



The Courier

PRESERVING MANCHESTER'S HISTORY SINCE 1965

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

President's Message

Dennis Gleason

I hope this message finds you well as we look to rounding our 2024. Thank you to everyone who gave to the Society this year, either your time or money. As a dedicated member of our community, you have been an integral part of our journey and our impact. The roof on the Cheney Homestead is moving forward and a final decision to go ahead will have been made when you read this newsletter. A new and expansive exhibit about the North end of Town is being created by retired firefighters of the Manchester Fire Department (aka the former 8th District Fire Department). We are discovering a lot of North End history in our collections. Our visitors love new displays and sometimes find that we have information on their families and homes. Connecting to your past is wonderful and many of us have these connections which can be found through research at your historical society.

In September we will join in celebrating a visit to Manchester of The Wall That



Heals, a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, which honors the more than 3 million Americans who served and the 58,281 men and women who died. It will be at Charter Oak Park from September 19th through the 22nd. The History Center and the Old Manchester Museum will be open these days from noon to 5 p.m.

The Society's Annual Membership meeting will be on Sunday, September 29 at noon with lunch at 1 p.m. at the History Center. Many folks enjoyed last year's meeting and I hope you will join us this year.

I am working with the Town Clerk's office on a family history workshop to be held at the History Center. We would like to renew the successful Family History Day events held each year before Covid. We would also like to renew another successful event, The Parade of Wreaths, where individuals, families, or businesses can decorate or sponsor a holiday wreath, and after judging and prizes awarded, to be sold to benefit the Society.

Fellow members, the Society needs your help – we can and must become stronger by

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Many Hats

By Sue Stepanski

Fellow members, do you remember when everyone wore a hat? To the grocery store, to religious services, to work, and to picnics? In the 1890 – 1900's, "to wear many hats meant" meant versatility and adaptability during a time when social, political, and economic change was impacting everyone.

Our new exhibit "*Many Hats*" gives our members and friends an opportunity to see both men's and women's hats and accessories. The exhibit features 20 men's and women's hats from our collection along with accessories. Our *Many Hats* were made with feathers, flowers, straw, and black silk.

During those times one's attire was an important statement. Masculinity and power was demonstrated by the wearing of a black silk top hat, gold cufflinks by Tiffany and carrying a Hupmobile keychain. Women showed off by wearing new Easter bonnets festooned with flowers and silks, along with leather stiletto boots and a new beaded purse.

Come to the Old Manchester Museum on Cedar St. to view our *Many Hats* exhibit.



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A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

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Cheney Homestead News

By Jamie Donahue

Looking forward to 2025

At the end of 2024 the Cheney Homestead Committee will bid farewell to Kevin Drake, our current chairperson, as he takes on new responsibilities in his profession. Kevin will remain on the Board of Directors through September 2025, so he will still be around to offer his expertise and experience.

This year we have asked for donations to help us replace our roof, and many have responded enthusiastically! This will help us to serve the Manchester community for years to come by preserving the Cheney Homestead so that visitors can continue to enjoy seeing where George and Electa Cheney encouraged their children to pursue their dreams.

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President's Message | *continued from page 1*

growing the organization. I am reaching out to you with a heartfelt request to help reinvigorate and strengthen your participation within our group. Over recent years, and due to a combination of factors, participation and engagement has declined. In response we are committed to revitalizing our activities and ensuring that our collective efforts continue to make a meaningful difference.

To achieve this, we need support and involvement. If you have not seen us in a while, please come and visit! Consider stepping outside of your norm and back into volunteerism. Share your interests and ideas with us. Look within your own groups/clubs and communities

for others who would find their time well spent by learning and helping others to learn. Together we can foster a more vibrant and engaged community that continues to drive positive change.

Manchester is an historic community, and we deserve to know its beginnings and how it continues to be *A City of Village Charm*. Please feel free to reach out to me directly at 860-647-9983 with your thoughts, ideas, or to get involved. We look forward to working with you to reignite our collective energy and commitment.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication.

The Story of Fuss & O'Neill

By Bill O'Neill and Susan Barlow

This year, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Fuss & O'Neill, the hometown engineering firm established by Hayden Griswold, Sr., 1898-1983. "The Chief," as he was called, was a remarkable man, well-respected in the community, active in fraternal and civic organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, and Boy Scouts. Born in Rocky Hill, CT, he graduated in 1916 from Cornell as a civil engineer. He joined the U.S. Army during World War I, and then came to Manchester to work for Cheney Brothers and its subsidiary, the South Manchester Water Company – surveying the land for the watershed of Roaring Brook Reservoir in Glastonbury and designing and supervising construction of dams for the reservoir and installation of the wood-pipe water main from Glastonbury to Manchester that ran along South Main St. He designed and supervised construction of the water purification plant on Line Street. Meanwhile, he personally took on surveying jobs, covering much of Manchester and surrounding towns. The first entries in his map index book are dated 1921. By 1924, this part-time occupation had become a regular business, which we recognize as the "birthday" of Fuss & O'Neill. A 1999 employee newsletter described him as a "delightful man with a dry sense of humor." He was an excellent draftsman and artist – see the example of his work in the 1930 Indian map. He worked at Cheney Brothers until the early 1930s, when he took a leave of absence to work as a consulting engineer and supervisor for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Eventually he went into



Top row, left to right: Hayden Griswold, Sr., Hayden Griswold, Jr., Walter Fuss, Bill O'Neill. Photos from 1960s through 1970s. **Bottom row**, Insets of the 1930 "Map of Connecticut Circa 1625, Indian Trails, Villages, Sachemdoms," drawn by Hayden, Sr., and c. 1980 photo of drafting group (Merv Clemson, center in front row; Doug Macgillvary, second from right in back row.) Read more about Fuss & O'Neill on their website: <https://www.fando.com/about/>

business full time from his home at 122 Oakland Street with the help of his wife, Maude, and next-door neighbor, Merv Clemson, 1928-2020, who joined the firm in 1944 when he was a teenager, working part time and summers. He became the longest-serving employee. In 1947, Hayden "Mike" Griswold, Jr., 1922-2015, joined his father at Griswold Engineering. Mike was a graduate of Manchester High School and UConn. and served in World War II as a combat infantry platoon leader, promoted from 2nd Lieutenant to Captain on the battlefield of the Battle of the Bulge at age 21.

Manchester's growth and the need for land surveying

Surveying was a big job during Manchester's population surge between 1940 and 1970 – doubling from 24,000 to 48,000. The need for housing boomed, and surveying for the new residential sub-divisions and related roads kept the young firm very busy. Merv Clemson recalls "70-hour work weeks when four- and five-man survey crews were in the field sometimes seven days a week." A lot of this survey work came from Manchester developer Alexander Jarvis, who built many subdivisions in town.

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The Story of Fuss & O'Neill | *continued from page 3*

A shift to more services

Engineering became a major part of the firm when Walter Fuss, 1928-2002, former Manchester Public Works Director, joined it in 1967. He became a partner in 1968. In 1971, the firm's name changed to Griswold and Fuss. In 1973, another former town Public Works Director, Bill O'Neill, joined the firm, and the name was changed to Fuss & O'Neill in 1977. Bill recalls that, "Griswold and Fuss Engineers had about 17 employees. Walt and his wife, Beverly, and my wife, Carol, and I enjoyed bicycle rides together in Europe and the U.S., travel to professional conferences, social gatherings, and organizing company picnics. Walt and I played a lot of tennis. Our children contributed to the company as office cleaners, surveyors, and traffic engineer. The oldest of the three Fuss children, Stephanie Fuss, UConn and UMass graduate, became the company's first landscape architect. We were all close. At my retirement, we had about 225 employees in four New England offices. Walt's integrity, engineering skills, hard work, and focus were the backbone of the company."

Doug MacGillvary worked for the firm from about 1974 to 1995 as a surveyor, when a three-person crew consisted of the party chief, a transit man, and a rod man. Their field notes would be given to a draftsman, who then created drawings – all before CAD (computer-aided design) and GPS. By the 1970s, surveying was not as big a part of the firm as other services, such as environmental,

water, civil, and structural engineering. Surveying was changing, too, with "more advanced instruments and automated data collection – it was downloaded at the office."

Moving to 146 Hartford Road

In 1986, the firm bought the former Cheney office building – coincidentally purchased from Jarvis Realty, a former survey client. It was the very building in which "The Chief" worked in his early career at Cheney Brothers. The firm leased and rehabilitated 160 Hartford Road next to their headquarters and won a preservation award in 2011, from the town's Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District Commission.

Modern Times

Projects of the 1980s and 1990s included traffic engineering, large-bridge design, industrial parks, and shopping malls – including Manchester's J. C. Penney Distribution Center, Buckland Hills Mall, and multi-unit residential projects in Buckland. Through growth and acquisitions, Fuss & O'Neill now has over 400 employees, in eleven regional offices. In 2024, the firm announced its partnership with Trilon Group: "Fuss & O'Neill was selected by Trilon Group to be a part of the company's vision to build the next Top 10 design firm in North America. Trilon is doing this by bringing together the nation's best infrastructure consulting firms." Fuss & O'Neill retains its values and rich history as the firm moves to the Gold Building in Downtown Hartford, but it has its roots right here in Manchester, CT.

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Member Meeting

Sunday September 29 at 12 noon at the History Center

Collins Driggs - Musical Prodigy

We recently received a donation of sheet music composed by Collins Driggs. It is titled **S. M. G. S., '25 March**. This music was dedicated to the Class of 1925 of the South Manchester Grammar School. At that point we did not know of Driggs, so some research was called for.



Collins was born in 1911 in Manchester where his father, Dayton, was a beam setter for Cheney Brothers. While attending grammar school Collin became very interested in music and never looked back. While still in school at the age of 12 he organized a school orchestra, the first in

Manchester. While in grammar school he composed the S. M. G. S. '25 March for graduation. His early music education concentrated on organ music under his teacher Mrs. Harry Trotter.

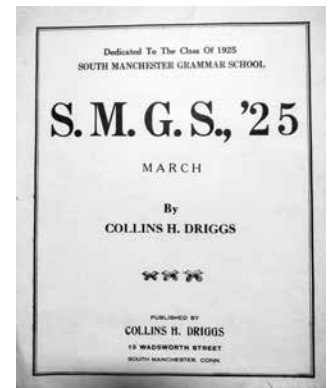
While still a teenager he was organist at North Methodist Church. He was a featured organist with Paramount Theatres and also on Hartford's American Broadcasting Co. outlet, where he was billed as the "World's Youngest Featured Organist".

In an article written about him he said that he called his first day at the organ "the shortest day of my life."

In the early 1930s he became organist for several years at the State Theater on Main St, where he played background music for silent films, and he also played for a weekly program on radio station WTIC. He later left the State Theater for the Allyn Public Theatre in Hartford and continued his weekly program on WTIC. He appeared on Fred Allen's radio show and made recordings for RCA Victor. At the 1939 World's Fair in New York, he gave daily concerts at the Ford Exposition.

For 12 years Collins was the featured organist at the Christmas and Easter programs at Rockefeller Plaza. In his later years he conducted organ clinics to help beginners, teachers and professionals.

Collins and his wife Florence moved to Cape coral, Florida, where he died in 1966. He is buried in Manchester's Buckland Cemetery.



Cheney Homestead News | *continued from page 2*

Looking to 2025, we are hoping to resume our themed open houses beginning in February. To accomplish this, we are seeking volunteers to assist with house tours, refining our exhibit spaces, and with keeping up the gardens along the outside of the Homestead, as members of the Cheney Homestead Committee.

As incoming chair, I am excited to be a part of this legacy of invention and ingenuity within the community of Manchester. I have been part of the Society since 2012, and a member of the Homestead Committee since 2016, seeing the Homestead through economic ups and downs and Covid. This is a real honor for me to be a driving force behind showcasing the history of the Cheney family.

I hope to see you at an open house in the near future!

Woodbridge Farmstead News

By Peggy Newton

Summer is winding down at the Farmstead. It has been a very hot, humid, and rainy one, which has been a boon to our newly planted flowers and shrubs. Our fruit trees (peach, plum and apple) have been especially productive this year. We have had to cancel two Open Sundays because of rain and a dangerous heat level. Now all our volunteers are anticipating the cooler days of Autumn.

In spite of the weather our Summer has been a busy one. In July we had a visit from Shady Glen. They brought their two vintage dairy delivery trucks. One was their 1913 Model T Ford and the other the 1960's

milk delivery truck, which delivered three large containers of ice cream. Vanilla, chocolate, and blueberry flavors were available and volunteer Carol Zapadka dished out many cups of free ice cream for our visitors. We wish to offer a big thank you to Shady Glen for making this possible. Dave Smith also brought his 1913 Model T Ford touring car.

We also continued our tours inside the air-conditioned Woodbridge house, which featured

displays of vintage clothing that was worn by Thelma and Raymond Woodbridge. This was the first season since the new lighting was installed inside the barn. This lighting greatly enhances the visitor experience, even showing the upper reaches of the barn and the hay handling equipment.

Town Historian Susan Barlow visited at the end of July and gave an informative talk on the history of Case Mountain and the mission of the Friends of the Cabin advocating for the preservation of the 100 year old chestnut wood cabin on the shore of the pond. Plums were available for picking from our plum tree.



Anticipating cooler weather this fall, we have scheduled an End of Summer Game Day featuring Croquet,

Badminton, and other period games. Other Sundays will feature farm animals from Aussakita Farm, apple picking and cider making, Autumn floral crafts and our annual Pumpkin/Halloween Sunday.

Our Woodbridge committee always welcomes new volunteers to help with our various activities. If you want to have fun and meet new people please call the History Center (860-647-9983) or committee chair Peggy Newton (860-305-7310).

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Member Meeting

Sunday September 29 at 12 noon at the History Center

Calendar of 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 farmhouse, 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.

Saturday September 14, History Hike Porter St. 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Meet at Highland Park School at 395 Porter St. A unique neighborhood with historic and modern houses reservoirs and the home of Hart Porter whose ca. 1820 house is on the Connecticut Freedom Trail as having been a stop on the Underground Highway before the Civil War.

Thursday-Sunday, September 19-22, The Wall That Heals open 24 hours each day Vietnam Veterans Memorial Replica and Mobile Education Center with over 58,000 names of men and women casualties.

Saturday, September 21, Hispanic Heritage Day Celebration 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at 153 Spruce St. Neighborhood Resource Center The celebration will include music and cultural performances, food trucks and a local vendor market

Sunday September 29, Annual Member Meeting 12 noon to 3:00 p.m. at the History Center The member meeting will be held at noon and lunch will be served at 1:00. Reservations required. Watch for the mailing announcing the meeting and an enclosed proxy ballot.

Saturday October 5, Cheney District Walk conducted by Christopher Paulin 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. This annual walk through the silk mill district includes commentary on the Landmark status of the district, Cheney Silk Mill labor relations, worker housing and historic buildings. Dr. Paulin teaches history at CT State Manchester (formerly MCC) and continues the walks begun by John Sutherland.

Saturday October 19, Family History Day 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the History Center Experienced genealogists will be available to help you with your research of your family history. Town Directories and maps will be available for reference.



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New North End Exhibit Being Created

By Ken Roback

A new exhibit is currently being created at the History Center and an area has been dedicated to depicting life in Manchester's historic North End. Since the merger July 2023 of the Eighth District Utilities District and the Town, six members of the former Manchester Fire Department have been collecting and cataloging memorabilia, pictures, and records from the 8th District, North End and their Fire Department. They have been meeting one day a week over the past year, to scan records and photos. They are also prepping the area to display the various items from the collection.

One of the valued items they arranged to procure is the 8th District's fire horn from the old fire station rooftop. Town people of a certain age will remember the horns of both the Town and District fire departments sounding to signal the location of

a fire, 12 noon, or the children's favorite, 9 toots at 7:00 a.m. indicating a snow day and no school. A crane was needed to lift the horn and its structure from the roof. These same fire department alumni refurbished the horn to make it ready for display. The Fire Department's antique hose cart will also be part of the exhibit.

Research on the history of these items was made possible by obtaining and preserving the Eighth School and Utilities District records. These include meeting minutes, rate books, and other correspondence which date back to the mid and late 1800s.

If anyone has any memorabilia they would like to contribute to the North End display, please contact the Manchester Historical Society.