive with the lives that were so much a part of the old place!



Ednah's Description of George

"George Cheney was a man of strong, original, and noble character, in whose traits may be found the germs of those qualities which have given his sons success in life. He was slight in stature, of a quick, nervous temperament; and he possessed an active, inquiring mind, and very high moral qualities.... Although opposed to the popular views of religion, he was highly respected in the town, where his judgment was generally deferred to. He was a justice of the peace, and 'Squire Cheney' settled the quarrels of the neighborhood.... He was very simple in dress, even objecting to shiny boots and hats, or to a bow on 'mother's Sunday bonnet'".

Words of George Cheney, commonplace book (with permission of the CT Historical Society)

"A compleat farmer is a most careful-industrious frugal - as well as reputable and useful man . . ."

"4 April 1807 Cold, snow flying, Good sledding"

"Would men take as much pains to do good as they do to grieve and distress one another the society of men on earth would resemble that of angels in Heaven."

This mask in our collection is of George Wells Cheney, according to family information. However it is not certain as it might be of his father George Cheney.



Save The Date - Open House Day - Saturday, June 12

On Saturday June 12 our museums will be open to the public between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Admission is free (donations are always appreciated)



www.facebook.com/manchesterhistoricalsociety • www.manchesterhistory.org

The Courier

A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

Online at: www.manchesterhistory.org

E-mail: info@manchesterhistory.org

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

Tel. 860-647-9983

OFFICERS

President, Jack Prior
Vice President, Dr. Sarah Cieglo
Secretary, Carol Cafazzo
Treasurer, Dick Borden

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Mya Bowen
Dan Kimball
Chris Malone
Peter Millett
Tanya Millner
Stephen Penny
Deborah Simmons
Louis Spadaccini
Mana Zarinejud

STAFF

Operations Manager, Gerry Gallo
Office Assistant, Sonya Owen

Design & Printing by Fusion Cross-Media



Drop Us A Line...

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

Newsletter Editors

Dave Smith
Bob Kanehl

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.

Seasons at the Woodbridge Farmstead

By Peggy Newton

The gardens at the Farm welcomed us back this spring with bright bunches of daffodils and our magnificent magnolia tree. We have hosted two Open Barn Sundays since we reopened in early May. The first day was to honor Mother's Day with flowers and treats. Our annual duck race was held on Bigelow Brook. On Patriotic Sunday we wore our best red, white and blue while enjoying ice cream and games.

We will be open through October on the second and fourth Sundays with many special events. On Connecticut Open House Day Saturday, June 12 we will be open from 10 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Tours of the barn, grounds and house will be held with refreshments available. Future events planned for children include the return of Imagination Playground with their gigantic foam building blocks and also animal visits with piglets and lambs from Aussikita Farm.

In July we will be excited to witness the construction of our long awaited new/old Visitor Center. It will be constructed from an old Manchester barn. Construction techniques will be explained. The relocation and repair of the old farm shed will be completed in the future. We hope to hold a good old-fashioned barn raising for the public. In June or July we hope to have a visit from a member of the Woodbridge family and who grew up in the house. We will have many questions to ask.

In August we are planning to host a visit from antique tool collector, Bruce Perry, who will stump visitors with uses and names of some unusual and very old tools. An outdoor Art Show and artists is also planned.



From left to right: Jean Burr, Melissa Bochet, Dave Smith, Peggy Newton, and Carol Zapadka

The Manchester Historical Society Presents

“Threads & Strings”

Weaving and Music Event

Cheney Homestead Museum, 106 Hartford Rd, Manchester CT

Sunday July 11th, 12 - 4pm



All ages - Please join us for Weaving Fun & live Music!

Weaving - Weavers from the [Hartford Artisans Weaving Center](#) will demonstrate and give you a chance to try weaving and learn about local classes. A variety of hand looms and a rag rug loom will be used. Examples of cultural woven items from our community will be displayed, as well as an exhibit of indigenous mat weaving associated with the Connecticut tribes. A variety of other fiber related crafts will be shown.

Handweaving to Industrial weaving - See Electa Cheney's reproduction 1820s flannel in progress, and learn how the country, and her own sons (Cheney Brothers Silk), transitioned to large scale machine weaving.

Stringed instruments - Enjoy listening to a variety of stringed instruments as musicians perform

Weaving Store - The Hartford Artisans Weaving Center will have a selection of woven products for sale.

Tour the 1785 Homestead, gardens, 1851 Keeney Schoolhouse and learn about the Cheney family and Early American life.

\$5/\$10 per family - Donations help to maintain the museum. Thanks!

Calendar of Events

Old Manchester Museum at 126 Cedar Street, is open the first Saturday of the month, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. May through December. It is also open by appointment and for research. Please phone 860-647-9983. Please note that masks and social distancing are required until further notice.

History Center and Museum Store at 175 Pine St., open Tuesday to Friday from 10:00 to 2:00 (phone 860-647-9983), are located in the former Cheney Machine Shop. Only office and store are open. Tours are not yet available.

Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse at 106 Hartford Rd. are open the second Sunday of the month from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. An early American home (ca. 1785) with art and furniture. Masks and social distancing are required until further notice.

Woodbridge Farmstead at 495 Middle Turnpike East, open the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 12 noon until 2:00 p.m. An 1830 house and late 1700's barn on the site of the former Meadowbrook Dairy. Early farm equipment on display along with a sleigh and pony wagon. Visitors can park at the municipal lot behind the Senior Center or along Middle Tpke. East. Masks and social distancing required until further notice.

• **Saturday, June 12, Connecticut Open House Day** and Manchester museums open free from 11 to 3:

- History Center at 175 Pine, the former Cheney machine shop and loom room.
- Cheney Homestead & Keeney Schoolhouse at 106 Hartford Road with Nick Dubaldo demonstrating violin making and talking about Andrew Stavnitsky (1894-1977), Manchester's own violin maker.
- Old Manchester Museum at 126 Cedar Street with displays of Cheney Brothers, Bon Ami Soap Co., and Spencer rifles and much more.
- Woodbridge Farmstead barn, house and grounds, at 495 East Middle Turnpike at Manchester Green with its 18th century barn.
- Pitkin Glass Works at the corner of Parker and Putnam Streets, where glass experts will be available to answer questions. Pitkin glass items will be available for purchase and archaeological digs available for children.

• **Sunday, June 27 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn and house open**

• **Sunday, July 11 from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead open, "Threads and Strings"** program with music and weaving demonstrations. Note earlier start time.

• **Sunday, July 11 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn and house open**

• **Sunday, July 25 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn and house open**

• **Saturday, August 7 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Old Manchester Museum open**

• **Sunday, August 8 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead open**

• **Sunday, August 8 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn and house open**

• **Sunday, August 22 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn and house open.**

• **Saturday, September 4 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Old Manchester Museum open**

• **Sunday, September 12 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead open**

• **Sunday, September 12 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn and house open**

We Will Miss

Constance Williams Walker a long time member and volunteer at the Society. Connie often portrayed an early school mistress at our Keeney Schoolhouse and the kids loved her. She was very proud of her family history, including her family connection to the Woodbridge family. She was a favorite of many of our volunteers.

Mary Comollo, a member of the Society for many years was also active in other organizations including the Manchester Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, the American Cancer Society's Manchester North Unit and the high school Class of 1944 Reunion Committee.



100 Years Ago in Manchester

Just to show that nothing is new, this article appeared in the Manchester Herald in 1921. Today this can apply to television news outlets and even our politics.

“Now that Hartford has only two daily papers it is hard for their readers to obtain from them an unbiased opinion on any subject. Of course it is to be expected that the two papers should be opposed to each other on official matters as the *Courant* has been republican and the *Times* democratic for many years. But that is no reason why the two papers should differ on every other question of public interest. The *Times* favors setting the clocks ahead an hour for daylight saving and the *Courant* opposes it. The *Times* favored the consolidation of school districts in Hartford and the *Courant* opposed it. In short, whatever one paper approves the other seems in duty bound to disapprove. Of course this gives the readers of both papers an opportunity to get the arguments on both sides of a question, which is not a bad idea. But the reader who subscribes for only one of the papers gets a decidedly one-sided view.”

In spite of what we have been through with the Covid-19 epidemic, our health system has come a long way over the past 100 years. When was the last time you heard of anyone suffering one of these diseases?

History Center Renovations

As part of our planning for the Town's 200th anniversary in 2023, we are in the process of creating new exhibit spaces in room 2 of the History Center. Eleven new wall cases have been constructed, lining both sides of the center aisle. We are now in the process of planning what will be exhibited in them. We intend to show aspects of the Town's history beginning with the Native American (pre-colonial) period and continuing to the present. We have engaged a professional design company to guide us through this process and to help us create the layout and descriptions for each exhibit. Our goal is to have this completed by the end of September 2021.

There are opportunities for individuals and companies to sponsor an exhibit. For information about this contact Jack Prior at 860-647-9983 or by email at president@manchesterhistory.org.

From the *Hartford Courant* in April 1921:

“One case of small pox, being the third since January 1, five cases of typhoid fever, a leprosy case and one case of sleeping sickness were among diseases reported to the state department of health the past week. The smallpox case is in Manchester. The patient, a young man, came in contact with the disease in Detroit and then went to Providence. The patient left for his home in Manchester, however, before his case could be diagnosed. Connecticut was informed and the Manchester health officer quarantined his home.”

And the issue of guns is not new either. This was reported in May 1921.

“Manchester must be a place from where the government has nothing but good in the way of reports, according to the number of revolvers that have been issued to the largest of the five post offices in town. The South Manchester office does by far the largest amount of business of any in town and will probably exceed the total for all the other offices combined, yet the allotment for South Manchester was just one revolver. If this gun is given to the messenger when mail is taken from the office to the station, or while important mail is being transported in either direction there will be nothing in the way of guns to protect the interior. Postmaster T. J. Quish is to make application for additional revolvers, feeling that at least two or three more should be provided.”



The Manchester Historical Society
 175 Pine Street
 Manchester, Connecticut 06040

MANCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill out this form, and mail it with your check to:

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

Name: (Mr.) (Mrs.) (Miss) _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: () _____ Email: _____

Type of Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Individual	\$60
	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Individual (65+)	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Couple	\$40	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Family	\$100
	<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

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

Make checks payable to: Manchester Historical Society