

The Courier

PRESERVING MANCHESTER'S HISTORY SINCE 1965

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

President's Message

Dennis Gleason

The Historical Society is your local source of what people remember or have researched from years



gone by. Living on School St. on the corner of Clinton St., I remember the neighborhood Red and White Store. Behind our house was a one car garage with a second-floor pigeon coop for my uncle's racing pigeons.

About 1960 at 236 School St. a building was moved to a lot next door. It was once the Manchester Bottling Company. Now it's a house. At the corner of School and Autumn Streets was once a dump, when my father was young.

This is information we preserve for our kids and those who

come after us. Now is the time to write down your own knowledge of Manchester. It may seem insignificant now to you but someday someone will appreciate the time you have taken to record your experiences. Saving your history is our job. It might be objects, or just a story, and saving historic items from the trash will help folks 100 years from now to connect with us today. Sometimes even a photo can answer a question about the past. Putting a note with the photo will let your family know the story or person years later.

Recently I put out an appeal for funds. They will be used for upkeep and restoration. Our five locations cost a lot to maintain and operate. People who tour our History Center building are grateful for our efforts and all the volunteer time involved.

This year we went out to the schools to meet with the third graders. We described to them

the history of Manchester and their area of town. Why the town grew the way it did. In 1849 the railroad provided a way to ship goods and allow people to travel distances much faster than by horse or by foot. The town began a period of considerable change, going from farming to industry to urban living.

We have recently inaugurated a new website, which we encourage you to visit. There is a lot of information there. Also, think about becoming active with our society. We are looking for new board members. Let us teach you to pass knowledge on to the future. I want to thank again the volunteers who give so much of their time to make the organization work.

Please come in and talk with me. I am at the History Center Wednesday and Friday from 10 to 2 and on Saturday from noon to 4.

Manchester Podiatrist Makes History

Dr. Marcy MacDonald of Manchester has made history by the time you read this. She has undertaken her 19th swim across the English Channel. Only a few people have made more crossings than this.

Marcy MacDonald is making this crossing in honor of the 80th anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 1944. It is also to raise Funds, Awareness and Care for our military veterans. As she describes it, the swim is for PEACE, HOPE and CARE.



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A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

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Newsletter Editors

Dave Smith
Bob Kanehl

Woodbridge Farmstead News

By Peggy Newton

It was so good to be back among our volunteers during our first Open Farm Day several weeks ago. Spring is a season of renewal and great expectations. In April we renovated many of our gardens, removing excess foliage and extensive weeds, and installing new and appropriate flowers.

But we will miss the smiling face of one of our volunteers, Lucy Sweeney. Lucy would often hold court in the barn and recount her Manchester teaching days with Thelma Woodbridge.

At our May 19th Open Day, we held old fashioned games and Dave Smith led a tour of the barn. Our next Open Day will be Saturday June 8th which is Connecticut Open Museum Day. All historic museums and sites will be open from 11 am to 3 pm. As always admission is free, and refreshments will be served at our farmstead.

We hope to have our Annual Duck Race that day in Bigelow Brook as it passes through our property. We will also have some new exhibits at the farmhouse and expect to have floral arrangements made by Manchester Garden Club members. Upcoming events scheduled for this year include animal visits, history talks, and antique ephemera demonstrated by Bruce Perry.

If you are interested in history and want to join us as a volunteer, please call the History Center at 860-647-9983 or Peggy Newton (860-305-7310)

We Will Miss

Nathan Agostinelli a man who touched many aspects of Manchester life. Nate, as he was affectionately known to his many friends, was a major influence on many Manchester organizations, including our Historical Society. He will be remembered for his unstinting service to our community.

Peter Brunone was a long time member of the society as well as the Garden Club. Peter volunteered his expertise to us over several years including at the Woodbridge farm.

Mary Ann Handley was passionately interested in history, teaching at Manchester Community College for many decades. She served as State Senator for the 4th district and on the Manchester Board of Directors. Mary Ann was a long time member of the Society and presented many programs to our members.

Eileen Jacobs Sweeney served as our Development director and Executive Director for several years. Under her guidance the society improved its professionalism and the awareness of the Society throughout the community. Eileen was passionately interested in historic preservation and advocated for saving our cultural resources.

Manchester Third Graders Discover their Heritage

By Bob Kanehl

The Manchester Historical Society has spent the month of April reaching out to the Manchester School District's third graders. This year each of the third grade classes in the town was visited by a representative from the society. This visit included a talk about their school and various historic locations around the area a student might see when coming to school. These talks focused on what history is in general as well as important business, events or persons associated with Manchester.

Each school had their own special narrative concerning these topics:

- How the school gained its name.
- An interesting fact about the surrounding area of the school.
- Something connected to the area or school viewable at the historical society's museums.

For example:

Buckley – Did You Know:

Buckley Elementary is named for Professor William F. Buckley. Besides being a UConn professor, this Manchester resident was instrumental in collecting and writing about local history. Among his books are the 1973 History of Manchester, and the History of the Pitkin Glass Works. Dr. Buckley was a supporter of education in town, serving on the Board of Education, as well as a major supporter of the Manchester Historical Society. He lived on East Center Street at Manchester Green.

Just down the road from here on the corner of Lydall and Vernon Streets there once was a musical instrument manufacturer. Mervin Landfear lived there in the mid-1800s. He developed and fixed various musical instruments, but he is most famous for the reed organs he made. These organs have a pump to blow air over the reeds to create sound. The pumping is done either by an assistant or by the player using a foot pedal. The organs were patented and sold throughout the country. Landfear eventually moved his business to New Haven.



An interesting fact is that there are very few known Landfear organs made in Manchester that you can see. One is in Germany; one is at Yale University's historical music collection and two are at the Manchester Historical Society – see you there.

To enhance their understanding of history the students were allowed to study various hands-on examples such as an early 1900's camera, Bon Ami Soap; solid metal irons; J.B. Williams Shaving Soap, and various examples of silk, cotton and wool fabrics.

The town's third grade curriculum includes a research unit on the Cheney family and the development of the Silk Industry. The April talks avoided this topic to allow the students to discover through their own research the significance of the Cheney family and mills.

All the classes, were offered a second presentation focused on the Cheneys and the Silk Industry as an introduction to their unit of study. This talk had hands on exhibits including silkworm cocoons, bobbins, shuttles, and examples of silk and velvet. One school (Highland Park) invited the Society's representative back to conduct a one-day introduction to the Silk Industry. This second presentation was in May.

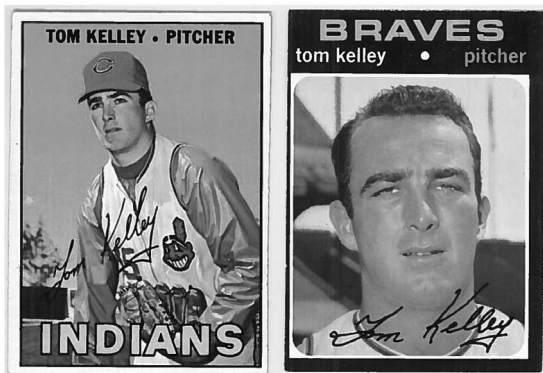
In conjunction with these presentations, the four society museums ran extra hours in May to allow the students time to visit with their parents.

Recent Acquisitions

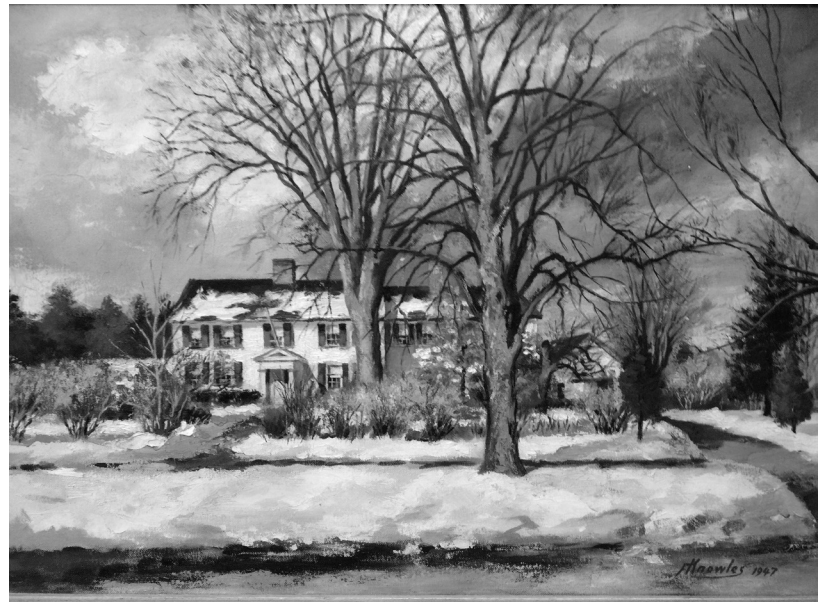
By Dave Smith

Since the beginning of this year, we have been fortunate to have been given a number of interesting (and perplexing) donations. Among the more interesting items are:

1. A silk parachute marked "Cheney Bros." and the date "Apr 19, 19__." The last two digits of the year are not readable. It is notable that it was not marked "Pioneer Parachute" and that it is of silk and not nylon. Pioneer Parachute was formed in the late 1930's so this may have been an experimental chute before Pioneer was established to make parachutes.
2. A hand cranked, wood, wall-mounted telephone. The phone was used in the late 1800's when party lines were the rule, and one would have to crank the phone to get the operator's attention so that she would connect you to the person you wished to talk to. Others on your party line could listen in to your conversations.
3. A set of signed Tom Kelley baseball cards. Tom, a Manchester native, played for the Cleveland Indians and the Atlanta Braves from 1964 through 1973.



4. Three pairs of wire rimmed eyeglasses that belonged to Bill Green. Bill sold and repaired bicycles on Spruce St. for many years from about 1920 to 1960. Many kids in Manchester got their bikes from Bill and/or had them repaired by him.



5. Oil painting of the Timothy Cheney house that stood at 166 East Center St. for over 200 years. It is speculated that he made his wooden geared clocks at this location in the late 1700's. It remained in the Cheney family until 1942 when it was purchased by Edgar Clarke. The house was razed in 1967 to make way for the Green Apartments that stand next to the High School tennis courts. The efforts to save the house from demolition were led by a group of high school teachers and others interested in preservation, which became the nucleus for the formation of the Manchester Historical Society.

Calendar of Events

History Center Exhibits, Office, and Museum Store at 175 Pine St., open Wednesday to Friday from 10:00 to 2:00 and Saturday noon to 4:00 p.m. located in the former Cheney Machine Shop building. Exhibits include **Manchester Then and Now** and business signs. There is a research library and museum store. Phone is 860-647-9983 and our email is info@manchesterhistory.org.

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. Please call our office at 860-647-9983 for further information. Exhibits include Manchester manufacturers Cheney Brothers, Bon Ami, and Norton Electric, our elementary schools both past and present, Pitkin Glass Works bottles, and the story of the Spencer Rifle and its inventor Christopher Spencer. There is also a museum store in the lobby.

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. The house is an early American home with period art and furniture a new clock making exhibit and an art gallery. The Homestead was donated to the Manchester Historical Society by the Cheney family in 1968 for the purpose of a museum to exhibit and explain the impact of the Cheney family on Manchester. Guided tours include the 1751 Keeney one-room schoolhouse, a partial restoration of one of Manchester's earliest one-room schools.

Woodbridge Farmstead at 495 Middle Turnpike East, is open the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 12 noon to 2:00 p.m. (except during June when it will be open Saturday June 8 and Sunday June 22). The Farmstead includes a ca. 1830 farmhouse, a Visitor Center and a late 1700's barn on the site of the former Meadowbrook Dairy. Early farm equipment is on display along with a one-horse open sleigh and a pony wagon. The Visitor Center features 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.

Genealogy Group meets the second Wednesday of the month at the History Center 10 to noon.

June 8, Saturday | 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Open House Day at all of our museums and participating museums throughout Connecticut.

June 8, Saturday | 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Open House at Pitkin Glass Works. Pitkin related items will be available for purchase (cash only)

June 9, Sunday | 1:00 pm
at the History Center: presentation about Gustavus Farley Jr. and his wife Katherine S. Cheney by Penny West, great-granddaughter of the Farleys. The Farleys traveled to Japan and lived there in the 1880's. Travelling across the United States and the Pacific Ocean during this period was an exciting experience. Living in Japan 140 years ago was challenging as well.

June 12, Wednesday | 10:00 am
Genealogy group meets at the History Center.

June 15, Saturday | 1:00 pm
Great Lawn Walk and Mansion district meet at Fuss & O'Neill on Hartford Rd.

June 23 Sunday | 12 noon to 2:00 pm
Woodbridge Farmstead open

July 6 Saturday | 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Old Manchester Museum open

July 10 Wednesday | 10:00 am
Genealogy group meets at the History Center

July 14 Sunday | 12 noon to 2:00 pm
Woodbridge Farmstead open

July 14 Sunday | 1 p.m to 4:00 pm
Cheney Homestead open

July 28, Sunday | 12 noon to 2:00 pm
Woodbridge Farmstead open



Manchester Historical Society
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w/Cheney Homestead Roof on the subject line