



The Courier

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Woodbridge Farmstead Endowment Fund Receives Large Bequest

by David Smith

As part of the settlement of the estate of **Thelma Woodbridge**, the Farmstead Endowment Fund has received a bequest of \$500,000. The income from this fund is to be used for the upkeep and maintenance of the Woodbridge Farmstead and the Woodbridge family gravestones at East Cemetery.

The Society is very grateful to both Thelma and Raymond Woodbridge for making this bequest possible. It was their wish that Woodbridge house and property be maintained for the benefit of the citizens of Manchester and used as a museum and teaching experience telling the stories of when Manchester was an agricultural community known as Orford Parish. This part of town was the center of communication with the rest of the world.

Manchester Green was the location of the town's first post office and was on the main route through town between Hartford and eastern Connecticut. Stage coaches would stop here to exchange their tired horses for fresh ones. George Washington stopped here on his way from Providence to Hartford.

This magnificent bequest will allow the Society to preserve the 1830 house and its contents, which are a time capsule of the Woodbridge family covering almost 200 years. The two barns, one from the 18th century and one from the 19th century, house a large collection of agricultural implements which show how farming was carried out when Manchester first became a town in 1823.



John Dormer receives bequest from Estate Executor Robin Murdock-Meggers at the Woodbridge House.

As with every old house or building, maintenance is an ongoing issue and so it will be with this property. Fortunately, the buildings are in reasonable condition but will still require repairs in the near future. Some of the income from the fund will be leveraged with grants and other donations to carry out any necessary work.

Annual Holiday Gala

Come to the Annual Evening of Bidding, Shopping, and Fun

On Friday, December 3, from 6:30 to 9 p.m., the Historical Society hosts its seventh annual holiday gala, featuring a live auction, wine, hors d'oeuvres, coffee, and dessert. Gift baskets, decorated wreaths, and other boutique items will be for sale. Live-auction items include gift certificates from local businesses.

Tickets to this event must be pre-purchased, \$15 for members, \$20 non-members. Buy tickets at the History Center, 175 Pine St., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, starting in November



(or order by mail, see page 7). All donations help raise funds for the Historical Society's operation.

Unique items needed—we are seeking some special items for the live auction, and we're asking newsletter readers to donate an art object, antique, or other intriguing item that may be taking up space at your home. Call us at 860-647-9983 or bring the item to the History Center at the hours shown above.

We are also seeking corporate sponsors for the event and the printed program.

President's Report

by John Dormer

[Presented at the Society's Annual Meeting on October 24, 2010] Good afternoon and welcome to the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Manchester Historical Society. Before I begin to talk about the status of the Society, I would like to thank the many volunteers who have worked on the various special events and routine operations of the Society during the past year. Without the thousands of hours these members and some non-members have given to the Society the Society would be unable to function or for that matter exist. Thank you all for your efforts and please continue to help the Society by encouraging others to come with you when you do your volunteer work.

PROPERTY SUMMARY AND PROJECTS ON PROPERTIES

The Society has four sites in Manchester that we maintain: the Cheney Homestead, the Woodbridge Farmstead, the Old Manchester Museum, and the History Center. The Cheney Homestead site also is the location of the Keeney Schoolhouse.

Until October of 2009 when she passed away, **Thelma Woodbridge** lived in the house on the Farmstead and provided for the daily upkeep and financial support for that property. Since October 2009, the Historical Society has assumed those responsibilities as Thelma and her late husband **Raymond Woodbridge** had donated that property to the Society in 1998, with life tenancy for Thelma. The Woodbridge Committee of the Society had worked with Thelma for several years making plans for the Farmstead and concluded that the barns on the property could some day become a museum representing Manchester's agricultural history. During this past year, the Committee and other volunteers have maintained the property and began the long process of making more detailed decisions concerning the Farmstead. Once the estate is settled, more definite steps can be taken to make Raymond and Thelma Woodbridge's dream become reality.

During this past year, the Cheney Homestead has undergone several changes. As reported at the last Annual Meeting, a new, natural gas-fired heating system was being installed. The installation was completed in November 2009 and resulted in a reduction in the heating expenditures of approximately \$1,500 for the 12-month period of October 2009 thru September 2010 when compared to the previous year. Under the leadership of Committee Chair **Jill Mack**, volunteers and local businesses painted, updated, and generally cleaned the caretaker's apartment at the Homestead. They arranged for a new tenant to occupy the Homestead starting in January of this year. He has been a good tenant and leads tours of the Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse on one Sunday afternoon each month.

The Old Manchester Museum reopened in May 2010 after closing for the winter to change exhibits. The main exhibit this year is celebrating the 100th anniversary of Boy Scouts in America and the 99th anniversary of Boy Scouts in Manchester. Current and former Boy Scouts donated or loaned items

to make this an outstanding exhibit. Once again, volunteers from the Society donated hours of their time to create the exhibit. If you have not yet visited the Old Manchester Museum, I urge you to do so in order to see this and the other exhibits on display. This building is owned by the Town of Manchester and leased to the Society. The Society is responsible for all the operating costs of the building and the interior cleaning and maintenance.

The History Center, the building we are presently in, was purchased by the Society in 1999. After a period of removing trash and debris from the building, the construction of the offices in Room #1 was completed in 2004 and our first Executive Director and Development Director occupied the offices in the spring of 2004. In the months of October, November, and December 2009, over one hundred of the window openings on the east, south, and west sides of the building were restored by removing old paint, priming, and applying a coat of finish paint to both the inside and outside of the windows. This resulted in a much more comfortable interior space and saved money on the heating costs. Again, I would like to thank the members of the Society and people in the community that donated over \$33,000 to the "No Pane, No Gain" window restoration fundraising drive. There is still a significant amount of work to be accomplished at the History Center before it can be used to house our artifacts and exhibits. The remainder of the windows need to be restored, a modern, cost efficient heating and cooling system is needed, masonry repair is needed on the building exterior, an updated electrical system needs to be installed, a modern fire alarm system is needed, and an elevator will eventually be needed to comply with the American with Disabilities Act. A great deal remains to be done, but the Society with the help of many volunteers has come a long way in the preparation of this building.

The Keeney Schoolhouse had all of its windows replaced by ones "built from

See ANNUAL MEETING, page 4

The Courier

A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society
Online at www.manchesterhistory.org
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Eagle Scout Project Beautifies History Center

Sean Murphy, a member of Boy Scout Troop 25, recently completed his project as one of the requirements to obtain Eagle Scout status.

Sean's project consisted of painting the walls of the lobby area on the ground floor and building several shelf units for storage of artifacts. Sean was required to plan and obtain the materials required for this two-part project, enlist fellow scouts to help work on the project, and supervise the carrying out of the work. As a result, the entry way into the ground floor lobby looks much better and should help us to rent out the nearby spaces and increase our rental income. We are very grateful to Sean and his fellow scouts who worked on this project.



Sean Murphy (second from right) and fellow scouts painting History Center lobby area.

Loom Exhibit Taking Shape

OUR FUTURE EXHIBIT of silk manufacturing in Manchester is beginning to come together in the History Center. The centerpiece will be the four large looms donated to us several years ago. In addition, there will be other textile looms and equipment used in the manufacture of silk goods. These will include manually operated wooden looms and braiding machines.

The area in the History Center dedicated to this exhibit has been under renovation for several years and many people have worked to make it usable as an exhibit space. Lighting and electrical work was recently completed, appropriately enough, by students from the Electrical Shop at **Howell Cheney Technical School** under the direction of **Bruce McKechnie**. Both Senior and Junior classes worked on this and were happy to be able to gain hands-on experience in a commercial setting.

With that electrical work completed, the four mechanical looms and the bobbin winding machine were recently moved to their final locations using rollers and the brute force of our volunteers. Now the interesting work begins. We will attempt to get at least some of the machines operating again, which will take a while as many pieces have yet to be assembled and the operation of the machines deciphered. Stay tuned for future updates on our progress in creating this exhibit.



Howell Cheney Technical School instructor Bruce McKechnie and students working at the History Center.

scratch” by a member of the Homestead Committee. Material costs were under \$1,000 for the project and we now have windows that are custom made and of high quality, and with a savings of about \$4,500.

ORGANIZATION STATUS

During 2009–10, the Board of Directors looked at the overall organization of the Society. In the late spring and summer of 2010, the Society received a grant from the Greater Hartford Arts Council covering two-thirds of the cost of a workshop for the Board on Organizational Assessment and Leadership Building. Using the Peer Advisor Network (PAN) organization to provide an advisor to lead the Board, the Directors met several times and evaluated the Society’s organization and leadership. The blueprint for the ongoing business of bringing the Society into agreement with this study is now underway. As a result of this organizational study, the Board has applied for another grant to obtain the services of another PAN advisor to guide us in the project of updating the Society’s Five Year Strategic Plan. This effort is scheduled to begin in late November.

Treasurer **Joe Lawler**, member **Don LaPlante**, and I have begun work on a comprehensive Standard Procedures Manual for the Historical Society. We are currently working on the financial section and have a couple of hundred man-hours in the project at this point in time. The entire project is anticipated to take 18 to 24 months to complete. The result will be a printed reference manual that will cover all phases of the operations of the Society. Once written, it will require continual review and updates to keep it current with the Society practices.

GRANTS

The Society is in the final stages of applying for a grant from the Greater Hartford Arts Council to pay for up to 75% of the first year’s salary of a part-time Executive Director. The Society has not had an Executive Director since June 2007 when our first Executive Director, **Mary Dunne**, left for employment at the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. An announcement of those groups being awarded grants is expected in mid December 2010.

The Society received two grants from the Cheney Family Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving during the past year. The first was a \$15,000 grant to help underwrite the cost of the new heating system for the Homestead. The total cost of this project was approximately \$27,000. The second grant was received just last week in the amount of \$12,500 to help with the costs of repainting the Homestead, which is planned for 2011. Estimated costs for this project range from \$25,000 to \$65,000, depending on the scope of the work.

The grant from the **Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism** awarded in 2007 for the restoration of the History Center windows was activated in 2009. It has resulted in the restoration of over one hundred windows out of the one hundred and sixty four openings in the building. The total project cost was about \$195,850, with the grant covering one half of the cost and the Society covering the other half.

Again, I would like to thank everyone who has supported the Society during the past year by a donation, volunteer service, or through your membership dues. I look forward to a productive next year and ask for your support as we proceed with “*Preserving the Best of Times.*”

Tag Sale a Huge Success!

The October Book and Tag Sale held at the History Center was another smashing success following the Book and Tag Sale held earlier this year. The combined events raised over \$25,000. The Herculean efforts of **Terry Parla** and the many volunteers made it all possible. In addition, the many people.

A lot of time was spent organizing the myriad items. The thousands of books were arranged in order by subject or author, requiring many hours of work. The other items were grouped by type or by use and took up most of the top floor of the History Center. A Big Thank You is extended to all who contributed to this success!

We Will Miss...

SUZANNE SHORTS Suzanne was a founding member of the Society and an active volunteer for many years. Her other interests included community affairs such as the Women’s Auxiliary at the hospital and the Republican Town Committee. Suzanne was very interested in her family history and was very proud of her father (who died before Suzanne was born). Capt. Matthew Batson served in the U.S. Army and developed the Batson Aero-Yacht in 1913, which was built in Savannah, GA. It was designed to fly across the Atlantic Ocean, but was not successful. Suzanne ensured that a model of the aeroplane was donated by the family to the New England Air Museum at Bradley International Airport, where it is now part of the Batson exhibit. Suzanne is survived by her son Arthur and daughter Pammella Starbuck and their families.

HERBERT BENGTON Herb was an instrumental member of the Society for many years. He served as Acquisitions Chair for many years and was responsible for the growth of the Society’s collections. Herb proudly represented the Society at many functions and gave many presentations on the history of Manchester. He served as Town Historian until he moved to Rhode Island in 2004. Herb is survived by his wife Louise and son David and family.

FRED BLISH III Fred, and his wife Mary, have been Life Members of the Society for many years. Fred is best known for his long-time association with the Little Theater of Manchester and his (and Mary’s) efforts in the restoration of Cheney Hall. He was multi-talented in the theater world; designing and working on sets, producing and acting in plays and writing several novels touching on acting and his most recent telling the history of the Little Theater of Manchester. Fred is survived by his wife Mary and family.

Welcome, New Members!

by Florence Johnson

The Society welcomes the following new members
who joined between January 31 and October 30, 2010:

FROM MANCHESTER

Henry Agostinelli
Janet Ahl-Kearns
Mr. & Mrs. Gary Basile
Emily Bloom
Michael Brackin
Peter Bugbee
Hilda Campbell
Natalie Chirico
Michael Charter
Claudette Dube
Lillian Emerson
Beverly Fuss
Marcia Kathryn Fausel
Timothy Hoops
Patricia & Robert Hetzel
Jessica Hjulstrom
Cathy Kapa
Cathy Keane
Monica King
Maxine Lerman
Anna Maggiore
Rick Marr
Josephine & David Poland
Gordon Palmer
Michael Saimond
Amanda Sandborn
Jason Scappaticci
Nicola Sinclair
Joseph Sobanski
Andrea Sohacki
Robert Sulick
Charles VanDyke & Krystle Yadwisiuzak
Patricia & Egils Vigants

FROM ELSEWHERE

Ronald P. Case Superior, WI
Marlene Case Foxboro, WI
Daniel Dormer Jamaica Plains, MA
Jean Dormer Jamaica Plains, MA
Alayne Gelthety Northville, MI
Maureen Hovey Vernon, CT
Nancy McHugh Ellington, CT
Glen R. Jorgenson No. Highland, CA
Ray Kocor Kissimmee, FL
Joanne Morgan Andover, CT
Barrett Nordstrom Brighton, MA
Claire Olds Saratoga, NY
Bruce Pigott Central, SC
Frances Roy East Hartford, CT
Donna Roberto Andover, CT
Herbie Walker Farmington, CT

*The following members have upgraded their
memberships to Life Member:*

Rita Anderson Janice Obuchowski
Robert Lazerini Charles Swallow
Jackie Mirtl David Nutter

Meet Your New Directors

MARY DUNNE Mary will be familiar to most of our members. Mary was our Executive Director for several years, until she took a position with the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism in 2007. She has remained in close contact with the Society since then and has volunteered on a number of occasions. Mary's background is that of an architectural historian, which continues to be her passion. Mary and her husband Bob have two young children.

JASON SCAPPATICCI Joe works at Manchester Community College as a Student Retention Specialist. He holds history degrees from Utica College of Syracuse University and from Trinity College in Hartford. Jason has had a long interest in history and volunteers with the Mark Twain House as a historic interpreter and has served on the Cheney Home-
stead Committee for several years.

Annual Meeting Report

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the Society was held October 24 at the History Center. The President's Report was presented by John Dormer (reprinted in this issue, page 2). Curator Dave Smith reported on donations of artifacts and progress on the future Loom exhibit. The main order of business was the election of officers and directors.

OFFICERS ELECTED

President John Dormer
Vice-president George Beauregard
Secretary Marsha Gunther
Treasurer Joe Lawler.

DIRECTORS ELECTED

Susan Barlow, Anne Beechler, Mary Dunne, Vivian Ferguson, Terry Parla, Jason Scappaticci, David Smith, Charles Swallow

The meeting was followed with a presentation by Susan Barlow on the progress made by the Society over the 45 years since its founding in 1965.

Storage Shed Repaired by Volunteers

OVER THE SUMMER, several volunteers took on the major task of repairing the storage shed behind the History Center building. The shed was originally used by Cheney Brothers for storing pipe, wood and other construction materials. It has been virtually unused for many years. Over the years the roof has leaked and caused part of it to collapse. The large sliding doors also deteriorated so that they did not operate.

Earlier this year **John Parla**, together with his sons **John** and **Jamie** and friends **Eric Lee** and **Dave Sposito**, undertook the job of repairing the roof and replacing the doors. They spent many hours on it during the heat of the summer. **Sanford and Hawley, Inc.** and **Andrew Ansaldi** contributed building materials.

The shed will now be used to store materials again, returning to its original purpose.

2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Unless noted, admission to lectures and walking tours is \$1 for members and \$3 for nonmembers. Most lectures and events take place at the History Center at 175 Pine St. Admission to Old Manchester Museum and Cheney Homestead is by donation. Additional information is available online at www.Manchesterhistory.org.

Through December 12 (Saturdays 10-4 and Sundays 1-4) Old Manchester Museum	BOY SCOUT EXHIBIT Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America and 99 years in Manchester, the exhibit showcases Boy Scout memorabilia. Coordinated with Troops 25, 27, 47, 123 and 364 and with former members of troops that no longer exist.
December 3 Friday 6:30–9:00 p.m. History Center, 175 Pine St.	HOLIDAY GALA Featuring hors d'oeuvres, desserts, wine with holiday music and live and teacup auctions. Wreaths, baskets, trees, art objects, jewelry, and gift and restaurant certificates will be auctioned.
December 4 Saturday 11:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. (Free)	HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE at all society properties Cheney Homestead 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Fireside Patriots will demonstrate life in the nineteenth century. Old Manchester Museum 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Annual Bake Sale and Seasonal Exhibits. History Center 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Harp Concert by MusicMakers Academy students at 1:00 p.m.
December 12 Sunday 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	CHENEY HOMESTEAD OPEN TO VISITORS Admission and guided tours by donation on this Sunday and the second Sunday of every month, year-round.
Friday, January 1, 2011 1:00 p.m.	HISTORY WALK ON THE GREAT LAWN Meet at Cheney Homestead for a 1½ hour walk. The walk will be along steep and uneven ground. Extreme weather cancels. \$1 for members and \$3 for nonmembers.
January 9, Saturday 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	CHENEY HOMESTEAD OPEN TO VISITORS Admission and guided tours by donation on this Sunday and the second Sunday of every month, year-round.
January 29, Sunday 1:00 p.m.	CHENEY RAILROAD HISTORY WALK A one mile long, easy but bumpy, walk along the former railroad right of way. Meet at north end of Main St., behind Farr's Sporting Goods. Park at nearby shopping plaza or Eighth Utilities District office lot.
February 13, Sunday 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	CHENEY HOMESTEAD OPEN TO VISITORS Admission and guided tours by donation on this Sunday and the second Sunday of every month, year-round.

The Manchester Historical Society

Cordially invites you to the

7th ANNUAL HOLIDAY GALA

An evening of fun, socializing, and shopping for all ages

Friday, December 3, 2010

6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

At the History Center, 175 Pine St. (corner of Forest St.), Manchester, CT

\$15 for members, \$20 for non-members

Wine, hors d'oeuvres, coffee and dessert,
Live auction, teacup auction, sale items include gift baskets, wreaths,
and other boutique items. The museum store will be open.

Purchase tickets at the History Center, Monday through Friday from 10 to 2 up to November 26 or mail in the form below. You can also reserve tickets by calling Terry at (860) 643-1823.

For information on donating a wreath, a gift basket or a live auction item, call (860) 647-9983.
More info about the Historical Society at www.ManchesterHistory.org

To order tickets to the December 3 Gala by mail,

Please complete form and make out check payable to the
Manchester Historical Society
And mail both to our office at
175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT 06040
By November 29.

Individual or organization name & contact	
Street address, town, state, zip code	
Phone & e-mail address; names of guests if available	
Number of tickets at \$15 per member, \$20 non-members. We prefer not to sell tickets at the door, and only sell advance tickets so we can have a better estimate of need for refreshments.	
I am unable to attend, but please accept my donation. All donations are very much appreciated.	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> Any amount is welcome _____ Thank you for supporting the Manchester Historical Society!



The Manchester Historical Society
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Manchester, Connecticut 06040

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School Tour Students Send Thanks

Thank-you notes arrived from the children who visited the Historical Society during the 2010 school tours. **2010 Tour Coordinator Kris Miller**, pictured above, noted the many creative cards, with colorful pictures of the Homestead, Cheney Hall, and museums that were part of the children's walking tour of the historic district. The Society is looking for a coordinator for the 2011 tours, and Kris, who did an outstanding job this year, will help a new coordinator find all the resources needed to maintain this decades-old tradition of teaching a new generation about Manchester's heritage.