

The Courier

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A Web of Silk:

Silken Threads Linked Manchester's Largest Employer to Its Constituents Around the World

by Mike Forino

In 1908, a world map hung in the main office of Cheney Brothers. Held by tacks, silken threads physically linked Manchester's largest employer to its constituents around the world. California, Japan, China, Italy, France, England, Germany, and Mexico were all marked on this visual web of global connections.

How did this global map relate to their domestic operation? To Cheney Brothers, each thread represented a vital area of commercial interaction, all of which propelled them to become one of the largest and most profitable silk manufacturers in the world, and one of America's earliest international manufacturing conglomerates.

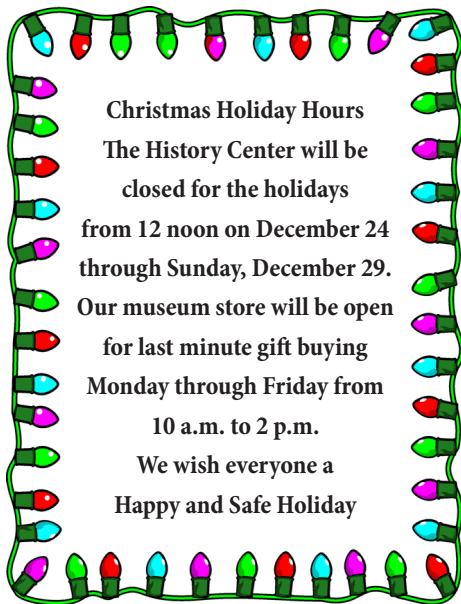
The company's relationships with foreign countries were born from issues in silk manufacturing in New England. Mulberry trees are essential in the process of cultivating silk; the leaves of the trees are the food source for silkworms, which produce raw silk filament as they spin their cocoons. Silk growing, or sericulture, began in North America as early as 1607, after the discovery of wild mulberry trees near the settlement of Jamestown. Despite the eagerness of the English king to establish silk farms in Virginia, the more lucrative crop of tobacco precluded any serious attempts. To reduce reliance of the newly formed United States on foreign goods, sericulture was encouraged by Congress in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. But the lucrative cotton market barred silk production in the southern states, and silk was grown in the northeast, despite the unfavorable climate. The first silk mill in the U.S. was built in 1810, over two decades after the first cotton mill, but it remained a small operation. Many New England silk operations had to sell their crop to British mills.

Due to financial instability and a mass blight of mulberry trees in the 1840s, most silk operations in the U.S. failed. The Cheney brothers began cultivating silk in 1835, and established mulberry tree farms in Ohio and New Jersey, but they were closed due to the blight, and the Cheney brothers declared bankruptcy. Several years earlier Seth Cheney, an aspiring artist, asked his brothers for money to travel to Europe for study. They agreed, only if he sent back mulberry tree saplings. Ironically, it was the money that Seth earned painting that allowed the Cheney brothers to reopen in 1845.

The increasing costs and difficulty of sericulture made the Cheney brothers look for new ways to expand their enterprise. They decided to establish a silk mill. But where would they get silk? The closest natural source was not even in North America. By the late 1840s, the Cheney brothers had made trade connections with British officials in China, but shipments were highly irregular. In 1859, the young Frank W. Cheney traveled to Asia for two years, aspiring to set up direct trade relations. Soon after arriving in China, he found that the much larger British silk industry's hold over the Chinese market left only overpriced and low quality silk for purchase. Frustrated, F.W. moved on to Japan, a country which had been in extreme isolation until only a few years before. Among the first Americans to deal in Japan, F.W. spent his remaining time in Asia, setting up trade agreements with the Imperial government. He left having succeeded. Japan would become the largest supplier of raw silk to the Cheney Brothers, and also to the U.S. silk industry.

When he returned, British silks were deemed superior to American, but the onset of the Civil War engendered

See **SILK**, page 4



Christmas Holiday Hours
 The History Center will be closed for the holidays from 12 noon on December 24 through Sunday, December 29. Our museum store will be open for last minute gift buying Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. We wish everyone a Happy and Safe Holiday

A Message From Our New President



Members, volunteers, and friends, it is a great honor to have been elected President of the Manchester Historical Society for the 2013–2014 year. This year will be filled with exciting changes, as the Society continues its work on the History Center, the Woodbridge Farmstead, and the Cheney Homestead. With new projects comes a need for more volunteers, especially at the History Center. Volunteers as greeters and docents are always needed and welcome, but there are also opportunities for those interested in renovation, restoration, and cleaning projects. All are welcome to volunteer and visit the History Center on Pine Street. I encourage all to attend upcoming events, and to support the Society in any way that you can. Know that my door is always open to everyone. I am available for any reason Mondays and Tuesdays from 10 to 2, at the History Center. If you would like to stop by and chat, please come in, or send me an e-mail at president@manchesterhistory.org.
 —Dennis Gleeson, President

The Courier

A newsletter of the Manchester Historical Society

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 E-mail: info@manchesterhistory.org
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Annual Meeting of the Society

The Annual Meeting of the Historical Society was held Sunday, October 20 at the History Center. Nearly 40 members attended. During the business meeting minutes of the previous year’s meeting were approved, the Treasurer’s report was presented, followed by the reports of the President and Curator. Eileen Sweeney delivered her Executive Director’s report detailing progress during the last year. The final order of business was the election of officers and directors and the slate was presented by the Governance Committee.

The following were elected for the 2013–2014 year. **President:** Dennis Gleeson; **Vice President:** Marsha Gunther; **Secretary:** Rita McParland; **Treasurer:** John Dormer; **Directors:** Mya Bowen, Patricia Hetzel, John Cooney, Theresa Parla, Kevin Ferrigno, Jason Scappaticci, Leslie Frey and David Smith.

Following the business meeting, Assistant Director Mike Forino presented an illustrated talk on the history and development of our History Center building, the former Cheney Brothers Machine Shop.

Chat With the Past

On October 29 the Historical Society hosted a “Chat With the Past” which was a great success. Twenty-two people shared their memories of life in Manchester in its finest days. Many of them were not born in Manchester, but were fortunate enough to have moved here in their childhood. The conversations were animated and thoughtful, and we are planning to host this event again in the future. Maybe we will have more people who lived in the North and South Ends and the East and West sides to share their memories. Each gathering will attract a varied mix of local residents. We would especially like to thank Shop Rite of Manchester, which generously supplied pastries for the event.

Genealogy Group News

by Kris Miller

Feel free to join our group of people that have a common interest in doing genealogy research on their own family. We meet on the second Tuesday of every month at 10 AM at the History Center, 175 Pine Street unless otherwise specified. If you are interested in doing research on other Manchester families and properties to help our curator, Dave Smith, then please let us know. All Society members are welcome to join us for free, members of the public will be charged a \$3.00 fee. Check out our upcoming meeting agendas and field trips on the upcoming events page at www.manchesterhistory.org. If you have questions give Kris Miller a call at 860-528-3122.

December: No meeting will be held in December.

January 14: Our meeting will be held at the Windsor Historical Society, 96 Palisado Ave., Windsor, CT at 10 AM. Librarian, Barbara Goodwin, will give us a tour of their extensive historical resources relating to the town of Windsor and its people. Highlights include thousands of historic photographs, 17th–20th century manuscripts (many indexed by date and family name), more than 350 published genealogies of Windsor families, family correspondence files, and subject files. Their library also contains copies of local cemetery records and vital records, regional and state histories, town reports, local newspapers, school yearbooks, city directories and maps. There will be free time to browse their library and to go through their two self-guiding exhibit galleries.

February 11: Our meeting will be at the History Center at 10 AM. We will be taking care of business such as the election of new officers. We will also be having a “round table” discussion concerning business topics for the coming year such as future meeting agendas and field trips and plans for developing our own genealogical reference library.

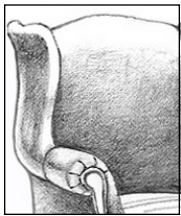
Society Holds Mill Mixer

Many Enjoy This First Time Ever Social Event

The Manchester Historical Society hosted a first time ever “Mill Mixer” on Thursday evening October 10, in an effort to reach out to our History Center neighbors. The tenants living in the apartments that surround us and the management were invited to an evening of music, wine, beer, and food tasting. Staff and volunteers worked their magic to turn the history center into a casual cabaret. Also on display was the ongoing industrial art exhibition entitled *Harvest: The Industrial Art of Brian Walters*, including over a dozen sculptures created from scrap metal and other found materials.

Big thanks go out to the Manchester Symphony Orchestra for providing the musical entertainment and to the volunteers who put in many hours to make this evening a success. The Society gratefully acknowledges the following local businesses which made the event possible: Action Blueprint, Cheney Mill Self Storage, Highland Park Market, Hosmer Mountain Soda, La Via del Gusto, Michael’s Bakery, Old Burnside Brewery, Pepe’s Restaurant, Pinewood Furniture, Royal Ice Cream, Sam’s Club, Sorrento’s Pizza, Stop & Shop Supermarket, and the Hungry Tiger. Students from Rocky Hill High School Volunteer Program and Marsha Gunther also greatly helped.

The Society will sponsor another mixer in the spring. This spring fling event will feature entertainment, food, and wine tasting. We hope to see everyone there!



Help Us Breathe New Life Into the History Center Visitors Corner

Join us in refurbishing the popular, high-back wing chairs in the Visitors Corner at the Manchester History Center at 175 Pine Street. This reception area welcomes local residents, as well as travelers from far and wide, searching for connections to the past. The Corner generates new members, volunteers, and donors. The cozy, comfortable chairs invite visitors and volunteers to sit and chat about Manchester, and provide a relaxing respite after helping with Society work. The well-worn and much-loved wing chairs are in immediate need of attention to continue to serve in this capacity. The chairs are “keepers”—vintage, American-made, and were originally donated by local families: the Olmsteads, the DeCormiers, and the Narkons. Two of the chairs sat in the John Olds House for many years. The Society invites donations from generous donors to fund this project—any amount is greatly appreciated and will make it possible to bring these chairs back to their former glory. Thank you

The Industrial Art of Brian Walters



The ongoing exhibit of *“Harvest”* *The Industrial Art of Brian Walters* continues through December 1. The works on display, while an eclectic grouping, all stem from Brian’s “Reclaimed” series with off shoots ranging from the urban Totems and Woven subseries. It is the material and how it is sourced that keeps the work cohesive. The method of collecting material for these pieces is in a way a process of “harvesting.” The material has to be ripe, in a manner of speaking, the more rust and wear the better. Walters has scoured countless garages, junk yards, farms and other venues for “that” part. A search that will never end, the chase has become one of the most interesting aspects of creating the work. Once collected and stockpiled, the pieces age even more and are then chosen somewhat chaotically to be assembled into a new sculpture. Each piece must be placed in the correct location and even the smallest piece has an exclusive place to be. A momentum to create new and exciting work is developed and “stale” and “static” are two words rarely spoken at the studio. The exhibit, located in Room 3 of the History Center, is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday.

SILK, from page 1

high tariffs on foreign goods. These protections allowed the American silk industry to grow without serious competition, and by 1900, American silk manufacturing stood toe to toe with the British. Japan continued to grow as the leading exporter of raw silk to the U.S., and by the 20th century, silk had become one of that country’s top three exports. To maintain relationships and growth, the Cheneys participated in the creation of the Silk Association of America. The SAA took bold steps to train Japanese silk professionals, open westernized schools, and promote the adoption of American practices.



Members of the Silk Association of America delegation to China in 1923, with their Chinese counterparts.

By 1910, the American industry had outgrown the British, and with the need for more raw silk, the SAA began to lobby for control over the Chinese silk market. The shift in interest to China along with a variety of political moves against Japan caused a serious rift between the two countries. Over the next several decades Japan established its own finished silk industry, severely affecting the American industry. The Great Depression, and the eventual attack of Japan on the U.S. in 1941, severed this once great relationship permanently. By the conclusion of the war, the Cheney business was unable to stand in competition with foreign production and synthetic fibers, and eventually closed its doors.

This is only a brief synopsis of Cheney Brothers in Asia. In closing, their role as one of America’s earliest international manufacturing firms was not limited to Asia. The relationships had profound success on the growth, and the deterioration of those relationships led to the company’s eventual collapse.

We Will Miss...

CHARLES GENOVESE Charlie was a Society member for many years and was active in the Society before becoming a member. He was a leading member of the crew which rebuilt the Keeney Schoolhouse as a Bicentennial project in 1976. During that project, he learned to utilize tools of the mid 1700’s era, when the school was originally built. Charlie was also an active member and past President of the Conn. Firemen’s Historical Society, which maintains a fire museum in the old Pine Street Fire Station, where he had served as a firefighter in Hose & Ladder Co. No. 1.

48 Years and Counting...

As the Society's 50th Anniversary approaches, we need the support of all of our members to continue the progress made in preserving the best of times in Manchester—the story of the town's heritage, its Native American culture, its agricultural beginnings, its industrial past, its immigrant workers—and the legacy they left for us to pass on to future generations. The Society's members, volunteers, and donors have accomplished much in the ensuing years: preserving and operating five historic sites; an archival collection; a research facility; and rich programming for the community. During this season of giving, please consider contributing to the **Manchester Historical Society's Annual Appeal Campaign**. Your dollars have a positive impact on the daily operations of the Society by keeping the museums open for local folks and visitors alike. Approximately 4,000 people, including Manchester's third-grade schoolchildren, visited the Society's historic properties over the past year, enjoying their visits while learning about local history. Your generous financial donations are greatly appreciated. The Society welcomes the public for tours, updates on progress at its facilities, and just friendly chats about old Manchester memories as it builds on the connections from the past to the future.



SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 10th ANNUAL

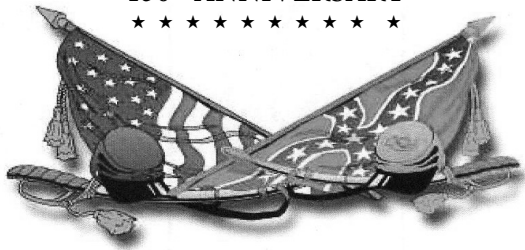
Historical Society Holiday Gala

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2013

Plans are underway for the Historical Society's 10th Holiday Gala fundraiser. We are looking for some special item to help make the evening a financial success as well as a fun-filled evening. Do you have a special antique, collectible, service, or artistic item that you can donate to the auction? Cottage rentals, timeshares, dinners, concert tickets, and gardening consultation are all popular auction items. We're also looking for sponsors, such as local businesses, and advertisers for our Gala program, and we would appreciate your help in soliciting them. We want the 10th annual gala to be our best ever, and it will be one of our biggest fundraisers. Please contact us at 860-647-9983 to let us know what you can donate or if you can solicit a business sponsor.

Mark your calendar for the festive evening! Wine, hors d'oeuvres, coffee and dessert will be served. You'll enjoy music, auctions, and a few surprises. The museum store will be open to purchase local history gifts.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *The* ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
CIVIL WAR
 150th ANNIVERSARY
 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Civil War Notes

by Ron Schack

President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

NOVEMBER 19, 1863

On a chilly day in November, 1863, a crowd gathered at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania for the dedication of the military cemetery. Edward Everett, distinguished Congressman from Massachusetts, was the main speaker who gave a 2-hour speech. President Lincoln then gave his 2-minute speech. Lincoln thought his speech was a failure, but Everett assured him it was not. Lincoln's speech came to be considered one of the most moving speeches ever made.

BATTLE OF CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

The Battle of Chattanooga, Tennessee occurred between November 23 and 25, 1863. Union forces captured Orchard Knob and Lookout Mountain, then assaulted and overran Missionary Ridge, defeating one of two Confederate armies. Chattanooga was considered the "Gateway to the Lower South", which became the supply and logistics base for Sherman's 1864 Atlanta Campaign.

OTHER NOVEMBER, 1863 NEWS

Henry Gray, a Manchester resident at the time of his enlistment with **Company B, 10th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry Regiment**, died in the service of his country at St. Augustine, Florida on November 13, from chronic diarrhea. His widow, Mary Perkins, received a Civil War pension. Henry is interred in **East Cemetery, Manchester**.

DECEMBER 1863

- Union and Confederate camps alike set up their winter headquarters. Minor hostilities continued in various campaigns.
- **President Lincoln explains the Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction.** A full pardon will be given all Confederates, except government officials and high ranking military officers. All property, except slaves will be restored.

JANUARY 1864

- Desertion continues to be a problem in the North and South.
- **William H. Chadwick**, a Manchester resident, joined **Company B, 10th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry Regiment** as a corporal on September 30, 1861. He was promoted to full sergeant on March 14, 1863. William died while in the service of his country, at New Bern, North Carolina on **January 2, 1864**. He is interred in **Buckland Cemetery, Manchester**.
- **Nelson V. Noyes** enlisted as a corporal on August 7, 1861. He joined **Company A, 1st Connecticut Volunteer Cavalry Regiment** on August 13, 1861. Nelson was admitted to Carver General Hospital, Washington, DC on November 23, 1863 with diarrhea, and furloughed on January 11, 1864. He was reported as deserted on February 18, 1864 but had died of his illness while on leave at Manchester, on **January 29, 1864**. Nelson is interred in **West Cemetery, Manchester**.
- **Frederick T. Chapman** and **Frederick Taylor**, both from Manchester, and both with **Company A, 7th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry Regiment**, received disability discharges in **January, 1864**.

Sources include: Manchester Historical Society Civil War data, Hartford Courant Archives, Wikipedia & Find a Grave Websites

New Holiday Ornament Now Available



The second in our series of holiday ornaments is now available in our Museum Stores. This new porcelain ornament features the Woodbridge house at Manchester Green and depicts the house in its new paint scheme of yellow with white trim and dark green shutters. **The gift-boxed ornaments sell for \$12 each.**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Lectures usually take place at the Manchester History Center at 175 Pine Street. Parking is available along Pleasant Street and along the Forest Street side of the building; parking for people with disabilities is available in the small lot next to the History Center. The building is handicap accessible. The cost for most lectures and walking tours is \$2 for members and \$4 for non-members; free for children under 16.

OLD MANCHESTER MUSEUM, 126 Cedar Street
Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
(except holidays, May–Dec., **closing Dec. 15th for the winter**)

CHENEY HOMESTEAD, 106 Hartford Road
Open second Sunday of every month year-round 1–4 p.m.
View the 1785 house and hear commentary about this interesting residence where the Cheney brothers were born and grew up.

Through December 1, Manchester History Center
HARVEST: THE INDUSTRIAL ART OF BRIAN WALTERS
An exhibition of metal sculptures created by Connecticut artist Brian C. Walters II, a professional welder turned self-taught artist. Walters utilizes scrap and found materials to create unique pieces of art, wavering between what is natural and man-made.

December 6, Friday, 5:30 p.m.
ANNUAL GALA EVENING
A festive, fun-filled fundraiser featuring live auction, teacup auction, music, hors d'oeuvres, coffee, and dessert. New this year—a ballroom dance demo! Put on your glitter! Come socialize with friends old and new. Auction items include an antique melodeon, gift certificates to local restaurants and salons, framed original artwork, overnight stay at local hotel, gift cards for oil changes and gasoline, Little Theatre of Manchester tickets, a fresh holiday plant, golf foursome, jewelry, gift baskets with gourmet food and coffee, bottles of wine, hand-made lighted wreath with antique ornaments from the 1930s, 40s and 50s a basket of treats for birds, “A Christmas in Dublin” tickets, and many more. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Live auction at 7:30. Tickets: \$20 for members, \$25 for non-members. Send a check with guests’ names to 175 Pine Street, Manchester CT 06040. Contact the History Center at 860-647-9983 to donate an item.

December 7, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., FREE
ANNUAL HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
Come one, come all! Holiday Opening at the Historical Society properties: Cheney Homestead at 106 Hartford Road decorated for the holidays by the Manchester Garden Club; History Center at 175 Pine Street where the museum store will be open all day with holiday gifts—note-cards, local history books, copies of old maps, DVDs, coffee mugs, a new Woodbridge Farmstead tree ornament, and more; and the Old Manchester Museum at 126 Cedar Street decorated in vintage holiday style, this location also has a museum store. A free trolley will shuttle visitors throughout the South Manchester Historic and Arts District (trolley runs from 11 to 3 as part of S.H.A.R.E. the Holidays). In addition, the second annual Jingleberry Bazaar will open for the day from 10 to 4 at the History Center, with original artwork and crafts by local artisans, “with a little bit of sparkle, a touch of vintage chic, a dash of creativity, and handmade treasures sure to delight.”

December 10, Tuesday
NO GENEALOGY GROUP MEETING IN DECEMBER

NEW! December 15, Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
HOLIDAY MANSION TOUR AND FUNDRAISER
Visit three historic mansions on the Great Lawn, replete with holiday decor, food, and music. Tickets, \$45.00 (\$25.00 for students age 13–18), may be purchased at the door, or in advance at the Manchester History Center. The three mansions on the tour were formerly owned by Charles Cheney, Howell Cheney, and Frank Dexter Cheney.

December 28, Saturday, 1:00 p.m., FREE
HIGHLAND PARK HISTORY HIKE
Meet at the trailhead on Spring Street, near the bridge over Birch Mountain Brook. This parklet was donated to the Manchester Land Trust by the Case family, and the trailhead, mansions, and former paper mills are part of the Case Brothers National Historic District. Our 2.5-mile hike will start out slow, but it does include steep and rocky areas, so some athleticism is needed. No dogs, please. Takes about two hours.

January 1, Saturday, 1:00 p.m.
GREAT LAWN HISTORY WALK
Led by Tom Ferguson and Susan Barlow. Meet at the Cheney Homestead, 106 Hartford Road—park at Fuss & O’Neill, 145 Hartford Road. Be prepared for a one-and-a-half-mile walk over hilly terrain as we walk along Hartford Road, Main Street, and Forest Street and hear commentary about the Landmark Historic District. Tom will describe some of his experiences growing up in the Horace Bushnell Cheney mansion. This hike will be held rain, shine, or light snow. Extreme weather cancels. It is a somewhat strenuous event, and participants should wear sturdy shoes or boots, and suitable winter protective clothing. \$4 for non-members, \$2 for members, free for children under 16.

January 25, Saturday, 1:00 p.m., FREE
CHENEY RAILROAD HISTORY WALK & COMMENTARY
Hikers will have an easy, but bumpy, walk along the former railroad, built in 1869 to connect the Cheney silk mills to the main rail line in the North End. At 2.5 miles, it was the shortest private freight-and-passenger railroad in the United States. We will hike along the one-mile portion owned by the Manchester Land Conservation Trust and, depending on the weather, on to Center Springs Park, which will take about 1¼ hours round trip. Participants will hear about the history of the railroad and see maps and old pictures. There are no restrooms along the route. Meet at the North End of Main Street in Manchester, on the north (right) side of Farr’s Sporting Goods, 2 Main Street, Manchester, CT 06042. Park at the nearby shopping plaza or Eighth Utilities District office building (please do not park in Farr’s parking lot). Extreme weather cancels. No dogs, please.



The Manchester Historical Society
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Please print and fill out this form, and mail it with your check to:

The Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine St., Manchester, CT 06040

Name: (Mr.) (Mrs.) (Miss) _____ Date _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone () _____ Email _____

Type of Membership:	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Individual	\$45
	<input type="checkbox"/> Student (under age 18)	\$5	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$250	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Family	\$75
	<input type="checkbox"/> Life Individual	\$250	<input type="checkbox"/> Life Couple	\$400		

I would like to make an additional contribution for

<input type="checkbox"/> Manchester Historical Society Building Fund	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodbridge Farmstead Fund	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Manchester Historical Society Endowment Fund	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodbridge Endowment Fund	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheney Homestead Endowment	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Keeney Schoolhouse Endowment Fund	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Fund	\$ _____

I have enclosed a matching gift form

Make checks payable to: Manchester Historical Society

Membership Dues and Donations to the Society are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.