



“50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

# The Courier

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## With a Grain of Salt – Trolleys

by Bob Kanehl

I spent this past summer at the Connecticut Trolley Museum in East Windsor (CTTM) learning to drive the vehicles. I discovered the electrical engineering truly hasn't changed over the 100 years of trolley development. The Electric Trolleys of 1890 operated on the same principal as the trolleys of today.

It is the outward appearance that has changed, as well as the use. At one time it was a daily occurrence for residents of Manchester to travel around town, to Hartford or Rockville on the trolley. They were the buses of their days.

Our system was started by Wickham and Chapman. Tracks ran the length of Main Street (North to South, Center Street from the Green Area to East Hartford, and connections merged in several locations for trips outside of Manchester. Eventually Manchester's tracks became part of the Hartford to Rockville Line, a branch of which is maintained by the CTTM in East Windsor to provide a small reenactment for the visitors and drivers.

The Connecticut Company would take over the local tracks in the 1930s to 40s. This company would convert the trolleys lines into bus routes still servicing the town.

Two things struck me while at the CTTM this summer. The first was that many trolley companies developed amusement parks that could only be reached by riding the trolley. In East Windsor it was Piney Ridge Park famed for its bouncing dance floor and the baseball park used by early Yankee greats as an alternative playing site when the New York team was not playing at home.

Manchester had its Laurel Park. Swan boats, long walks, a merry-go-round, and zoo animals met the trolley riders. Riding in the open trolley cars in the summer months, speeding along at 25 miles per-hour, cut the summer heat almost as much as the beer awaiting the riders at the park.

Our park was located on the Manchester border with East Hartford, just about across the street from Wickham Park of today.

The second fascinating fact I discovered was that trolleys were the high school buses of their days. Many students traveled to and from their local high schools aboard the vehicles. If this is true, then Manchester students first used the trolley to get themselves to the North End where they took a special train to Hartford to attend Hartford Public. Later they would have traveled the Main Street line to the large brick building built in 1904 across from Bennet Academy.

The story at the CTTM is that on snow days, students had to dress, troughed through the snow to the trolley stop. If the car came with a flag on the back, there was no school, and the students troughed home. Maybe that is the start of my father's saying: "I walked to school up-hill both ways through the snow."

One question remains at the CTTM and also in my mind. It is for any who traveled to school on the trolley – what color was the flag?

Railroad and trolley rules have specific messages for a red, blue, and green flag.

Any Ideas?



*The four trolley lines meet at the Town Center*



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## The Courier

*A newsletter of the  
Manchester Historical Society*

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## The New Research Library at the History Center

by Janet Prior and Kris Miller

Some exciting news is happening at the History Center! Coming in the near future is our newly revised Research/Genealogy Library. At the end of June, a Research Library Planning Subcommittee was formed at the Manchester Historical Society. They have been meeting monthly to bring to our members and the public a library whose vision is to be the premier resource for information about the history and heritage of Manchester from 1633 to the present. A collection of historical and genealogical resources relating to the town of Manchester will be represented. Among these sources that will be available include town directories, maps, books, historic pictures, postcards, videos, cemetery records, oral histories, genealogical charts, family group sheets and other resource materials.

The subcommittee is reaching out to you, our members and the public, to help us fill our shelves and library with any books pertaining to the history of Manchester, old letters, diaries, family trees and family histories of Manchester residents, or anything fitting that would enhance the research library. The subcommittee is also looking for monetary donations to help furnish the library with library shelving, map cases, and any other needed accessory. Your donations would be greatly appreciated and may be brought to the History Center at 175 Pine St. attention "Research Library Planning Subcommittee".

At this time the subcommittee is in the early stages of cataloging books, designing, and structuring the library for what will hopefully be the Grand Opening in June 2019. If you have been looking to volunteer and the research library sounds of interest to you, please contact Kris Miller at 860-432-0307 for more information about joining the subcommittee. Please help spread the word about this exciting new endeavor.

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## SAVE THESE DATES!

**September 30 – Dancing With the Celebrities**

**October 6 – Cheney District Walk Tour**

**October 13 – Historic House Tour**

**October 14 – Homestead Harvest**

**October 28 – Meet the Woodbridge Family**

**November 11 – Manchester Veterans**

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

**Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.**  
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## 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](mailto:info@manchesterhistory.org).

## 2018 Preservation Award Winners

by Susan Barlow

Five Manchester properties received recognition for their owners' efforts to preserve the historic character of their buildings. The awards were presented by the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District Commission, an advisory commission appointed by the town to promote, encourage, and secure the preservation and rehabilitation of the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District. The awards were presented at a May 25 reception at the Town Hall. May is National Preservation Month, and the Commission has presented local awards since 2001. Commission members and Mayor Moran thanked the award winners for their work to preserve Manchester's history and charm. The purpose of the awards is to recognize property owners who "have maintained their property in a manner that preserves its historic values and character." The Commission looked at properties throughout town, searching for examples of buildings restored to condition similar to original.

The 2018 winners are:

1. A 1926 wood-shingled building at 113 East Center Street, owned by the law firm of Falkenstein, Meggers, Paul and Robinson, P.C. since 1984 and formerly the home of the owner of Manchester Modes, a Manchester clothing designer and manufacturer.
2. A 1924 Sears Craftsman-style bungalow at 390 East Center Street, owned by Jeffrey Craig. The house has recently undergone an exterior renovation with new paint colors.
3. A 1933 Cape Cod style house with Colonial Revival influences at 117 Princeton Street, residence of the McCaulla family, who have worked to preserve wood shingles and also many very old trees on the property.
4. A rustic 1949 building at 650 Gardner Street – Camp Merrie-Wood, owned by Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Inc., on land donated by the Cheney family in 1947. The building was constructed in 1949 by students at Howell Cheney Regional Technical School. It has recently undergone exterior and interior renovations and repainting.
5. An 1876 residential building at 195 Spruce Street, the former Russell Barber Shop, owned by Patricia Tantillo Fox and Theron C. DeBella. Theron's son plans to open a barber shop at this location. The property has new landscaping, paint, and a sign identifying it as "The Russell."

Past winners of preservation awards are listed on the Town's website.

## Silk Vault Building Update

Over the past few months we have taken steps to maintain and improve our historic silk vault building, with an eye to making it look more like it did when first built nearly 100 years ago, and more importantly to make it weather proof to preserve its structural integrity.

Crosskey Architects was engaged to carry out a condition assessment of the building and make recommendations for repairs needed both short term and longer term. An extensive report was completed in July with priority ratings assigned to each of the recommended actions to be taken. The critical condition with a recommended action within one year concerns the steel railings on the second and third floor balconies. The most important condition with a serious rating with recommended action within three years concerned the roof, which is a concrete slab with a covering of several layers of felt and reflective foil.

The board has decided to address the roof condition as soon as possible and is in the process of getting proposals for that repair work. Hopefully, the roof will be repaired before the end of winter, with timing dependent on funding. Most of the ground floor storage units have been rented but two are still available. Several are also available on the second floor, with restricted access. The Society is using three of the units on the upper floors to store some of our artifacts and extra office furniture and equipment. The floor area of each unit is 600 sq. ft. If you wish to rent a unit please contact our main office.

## "Murder" Was a Huge Success

The recent production by author Walt Scadden of "Murder In Manchester" was an overwhelming success. Two presentations were necessary to accommodate all who wanted to see it. A big part of the success was the support of many sponsors and donors who contributed to the production.

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# Cheney Homestead News

Our summer is wrapping up at the Cheney Homestead, and it has been a summer of blessings and of “uninvited visitors” in the garden.

The Homestead Art Gallery was completed in June, and a wonderful dedication took place with special words given by Mayor Moran and members of five Cheney families in attendance. Research and collection work continues as we gather more works of John, Seth, Margaret and Ednah Dow Cheney.



*Cheney Homestead art gallery: Part of the new art gallery dedicated to Seth and John Cheney*

The gardens have fared less well this summer due to the erratic weather, and also from brother deer, brother groundhog, squirrel and raccoon. Lessons have been learned as nature has told all her children where the good food is! Potatoes are doing well, as are the winter squash.

We are preparing for an eventful Fall, and please join us when you can!

## Cheney Homestead - Fall Events

**Sunday, Sept 9th** 1pm-4pm - “Back to School 1751” Join us at the Keeney Schoolhouse for an 18th century school lesson, then tour the Cheney Homestead and try weaving and rag rug making. Also, visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John & Seth Cheney. Donations welcomed.

**Saturday, Sept 15th**, 10am-1pm - Open house & outdoor activities with Building Healthy Families organization. Hayrides, outdoor games and tours of the Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse.

**October - Friday Night Campfires**, 6pm-8pm (canceled if rain). Popcorn and stories around a campfire on the big lawn of the Cheney Homestead. Hear colonial and Native American tales, and haunting stories from early America and our area!

**Sunday, October 14th**, Noon - 4pm - Homestead Harvest! Blacksmithing and Horseshoeing (farrier) demonstration, open fire camp cooking, hayrides, horseshoe throwing competition and other period outdoor activities. Tour the Cheney Homestead & Kinney Schoolhouse and try weaving and rag rug making. Also, visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John and Seth Cheney. Donations welcomed.

**Sunday, November 11th**, 1pm-4pm - Open House and “The Life & Art of John Cheney, 1801-1882”. A 2pm talk will focus on the life of John Cheney, followed by a demonstration and explanation of the art of engraving by MCC art professor, Barbara Solomon. Tour the 1785 homestead and visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John and Seth Cheney. Donations welcomed

**Saturday, December 1st** - Holiday Open House. View the Cheney Homestead, beautifully decorated for the holidays by the Manchester Garden Club. Tour the 1785 homestead and visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John and Seth Cheney. Donations welcomed

**Friday, December 7th**, 6pm-8pm - A lightly dramatized fireside reading of “A Christmas Carol” at the Cheney Homestead, followed by singing of carols and sharing of holiday cheer! Reservations required.

**Sunday, December 9th**, 1pm-4pm - A fireside reading of “A Christmas Carol” at the Cheney Homestead, followed by singing of carols and sharing of holiday cheer! Tour the 1785 homestead and visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John and Seth Cheney. Donations welcomed.

## **We Will Miss.....**

**Marshall Lamenzo** was a long time member of the Society. He was active in local politics and taught in East Windsor where he resided many years after growing up in Manchester. He also worked for the Ford Motor Company. His hobbies included model trains and classic cars. Over the years he owned over fifty collectible cars.

**Donald Paine** was a mechanical engineer of the first order. Don served in the Navy during World War II and later worked for United Aircraft Corporation for 40 years. He was a tinkerer and problem solver. For many years he drove an orange colored electric car around town, long before electric cars became popular. In recent years he helped us make operable our electric wheel chair at the History Center.

## Calendar of Events –

- ▶ **The Old Manchester Museum**, at 126 Cedar Street, is open the first Saturday of the month, May through mid-December, and by appointment. The hours are 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. There are exhibits of local history including Cheney Brothers, the Spencer repeating rifle, Pitkin Glass Works and the Manchester Sports Hall of Fame. The research facility is available year round. For a research appointment, please phone 860-647-9742. To visit the museum during closed hours please phone 860-647-9983 for an appointment.
- ▶ **The History Center and museum store**, is at 175 Pine Street at the corner of Forest Street. In the Museum Store you can purchase local-history items. There is also a study area where visitors can conduct research by browsing through old Manchester directories and books. There's an exhibit of the Russell barber shop, with barber pole, and vintage barbering tools and furniture, as well as an exhibit about Cheney silks. Please check to make sure the building is open before coming! 860-647-9983. Parking for events is available along Pleasant St., the Forest St. parking lot (no on street parking is allowed) and the small lot north of the History Center.
- ▶ **The Woodbridge Barn and grounds**, at 495 Middle Tpke East, is open May through October on the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 12 noon until 2 p.m. Parking is available at the Senior Center parking lot and along Middle Tpke. between the Senior Center and the farmstead.
- ▶ **The Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse** at 106 Hartford Rd. are open the second Sunday of the month year round (weather permitting) from 1 until 4p.m.

**Sunday, September 23 at 1:00 p.m., "Murder in Manchester, the Great Silk Heist" a new play** -- at the Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street -- This dramatic play tells the story of the January 1919 attempted silk heist in Manchester, and the murder of Cheney security chief Bill Madden. Author Walt Scadden wrote this play as well as a book on the topic. The public is invited to this approximately 90-minute program. Local actors will portray Bill Madden, Police Chief Sam Gordon, and other residents in this Manchester drama. \$3 for members; \$5 for non-members; FREE for veterans and for children under 16.

**Sunday, September 23 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Open House at the Woodbridge barn and grounds**, weather permitting. Free. Visit the restored eighteenth century barn and the grounds of the Society's Woodbridge property. The Farmstead is located at Manchester Green, near the intersection of East Middle Turnpike with Woodbridge Street. The Woodbridge farmstead is on the National Register of Historic Places. There are tour guides to describe the barn, and displays of farm tools and equipment. The farm was donated to the Manchester Historical Society by Ray and Thelma Woodbridge in 1998.

**Sunday, September 30, "Dancing with the Celebrities, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.** at Cheney Hall, 177 Hartford Road, Manchester. Featuring local celebrities, presenting a special dance with their partners. Instructors courtesy of Arthur Murray Dance Centers of Vernon, Connecticut. Special guest and Mistress of Ceremonies, Barbara Cheney, who is an award-winning ballroom dancer. Wine, beer, soda, and water will be available for purchase. Come enjoy the fun and festivity. You can "vote" for your favorite dancer by purchasing \$1 tickets. A fun and enjoyable event for all ages. Teacup auction with wonderful local items to bid on. Plus, buy \$1 tickets to vote for your favorite dancer! Admission \$15 for ages 13 to adult, and \$5 for ages 12 and under.

**Friday, October 5 and all October 2018 Fridays from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Campfire Storytelling** at the Cheney Homestead. Popcorn, cider, and stories around a campfire on the big lawn of the Homestead. Hear colonial and Native American tales, and haunting stories from early America and our area. Stories appropriate for all ages in the first hour, and getting scarier in the second hour as we approach Halloween! Rain cancels.

**Saturday, October 6, Old Manchester Museum open from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.,**

**Saturday, October 6, the 42nd annual walking tour of the Cheney Historic District with commentary by Dr. Chris Paulin** of Manchester Community College, 1:00 p.m. Free. Popular history walk starting at Fuss & O'Neill, 146 Hartford Road (plenty of parking in their lot west of the building). Find out about those huge brick buildings that remain from the days of the world famous silk mills. Who worked there? Who owned the mills? Where did workers and owners live? This event is co-sponsored by Manchester Community College and the Manchester Historical Society. We'll see

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Cheney Hall, the former silk mills, the location of the defunct South Manchester Railroad, the Loom exhibit at the former Cheney machine shop, neighborhoods of worker housing, and Washington School. The walk takes about two hours with a distance of a mile or so. No rain date, so bring umbrellas if weather is iffy. Extreme weather cancels. Donations to the Manchester Historical Society are welcome

**Sunday, October 7 at 1:00 p.m., walking tour of West Cemetery** -- led by Ruth Shapleigh-Brown, founder of the Connecticut Gravestone Network. Save the date. More details to come.

**Saturday, October 13 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Historic House Tour**, visiting six houses in Manchester, fundraiser for the Manchester CT Sculpture Project. A fabulous opportunity to see the first floor and grounds of six historic Manchester houses not usually open to the public and also to support the creation of a bronze sculpture of Joe McCluskey, world-famous runner and native son. Tickets available at Woodland Gardens, E.M. Dougan Art & Framing on Main St. and at the Town Hall Customer Service at 41 Center Street. \$35 in advance. \$40 on the tour date -- tickets may be purchased at 50 Forest Street, one of the tour homes. There'll be music and a fabulous silent auction. Rain or shine.

**Sunday, October 14 from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m., Homestead Harvest!** At the Cheney Homestead. Blacksmithing and horseshoeing (farrier) demonstration, open fire camp cooking, hayrides, horseshoe-throwing competition, and other period outdoor activities. Tour the Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse and try weaving and rag-rug making. Visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John and Seth Cheney. Guided tours include history of the building and its contents, and of the family who lived there.

**Sunday, October 14 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Open House at the Woodbridge barn and grounds**, weather permitting. Free. Visit the restored eighteenth century barn and the grounds of the Society's Woodbridge property. The Woodbridge farmstead is on the National Register of Historic Places. There are tour guides to describe the barn, and displays of farm tools and equipment.

**Sunday, October 28 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Open House and "Meet the Woodbridge Family"**, weather permitting, at the Woodbridge barn and grounds, Free. Visit the restored eighteenth-century

barn and the grounds of the Society's Woodbridge property. The Woodbridge farmstead is on the National Register of Historic Places. There are tour guides to describe the barn, and displays of farm tools and equipment. The farm was donated to the Manchester Historical Society by Ray and Thelma Woodbridge in 1998.

**Saturday, November 3, Old Manchester Museum open from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

**Sunday, November 4 at 1:00 p.m., "Native Americans"** -- program by George Ducharme, award-winning community activist. At the History Center. Manchester Community College distinguished alumnus and professor, George has been an advocate of inclusivity in the community. \$3 for members; \$5 for non-members; free for children under 16.

**Sunday, November 11 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Open House and at 2:00 p.m. "The Life & Art of John Cheney, 1801-1882"**. At the Cheney Homestead. The 2:00 p.m. talk will focus on the life of John Cheney, followed by a demonstration and explanation of the art of engraving by an art professor from Manchester Community College. Tour the 1785 homestead and visit the new Homestead Art Gallery to see beautiful works of art by John and Seth Cheney.

**Sunday, November 11 at 1:00 p.m., "Manchester Veterans" program on the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War I.** At the History Center. An opportunity to hear some interesting stories from veterans of Vietnam, Korea, and World War II, as several long-time residents discuss how Manchester influenced their military service, and how their military service affected their subsequent life in Manchester. Veterans are invited to bring a Manchester-connected story to share at the end of the program. \$3 for members; \$5 for non-members; FREE for veterans and for children under 16. The World War I exhibit at the Old Manchester Museum will also be open today from noon to 4 pm.

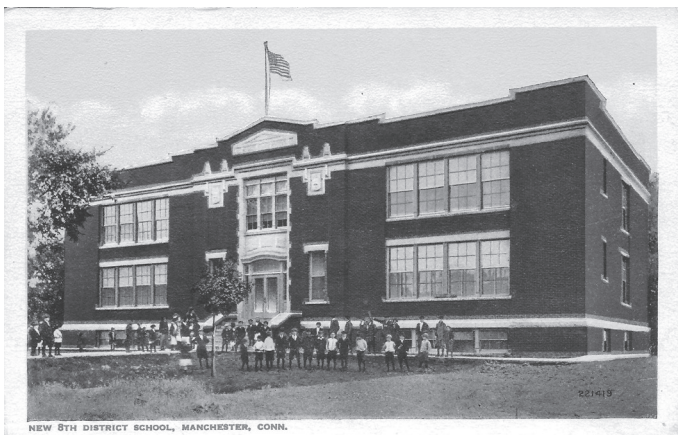
**Saturday, December 1, Old Manchester Museum open from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**



# Robertson School Celebrates Its History

by Dave Smith

Throughout the winter and spring of this year a dedicated group of Robertson 4th graders spent hours researching the history of their school under the guidance of their teacher Regina Gatmaitan. Poring through old school reports, pictures, period report cards and newspaper articles from the Historical Society archives, the group delved into the rich history of the Eighth District School and its successor buildings that eventually became the present Robertson School. The core group of students who did much of the work consisted of Afeef, Christina, Dezrene and Samy. They produced a Power Point history of the school and described how the present school was named after John T. Robertson, of Bon Ami Soap fame, why the school mascot has been the Robertson Bees for many years (part of the old North End was known as the Beehive) and when the former and present buildings were constructed and added to.



*Robertson School about 1920*

Robertson Day was declared on June 19 and was celebrated with a special flag that had previously flown over the United States Capitol which was flown at the school. The students created a time capsule (currently stored at the Historical Society) which will be opened in 25 years. Boy Scout Joshua Duvall created benches for the front of the school as part of his Eagle Project.

As a lasting memorial of the current students and staff, a concrete “beehive” was cast into the front yard of the school. Each student and staff member colored a small stone and

added his/her name and these were cast into the beehive.

The students who did not graduate this year from Robertson are now integrated into other Manchester elementary schools, including 200 at Waddell and 45 at Buckley. The fifth graders are now at Bennet Academy. The Robertson School buildings are now occupied by students from Verplanck, as their school is now undergoing a total renovation.



*Students and staff spell out “BEES” on Robertson Day*

## Ask The Archivist

by Dave Smith

We recently received a question from several students at Manchester High School about the origin of the high school’s Indian mascot. They wanted to know why the high school mascot is the Indians.

After some research through our collection of Manchester High School archives we discovered the following:

For many years the local newspaper, the Manchester Evening Herald, devoted one full page each week to Manchester High School news and happenings. This began in September 1933 and continued until May 1989, a run of over 55 years!

The first mention of Indians in connection with the high school was in the December 8, 1949 issue of the “High School World”. The article began: “Heap big change, you betchum! Manchester High School has decided to call itself the Indians. This name was decided upon by the student body that they might have a mascot.” Cheerleaders introduced new cheers at an assembly of the students.

It went on to say “as the student response to the nickname proved enthusiastic, the cheerleaders are sure that “We will scalp all other teams.”

If you have a question that we might be able to answer, please email to [info@manchesterhistory.org](mailto:info@manchesterhistory.org). We will try our best to provide an answer.



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