



# The Courier

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## Reproducing Electa’s 1825 Prized Flannel Cloth

by Susan Scoville, Cheney Homestead weaver

In 1825, Electa Woodbridge Cheney won 2nd place at the Hartford Agricultural Fair for her 36 inch wide flannel, woven at the Homestead. Beginning this year, the Cheney Homestead Museum, with the skill and knowledge of the Homestead weavers, is reproducing the flannel on our own loom as a visible example of the art, ingenuity and early American life-skills practiced at the Homestead for two centuries.



The mother of sons who would eventually establish the famous Cheney Brothers Silk Mills, Electa was the daughter of Deodatus Woodbridge, owner of the Woodbridge Tavern at Manchester Green. Growing up just after the American Revolution, Electa would have learned how to spin and weave, along with other essential skills, from her mother or other female relatives. It’s likely that Electa passed on some of this knowledge, and imparted advice, to her sons as they founded their silk weaving mill.

Though the Industrial Revolution was well underway in New England by 1825, everyday textile production continued in many homes, and most weaving was done by women (fancy weaving such as coverlets continued to be dominated by men). Agricultural / cattle fairs which began in Massachusetts in 1812, quickly spread in New England, and by the 1820s, it was common to see competitions for “household manufactures” (hand woven textiles) such as the one that Electa entered.

*Continued on page 3*

## Herald Digitization Project Update

We are happy to report that we are now over halfway to our goal of \$10,000 to pay for the digitization of the Manchester Herald newspapers that we have on microfilm in our archives. We have received contributions both large and small and are grateful for all of them. When completed, anyone anywhere with access to the web will be able to access the Herald and carry out their own research or just browse the old news. If you have not already done so, please help us reach our goal. Thank you.



**This issue contains two articles of historic interest that occurred exactly 50 and 100 years ago!**

## Annual Member Meeting

**Sunday, September 22, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. at the History Center**

Please be sure to attend our Annual Member meeting. Look for your proxy and invitation in your mailbox. Please return the proxy if you cannot attend in person.

**Save the Date!**  
**Sunday, September 22 - 1:00 pm**  
Annual Member Meeting



## Drop Us A Line...

You can contact us at  
info@manchesterhistory.org or  
President Jack Prior at  
president@manchesterhistory.org

## The Courier

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Manchester Historical Society*

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## The Seasons at Woodbridge Farmstead

*by Peggy Newton, Farmstead Chair*

Down on the Woodbridge Farm we have had a busy spring and summer. We started in May with a duck race in Bigelow Brook, which runs through the back of the farm. There was a visit from our friends at Imagination Playground. The playground was set up with giant foam building blocks of various shapes which tickled the children as well as the adults.

One of the highlights was a visit by kids (baby goats) in June. Both the adults and children cuddled them and watched them play and eat the weeds in the gardens! Other events were held including an egg hunt (with prizes), ice cream making and tasting, and the planting of sunflower seeds. Our most recent event was a display and demonstration of women's crafts and farm tasks as would have been experienced in the 1800's. It was held to spotlight the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote.



A stand-out event was a visit from Bruce Perry, our expert heritage tool collector, who demonstrated some of the many tools in his collection. His what-is-it tool quiz stumped most everyone who guessed the use of some of his tools. Children had the opportunity to carry water with two pails on a pole balanced on the shoulders. Plans for this fall involve scarecrows, pumpkins and other surprises. Anyone wishing to volunteer or see a special event at the Farm may call the History Center (860-647-9983) during the week (Tuesday through Friday) or Peggy Newton (860-649-4420).

**Your ad could be here!**

*Contact us for details*

## 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).

## Reproducing Electa's 1825 Prized Flannel Cloth

*continued from page 1*

While flannel today is usually a cotton fabric, in Electa's time it was made from wool, and cotton flannel was known as flannelette. The wool used in Electa's flannel could have come from sheep owned by the family or raised nearby. The sheep would have been sheared, and the wool would then be cleaned, sorted, and carded before being spun into yarn. She also may have had assistance from neighbors in spinning the large amount of yarn needed to create the flannel – "changing work," or reciprocal labor, was common in New England. In order to save time, the Homestead weavers will use a commercially produced wool yarn, which was beginning to be available in Electa's time.

Once the yarn was spun, it could have been dyed before being woven into cloth. Many flannels were woven in the natural color of the wool, especially if the flannel was meant to be used as a lining in clothing. The Homestead has decided to use the flannel as a lightweight blanket in Electa's bedroom, so the cloth will be mostly natural colored wool, with a few dyed stripes along the length of the cloth.

Flannel was generally woven as a plain weave (aka tabby) cloth, though some flannels may have been produced as twill. The Homestead weavers are currently weaving a small sample to test the size of the yarn, as well as the weave structure. Once the weaving of the sample is complete, they will determine how to finish the cloth. An 1817 book on weaving and dyeing discusses flannels for fulled cloth. Fulling (which wets and shrinks the cloth, making it heavier and denser) was another service that was offered by mills to home weavers. If the flannel was still a natural white, it could also be sent to a fulling mill to be "dressed," or dyed. Once fulled, a flannel may also have been brushed in order to raise the nap, making the cloth softer and warmer. This could be done by hand with a traditional teasel brush, or sent out to a mill.

In a household with 9 children, Electa's flannel would have been used, reused and recycled until there was nothing left. We hope our historic reproduction flannel will honor Electa's creativity, skill and artistry.

## Road Race Programs Sought

As we have been cataloging the items in our Manchester Road Race collection we have discovered that programs for several years are not available. We wish to complete the collection so that all years are represented in the collection and available for researchers and others interested in the history of the Road Race.



It appears that the first year a program was issued was 1954. We are not aware of any programs that may have been printed before that. If anyone knows of an earlier year we would be most grateful to learn about it and acquire a copy for the collection.

To complete the collection we would like to add the following years: 1958, 1972, 1974, 1982, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1995. If you have any of those years and would like to donate them (or loan them to us for copying) we would greatly appreciate it.

Please call us at 860-647-9983 to let us know.



## We Will Miss ...

**Edith Schoell** was a long time member of our Manchester Historical Society and a willing and frequent volunteer. She often hosted the third graders and other visitors to our museum on Cedar St. and enjoyed interacting with the guests. Although a somewhat private person, she was very active in the Manchester Grange, where she held many positions over the years. During her career she worked overseas with the U.S. Foreign Service and traveled in the U.S. and to other foreign lands. Edith was a beautiful soul and we will miss her presence.

# 100th Anniversary of 19th Amendment

It was in 1919 that the U.S. Senate passed the 19th Amendment, granting women's voting rights. On August 26, 1920, the amendment was ratified by a three-quarter majority of the states.

The Manchester Historical Society will welcome Mary Ann Handley on Sunday, October 27 at 1:00 p.m., to talk about this anniversary, bringing in a local perspective. The talk will be at the History Center, 175 Pine Street, Manchester; \$3 for members, \$5 for non-members; children under 16 free. The Town Troubadour will present music on the topic.

Meanwhile, here are some Manchester-related events regarding the time-consuming process of bringing about voting equality.

**January 1874**, woman's suffrage was the topic at Cheney Hall, with activists Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) and Isabella Beecher Hooker (1822-1907) speaking out for voting rights. Susan B. Anthony had been arrested, found guilty, and fined in 1872 for voting in a presidential election, and in the next couple of years traveled extensively to promote equal rights. Time magazine later called her 1873 speech one of the "Top Ten" greatest speeches of all time. • In a somewhat humorous letter to the editor after the event, J.B.O. (possibly James B. Olcott, 1830-1920) describes his reluctance to attend, his suspicion of Mrs. Hooker and Miss Anthony, against whom "I have been prejudiced...the newspapers so belied and be-susaned her; who could help being prejudiced! She turns out just such an intelligent, straight-forward, honest woman as every man would like to leave in charge of his concerns while he gallops away upon business and legislative adventures. ... Her talk is as plain and trustworthy as herself; argument, anecdote, and facts that kept us whist with attention all the while she was speaking. She neither scolds nor gives us 'baby-talk' and is altogether quite difficult to get around or overcome with her cogent reasons." J.B.O. goes on to say, "Mrs. Hooker...talks to her audience as she might to a welcome guest at her own breakfast table, simply, earnestly, and charmingly. With a force, too, as of one's own convictions. It is a touch of the best society to hear her, that will harm none of us. Our lecture was a free one, thanks to the owners of the hall [Editor's note: Cheney brothers owned the hall], and there should be liberality enough wherever these women hold forth to make the remaining ones so." – Hartford Courant, 1/25/1874

**January 1915**. "A mass meeting of suffrage workers was held last evening in Odd Fellows' Hall. Rev. Charles E. Hesselgrave was chairman. Mrs. Carlos F. Stoddard of New Haven was the principal speaker." [Editor's note, Charles Everett Hesselgrave was pastor of the Center Congregational Church, which had 400 members at the time. Mrs. Carlos F. Stoddard was a leader in Connecticut's Equal Franchise League.] – Hartford Courant, 1/29/1915

**November 1916**. "The regular meeting of the South Manchester Equal Franchise League was held at the home of Miss Mary Cheney on Hartford Road... Many new members were received, among them Dr. and Mrs. Charles E. Hesselgrave and Rev. Charles Calderwood [Editor's note: Charles M. Calderwood was pastor of the Second (North) Congregational Church, which had 302 members at the time.] The president appointed a committee to arrange for the regular meetings...as follows: Mrs. John A. Hood, Mrs. F. B. Cheney, Miss Ellen Bockus, Mrs. George Chapman, Mrs. Mathias Spiess and Mrs. Edward E. Fish." – Hartford Courant, 11/8/1916.

**December 1916**. There was a controversy about the Equal Franchise League's free use of the high school auditorium, or "hall," which was traditionally granted by the school board to town organizations. However, Howell Cheney, acting as chair of the Ninth District School Board, imposed a \$10 rental fee. At the Equal Franchise League's meeting held December 4, "it is probable that there will be a statement concerning the action of the school board on the use of the hall for their meeting last week." – Hartford Courant, 12/3/1916 • Mrs. Henry Mara, Equal Franchise League president, wrote to the School Board, "Will the committee of the Ninth School District allow the South Manchester Equal Franchise League the use of the high school hall on equal terms with all other organizations?" – Hartford Courant, 12/5/1916 • Finally, after reviewing various regulations, the school board did allow free use of the hall: The League is "much elated over the decision of the school board to allow them to use the hall. Up to last night the conditions under which the hall could be used by the league was not given out...aside from being informed that the use of the hall was to be granted to them they had not learned what the restrictions were to be." – Hartford Courant 12/6/1916.

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## Upcoming Events

**Old Manchester Museum** at 126 Cedar St. is open the first Saturday of the month, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. through December, depending on the weather and also by appointment. The research facility is available year round by appointment only. To make an appointment for a museum tour or using the research facility please phone 860-647-9983. In addition to a wide variety of exhibits covering Manchester's history there is also a museum store and the Manchester Sports Hall of Fame.

**The History Center and museum store** are located in the former Cheney brothers Machine Shop, 175 Pine St. at the corner of Forest St. Open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. You can purchase local history items such as books, copies of vintage maps, t-shirts, mugs, note cards and limited edition ceramic tree ornaments with images of our historic buildings. There is a study area where visitors can conduct research covering Manchester. Currently there is are exhibits about Cheney silks and cravats, and a reproduction of Russell Barber Shop (formerly in Spruce St.) with barber pole and vintage barber tools and furniture. Parking available along Pleasant St. and in the lot on Forest St.

**Cheney Homestead Museum** at 106 Hartford Rd. is open the second Sunday of the month year round from 1 until 4 p.m. Also by appointment - please call 860-647-9983. The Homestead, built in 1785, is where the Cheney brothers grew up and it remained in the Cheney family until it was donated to the Manchester Historical Society in 1969. Exhibits include Cheney family furnishings and a new art gallery featuring artwork by John and Seth Cheney and other family members.

**Woodbridge Farmstead Barn Museum** at 495 Middle Turnpike East is open May through October on the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 12 noon until 2:00 p.m. Several rooms in the house are also open. It is closed during the winter. Parking is available at the Senior Center and in the lot behind the barns.

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• **Wednesdays or Saturdays starting September 7, Classical Drawing classes at 106 Hartford Road** with instructor Trudy Mitchell in the Homestead's historic north-light studio. Six-week session on either Wednesday or Saturday 9:30-12:30. Learn the 19th-century method of sight-size drawing using the important concepts of line accuracy/quality and value structure. Students will draw from the lithographic plates of Charles Bague, a 19th-century master artist and printmaker. Instructor, Trudy M. Mitchell, is a retired educator with over 30 years of experience in teaching children and adults. She has studied classical drawing and painting for the last six years at Wethersfield Academy for the Arts. Classes are open to all, no experience necessary; adults and children age nine and up.

• **Sunday, September 22 at 1:00 p.m., Annual Member Meeting of the Manchester Historical Society** at The History Center. Financial and activity reports, membership vote on proposed slates of officers and directors.

• **Sunday, September 29 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge barn, house and grounds open** – NOTE CHANGE OF DATE!! The goats are back! Come pet the goats and hug the kids (goat kids that is). Duck race for children and adults alike in Bigelow Brook.

• **Saturday, October 5, Walking Tour of the Cheney Historic District with commentary by Dr. Chris Paulin** of Manchester Community College, 1:00 p.m. 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 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. The walk is free, but donations to the Manchester Historical Society are welcome

• **Saturday, October 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Old Manchester Museum open**

• **Tuesday, October 8 at 10:00 a.m., Genealogy Group** -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists. Special program, "Historic Witch Trials of Connecticut," presented by Jason Scappaticci.

• **Sunday, October 13 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead open.** Visit this early American home, including the recently opened Homestead Art Gallery and be inspired by Manchester's rich history in art.

• **Sunday, October 13 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn, house and grounds open** Scarecrow Sunday and crafts. Pumpkin carving and decorating! We supply the pumpkins and you supply the decorating ideas! Take home your pumpkin.

• **Sunday, October 27 from 12 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead barn, house and grounds open** -- Fall Farm Day with games, prizes and Fall food and drink!

• **Sunday, October 27 at 1:00 p.m., at the History Center, "Votes for Women, 1919"** -- a lecture on the of the passage of the 19th amendment by congress for American women's right to vote (ratification occurred in 1920). Former State Senator Mary Ann Handley will present this informative talk at the History Center, 175 Pine Street, Manchester. Mary Ann, a retired Manchester Community College history professor, has conducted research on this topic, and at the lecture will establish a foundation for understanding the background of the equal suffrage movement, and the controversies and disputes that delayed voting privileges for women. She will present information about Manchester's involvement in the work to bring about change. The talk will be followed by a question-and-answer period. The public is invited. \$5 for non-members, \$3 for Society members, and free for children under age 16.

• **Saturday, November 2, North End walking tour** starting at 1:00 p.m. at the parking lot of the Eighth Utilities District offices, 18 Main Street, corner of Hilliard and Main. Stroll to the former Mather Electric/Bon Ami building, and view the location of the former Depot Square as well as many historic buildings still in existence. The walk takes about one and a half hours. Union Village is on the National Register of Historic Places, and includes historic icons such as the Second Congregational Church and the

*continued on next page*

## Upcoming Events *continued on next page*

Whiton Memorial Library. The walk will be held rain or shine, but extreme weather cancels. Check our website for last-minute changes. Please bring bottled water. No dogs, please. Cost is \$3 for Historical Society members, \$4 for non-members, and free to children under 16 years of age.

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

• **Tuesday, November 12 at 10:00 a.m., Genealogy Group** -- a meeting for both amateur and more experienced genealogists, as we explore topics in genealogy, helping each other with research and in overcoming roadblocks.

• **Sunday, November 10 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead open**

• **Saturday, December 7, "Bah Humbug Hullabaloo,"** at the History Center. Futuristic Victorian/Steampunk Holiday Celebration with music, merriment, and Manchester history,

hosted by Oddball Newt, with fun for the whole family. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Historical Society. Live music, games, a steampunk marketplace with over 40 vendors, and panels on Victorian-era traditions. Open house from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Ticketed event starts at 2:00 p.m. Oddball Newt adds, "Ugly Sweater, Woeful Waistcoat and Beastly Bustle contest. Show off your horrid holiday spirit and ungainly fashion sense." Tickets \$30 before the event, \$35 at the door.

• **Saturday, December 7 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Old Manchester Museum and Cheney Homestead Holiday Open Houses**

• **Sunday, December 8 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead Holiday Craft Event**

• **Sunday, December 15 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., "Holly and Ivy Gala"** at the History Center. All welcome to this holiday celebration. Details to come.

## 100th Anniversary of 19th Amendment

*continued from page 4*

**March 1917.** "The South Manchester Equal Franchise League met at the home of Mrs. W. R. Tinker Monday afternoon. Dr. Valeria Parker of Hartford gave an interesting talk on legislative work. A musical selection was rendered by Misses Keash and Spiess and Master Harry Miner. Miss Rosalind Crawford rendered a solo. Refreshments were served. Mrs. F. T. Blish and Mrs. H. G. Mara poured. The President appointed a committee to arrange for a whist party to be held in April. The League will hold a rummage sale at the town hall March 13 and 14." – Hartford Courant, 3/7/1917.

**April 1917.** "The members of the Equal Franchise League will meet Monday at the home of Mrs. Frank D. Cheney. Mrs. E. L. G. Hohenthal will deliver an address on "Notes from My Scrap Book." – Hartford Courant, 4/1/1917

**February 1918.** The Manchester Chamber of Commerce did not vote to support going "on record to the Connecticut senators requesting them to vote for woman suffrage. Coming unexpected, there was a rather hot discussion among those present." – Hartford Courant, 2/20/1918

**1918, 1919, 1920:** The 19th amendment passed the U.S. House in 1918, the U.S. Senate in 1919, and was ratified in 1920. On November 2, 1920, more than eight million U.S. women voted in national elections for the first time.

*Compiled and edited by Susan Barlow; additional research by Noreen Cullen and Leslie Manna*

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# Parachute Women and Footprints On The Moon

Written by Ken Thomas

As an Industrial Engineer supporting aircraft products at Hamilton Standard in Windsor Locks Connecticut, I met a senior “Sewer” who had previously worked at the Cheney Mills and Pioneer Parachute during the Korean War. The Hamilton space story started in 1959 when Hamilton initiated the internal funding of research and development in many space-specific life support technologies. They created a staffed laboratory for space, called the “Moon Room.”

The former Pioneer Seamstresses ended up educating Hamilton’s (male) engineers in the nuances of structural fabric manufacturing. The engineers found that specifications, processes, and process control approaches from parachute manufacturing were the solutions to many of their problems. The “Sewer” then walked me through the Composites area explaining the parachute technology transfers that were abundantly visible; telling me of how this parachute experience later flowed into Apollo space suit development.

A few “parachute women” were still working at Hamilton when President Kennedy announced the United States was going to set foot on the Moon and return before the end of the 1960s. These women not only helped Hamilton with the winning spacesuit proposal but made prototype suits, contributed to engineers’ designs, reworked production Apollo pressure suits to support training deliveries, constructed the first Apollo pressure suit to meet contract requirements, and more. During one delay, Hamilton’s Dr. Vail was allowed a second attempt and the Baker

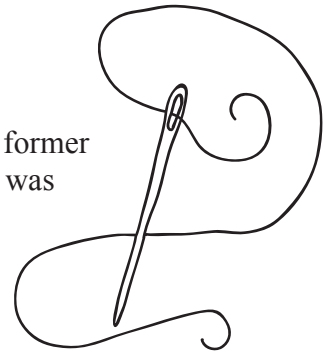
team that included the former Pioneer seamstresses was permitted to create a competing Hamilton entry.

My coming to verify the senior “Sewer’s” story was by a series of coincidences.

In 1989, I made a career move to become a spacesuit Project Engineer in Hamilton’s Space and Sea Systems. I immediately started learning everything I could about spacesuit development. By that time, the only evidence I found supporting the “Sewer’s” story was a display board adorned with pressure suit seam examples made by Pioneer alumnus. The board was used in Hamilton’s 1962 Apollo Space Suit Assembly (SSA) competition proposal presentation.

I started spending my lunches doing research. Within days, I began finding evidence that the Hamilton Sewer’s and Engineer’s stories were true. While I was able to verify most of what these people told me, this research spanned years and is still ongoing. In the early 1990s, Hamilton was beginning to move composite manufacturing out-of-state or out of the country, causing an additional loss of the historical trail.

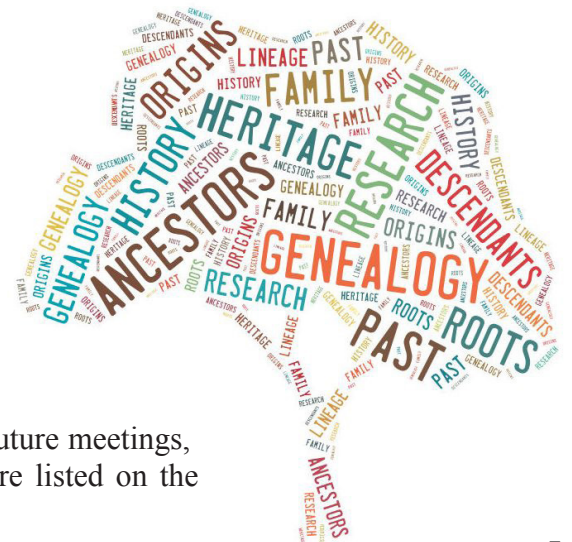
Unfortunately, by this time, the “Sewer” had retired and I failed to get her name. By telling a small part of my research story, I am hoping to learn, not only who this senior “Sewer” was, but also the other Parachute seamstresses that worked at Hamilton Standard on the Apollo Space Suit assembly.

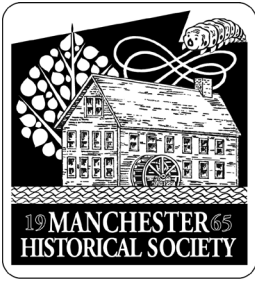


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## Genealogy Group News

Tuesday, 10:00 a.m., September 10, 2019, the Genealogy Group of the Manchester Historical Society will meet at the History Center, 175 Pine Street. A “Show & Tell” Round Table promises a lively discussion. Come with, or without, an item of ancestral importance. This is a great opportunity to discuss successes, stumbling blocks and near finds that have been learned along the way. Beginners or experts are welcome. The Genealogy Group consists of Historical Society members with an interest in researching their family history. The general public is welcome to attend all genealogy meetings with a suggested donation of \$3.00. Future meetings, held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month Sept-Nov and Jan-June, are listed on the events page at [www.manchesterhistory.org](http://www.manchesterhistory.org).





The Manchester Historical Society  
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