



“OVER 55 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

# The Courier

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## A Visit to the Woodbridge Barn

by Michael Sokola

The Woodbridge Barn is an historic barn dating back to about 1774, which holds many things that you do not see every day. You can see many old farm tools that people actually used. In October 2020 I got to use an old apple cider press. It was hard to turn the crank to mash up the apple chunks. Next to the apple cider press is a corn husker. It took off the husk of the corn which is the outer leafy and stringy layer, so there was only the corn and cob left. Near the corn husker and apple cider press there is a wagon which used to be pulled by a horse.

Did you know that George Washington visited the Woodbridge area? In a book called “Old Manchester III Manchester Green...a Picture Book” there is a diary entry from George Washington’s personal diary. It says “November 9th 1789, Stopped at Woodbridge’s in E. Hartford (Manchester was still East Hartford at the time) where the level land is entered upon, and from whence, through East Hartford, the country is pleasant, and the land in places very good, in others sandy and weak.” It feels great walking where George Washington once walked.



You can go to the Woodbridge Barn on the second and fourth Sundays of each month from May to October, noon to 2 PM. The barn has caring workers that make sure that people have a good time. They do an annual duck race down the Bigelow Brook. My duck has won 2 years in a row. There are so many things to do, make crafts, eat snacks, play games, tour the barn and investigate history. Hope to see you there!

*Michael is a student at Bennet Academy and his story was recently published in the school newsletter.*



Left to right: Grace, Carrie, Wyatte, Kieran

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A newsletter of the  
Manchester Historical Society

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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).

## Seasons at the Woodbridge Farmstead

By Peggy Newton

Phew! What a summer at the farm! Heat and abundant rain showers have forced a cancellation of one Open Barn Sunday. But good things are still happening. We have had a bountiful crop of blueberries and raspberries, and the peach trees and apple trees have been laden with fruit!

Exciting news for the fall will be the completion of our Visitor Center with room for historical exhibits, and a real flush restroom.

Open Days this summer have featured the statewide Open House Day in June at historical sites, with many visitors taking tea in Thelma's dining room decorated with Manchester flowers. Recently we had a visit from Bill Hoch, of Shady Glen, who discussed dairy farming and the origins and history of Shady Glen. To accompany his talk, visitors were invited to make their own butter. Many kids accepted the invitation, and took home the butter they made.

Upcoming events will include Manchester Art Association painters, setting up their easels and painting farm scenes. As a bonus, some painters may create paintings of baby farm animals, which will be visiting from Aussakita Farms. All this will take place on Sunday, September 12. In October, town historian Susan Barlow will speak on the history of Manchester Green and farming. Watch our eblast every Friday for updated information.

Farm friends (volunteers) are always welcome and needed. Garden helpers are especially welcome, as are barn and house tour guides. For more information about these opportunities please call the History Center (860-647-9983) Tuesday through Friday, or call Peggy Newton (860-649-4420 or 860-305-7310). You can also email Peggy at [peggynewton47@att.net](mailto:peggynewton47@att.net).



## We Will Miss .....

**Elisabeth Healy** ... Beth was a gracious lady and a long time member and volunteer for the Society. She was the widow of Dr. Thomas Healy and lived most of her long life in Manchester. In addition to our Society, she also volunteered at Manchester Memorial Hospital, the Manchester Early Learning Center and several other organizations.

**Monica Katkavich** was a valued volunteer at the Society for many years. She was always cheerful and brought light and brightness to our museum whenever she was present. Monica could not sit still for long and was always looking for something to do. In addition to volunteering for us she also volunteered at the Lutz Children's Museum. We will all miss her bright personality.

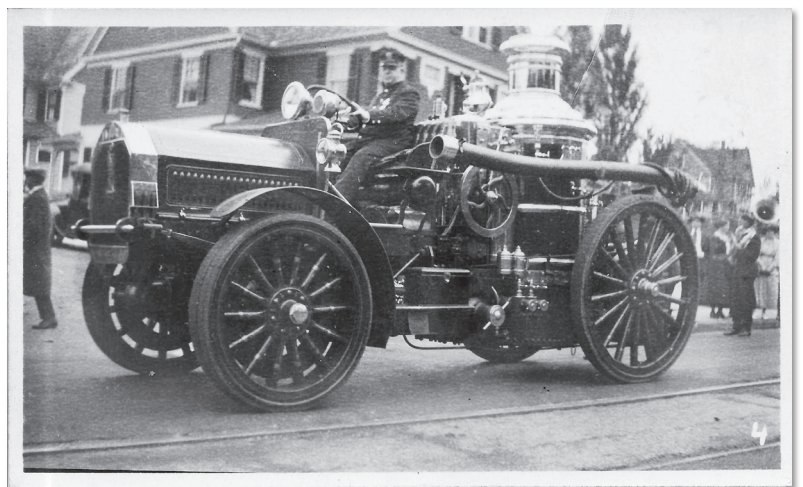
# 100 Years Ago in Manchester

*From the Manchester Herald*

**D.A.R. presents new memorial fountain:** The new drinking fountain at the Center erected as a memorial by Orford Parish Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, was dedicated and turned over to the town with fitting exercises. The exercises opened in the Center Congregational Church at 2 o'clock and it was nearly 5 o'clock before the ceremonies were completed. It is a granite fountain, located at the western point of the triangular park at the Center, and replaces a cast iron drinking fountain long in use. Funds being raised for the fountain were diverted towards war work and it was not until the war was over that they again took up the work (of fund raising).

Additional information about the fountain: The fountain was designed by Charles A. Platt of New York, grandson of George Wells Cheney, who also designed the wrestling bears fountain next to the Mary Cheney Library. The D.A.R. fountain was located at the western end of the center median of East Center Street about where the crosswalk is now. Fourteen months later it was struck by an automobile and heavily damaged (as was the car). The fountain was later moved to a spot between Washington School and the West Side Rec. It was moved again and is now located in Center Memorial Park to the west of the Probate Court building and is safely away from nearby Center St.

**Huge Muster of State Firemen:** On September 17, 1921 one of the largest crowds in Manchester lined Main St. from Charter Oak St. north to Depot Square and back to the center, to witness the impressive parade. Although it rained part of the day, the parade went on and ended at the old golf grounds on East Center St. (where Manchester High School athletic field is now located). About 1,750 firemen, along with their fire trucks participated as well as local and out of town bands. Although it was billed as a state muster, fire departments from Massachusetts and Rhode Island also participated. Great appreciation was shown for the Hartford Fire Department and its horse drawn fire engine that had come to Manchester to help battle the Ninth District school fire of October 1913. All four of Manchester's Fire Companies took part and brought up the rear of the parade. At the golf grounds competitions were held between the fire departments, including greatest distance of water thrown by a hand pump. This was won by the Holyoke firemen who were able to throw a stream of 227 feet. Other competitions were held including tug of war and greased pig contests.



# President's Message

By Jack Prior



It is hard to believe that summer is coming to a close. I must say at this point of the year I was hoping that we would be seeing more of each other in person and not just on zoom or not at all. However, we have not been sitting idle during this time. Hopefully, you have been keeping up on our Facebook page as well as the weekly eblast. For those who haven't had the opportunity to follow our activity, we have been busy. A new roof was put on the upper barn of the Woodbridge Farmstead. Site work has been done and preparations to reassemble a late 1800's barn from the North End of town are underway. By the time you get this newsletter, the barn will be partially reassembled. If you have a chance, drive by and see the progress. The plan is next year to have it open with a functioning handicap restroom and displays of old Manchester Green and farming.

At the History Center we are well underway in room 2 to creating exhibits of Manchester Then and Now. We are in the process of painting the displays and the walls. A team of volunteers have been busy determining what artifacts and stories we will be telling in each display window. There is still time to be a sponsor for the displays to help defray the cost. Contact the office for a package on the particulars. It has been a great collaboration with Content Design, our consultants on the project. Right now, we are targeting mid-November to open it to the public.

We also have been busy hosting several organizations, which are utilizing our newly airconditioned spaces. Two such organizations are the South Windsor Community Band and a Swing Band. Watch for future newsletters, Facebook and our weekly eblast for concerts given by them at our History Center. We are looking to expand to different groups as well and make the History Center a place for gathering and culture and history. If you have ideas, please email me and let's see how it may fit within our organization.

Stay safe and be kind to all.

## Calendar of Events

**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 and for research. Please phone 860-647-9983. Please note that masks and social distancing are required until further notice.

**History Center and Museum Store** at 175 Pine St., open Tuesday to Friday from 10:00 to 2:00 (phone 860-647-9983), are located in the former Cheney Machine Shop. Only the office and store are open. Watch for opening of our new exhibits coming soon. Tours are not yet available.

**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. An early American home (ca. 1785) with art and furniture. Masks and social distancing are required until further notice.

**Woodbridge Farmstead** at 495 Middle Turnpike East, open the second and fourth Sundays of the month, May through October, from 12 noon until 2:00 p.m. An 1830 house and late 1700's barn on the site of the former Meadowbrook Dairy. Early farm equipment on display along with a sleigh and pony wagon. Visitors can park at the municipal lot behind the Senior Center or along Middle Tpke. East. Masks and social distancing required until further notice.

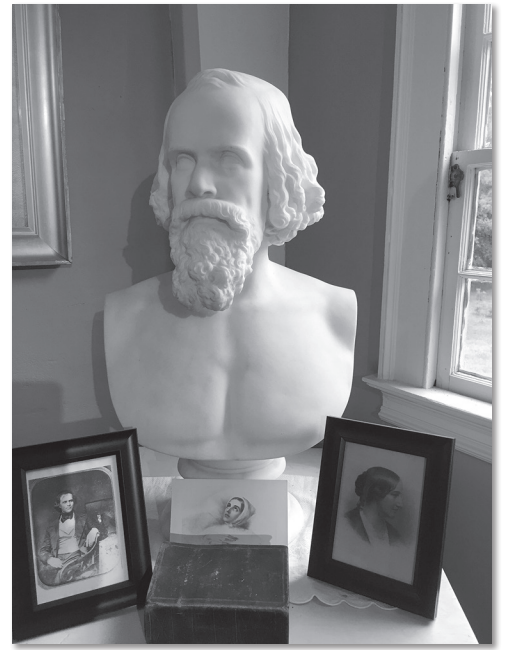
- **Sunday, September 26 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead open**
- **Saturday, October 2 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Old Manchester Museum open**
- **Sunday, October 10 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Woodbridge Farmstead open**
- **Sunday, October 10 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Cheney Homestead open**
- **Saturday, November 6 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Old Manchester Museum open**
- **Sunday, November 14 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Cheney Homestead open**

## Marble Bust of Seth Cheney

The Seth Cheney marble bust rests on a podium in a corner of the Cheney Homestead art gallery, its origins and previous owners largely forgotten. Recently, we've made it one of our objectives to trace the movement and ownership of this unique piece. While we know that sculptor Thomas Gould had crafted the piece in Florence, Italy in 1875, and that 20th century artist Russell Cheney had eventually donated the bust to the Homestead, the piece and Gould himself lack easily accessible documentation.

Whereas tracing the bust's history has been troublesome, exploring the story of its sculptor has revealed another colorful connection to the life of Seth Cheney and the Cheney Homestead itself. Thomas Ridgeway Gould, a Boston businessman turned sculptor, was very close friends with the artist Seth Cheney, learning drawing under him as an artistic apprentice. It was from Seth that Gould was able to kick start his artistic career, starting from commissioned paintings, to sculpting a monument commissioned by the Kingdom of Hawai'i, "Kamehameha", that honors the monarch who founded the Kingdom of Hawaii. He also was close friends with Ralph Waldo Emerson, and created a marble bust of Emerson that is displayed in the Harvard University Library. Combining his ties with artistic and literary figures to his creative skills, Gould constructed a legacy that spread from his works in the Hawaiian islands to his studio in Florence, Italy.

Gould himself was quick to acknowledge the initial skills learned from Seth, building not only a professional relationship but a personal relationship with his past mentor. Gould even visited the homestead on more than one occasion to keep occasional contact with Cheney and his family. The two held each other and their art in high regard, with Seth saying to Gould in his final days (1856), "This is one world, and art is another." Through their relationship, Gould and Cheney offered a glimpse of an America and New England that was growing ever more interconnected, from Manchester to Boston to Europe, along with a developing artistic culture and mindset uniquely inspired by American customs and ideals.



*Benjamin Pitt,*

*UCONN student, Cheney Homestead Committee Student Advisor*



Description of T.R. Gould by friend Ednah Dow Littlehale (later Seth's 2nd wife):

"T— G — was the Adonis of the circle [of Boston friends]: black curling hair . . . with a dark, rich complexion, soft, melting eyes, and a voice with profound tragedy and tender sweetness in it, gave him an almost irresistible fascination for the moment, until you learned that your friends had enjoyed the same tender pressure of the hand, and the same demonstrative glance of the eye. He had remarkable ability in imitating celebrated actors, especially [Junius Brutus] Booth, and filled you with horror as he recited tragic pieces."



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