



“OVER 55 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

The Courier

MARCH 2024

VOL. 59, No. 2

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



President's Message

By Dennis Gleason

As we begin another year at the Historical Society there is much to report and our plans for the year are beginning to take shape. We are completing the redesign of our website. It will be up and running when you receive this newsletter. Our computer system is receiving some much needed upgrades. New wiring and new computers will be installed, bringing our systems up to date. The main electrical service into the history center required replacing some of the circuit breakers as required by our insurance carrier.

The now former 8th District Manchester Fire Department is in the process of donating items to the Society. A new display area is being created highlighting the North End of town and featuring MFD artifacts as well as images of the North End before redevelopment reshaped the area. Future events will bring out the stories and memories of the North End.

The Manchester Sports Hall of Fame has moved to its new location at the Mahoney Center, next door to the Old Manchester Museum on Cedar St. The lobby space at OMM formerly occupied by the Hall of Fame is being refinished and a new exhibit will be installed in that space in the next few months. Our credit card system for payments to the Society has been closed due to excessive costs. Going forward all payments to the Society must be made by check or in cash.

We will undertake a fund raising campaign to help replace the Cheney Homestead wood shingle roof which was last replaced some 25 years ago. We will undertake a fundraising campaign to help pay for the new roof. The house is now almost 240 years old and we want to keep it up for future generations. It is the best place in town to begin to tell the rich history of Manchester.

We continue to reach out to community groups and individuals to tour the house and begin to learn about our unique history. Our history really begins in the mid 1600's with Thomas Hooker passing through what is now Manchester on his way to settle in Hartford. Later settlers moved across "The Great River" and into what became known as the Five Mile Tract. Farms and mills were developed but that part of our story has mostly been lost. We are here to tell that part of our history as well as of the indigenous people who were here to meet the settlers. The story of the Native Americans of this area will be presented during March, April and May on the third Sunday of each month by our own Steve Penny.

Our library is available for research Wednesday through Saturday during normal business hours. Discovering family information and stories and writing them down to pass on to future generations is important for your family as well as of interest to us. We sometimes regret not having questioned our older family members about what they remember or heard from previous generations. Now is the time to record what you have heard or discovered.

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A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

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Newsletter Editors

Dave Smith
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Our New Website and Logo

When you receive this newsletter our new website will be active. [www.manchesterhistory.org] We hope that you will find the site attractive and easy to use. As you can imagine, a lot of work has gone into revising and updating the site as it contains a lot of information.

If you find something that seems inaccurate, please do let us know. With so much information available, some things may have slipped through the cracks.

In addition to our new website, we have developed a new logo. It is a modified version of the previous logo used for the past 20 years. It still retains an image of a stylized mulberry tree and a water powered mill but adds the name of our state (there are over 20 Manchesters throughout the United States). The mill represents the many water powered mills over the years which superseded agriculture as the main economic activity.



Woodbridge Farmstead News

By Peggy Newton

On my recent visit to the farm I was so pleased to witness crocus buds and pointed iris leaves popping up in the front garden. Surely Spring cannot be far away.

Our first Open Farm Day will be Sunday May 5th from noon to 2 p.m. We hope to showcase our many different gardens at the farm this year. With this theme we plan to make bouquets to celebrate Spring and the opening of the Farmstead. We will also hold a flower hunt day to test visitors' floral knowledge.

If flowers are not your interest that day visitors can also tour the barn, visitor center and the Woodbridge house. In the barn visitors will be surprised at the new exhibit lighting. Folks can now see up to the rafters, a truly wondrous sight! They don't make them like that anymore!

So come and visit us in May and return often. We love to talk history and show off all the farm has to offer. If you are interested and want to have a fun filled summer, join the Friends of the Farm group as a volunteer. For more information call the History Center (860-647-9983) or email Peggy Newton at peggynewton47@att.net or call (860-305-7310).

The Cheneys and the North End

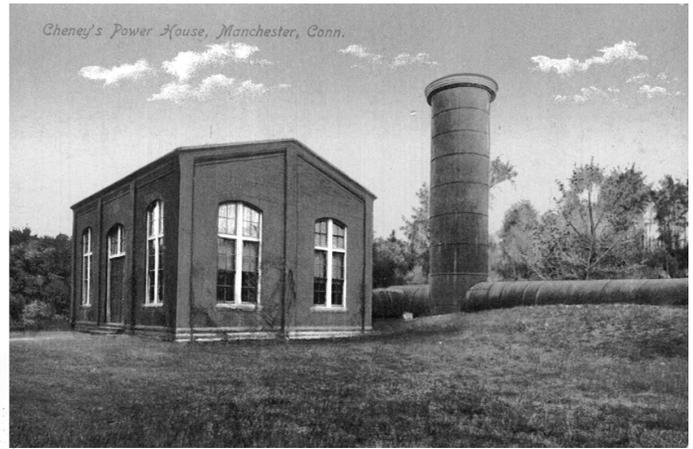
By Jamie Donahue

The history of Manchester is not only divided by century or decade, but also on geographical location.. While the southern part of town was for many years predominantly farms and fields, the northern section was known for its industry. The Hilliard Woolen Mills prospered and achieved great success. The



Union Cotton Mill erected a large stone mill building and provided extensive housing for its workers and the area near Union Pond. The Oakland Paper Mill was a major employer for many years. And in the mid 1800's the railroad linking Hartford and points east was built through the northern part of town and Depot Square became the major transportation hub for passengers and freight and where the Cheney's own railroad connected to the main line beginning in 1869.

As the Cheneys developed their mills in South Manchester, they came to rely on the power available from the Hockanum River, which passes through north Manchester. Cheney Brothers acquired the abandoned Union Mill complex in June 1901 together with the water privileges, to be able to utilize the



water power harnessed by the dam at Union Pond. They also acquired the site of the former Keeney Paper Mill on North Main St. beside the Hockanum River and converted it to a hydroelectric power station. The electricity generated by the Westinghouse dynamos was transmitted to a substation in the southern part of town and used to power the new velvet mills and carpenter shop.

To channel the water from Union Pond to the generators a large diameter pipeline was constructed from the dam to the power station, part of it running parallel to North Main St. This pipe, in later years after the mills shut down, was a source of amusement and a target for mischievousness for neighborhood kids. After many years of carrying water, the pipe began to rust and some holes developed in it. (Some of the holes were made and enlarged by would be hydraulic engineers) During the winter spectacular formations of ice developed along the pipeline from the water spurting out.

The purchase of the Union Mill buildings also provided materials including stone used in the construction of some of the mill buildings in the southern part of town.

We Will Miss

Russell Inzinga who donated the contents of his barbershop to the Society when he retired several years ago. Russell was a licensed barber for over 80 years and his barbershop was located at the corner of Spruce and Oak Streets for many years. He served during World War II in the Merchant Marine and later supported many community activities including sponsoring a boy's basketball team which was the Midget League champs in 1968.

Elsie Tartaglia was a long time member of the Society. She was an active fund raiser for several local causes including the Heart Association and MARC. Our condolences to her family and her friends, Nate, Mike and Steve Agostinelli.

The Manchester Fire Department and the North End

The Manchester Fire Department (Eighth District) and the entire North End of town has a long and storied history. Our historical society is in the process of telling much more of that story and exhibiting some of our recently acquired artifacts.

Anyone who has visited our History Center has seen the 24 feet wide panoramic photo of Depot Square taken in 1923. That shows what was the business center of town for many years, thanks in large part to the arrival of the railroad. Locating the depot there was made possible by the donation of land for it by several North End businessmen. Before the

railroad there were already several mills in that part of town, thanks to the Hockanum River. These included a number of paper and textile mills. Even the Cheneys connected their mills to the main line by constructing their own railroad (the South Manchester Railroad Co.).

The first fire department in town was established in 1888 in the Eighth District and for 135 years protected the north end while maintaining its mostly volunteer status until last year when it merged with the larger Manchester Fire-Rescue-EMS. Now some artifacts and photos have been donated to the historical society which will be incorporated into a new exhibit highlighting the extent of manufacturing and the importance of fire protection.

We are still looking for artifacts, photos and other memorabilia from the North End to enhance the exhibit and preserve for future generations. If you wish to share or donate, please contact our office.



MANCHESTER FIRE HOUSE AND APPARATUS



Calendar of Upcoming 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 May when it will be open Sunday May 5 and June when it will be open Saturday June 8 and Sunday June 22). The Farmstead includes a ca. 1830 farm house, 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 describes 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.

Native American series of talks by Steve Penny. Held the third Sunday in March, April and May at 1:00 p.m. at the History Center. These talks will discuss the story of the local tribes before European contact, the 40 year period between the Pequot War and King Philip's War and the period after King Philip's War and its devastating consequences for the tribes of Southern New England including the Podunks of the Manchester area. These events will be free for members and children under 16. The fee for non-members will be \$5.

Wednesday, March 13 Genealogy meeting 10 a.m. to noon History Center

Sunday, March 17 Native American talk (part 1) 1 p.m. History Center

Wednesday, April 10 Genealogy meeting 10 a.m. to noon History Center

Thursday, April 11 "Women in the Military" 7:00 p.m. History Center
The Orford Parish Pitkin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will present a panel discussion by eight women who are active duty or veteran service members. They will discuss their experiences as women who served in the United States

Armed Services both domestically and abroad. For more information you may contact Chapter Regent Judi Bigda at 860-214-2788 or via email at judibig@gmail.com

Sunday, April 14 Native American talk (part 2) 1 p.m. History Center

Saturday, May 4 Old Manchester Museum Open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sunday, May 5 Woodbridge Farmstead Open noon to 2 p.m.

Wednesday, May 8 Genealogy meeting 10 a.m. to noon History Center

Sunday, May 12 Cheney Homestead Open 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, May 19 Native American talk (part 3) 1 p.m. History Center

Sunday, June 9 Woodbridge Farmstead Open noon to 2 p.m.

Sunday, June 9 Cheney Homestead Open 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Donors Give Us Life

Our donors keep us alive and able to carry out the many functions of the Society. Without your financial support we would not be able to keep the lights and heat on, the insurance and utilities paid, the artifacts cataloged and cared for, and visitors and school tours welcomed to our museums, history center, Cheney Homestead and Woodbridge Farmstead. These donations during the year 2023 were made through the Annual Fund drive, membership renewals, memorial gifts, and individual interests. Thank you for your generosity.

Although we strive to compile an accurate list, it may happen that a donor was inadvertently not included in this list. If we left someone out, please let us know so that we can recognize the donor in our next issue.

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Cheney Homestead News

By Kevin Drake

The sky is the limit when you have a roof over your head. We're thrilled to announce plans for the replacement of our wood shingle roof in 2024. Be on the lookout for how you can help with our commitment to keeping the Homestead beautiful, safe and here for years to come.

2023 saw the development and opening of two new exhibit rooms. The Women of the Cheney Family room exhibit celebrates the contributions and achievements of multiple generations of this important community family. The Ingenuity and Industry room exhibit showcases the Cheney's ingenuity over several generations from the mid to late 1700s as clockmakers, smiths and important members of early Manchester – adding insight to how the Cheney brothers and the mills came to be. Come see the wonderful new additions to the house.

May 12 marks our season opening with monthly 2nd Sunday Open Houses. Whether you're seeking a peaceful retreat or a taste of history, we invite you to experience the charm of our colonial homestead. Come explore our scenic grounds and immerse yourself in the timeless beauty of rural living while learning about this important Manchester family.

Stay Connected: Follow us on Facebook or through the Society's website for the latest updates and events. We look forward to welcoming you soon!



New Members Who Joined in 2023

We extend a welcome to the following new members who joined during last year. We hope that you will visit our properties and join us for our upcoming events.

From Manchester

Judi Bigda
Dr. Maria W. Cruz
Autumn-Lynn Daub
Rebecca Fiske
Kristen Fournier
Edward Giard
Frances Giard
M. Louise Krippenstapel
Shaira Euxine Munoz Lyog
Adam and Lori McEvoy
David and Maria McEvoy
Bonnie McHugh
David Weldon Miner

From Elsewhere

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Kevin M. Drake
Daryl Dwyer
Kathy Begg Kiernan
Arthur "Tom" McKay
Susan O. Nedd
Steve Norris
Norma O. Paggioli
Megan Pilla
Linda Richardson
The Simon Konover Company
Dr. Ines D. Blackburn
Cathy Freeman
Clifford Hall
Brian McAuley
Henry R. Minor
Glastonbury
Colchester
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South Windsor
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