



“OVER 55 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

# The Courier

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## Moving Back to the Early 1800's

by Pete Millett

At the Cheney Homestead we are moving to the past while we look toward the future. To better tell our story of the young family of George and Electa Cheney around 1818, we have recreated the “Dormitory” boys sleeping room.

As the number of children increased, eventually reaching nine children, George added the “dormitory and kitchen to the original structure in the early 1800’s. The room was last used by Margaret and Dorothy Cheney as part of their living room until the 1960’s.

In early 2022, after much deliberation, the Cheney Homestead Committee began repairing the walls and ceiling, painting, and replacing the more formal furniture with ones better suited to tell the story of young boys in a young United States.

Featured are a trundle bed, which could comfortably sleep four boys, a wool braided rug, school primers and children’s



artifacts from the period. Hanging on the wall above the fireplace is an important image of early 19th century boy’s life: a depiction of nine young men playing the game of Wicket, a popular colonial game which is the direct predecessor of both Cricket and American Baseball.

Importantly, it was John Cheney, 2nd eldest of the boys, who at the age of 20 (1821) fashioned an engraving plate from his mother’s old copper wash boiler and created and printed this image as a reward certificate for school use. It is thought to be the earliest known image in America of the game of wicket, which would later

develop into “baseball”. John’s original engraving plate is now safely stored in the archives of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Please come and see for yourself our wonderful transformation back in time!



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Saturday, June 11**  
**11-3**  
**Open House Day**  
**at all Museums**

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A newsletter of the  
Manchester Historical Society

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## Newsletter Editors

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## Sue Crombie is our new Administrative Assistant

Sue comes to us with a wealth of experience from other volunteer positions she has held. She is a long time member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and has served on the Executive Council of Pitkin Glass Works for a number of years, currently as Treasurer. Her experience includes volunteer and nonprofit organizations including at the Wood Memorial Library in South Windsor and in the archive collections at the Wood of the South Windsor Fire Department.



## 100 Years Ago in Manchester

**Drowned Auto Yields Quart Bottle (full)** The 600 people who lined the south bank of Union Pond at midnight last night saw an automobile being pulled out of the water, where it was lodged with its driver about an hour and a half before, could see nothing but the humor of the whole situation. But William Hill, who was under arrest and wet to the body, did not look upon it in the same light. The car went off the bank at the end of North Street. The automobile, with the driver still in the car started rapidly down the incline, shot off the first hill, cleared the gully and landing with all four wheels on the top of the sand hill took another dive and landed in the pond, about 20 feet from shore.

An onlooker volunteered to wade in, and although the water was waist deep, he reached the car and feeling around the trunk of the runabout came upon a quart bottle. Climbing on top of the car, he took the cork out of the bottle and took a smell. Then he tasted it, and that proved even better, and while the officer stood on the shore and crowds looked, he started to drain the bottle. Although Policeman Fitzgerald called to him to bring the bottle, he held it to his mouth until he had finished half of the contents, and then brought it ashore. The driver, Hill, was arrested and held until he paid a bond of \$200.

**The South Manchester News**, which was established as a weekly newspaper in 1893 has now become a semi-weekly (as of April 1922), and William J. Flood, who founded the weekly 29 years ago, now sees his son, Joseph W. Flood take charge of the new venture.

*(Ed. Note: The Manchester Historical Society holds microfilms of all issues of the South Manchester News from March 1893 to July 1924)*

## Manchester Inventor

Anyone who has ever had trouble getting a clean shave should read every word of this article because it concerns a Manchester man who had the same trouble and decided to do something about it.

**Walden St. John** of Maple St. often noticed in a post-shaving mirror check that a few stubborn hairs eluded his razor. Why not, he thought, design a razor with a built-in light. Then even the smallest hair could be seen before it could duck in the shadow of a nose or ear.

About a year ago (1947) St. John started to develop his novel idea that is now known as the Shave-lite. Looking for a person with enough of the pioneering spirit and business sense to help him develop the Shave-lite, he found Ken Barker of Terryville who owned a factory there. During

World War II Barker's factory made screw machine products for Uncle Sam. He was impressed with St. John's idea and so he decided to turn over his factory to the production of Shave-lites.

The razor itself is remarkably simple in construction. Made of aluminum, it has an overall length of 6 inches. The shaving head takes a regulation double-edge blade. The light is provided by 2 standard pencil-lite batteries that slide into the handle. The bulb is just below the shaving head. The light, explains St. John, eliminates any shadows and allows a clean, thorough shave.

*(Ed. Note: We do not know the success or fate of this product reported in the Manchester Evening Herald in 1948. If anyone still has one of these Shave-lites we would like to add it to our collections.)*

## Seasons at the Woodbridge Farmstead Spring is Here!

By Kris Miller

As of May, Peg Newton formed the new Woodbridge Farmstead Events Planning Committee. We have some new and old volunteers who wanted to help in planning for and working at our Open Houses. The Event Committee's first planned event was held Sunday, May 15 featuring the Grand Opening of our newly completed Visitor Center. It's



a rebuilt 1880's barn that once stood on Edwards Street in Manchester. It houses a room with museum displays covering the history of the Manchester Green area, a room for equipment storage and a handicap restroom. The Mayor of Manchester, Jay Moran, and the President of the Society, Jack Prior, gave speeches and the mayor cut the ribbon that crossed the threshold into the Center.

That same day volunteers started giving guided

tours of the Woodbridge farmhouse. A new tour script has been written so that



volunteers can take visitors through the older rooms on the first floor of the house. We hope to have enough volunteers at each of our open houses to allow us to continue giving guided tours of the farmhouse. And in the future, we will create a new tour script so that volunteers can guide our visitors around the old cow barn. Until then though, the barn tour will remain self-guided unless our curator is available to give a tour.

If you are at one of our next open houses, don't be surprised if you see a life-sized cow in one of the milking stalls in the old barn. She's new to the neighborhood and needs a name. We are having a "Name the Cow" contest. Come to an open house in June and drop a name in the milk bucket. The person with the winning cow's name will be awarded a Woodbridge Farmstead tee shirt.

Stop by at one of our future open houses and see what's new at the farmstead! They will be held on June 11 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., June 26 from noon to 2 p.m. and on the second and fourth Sunday of July through October from noon to 2 p.m.

## Calendar of Events

**Face Mask Policy:** Face masks are recommended when visiting all of our properties.

**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 call our office at 860-647-9983 for further information.

**History Center Office, Museum Store and exhibits** at 175 Pine St., open Wednesday to Friday from 10:00 to 2:00 and Saturday noon to 4:00 p.m. (phone 860-647-9983), located in the former Cheney Machine Shop building. Also email us at [info@manchester-history.org](mailto:info@manchester-history.org).

**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 period art and furniture. The schoolhouse is a recreation/restoration of one of Manchester's earliest one room schools. Please call our office for further information.

**Woodbridge Farmstead** at 495 Middle Turnpike East, open the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 12 noon until 2:00 p.m. (except during June when it will be open Saturday June 11 and Sunday June 26). An 1830 house, Visitor Center 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. The new Visitor Center has displays of the history of Manchester Green. Visitors can park at the municipal lot behind the Senior Center or along the side street to the east of the farmstead. For special events hours may be longer.



**Saturday, June 11, Connecticut Open House Day** and Manchester museums open free from 11 to 3: • the History Center at 175 Pine, the former Cheney

machine shop now on the National Register of Historic Places • Cheney Homestead, gardens, and Keeney Schoolhouse at 106 Hartford Road • Cheney Homestead Arts at 199 Forest Street, classical art studio offering classes and workshops for children and adults • Old Manchester Museum at 126 Cedar Street • Woodbridge Farmstead's new Visitor Center and 18th Century barn and grounds at 495 East Middle Turnpike at Manchester Green. • Pitkin Glass Works at the corner of Parker and Putnam Streets, with an archeological dig for children. Enjoy visiting the open museums and a stroll on your own in the Historic District. The fire museum, corner of Pine St. and Hartford Road is also open. There is a museum store at the History Center and at the Old Manchester Museum with books on local history, high school yearbooks, copies of vintage maps, tee-shirts, mugs, notecards, etc.

**Sunday, June 12, Threads & Strings at Cheney Homestead,** noon to 4 p.m.

**Sunday, October 23, at 1:00 p.m., "Culture and Anarchy in Ireland -- and the Three Literary Giants who Helped to Forge Modern Ireland,"** a lecture on Irish writers and their perspectives on the culture of Ireland and its people by former State Senator Mary Ann Handley. A retired Manchester Community College history professor, Mary Ann will establish a foundation for understanding the influence of James Joyce and of Nobel laureates W. B. Yeats and George Bernard Shaw. She'll touch on this year's 100th anniversary of the publication of James Joyce's "Ulysses," and on Manchester's large Irish population. Local musicians will present music from 100 years ago. At the History Center, 175 Pine Street. The public is invited. Parking for the lecture is available along Pleasant Street, off Forest Street (no on-street parking) as well as in a small lot next to the History Center. \$5 for non-members, \$3 for Society members, and free for children under age 16.

• **Art classes at the History Center,** enter at 199 Forest Street. Following the artistic traditions of the Cheney family, classes for children and adults began in July 2019. Call 860-647-9983 for information.

# Threads & Strings

Join us for a day of weaving and music!

Sunday June 12th, 12 - 4pm

**Cheney Homestead Museum**

106 Hartford Rd, Manchester CT

Donations Appreciated!



**Threads** - Weavers from the Hartford Artisans Weaving Center will demonstrate weaving skills and historical techniques, and make progress on the Electa Cheney 1825 reproduction flannel. Spinners will demonstrate wool and linen spinning. Also, rug braiding will be demonstrated. Visitors will have an opportunity to try their own hands on loom and wheel!

**Strings**- The Connecticut Guitar Ensemble and harpist Haley Hewitt will perform, along with a local mandolin and guitar duo.

**Learning Opportunities:** Find out about local weaving, spinning, rug braiding & musical learning opportunities, and sign up for Summer painting, drawing & sculpture classes at [Cheney Homestead Arts.org](http://CheneyHomesteadArts.org)

Tour the 1785 Homestead, gardens, 1751 Keeney Schoolhouse  
and learn about Manchester, the Cheney family and Early American life.

Manchester Historical Society

and

  
Hartford Artisans  
Weaving Center



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## 1772 Foundation Grant for Woodbridge House

The Manchester Historical Society acknowledges with gratitude, the award of a grant from the 1772 Foundation. The grant in the amount of \$6,000 is to help cover the cost of installing a new roof on the Woodbridge house. The house was last roofed in the mid 1990's and was beginning to show its age. The condition of the roof was addressed in a recently completed Conditions Assessment Report, which highlighted several areas that need attention before the house can be repainted. Our efforts are now directed to keep moisture out of the basement, which has been an ongoing problem and recently become more noticeable. In addition, gutters have just been installed on the west side of the house, which has never had a gutter, and on the south side of the new Visitor Center.

