



The Courier

60 YEARS OF PRESERVING MANCHESTER'S HISTORY

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



President's Message

Steve Armstrong

Welcome to all supporters of Manchester

history as we approach the summer months. If you have been able to attend our in-person lecture series at the History Center, we have had some fascinating conversations on America 250-related themes. We have discussed how the American Revolution has been understood over time in the United States, the international impact of the American Revolution, the impact of the Founding Fathers, and what those Founding Fathers would say about America today. All of these sessions have been enriching; "audience participation" has been fantastic. During these sessions we have analyzed the impact of the American Revolution and how the ideas of the Founding Fathers still resonate today.

Our lecture series will continue into the summer and the fall; we are also planning a special event to commemorate America 250 at the Cheney Homestead. How to approach America has been hotly debated: should the American Revolution and the ideas surrounding it be "celebrated" or "commemorated". We have decided to do both.

We are planning a number of "member only" events in the fall: if you have not already done so, please renew your membership! Besides additional lectures, we are planning several concerts, a history book club, and a special history trivia/wine and cheese event. For those of you who live around Manchester, I hope that these events will entice you to visit the History Center.

Our annual appeal for additional support is going out soon. Please consider providing additional financial support for our efforts. We need this support to provide the type of programming that will enhance the story that we tell at the Manchester Historical Society. In addition, we are in a relatively old building: repairs and upgrades are always needed. If you can help us out financially and help us move forward it would be deeply appreciated.

If you have additional ideas about programming that you want to see (or if you just want to chat about history) please contact me at stevearmstrong512@gmail.com

America's 250th



The Courier

A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

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Weekly News

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Newsletter Editor

Dave Smith

We Will Miss ...

Stanley “Sandy” Ostrinsky was a long-time member of the Society. He was a member of several organizations besides the Historical Society and also a veteran of the Marine Corps, having served during the Vietnam War. He was well known as the owner of Ostrinsky’s Scrap Yard. Sandy spent many hours here at the Society repairing and cataloging our extensive collection of player piano rolls. We will miss him and his sense of humor.



Recent Acquisitions

By Dave Smith

Since the middle of last year we have received several donations of objects, textiles photos, and documents. Some of the more interesting donations are:

1. A photo of the John Olds house on Tolland Turnpike taken about 1900 [donated by Sue Stepanski]
2. Photo album of the Woodbridge extended family [donated by Linda Corcoran]
3. Three ledgers full of medical prescriptions by local doctors and filled at the Balch & Brown Pharmacy during the period 1892 – 1901 [donated by Ken Burkamp]
4. A stone mile marker from Tolland Turnpike dating from the early 1800’s with the inscription “VII M. H. C. H.” [donated by Town of Manchester] see *explanation of this inscription elsewhere in this issue*



Cheney Homestead Events

By Tana Parseliti

CT Open House Day at the Homestead is for the Young and the young at heart

On Saturday, June 13 from 11am to 3pm the Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse will join over 200 tourism attractions across the state in welcoming visitors to experience Connecticut's unique museums, historical sites, arts and cultural venues, farms and restaurants. CT Open House Day is sponsored by the Connecticut Office of Tourism to enhance awareness and interest in the state's tourism assets.

Recognizing the importance of introducing children to history in a fun and engaging manner, the Homestead Committee has planned a variety of activities for children and families for CT Open House Day. The day will include:

- Performance of interactive Colonial Era songs by Manchester Town Troubadour, Christian Loftus
- Children's History Scavenger Hunt with prizes
- Colonial Era Children's Games and Crafts
- Complimentary Shady Glen ice cream.

Tours of the 1785 Homestead and 1751 replica Keeney Schoolhouse will take place as well.

All activities are FREE and can be enjoyed by both the young and the young at heart!

The Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse are located at 106 Hartford Road in Manchester.

SAVE THE DATE

The Manchester Historical Society will commemorate America's 250th with

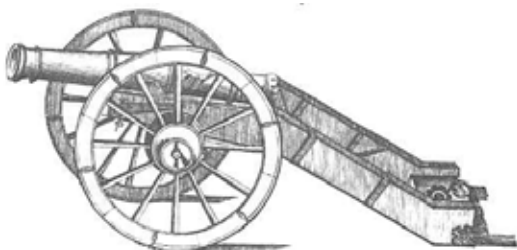
A REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND COLONIAL LIVING ENCAMPMENT

By Ye Olde Lebanon Towne Militia Reenactors

SUNDAY, JULY 12, 2026

10AM TO 3PM

On the grounds of the Cheney Homestead



Step back in time. Experience Men at Arms drilling in the 1764 Manual of Arms, Oxen drawn cannon artillery demonstrations, crime and punishment as it was practiced in the colonial era, leather working, basket making, horn

carving, Big Bear Traders and more!

*This special experience is FREE
but donations are warmly welcome.*

For more information on The Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse Openings and Special Events visit www.manchesterhistory.org or call the Manchester History Center at 860 647-9983.

Local Man Was Servant to George Washington

By Dave Smith

Mathias Spiess (who co-wrote the History of Manchester in 1924) was intensely interested in local history and authored several books and newspaper articles, including on the subject of local Indians, which was his main passion. The following article appeared in the Manchester Evening Herald in 1937.

Washington's Waiter Buried in Manchester
In the Center Cemetery is a tombstone with the following brief inscription: "John Jacklin, the waiter of General Washington, Died August 1, 1825. Hannah, his wife, died March 28, 1846"

Many inquiries have been made regarding this tombstone and of the couple whose remains rest beneath. Here is the story, taken from my "Treasure Chest" of historical notes:

"About the year 1740, Molly Barber, daughter of one of the earliest settlers of Wethersfield, was prevented from marrying the man of her choice, by her parents.

"Heartbroken and discouraged, she declared she would marry the first man who would propose marriage to her. Soon after, James Chaugham, a Narragansett Indian, born on Block Island, offered himself. They were married and removed to Ragged Mountain in Barkhamsted, and there reared a family of eight children. These grew up and were highly respected by all who knew them.

"A daughter, Mercy Chaugham married Isaac Jacklin, a servant (slave) of Secretary of State George Wyllys, of Hartford.

"Their son, John, whose remains rest in the Center cemetery, was born a slave, but slavery in Connecticut was shortly after abolished. John Jacklin grew up in an atmosphere of aristocracy; the fact that he was chosen as the waiter to serve General Washington, while in Hartford, shows that Jacklin had been well trained as a waiter in high society and aristocratic circles of that day.

"The personal service rendered by John Jacklin, to the commander-in-chief of the American Army in the Revolution, was such a matter of pride with him that he ordered it to be recorded in stone.

"There, under a large tree stands his tombstone, like a mute sentinel, yet eloquent to all who stop to read its inscription. It is one of the most unusual tombstones to be found in any cemetery in New England.

"For beneath it are the remains of a man who rendered humble service to the "Father of his Country," George Washington.

"Before that tyrant, death had pressed his finger cold upon Jacklin's pulsing heart, there flowed the blood of three races, white, Indian and negro.

"The question – Whither does the spirit fly? – may occupy one's mind in the case with John Jacklin, for a moment. The Indian within his soul longed for the Happy Hunting Ground in the Great Southwest; the white man's soul yearned for Heaven and the soul of the black man desired entrance into his voodoo Paradise. Perhaps there are no racial divisions beyond the Great Divide. Who knows?

"Coming back to Ragged Mountain, the children of James Chaugham and his wife, Molly Barber, and their descendants with their husbands and wives, became known in Barkhamsted and vicinity as the "Lighthouse Tribe" from the fact that the Hartford and Albany stage drivers, after leaving Riverton and coming in sight of the lights which shone through the windows of their cabins on the mountain, would remark: "There's the lighthouse and we're only five miles from port."

"A visit to Peoples Forest, now state park property, just above Pleasant Valley in Barkhamsted is interesting

to say the least. The cellar holes and the graves of about fifty of these half-breed Indians can still be seen on the western slope of the mountain. The old cabin has been reproduced and the place improved by the State.

"Here lived James Chaugham, a full blooded aboriginal American of the Narragansett tribe, with his wife Molly Barber, daughter of one of the earliest settlers in Connecticut and their daughter Mercy, the mother of John Jacklin, "The waiter of General Washington."

MATHIAS SPIESS

John & Hannah Jacklin





Summer Calendar of Events

- June 13** **Connecticut Open House Day**
Saturday 11 am to 3 pm at our several locations including Pitkin Glass Works
- June 14** **“Making war Before the War”**
Sunday 1:00 – 2:15 pm at the History Center When did the Revolutionary War begin? You may be surprised by the answer. Attorney Steve Penny will present his research on the events leading up to the Declaration of Independence and Revolutionary War.
- June 20** **Revolutionary War Reenactment, at the Pitkin Glass Works site,**
Saturday 11:00 am to 2:00 pm The Ancient Nathan Hale Fifes and Drummers will present re-enactments of Revolutionary War soldiers and their weapons, and music of the period. The Pitkin Glass Works, built in 1783, is located at the intersection of Parker and Putnam Streets. Parking is available on nearby streets.
- June 27** **Summer Walk on the Great Lawn**
Saturday 11 am to 12:30 pm Start at parking lot at 146 Hartford Rd.
- June 28** **“Connecticut and the Revolutionary War”** Sunday 1 – 2:15 pm at the History Center Society president Steve Armstrong will discuss how did Connecticut Cope with the Revolution
- July 12** **Revolutionary War & Colonial Living Reenactment** Sunday 10 am to 3 pm at Cheney Homestead A visit by Ye Olde Lebanon Towne Militia. An outdoor living history demonstration including musket drills and colonial life.
- July 18** **Cheney Railroad history walk**
Saturday 1 pm to 3 pm A chance to walk the length of the former railroad beginning at the North End
- July 19** **“Significance of the 1976 Bicentennial”** Sunday 1 – 2:15 pm at the History Center by Steve Armstrong looking back to 1976 and the previous celebration of our country’s founding.
- August 8** **Downtown & Chamber of Commerce history walk** Saturday 11 am to 12:30 pm Visit historic downtown, from the parking lot at Main and Park St next to St. James Church including a visit to the offices of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce which is celebrating its 125th anniversary.
- August 30** **“Popular Culture at the Time of the Revolution”** Sunday 1 – 2:15 pm at the History Center by Steve Armstrong describing life in Connecticut in the eighteenth century

Society Properties Open to the Public

History Center Exhibits, Library, Office, and Museum Store at 175 Pine St., open Wednesday to Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. located in the former Cheney Machine Shop building. Exhibits include **Manchester Then and Now, business signs** and the **loom room**. The new **Eighth District Fire Department and North End Exhibit** has been a popular addition. There is a research library and museum store. Our 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, Iona, 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 first and third Sundays of the month, May through October, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. The house is an early American home with period art and furniture, a clock making exhibit, and an art gallery. The Homestead was donated to the Manchester Historical Society by the Cheney family in 1968 for a museum to exhibit and explain the impact of the Cheney family on Manchester and beyond. Guided tours include the one-room 1751 Keeney schoolhouse, a partial restoration of one of Manchester's earliest one-room schools.

Woodbridge Farmstead and former Meadowbrook Dairy, at 495 Middle Turnpike East, are open the second and fourth Sundays of the month May through October, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. The Farmstead includes a ca. 1830 farmhouse, a Visitor Center in a barn salvaged from North Manchester, and a late 1700's English barn, as well as foundations of several barns from the days of farming. Early farm equipment is on display along with a one-horse open sleigh and a pony wagon. The Visitor Center shows the history of the Manchester Green area in photos. The house interior includes a Victorian era parlor and later period sitting and dining rooms. 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. The public is welcome to come and ask questions about genealogy research.

See also our website at www.manchesterhistory.org for more information and possible changes.

Corporate Members

We would like to thank the following corporate members for their support of our Society:

First Hartford Realty Corporation

Manchester Fire Support Group

Manchester Road Race Committee



LEAVE A LEGACY®

June is **Leave A Legacy** month when nonprofit organizations such as the Manchester Historical Society suggest that individuals include their favorite charities in their wills so that a cause important to you will continue beyond your lifetime. Our Society has been fortunate to have been the beneficiary of several bequests over the years.

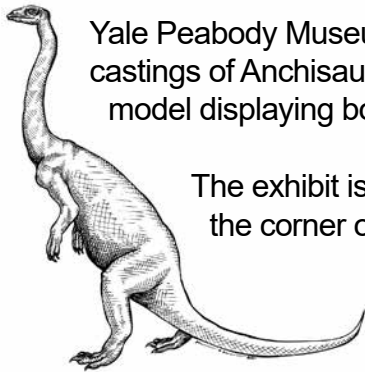
You too can make an impact on future generations in Manchester and also ensure that our important work will continue by leaving a bequest to the Manchester Historical Society.

Mile Marker: Seven Miles
(to) Hartford Court House

Old Manchester Museum Announces New Exhibit Mathias Spiess' Tour Book of Manchester Dinosaurs, Podunk Indians, Colonists

The Old Manchester Museum welcomes its Manchester Historical Society members and friends to its newest exhibit, **“MATHIAS SPIESS’ TOUR BOOK OF MANCHESTER: DINOSAURS, PODUNK INDIANS, COLONISTS.”** This immersive experience invites visitors to explore the rich and diverse history of Manchester, from prehistoric times to the colonial era.

Presented as a featured part of the AMERICA 250 EVENT, this exhibit celebrates Manchester’s unique citizen, Mathias Spiess, the town of Manchester’s first historian. The display features significant contributions from Mathias Spiess, a Manchester author, historian, artist, and poet along with the *Yale Peabody Museum* and the *Lutz Children’s Museum*, bringing together world-class artifacts and engaging local history.



Yale Peabody Museum has provided our Old Manchester Museum with the opportunity to display castings of Anchisaurus dinosaur found at the Buckland Hills area. They have also loaned to us a model displaying both the interior (skeletal) and exterior (skin) view of the Anchisaurus

The exhibit is hosted at the **Old Manchester Museum**, located at 126 Cedar St (at the corner of Cedar and Cooper Hill St). We invite the entire community to join us in celebrating Manchester’s history.

MATHIAS SPIESS’ TOUR BOOK OF MANCHESTER runs from May through December 2026.

The museum is open on the 1st Saturday of the month from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM.

OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY, June 6, 2026, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Highlighting the Manchester Dinosaurs, Podunk Artifacts, and Colonist Exhibit.

SPECIAL EVENT: DINO’ SHINDIG

TUESDAY July 21 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

The Yale Peabody Museum will present on Manchester Dinosaur Fossils. Come and see actual Buckland Hill dinosaur fossils. Talk to Yale paleontologists.

Dig up dinosaur bones and have some fun!

For more information, please visit www.manchesterhistory.org.



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Woodbridge Farmstead News

By Deb Shaffer

It's worth reflecting, on the 250th anniversary of America's independence, that the Woodbridge

Farm had been established nine years before 1776. The farm remained in operation for nearly 200 years through six generations of the Woodbridge family. Today the Woodbridge Farmstead stands as a living link to Connecticut's agricultural history.

The newest chapter in that history is the creation of a pollinator-friendly native plants garden within the foundations of the original farmhouse and horse barn. The project is a joint effort involving the local Pollinator Pathway group, UCONN Master Gardeners, the Manchester Garden Club, and many dedicated residents and volunteers. When completed, the garden will feature native plants and shrubs designed to support hundreds of species of insects, butterflies, and birds. This long-term initiative will be highlighted in several talks throughout the 2026 Open House season.

Meanwhile, we have begun our 2026 Open House season. We are normally open on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, May through October. However, our June 13 event will take place on a Saturday as part of the statewide Connecticut Open House Day program. Visitors can enjoy roving troubadours, refreshments, and - as always - conversations with our Woodbridge historians, who are happy to share stories about how the farm operated over the years it was a dairy and grew a variety of crops.

The lower level of our newly restored 19th century barn once served as the cow barn when the farm operated as Meadowbrook Dairy. Visitors can still see where the cows were housed, the milk room, and the framework of what was then considered a state-of-the-art manure management system.

During the barn restoration we uncovered many farm tools and equipment collected over the years and that had been stored in the barn. Seeing the tools used to work the land by hand gives visitors a new appreciation for the labor of earlier farmers who did not have the luxury of power equipment. Items not related to the Woodbridge Farmstead are now being offered for sale in an ongoing barn tag sale, which will be held during our Open Houses throughout the season.