



“50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

The Courier

MARCH 2016

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A Message From the President

by Dennis Gleeson

Entering 2016 the Society's 50th year, we continue to move forward with several projects underway. The restoration of the Woodbridge barn is now about 70% complete and is expected to be finished by late spring. Painting and concrete work are waiting for warmer weather. We wish to acknowledge the donation to the barn project of period door hardware by Roger Barrett, Jr. of Country Carpenters of Hebron. At the History Center, interior storm windows have been installed in Room 1. These were funded by grants from United Illuminating Co. This will help us conserve energy in heating the office and store areas. We hope to find funding to add storm windows to other rooms on the top floor of the History Center. Also, we are moving forward with a new heating/air conditioning system so that we can comfortably use the top floor for events year round. The location of the outside units for the HVAC system has been approved by the State Historic Preservation Office and the next step is to have the system engineered so that it can go out to bid. The Machine Shop display has received a donation of a 100 lb. anvil by the Madden family of Eldridge St. The anvil has been restored and mounted on a log supplied by Fred Lea.

A partnership with the Manchester school system has been initiated. This will allow our Society to help teachers and students to understand how Manchester's past has had an impact on today's Manchester.

We continue to seek help from volunteers for the daily operation of the organization, to plan and staff events and general maintenance.

The May school tours will be held again this year. The Cheney family is planning a large reunion to be held in June and we will be the center of activities for the family.

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.

Historical Perspectives on the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland

On Sunday, April 17, at 1:00 p.m., the Manchester Historical Society presents “The Easter Rising, Historical Perspectives,” a lecture by former State Senator Mary Ann Handley, at the History Center, 175 Pine Street. A retired Manchester Community College history professor, Mary Ann has conducted research on the Rising, and at the lecture will establish a foundation for understanding this pivotal event in Irish history. What factors led up to the rebellion? How does the Rising help us understand on-going struggles of factions within the same nation? How did the American Irish react to the Dublin event and to the subsequent executions of the “conspirators” or “heroes,” depending on one's perspective? The talk will be followed by a question-and-answer period. \$5 for non-members, \$4 for Society members, and free for children under age 16. Light refreshments will be served.

Wish list – Can you donate?

Hospitality and Event Items. For an upcoming fundraiser, can you donate coffee-table books (themes: gardening, art, Ireland, history) or smaller books on history? Also, grab-bag type gifts such as fragrant soaps, candles, boxed teas in special flavors. We also need creamers, teapots, and extra-nice teacups with saucers. Please drop off at the History Center weekdays 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – not open holidays and school snow days.

School Tour Volunteers. Can you staff our annual school tours during May? 700 elementary school students will come to the Homestead, schoolhouse, loom room, museum, etc., and we need volunteer docents and helpers to make these visits a success. This is a wonderful opportunity to work with the upcoming generation of history enthusiasts! Some of our docents have a lot of knowledge about the Cheney silk mills, but we can provide information for those who are new at it – or, you can start out as a helper, and learn “on the job,” so to speak. The hours are generally 9:25 to 1:30 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and you can work as many or as few days as fit your schedule. Phone the History Center at 860-647-9983.



Drop Us A Line...

You can contact Society President
Dennis Gleeson at
president@manchesterhistory.org,
or our Executive Director
Eileen Sweeney at
executivedirector@manchesterhistory.org

The Courier

A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

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We encourage our members to support the
Corporate Members of the Society.

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Genealogy Group News

The Genealogy group consists of Society members interested in researching their own family history. All Historical Society members may attend for free. An individual membership is \$25 per year. Nonmembers are welcome to attend and are asked for a \$3 donation per meeting. Some have been doing genealogy work for years while others are just beginning. The group meets on the second Tuesday of the month at the History Center at 175 Pine St., unless otherwise specified. The Program Coordinator is Dianne Bordeaux Lenti, who is a long time member of the Connecticut Professional genealogical Council. Future programs and meeting places are listed on the upcoming events page at www.manchesterhistory.org. If you have questions please call Kris Miller at 860-528-3122..

April 12 The meeting will be at the History Center. The speaker will be Bryna O'Sullivan who will speak on the topic of **Catholic Records**.

May 10 The meeting will be at the History Center. Speaker Linda Carlson will present a program of **Jewish Genealogy**.

June 14 Subject and place to be confirmed.

Historical Society Wants Your WWI Items!



As we put together a new exhibit celebrating the 100th anniversary of America's involvement in World War I, we are looking for artifacts and information about the men and women who participated in the Great War. Not only those who served in the Armed Forces but also those who served in other capacities, including the Red Cross and at the Homefront here in Manchester. We want to recognize the efforts of all who contributed to the war effort.

If you have pictures of men and women who were in the military or have items that were connected with the war in some way, we would like to borrow them for this new exhibit.

Please contact Dave Smith at 860-647-9742 or at info@manchesterhistory.org.

Fall 2016 Annual Dinner

Members Survey

Please help the Manchester Historical Society decide which day and time will best accommodate the needs of the majority of its guests for our Fall 2016 Annual Dinner. Please let us know which day and time would work best for you...

1. Saturday evening 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.
2. Sunday afternoon 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Please let us know what you think by Friday, April 15, 2016 by calling the Manchester History Center at (860) 647-9983, by emailing executivedirector@manchesterhistory.org, or by stopping by the Manchester History Center.

Thank you!

Horace J. Wickham

Manchester Inventor

By Dave Smith

First of a series of occasional articles on Manchester men who had great inventive talent and whose genius had both local and national impact.

Horace John Wickham was born in Glastonbury in 1836 and moved to Manchester at the age of 14. As a boy he had an innate mechanical ingenuity. He was happiest when using his mechanical abilities, including making miniature water wheels and testing them in the brook on his father's farm. At the age of 17 he became an apprentice machinist in the making of clocks in Bristol. He was a quick study and mastered the trade of machinist by the age of twenty. He then went to New Haven and was employed at the Whitney Gun factory, where he remained for most of the Civil War. In 1864 he joined the United States Arsenal in Springfield as master machinist. After the war, the need for rifles declined and Wickham returned to Manchester.

Wickham's inventive genius became evident with his first patent issued in 1868. It was for a jack for knitting needles. His next patent was issued in May 1869 for a match box, a very simple device for storing matches. In 1871 he received a patent for an improvement in pencil holders, an early mechanical pencil.

In 1869 Wickham joined the Plimpton Manufacturing Co. in Hartford, maker of paper products, most notably envelopes. His next series of patents was for manufacturing envelopes with greater efficiency. In 1874 Plimpton won the United States government contract for making stamped envelopes, which were previously made in New York. His success at Plimpton was due in large part to his mechanical abilities. He devised many improvements in the making of envelopes including the design of machines that would combine several operations in one (they cut, stamped, printed, gummed, folded, counted and boxed envelopes). His improvements resulted in the ability to manufacture 50,000 envelopes each day which was an astounding gain

in production for the time. One girl operator could handle the work formerly done by twenty operators. And it was found that one adjuster could care for twenty of these machines. These economies of scale were evidenced by the reduced cost for manufacture of envelopes. Previously it cost about 50 cents per thousand envelopes and with the Wickham machines the cost was reduced to 3 ½ cents per thousand! Nearly a billion stamped envelopes were being made annually for the government. For 25 years all the stamped envelopes used by the government were made by Wickham machines.

Plimpton also made stamped newspaper wrappers and Wickham's improvements in these machines was comparable to the envelope machines. Wickham retired from the Plimpton company in 1898 having secured nearly 40 patents.

He had many other interests and together with his son Clarence, organized the Hartford Manilla Company in 1881 with a large plant in the Burnside area of East Hartford. He was also general manager of the Hartford, Manchester & Rockville Tramway Company, which ran the trolley system between Manchester, Rockville and Hartford. In his later years he developed an interest in using peat as a fuel. He designed and patented machines for forming peat into blocks, for carbonizing peat and for producing fuel and gas from peat for use in a cooking oven he also designed.

Wickham was a lover of and a good judge of horses and fine cattle. He built his estate known as "The Pines" on the border of Manchester and East Hartford (now known as Wickham Park) in 1896. He had married Fylura Sanders of Halifax, Vermont in 1857. They had one son, Clarence H. Wickham. Horace died May 22, 1914 at the age of 78.



2015 Gala Attendees

Seated, left to right, Frances Smith, Pat Hancock; standing, Society Curator Dave Smith. Photo by Susan Barlow.



Pat and Ed Greaves look at the Live Auction items. Photo by Susan Barlow.

Woodbridge Barn Restoration Update

Fund raising continues for this project. Please make a donation to help us match the grant we were awarded from the State of Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development/State Historic Preservation Office. Financial support has been received from the SBM Charitable Foundation and individuals to help reach the goal to match the state grant award. Your help is very important.

The restoration work on our ancient barn continued throughout the fall and into the winter months as the relatively mild weather allowed much to get done. Interior structural repairs were completed, which included straightening and strengthening the main structure and repairing or replacing rotted sections of timbers. A new wood shingle roof of Alaskan Yellow Cedar on the main barn was installed, along with a new metal roof over the milk room part of the barn. Siding was repaired or replaced with appropriate new siding replicating the existing siding. The broken concrete floor in the room on the northwest corner was removed and replaced with a wood floor matching the main floor. New doors were fabricated and period hardware was purchased. The old door for the corner room where the Woodbridge's bull was kept was rediscovered and reinstalled. Wood sliding bolt latches were donated by Roger Barrett, Jr. of Country Carpenters in Hebron. Several windows have been repaired or replaced with old windows found in our other barn.

Work has now been put on hold until spring when the painting and concrete work can be finished.

Volunteers are the Key to Our Success

Since we depend so much on our volunteers to make the Society work and for the events and tours to take place, we wish to acknowledge those who are the key to our success. They serve on committees, keep our properties maintained, plan events and programs, host the many school tours, receive and catalog artifacts, operate the museum stores and greet visitors to the museum and history center. Thank you for all you do. The following persons volunteered during the year 2015. If you volunteered last year and your name does not appear here please let us know and we will acknowledge your participation in the next issue of The Courier.

Gail Adams	Marilyn Eastwood	Fred Lea	Carole and Tom Quish
Mike Agostinelli	Kevin Ferrigno	Eileen Leahy	Genevieve Robb
Susan Allely	John Fletcher	Clair Leighton	Jen Sage-Robison
Malcolm and Susan Barlow	Lori Fogg	Beverly and Al Logan	Walter Scadden
Donna Bartek	Jeane Fogg	Brenda Lowther	Ronald Schack
Adam Bawwab	Corinne Gabriele	Ann Lucente	Audrey and Earl Schaefer
Barbara Bawwab	Linda Gates	Susan Lyons	Edith Schoell
Yusuf Bawwab	Robert Gauthier	John Malone	Kent Schwendy
George Beauregard	Jill Gelinax	Thomas Matrick	Dave Smith
John Bereuter	Dennis Gleeson	Kim Mauro	Fran Smith
Rita Borden	Robert Gorman	Faith and Tim McCann	Joseph Sobanski
Mya Bowen	Marsha Gunther	Rita McParland	James St. Pierre
Pat and Andrea Clancy	James Hall	Kristine Miller	Deborah Starkel
John Cooney	Ruth Herbele	Peter Millett	Robin Starkel
Mary Jane Cooper	Pat and Bob Hetzel	Neal Narkon	Eileen Sweeney
Noreen Cullen	Maureen Hevey	Virginia Narkon	Dorothy Tomlinson
Peg DeForge	John Hovey	Peg Newton	Constance Walker
Karen DePauw	Dick Jenkins	Chris O'Brien	Jim Wallin
Marles Deveau	William Johnson	Sandy Ostrinsky	Kathryn Wilson
Doti Dienst	Gayle Juliani	Debbie Palmer	Phyllis Wilson
Jamie Donohue	Ann Kibbie	Len and Terry Parla	Mary Wynn
AnnLinda Dustin-Bray	Jean Lamenzo	Andrew Pryce	Wilda Wyse
Kathy Dyer	Mary Ann Lawler	Janet and Jack Pryor	Jane and Rudy Zadnik

2015 Gala Attendees



Silent Auction items in the renovated Machine Shop; photo by guest Mark Abraitis.



Kathryn Wilson, Mary Winn, Cathleen & Mike Dyer. Photo by Susan Barlow.

Calendar of Events

- **The Old Manchester Museum** at 126 Cedar St., is closed for the winter and will reopen May 1, 2016. It is however, open by appointment -- phone 860-647-9983. The research facility is available all year round -- to make an appointment, please phone 860-647-9742.
- **The Cheney Homestead** at 106 Hartford Rd., is temporarily open by appointment only. Please call 860-647-9983.
- **Museum store at the History Center** at 175 Pine St. is open weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. You can purchase local history items such as books, copies of vintage maps, t-shirts with historic scenes of Manchester, mugs, and notecards.
- **Tuesday, April 12 at 10:00 a.m., the Historical Society's Genealogy Group** -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists. This month, guest speaker Bryna O'Sullivan will present information on Catholic Records. We will meet at the Manchester History Center. The Genealogy Group consists of Historical Society members, but nonmembers are also welcome, \$3.00 fee. The group usually meets on the second Tuesday of the month at the History Center.
- **Sunday, April 17 at 1:00 p.m., "The Easter Rising, Historical Perspectives"** -- an illustrated talk about the 1916 uprising in Dublin, Ireland, presented by retired history professor Mary Ann Handley at the History Center, 175 Pine Street. The Easter Rising (Irish: Éirí Amach na Cásca), also known as the Easter Rebellion, was an armed insurrection in Ireland during Easter Week. Mary Ann has conducted research on the Rising, and at the lecture will establish a foundation for understanding this pivotal event in Irish history. What factors led up to the rebellion? How does the Rising help us understand on-going struggles of factions within the same nation? How did the American Irish react to the Dublin event and to the subsequent executions of the "conspirators" or "heroes," depending on one's perspective? The talk will be followed by a question-and-answer period. 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, \$4 for Society members, and free for children under age 16.
- **Tuesday, May 10 at 10:00 a.m., the Historical Society's Genealogy Group** -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists. Guest speaker Linda Carlson will present information on Jewish Genealogy. We will meet at the Manchester History Center.
- **Sunday, May 15 -- SAVE THE DATE** -- for an elegant tea at the Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street, with festive food, socializing, and some surprises. Plans are in process for this entertaining afternoon. Our recent teas have been very popular -- with a large variety of treats, both savory and sweet, along with hot tea in china cups. We also continue to celebrate our 50th anniversary year, founded September 1965 to preserve Manchester's history. This will be a fundraiser for the Society. The public is invited -- bring a friend and neighbor! There will be additional details in the spring, and a printable on-line invitation. But put the date on your calendar now!
- **Mid-May to mid-June, "Gold Star Families: 50 Years Later" exhibit** at the Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street. Traveling exhibit of the Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) Veterans History Project, about families who lost a son, brother, or husband in the Vietnam War. Several Gold Star families agreed to be interviewed by CCSU students, who then transformed the transcripts into content for a six-panel exhibit." There will be a talk and reception to introduce the exhibit at a time to be announced.
- **Saturday, June 4, Heritage Week kickoff "Concert in the Park"**
- **Saturday, June 11, Heritage Day** 11:00 a.m. til 3:00 p.m. -- Open House for all the museums in town
- **Tuesday, June 14 at 10:00 a.m., the Historical Society's Genealogy Group** -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists. Topic to be announced. We will meet at the Manchester History Center.

Annual Fund Needs You!

We are still considerably short of our goal of \$20,000 for this year's Annual Fund Campaign.

Your help is essential in keeping the museum open and available for visitors, researchers and school children. The Annual Fund supports our maintenance costs as well as procurement of office and conservation supplies, payment of utility costs and other basic needs.

We cannot rely on government support of these needs. Please consider making a donation to the Annual Fund today if you have not already done so. If you have made a donation, we thank you.



The Manchester Historical Society
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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: _____

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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 |
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