

The Courier

NOVEMBER 2009

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THELMA CARR WOODBRIDGE 1911 – 2009

Educator, philanthropist, historian and long-time Society volunteer. These are just some of the words that describe a special person who had an extraordinary effect on our town and historical society.

THELMA WOODBRIDGE WAS BORN IN 1911 in the eastern Connecticut town of Oneco. Her family moved to Manchester soon after and her father found work in the Cheney Brothers silk mills. Thelma recalled as a young girl bringing lunch to her father where he worked in the Machine Shop, the historical society's current office and future History Center.

Thelma graduated from Manchester High School in 1929, after having made the traditional high school trip to Washington, D.C. along with many classmates, one of whom would later become her husband, Raymond. She graduated from the Willimantic Normal School, a teacher training school, and after a short stint working for Cheney Brothers, was called on to teach in the Manchester school system.

For most of her career Thelma taught in the Hollister Street School, which was renamed the Bentley School in 1961. She retired in 1970, after a teaching career spanning 37 years. After her retirement she and her husband traveled extensively throughout the United States. They were avid bird watchers and kept up that interest throughout their lives. Thelma was also an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution for more than half a century.

One of the lasting effects of Thelma's and Raymond's interest in local history is the continuation of the annual local history tours for all third grade students in Manchester. Together they initiated bus tours of points of historic interest throughout town for the students. That program lives on and now includes visits to all the local history museums each May.

Thelma and Raymond together decided to donate their property, consisting of the historic Woodbridge family house and barns at Manchester Green, to the Manchester Historical Society many years before their deaths. That donation was realized in 1998, the year after Raymond died. Thelma continued to live in the house until her death on October 14, 2009, after a short illness.

No Pane No Gain Sheds New Light

by Susan Barlow

THREE CHEERS FOR THE PROGRESS in restoring the windows at our History Center at 175 Pine Street. This immense job has been in the works for several years: applying for a grant, hiring the preservation architect, raising money, determining the scope of the project, choosing the contractor, and finally, watching the windows take on a new life.

This window restoration project is being funded by a matching grant from Connecticut's Historic Restoration Fund and administered by the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. The grant, which is not to exceed \$140,000, will be matched with money received by the ongoing "No Pane, No Gain Window Restoration Drive" and by existing Society building funds. This grant and its matching funds will cover 100 windows of the 164 windows in the building.

Further window restoration work will be carried out as donations continue to come in.

Society president John Dormer said the windows in the initial portion of the project will be finished by December 31. They will still look like old windows, but they will be in good preserved condition, with no glass panes falling out, and with the damaged wood around the panes and window openings replaced and painted inside and out. John said, "The contractor, Proulx & LaRoche Builders, Inc., is doing a great job, and is here every day with a crew."

The interior of the windows is being painted in a yellow-tone, a color discovered when

See **NO PANE**, page 2

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cleaning the interior woodwork. The exterior will be "Cheney green," which was the original color, although the wood has been painted white for the past 50 years or so. Another part of the project (but not funded by the grant) will be to install interior storm windows on certain windows to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

Our 40,000-square-foot building is the former Cheney Brothers Machine Shop, constructed in several phases beginning in 1895. The Historical Society bought the building in 1999, and has completed several other projects, including a new roof, an entrance ramp and stairs, a replacement canopy, and improved plumbing and safety features.

Thanks to all who have donated so far! Please consider a first-time or additional gift, by either sending a donation directly to us or phoning 860-647-9983 to ask for a "No Pane, No Gain" brochure to be mailed to you.



One by one, the windows at the History Center are being restored. We thank all the volunteers who have worked on this project, and all the donors who have given a total of \$27,645.00 to preserve the windows of this historic building through the "No Pane, No Gain" fund drive.

The Courier

A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

Web page: manchesterhistory.org
E-mail: manchesterhistory@juno.com

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2010 Annual Fund

by John Dormer, President

THE 2010 ANNUAL FUND DRIVE started on October 1, 2009 and will continue until September 15, 2010. The contributions received by the Society from members and friends are used to help meet the operational costs of the Society. This very important fund drive supplements the dues, proceeds from fundraisers, net revenue from the museum stores, and unsolicited donations received by the Society throughout the year.

The operating budget for Fiscal Year 2009, October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009, was \$121,000 and the budget for Fiscal Year 2010 is expected to be about the same or slightly higher. The operating budget is for insurance, electricity, water, heating oil, natural gas, maintenance, exhibit preparation, archival material purchases, lawn care, snow removal, annual audits of the Society financial records, cost of a bookkeeper paid on an hourly basis, and salary for one part time employee.

Because of the economic conditions in the country during 2009, the Annual Fund Drive raised \$11,790, well below the very ambitious goal of \$40,000. It was hoped that a goal of \$40,000 would allow the Society to begin to look for an Executive Director. That activity was put on hold until the Society has established a method of funding that position.

This year the goal of the Annual Fund is \$25,000. It is hoped that at least 50% of the membership will contribute this year as compared to less than 10% last year. Donations of any amount are welcome and appreciated. Heating costs for the Fiscal Year 2009 were as follows: Cheney Homestead \$4,000, History Center \$10,000, Old Manchester Museum \$6,170. This year the Society will also have the responsibility of paying for heating the Woodbridge Farmstead which cost \$3,000 last winter. Combined electrical costs exceeded \$7,076, insurance costs were \$10,333, and taxes amounted to \$4,837. It is evident that the dues collected, which amount to approximately \$9,665, cannot meet the expenses associated with operating the Society. In spite of the thousands of hours of volunteer labor donated to the Society throughout the year, the Society depends on the Annual Fund to help meet its operating costs.

Please consider the possibility of contributing to this critical source of revenue for the Society and if possible, make more than one donation throughout the year.

Each member of the Society will receive an Annual Fund letter within the next few weeks and your response before December 31, 2009 will allow your tax deductible donation to be recorded on your 2009 Federal Income Tax.

Thank You in advance for your support of your Manchester Historical Society.

Could YOU be a Historical Society Volunteer?

**Come join us and see...
there's something for everyone!**

Various projects, something for everyone...

Various projects are available to contribute to—whether you like to greet visitors, conduct research, or participate in group efforts. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone!

Opportunities galore!

Opportunities exist—the sky is truly the limit. Some of us like to talk, some of us like to walk and others just like to sit and observe. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone!

Learning about our past...

Learning is “a given.” It doesn't matter if you'd like to learn something new or ignite your thinking-process about the old. Come join us and see, there's something for everyone!

Uncovering facts and information...

Uncovering information...whether checking archives, browsing through old books and manuscripts—gathering information from old sources and new. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone!

Networking and making new friends...

Networking with family and friends, in an environment filled with opportunities galore! There are social events and “meet and greet” opportunities. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone!

Turning back the pages of time...

Turning back the pages of time...take a stroll down memory lane...see how our forefathers lived...worked...hoped and dreamed. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone.

Enjoying fellowship with old friends and new...

Enjoying fellowship with old friends and new...what an avenue of opportunity exists—the possibilities are truly endless. Breakfast meetings, lunch-time gatherings, afternoon tea, or evening reception. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone!

Educating oneself and others...

Educating is key to staying happy and youthful. No grades given here...but this is the time and this is the perfect place to expand your mind in a relaxing environment. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone.

Remembering and recording for future generations...

Remembering and recording facts and figures for future generations. Reminisce about the past and research information. Come join us and see...there's something for everyone.

Watch for our next “VOLUNTEERS” meeting in the Courier or just call the office at 860-647-9983 and let us know what you would like to do to help. Hope to see you there!

Society Holds Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Historical Society membership was held October 25, 2009. Fifty memberships were represented. After president John Dormer reviewed last year's progress and discussed plans for the upcoming year, voting for the officers and directors took place. The following were elected for the term October 2009 through September 2010:

President: John Dormer
Vice-President: David Smith
Secretary: Marsha Gunther
Treasurer: Joseph Lawler
Directors: Susan Barlow, George Beauregard, Anne Beechler, Vivian Ferguson,
Jill Mack, Theresa Parla, Ed Rowe, Charles Swallow

The business meeting was followed by a presentation by the Fireside Patriots, portraying members of the Cheney family during the Civil War period.

Welcome, New Members!

The following people have joined the Manchester Historical Society between March 18, 2009 and November 30, 2009. We thank them for their interest and support and will work to make their membership informative, interesting, and enjoyable.

FROM MANCHESTER

Rita Anderson
Cindy Atwater
Judy Blaschik
James Brennan
Ann O. Cook
Martha Davidson
Margaret Donovan
Martha and James Eddy
Madelyn Fleury
Jill Memery
Dr. and Mrs. Stan Milewski
Jan McCollum and Penny Hunt
Sue and Jerry O'Connor
Mr. and Mrs. K. C. Parkinson
Carl E. Peterson
Muriel Ritchie
Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Robenhymer
Kara Roberts
Helen and Gary Robbins
Jody Wynn Rodiger
Jacqueline Sweeney
Sean Sweeney
Cynthia VanZelm and Chris Kennedy
Arthur Webster

FROM ELSEWHERE

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Scott L. Bane | New York, NY |
| Nancy Brennan | E. Hartford, CT |
| Brian Donachie | Fairport, NY |
| Ida Gall | Vernon, CT |
| Patricia Hargrove | Windsor Locks, CT |
| Anthony Lupacchino | Meriden, CT |
| Tam Cheney Neville | Somerville, MA |
| Grace Smith | Vernon, CT |
| Jean and Roger Thomas | E. Hartford, CT |

Museum Stores and Outlets

OLD MANCHESTER MUSEUM

126 Cedar Street
Open Saturday 10-4 and Sunday 1-4
(Open by appointment only January-April)

HISTORY CENTER, 175 Pine Street

Open Thursday and Friday 10 - 2

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER

AT TOWN HALL

Open Monday-Friday 8 - 5

A BIG Thank You to our Donors

The Historical Society has many generous donors each year. Below we acknowledge the people who made a difference during the past fiscal year (October 1, 2008—September 30, 2009) by donating to one or more of our funds or projects.

In creating a long list such as this, we strive for accuracy but may unintentionally omit the name of a person who has helped us by making a donation. If so, please let us know so that we may correct it in our next issue.

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 Mary Cassidy
 Regina Coope
 Mary Beth Dobmeier
 Domenica & Ray Fike
 See **THANK YOU**, page 5

THANK YOU, from page 4

MEMORIAL DONATIONS
(cont'd.)

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SEE Hockey Booster Club
Paula & Anthony Viscogliosi

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NO PANE NO GAIN
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WOODBIDGE
FUND

Dorothy Krause
Judy Taylor
Constance Walker
Thelma Woodbridge

New Heating System Installed at the Cheney Homestead

THE HEATING SYSTEM AT THE CHENEY HOMESTEAD was replaced this fall to improve the heat distribution throughout the house and to reduce operating costs. Removal of the old system and installation of the new system cost \$27,000. The Society would like to thank the Cheney Family Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for a very generous donation of \$15,000 that was used for this project.

Bob Rosenberg of the Cheney Homestead Committee handled the specification and request for the bid portion of the project as well as the walk-throughs with the bidders in July. Bob also contracted with Connecticut Natural Gas Company for the installation of a new gas line from Hartford Road to the house. Kasden Fuel Company was selected to supply and install the new heating system. Work was started in August and completed by November.

The old oil-fired steam boiler and associated plumbing, which had developed leaks in recent years, was removed and replaced with a high efficiency, natural gas-fired hot water system and new pipes to the existing cast iron radiators, which were flushed out, cleaned and repainted. The boiler was relocated to better utilize the space in the tenant's apartment. Two radiators were added to improve heat distribution in the buttry and dining room.

The greatly improved efficiency of the new system relies on several features. In addition to a highly efficient combustion chamber, the air for combustion is ducted directly from the outside of the house, so that previously heated interior air is not used for the combustion process. A computerized system on the boiler controls the temperature of the hot water being circulated to the radiators by monitoring outside air temperature.

There are now four heating zones in the house and another for heating domestic hot water. The old steam system had two zones, one for the tenant's apartment and one for the museum, resulting in cool and warm areas throughout the house. The new system has two separate zones in the museum area and two separate zones in the tenant's apartment. Since coming on line it has been able to maintain the correct temperatures in all zones throughout the month of November.

With this major investment, we are looking forward to dependable, trouble-free operation and comfortable temperatures during this heating system and for many years to come.

We Will Miss...

MILDRED FREDERICKSON Mildred was a lifelong resident of Manchester and the newest member of our Honorary Century Club.

HOWELL CHENEY MARTYN Howell, grandson of Howell Cheney, enjoyed mountain climbing and running in marathons. He was involved in the redesign of the recently renovated Howell Cheney Technical School.

HORACE PALOZIE Horace was a veteran of World War II, having served in the U. S. Navy. He worked for over 30 years at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

GLENN MIRTL Glenn was a World War II veteran and served in the U. S. Army Air Corps in the South Pacific. He was a professional Civil Engineer and worked many years for Fuss & O'Neill of Manchester.

RICHARD NIESE Richard was a longtime member and together with his wife, Alma, enjoyed serving as docents at the Old Manchester Museum.

Historical Society School Tours

by Anne Beechler

THE MANCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONDUCTED SCHOOL TOURS again this year for third graders in Manchester Schools. These tours included the Cheney Homestead and the Keeney Schoolhouse on Hartford Road, the Old Manchester Museum on Cedar Street and the History Center on Pine Street. The children walked from one to the other where they were met by volunteer docents who provided information and answered questions. The program included 442 children from 25 classes in 9 schools. A total of 32 volunteers participated. A thank you note from one of the third grade teachers follows:

Dear Manchester Historical Society,

Thank you so much for organizing, researching, and staffing the beloved "Walking Tour of Historic Manchester." Along with many parents who remember their own tour, we always have parents who say "I never knew about that," or "I've lived in Manchester for years and I never even noticed." The tour is an educational experience for students, staff and chaperones alike.

We also appreciate all the work that goes into "Pride in Manchester Week" and Heritage Day. Students who attend events with their family are given homework passes!

Gratefully,

Eileen Godbout, Buckley School

The School Tours this year were sponsored by the Rockville Bank Foundation.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL TOURS

Originally, bus tours of Manchester were conducted. They included the Osage orange trees at Buckland, Apel's Opera House, Manchester Green and George Washington's stop at the Woodbridge Tavern, the Pitkin Glass Works, the copper mine at Highland Park and the Podunk Indian village where Verplanck School is located. It was then decided to sponsor a **Walking Tour of Historic Manchester**. This walking tour includes:

The Old Manchester Museum where artifacts from Manchester's history are on display: the Spencer Repeating Rifle; Bon Ami soap; and photos of old Manchester including the Odd Fellows Building, Depot Square, and the Manchester Sports Hall of Fame. Volunteer docents provide information about Old Manchester, the importance of Cheney Brothers and the development of Manchester as the silk capital of the world.

The Cheney Homestead, built in 1785, was the home to several generations of the Cheney Family. The volunteer docent conducts a tour of the Homestead explaining the use of the various rooms, the use of the fireplace as a stove, the substitute for the bathroom, the old bed with its ropes and other aspects of their living conditions.

The Keeney Schoolhouse, a replica of the original 1751 schoolhouse, was built in 1975 using some of the original lumber. It was made possible because of donations of money, labor, and materials by many people and businesses and especially the students of Keeney Street School. The Schoolhouse is located on the grounds of the Cheney Homestead. Adjacent to it is a classic "two-hole" outhouse which was relocated from a farm in Bolton. The volunteer docent describes the

heating "system" which originated as a fireplace and then became a wood-burning stove. The teacher often assigned older boys the task of starting and keeping up the fire in the stove. The docent also talks about the length of the school day and year; the emphasis on reading, spelling, arithmetic and writing; the memorization of lessons; and the existence of many grades in one schoolroom.

The History Center, which houses the administrative offices of the Society, purchased in 1999, was formerly a Cheney Brothers mill known as the Machine Shop. It is in the process of being refurbished with a new roof completed last year and the restoration of windows to be completed this year. Looms similar to those used by Cheney Brothers were gifted to the Society are located on the lower level. The exhibit of these looms will open in the near future. The volunteer docents at the History Center do a power point presentation on the history of Manchester and then demonstrate the making of the Cheney silk on the looms. A cocoon is given to each student.

STUDENT COMMENTS ABOUT THE SCHOOL TOURS

Cheney Homestead

"I liked learning about their house and how they survived with nine children in such a small house."

"I was able to see where they use the bathroom and that its a pot with a top on top."

"It was cool that sleep tight means to tighten the ropes on the bed."

Keeney Schoolhouse

"If you misbehave, you will get in trouble and sit in a chair and put on a hat that says dunce on it."

"There was all the grades inside the schoolhouse."

"I didn't like the punishments for being bad. I sure wouldn't want to go to school at that time."

Old Manchester Museum

"At the Museum we got to see how heavy a gun was back then. Spencer made a gun that can shoot seven bullets."

"There was this thing that was heated up over a fire and put in a bed to keep it warm in winter."

History Center

"I like the History Center because we got to see how they actually used they're machines to make their silk."

"Thank you for the silkworm."

And one that summed it up...

"It was fun the whole way!" P.S. "I had a grate time."

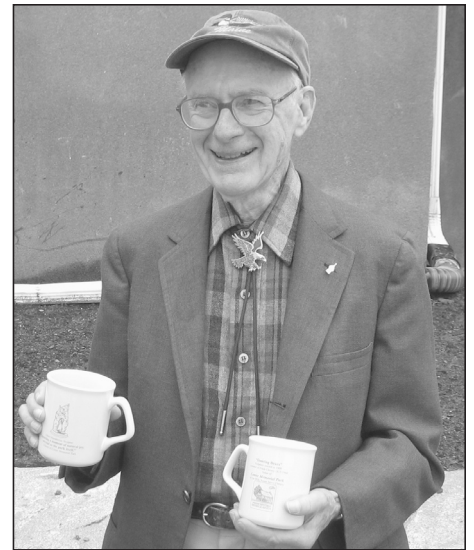
Great Holiday Gifts Available at Our Museum Stores

The museum stores sell books, maps, videos, note cards, tote bags and other historic and decorative items. Many items are also available at the Customer Service Center at Town Hall. See page 3 for hours and locations, or find out more at manchesterhistory.org.

Dancing Bears Anniversary Mug

THE MANCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS SELLING DANCING BEAR COFFEE MUGS in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the bronze sculpture, which has enchanted generations of children and adults. The bears have danced atop the fountain at the Main St. entrance of Center Memorial Park since 1909 and were presented by Susan Jarvis Cheney, the widow of Frank Cheney, Sr. (1817-1904), one of the original Cheney brothers who founded the silk empire in Manchester. In May the historical society conducted a “bears centennial” walking tour with a brief ceremony at the fountain.

The mug has a picture of the bears and an inscription about the park. Dr. Fred Spaulding, chairman of the Friends of the Park, designed and underwrote the cost of the mugs, to recognize the anniversary and to help raise funds for the historical society. The mugs cost \$10 and are available at the History Center at 175 Pine Street (open Thursday and Friday 10–2); and at the Old Manchester Museum at 126 Cedar Street (open Saturday 10–4 and Sunday 1–4). In addition to the mugs, the museum stores sell books, maps, videos about local history, note cards, tote bags and other historic and decorative items. Many items are also available at the Customer Service Center at Town Hall. Find out more at www.manchesterhistory.org.



Fred Spaulding holding Dancing Bears mugs.

[Photo by Susan Barlow]

Children's Civil War Living History Days at the Cheney Homestead

by Vivian Carlson

ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AUGUST 1ST AND 2ND, 2009 ten Manchester children and youths joined the Fireside Patriots at the Cheney Homestead for two intensive days of Civil War-era living history experiences. Seven young men and three young ladies began their adventure in the Keeney School House on the Homestead grounds with Mary Bushnell Cheney serving as schoolmistress, assisted by her sister-in-law, Carolyn Cheney. As the students were completing their lessons for the morning, Lt. Col. Frank Cheney came to the school and mustered the young men into the 16th CT Volunteer regiment. Their training in drill, flag and military protocol began immediately. The young ladies left their lessons to assist the Cheney women with the efforts of the Ladies' Loyal Society of South Manchester, preparing goods and packing boxes to be shipped to the Christian Commission in Washington City for use in the hospitals or shipment to the men at the front.

The young ladies cooked a blueberry cobbler over the open fire and made fresh lemonade after sewing their own aprons. Later they sewed housewives (small fabric sewing kits with needles, thread and patches) for the soldiers' boxes, learned to play graces, and read diary entries written by nurses working in civil war hospitals near the front. On Sunday they assisted in treating an “injured” young man from the CT 16th regiment.

The young men learned to march in a straight line, follow many differ-

ent orders in the line of march, and handle their wooden rifles according to commands. Each soldier designed and drew a regimental flag and all listened to a story about two 15-year-old soldiers who were sent to the front and fought with the men in 1864. The young soldiers prepared and cooked

a hearty Sunday morning breakfast over the open fire and later followed Lt. Col. Cheney into a skirmish on the Great Lawn.

All participants had opportunities to shoot Lt. Col. Cheney's black powder rifle, play with period games and toys, learn to fold a flag, sing Civil War-era songs, and visit the Fire Museum. Mayor Lou Spadaccini and all of the parents came to see the final drill demonstration,

flag ceremony, unveiling of the regimental flag, and presentation of the filled boxes for the soldiers. Each participant received a certificate certifying their promotion to Junior Fireside Patriot and are now welcome to join the Patriots as living historians at future Cheney Homestead events.

The Fireside Patriots (Marc Bassos as Lt. Col. Frank Cheney, Vivian Carlson as Mary Bushnell Cheney, Jenifer Bussa as Carolyn Cheney) would like to thank the members of the Cheney Homestead committee, especially Sandie Bursey and Brenda Paullo, for their support of this event. The Homestead Committee would also like to thank our event sponsors, Highland Park Market and Shamrock Tree Service.

All funds raised from tuition payments for this event will be used to support the ongoing restoration and maintenance of the Homestead.





The Manchester Historical Society
106 Hartford Road
Manchester, Connecticut 06040

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Unless noted, admission to lectures and walking tours is \$1 for members and \$3 for non-members. Most lectures and events take place at the Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street, or as noted. Information about upcoming events is available online at www.manchesterhistory.org.

January 9, 2010 Saturday at 1:00 p.m. at History Center

Museum of Connecticut Glass Annual Meeting and Lecture

Members of the historical society and friends are invited to a free lecture by Kirk Nelson, Executive director of the New Bedford Museum of Glass (www.nbmog.org). The event begins earlier with a potluck lunch for glass museum members. Extreme weather postpones to Sunday, Jan. 10 at 1:00 p.m.

February 27, 2010 Saturday at 3:00 p.m.

Cheney Railroad History Walk

Hikers will have an easy, but bumpy walk along the former railroad, which was built in 1869 to connect the Cheney silk mills in South Manchester to the main rail line in the North End. At 2.5 miles, it was the longest private passenger and freight railroad in the United States. The hike will be along the one-mile section owned by the Manchester Land Conservation Trust and will take about 1 ¾ hours, round trip. Meet behind Farr's Sporting Goods, 2 Main St. Children are welcome and will receive a free railroad patch. Extreme weather cancels. No dogs, please.

March 14, 2010 Sunday at 1:00 p.m. at History Center

Native Americans *presented by Steve Penny*

Watch for further information in the February Courier