



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

Greetings!
This is Steve
Armstrong. I

am really looking forward to all the programming we have lined up for Historical Society members this fall. First off, we will be having our Annual Meeting on November 1 at our History Center building. More details forthcoming. We will also be having a continuation of our America 250 lecture series throughout the fall, and we will be sponsoring a concert series starting on Sunday, October 11. I am extremely excited about several new things we will be doing this fall. We are collaborating with the Dionysus Theater Company this year; Dionysus is a black box theater group that will be putting on several plays at the Historical Society; Society members

will receive a discount for all theater events. We will be working with several local historical societies to create a Connecticut history book club that will meet throughout the year. There will also be a history trivia/wine and cheese event for Historical Society members in the late fall; details forthcoming. I am proud of the programming we are introducing at the society: more to come!

We are also looking to change some of the exhibits in the History Center. We want to create exhibits that relate to the lives of members (and non-members) who visit our building: we want exhibits that people can visit and then say, "I remember that!" If you have any ideas for this or other exhibits, please let us know.

I would also invite you to visit our other facilities: Cheney Homestead, Woodbridge Farmstead, and the Old Manchester Museum where the dinosaur exhibit is on display. There are fascinating activities going on at all of these locations: please check them out. As you can see, there is a lot going on at the Historical Society. We would appreciate your support. Please help us out financially if you can. If you wish to volunteer, I assure you that we can find something for you to do. Finally, if you want to talk about what we are doing, please contact me. I am at the History Center Wednesday through Saturday, or I am available at stevearmstrong512@gmail.com. I would love to talk to you!

America's 250th



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A newsletter of the
Manchester Historical Society

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We Will Miss ...

Susan I. (Manning) Holmes and her husband Richard have been long time members of the Society. Susan served on the Manchester Board of Education for many years. She leaves four children and nine grandchildren, all with their partners.

Bradford (Brad) Palmer had been a member of our Society for many years. He was well known as a 40-year member of the Town Water Department. In addition, he served in the U. S. Army and was an outstanding marksman and instructor. He was also a member of the 8th District Volunteer Fire Department for many years and a steward with the Manchester Land Conservation Trust.

Martha Eddy and her husband Jim have been members for over 15 years. She was interested in family genealogy, gardening and other pursuits including the Manchester Women's Club Little Free Libraries.

Jack Robert Slifer and his wife Joan have been Life Members for many years. Jack was a veteran having served in the U. S. Army in the 1960s. He was an avid outdoor person and a member of several organizations including the American Legion and the Rockville Fish and Game club.



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Cheney Homestead News

By Tana Parseliti

REENACTMENT BRINGS AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY TO LIFE AT THE CHENEY HOMESTEAD

Revolutionary War history came to life at the Cheney Homestead on July 12 when the Cheney Homestead Committee and Manchester Historical Society hosted a Revolutionary War and Colonial Living Encampment and Reenactment. Over 300 individuals of all ages visited the Homestead to partake of this memorable event.

Early in 2026 the Cheney Homestead Committee and the Historical Society Board of Directors began considering how it could celebrate America's 250th anniversary. They enthusiastically embraced the idea of commemorating the occasion with a Revolutionary War Reenactment. The Cheney Homestead was a logical choice as a site. Built in 1785 by Timothy Cheney, a Captain in the Militia and recognized Manchester Patriot, the Homestead is representative of the architecture and lifestyle of the period.

Our reenactor groups included Ye Olde Lebanon Towne Militia Co., 1775, whose mission is to re-create and perpetuate the Military and Civilian History of the American Revolutionary War Period (1775-1783) as well as members of His Majesty's 54th Regiment of Foot 1775-1778, who portrayed 18th Century British foot soldiers stationed in New England.



to hold drills, engage in skirmishes, and conduct artillery demonstrations.

A Militia encampment showcased a wide variety of colonial era crafts, skills and occupations providing insight into civilian life in the American Revolutionary War Period (1775-1783).



Over 30 volunteers worked to make sure the Reenactment flowed smoothly and showcased the assets of the Homestead.

The Timothy Cheney House welcomed a record 162 visitors for tours. An Information Booth promoted the Historical Society sites, activities and events.



Behind the scenes Logistics, Parking, and Volunteer Hospitality volunteers made sure the event ran smoothly and our volunteers were properly deployed and cared for. Photographers Paul Ofria and Emmet Gemme chronicled the day with beautiful photos. Find us on Facebook at Cheney Homestead Museum for photos from the event.

The Homestead Committee is grateful to the following businesses and individuals for their support and in-kind donations that helped make the Reenactment possible:

- American Smoke BBQ
- Anonymous Donor of Portolets and Trash Containers
- Highland Park Market
- Photographers Emmet Gemme and Paul Ofria
- Royal Ice Cream Co.
- Schultz Design
- USA Waste & Recycling
- All American Waste

The Cheney Homestead Committee was proud to host this special celebration of America's 250th and looks forward to joining with the Manchester History Center Museum, Woodbridge Farmstead and Old Manchester Museum to share our rich Manchester history through tours, exhibits and special events throughout the year.

Manchester's Earliest History on Display

By Susan Stepanski

"The weather outside was dreary but the atmosphere at the Old Manchester Museum (OMM) was full of fun and curiosity. The Mathias Spiess Tourbook of Manchester – Dinosaurs, Podunk Indians and Colonists exhibit has been showing several plaster castings of the Manchester Anchisaurus dinosaur, along with artifacts from the Podunk Indian era and Manchester's colonial period."

On Tuesday July 21, 2026, 122 visitors came to see the actual Yale Peabody Museum Manchester Dinosaur artifacts! Driven up from the Yale Peabody Museum by the dedicated Yale

Peabody staff, actual artifacts were displayed in the South Gallery, in front of the plaster castings. Daniel Brinkman, paleontologist from Yale Peabody along with his assistant Jared, helped adults and children study the fossils and interpret the markings made by the animal. Vanessa Rhue, Collections Manager for Yale Peabody oversaw the interactions and provided her insight. We appreciate their assistance in putting this exciting event together.

Many children had the opportunity to dig for their own dinosaur fossils! A table was set up with blocks of clay and two tools, a brush and a scraper. Teams of children worked on individual blocks to discover different dinosaur fossils. It was exciting to see children engaged and working together for one purpose.



A 6-foot diorama of Mathias Spiess time frames (Jurassic, 1630, and 1776) not only displayed the castings but also included a section on Dutchman Peter Hagar and Wunnee-Neetunah, a Podunk Indian Princess. Podunk

wampum and stone artifacts are also on view. The final section

presents the Manchester volunteers who answered the Lexington Alarm and went to Boston in 1775.

Along with the children, adults walked through the North Gallery, where the Pitkin Glass and Cheney Brothers exhibits are shown. Some of the various Manchester business and manufacturing companies are highlighted with actual items made in Manchester.

As people left the museum, several checked out the Museum Store's supply of fossils for sale.

Jasper arrowheads, fossils from Mongolia along with dinosaur mobiles and toys are available

for sale. Come by and pick up your Holiday gifts before they are all sold out!

If you missed this wonderful event, consider coming to the Old Manchester Museum from now to December 2026. The Museum and the Store is open the first Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



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 on 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, is 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

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

Upcoming Events

September 13, Sunday 12:00 p.m. "Manchester Green History Walk." Meet at the Senior Center and join us while we explore "The Green" and visit the Woodbridge Farmstead. Learn about George Washington's visit, the town's first post office and the tavern kept by Deodatus Woodbridge.

September 19, Saturday 1:00 p.m. "Center Memorial Park." Learn about the monuments in the park

September 20, Sunday 1:00 p.m. "Myths of Manchester" at the History Center. Learn about the myth(s) of Manchester and the importance of accuracy in our history.

October 3, Saturday 3:00 p.m. "Cheney Landmark District Walking Tour" A two hour walk in the Cheney District including former silk mills and residential neighborhoods.

October 11, Sunday 1:00 p.m. "Harmonies From Their Homelands" at the History Center. Presented by Entwyned a music and history program celebrating our 250th birthday.

October 18, Sunday 12:00 p.m. "Adaptive Re-use in the South End" starting at 146 Hartford Rd. See re-use of buildings in the Cheney Historic District including mill buildings now apartments and a history museum and a firehouse also now a museum.

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Woodbridge Farmstead News

By Deb Shaffer

The Woodbridge Farmstead is a unique place. It is a small corner of what was once a working farm that remained in the Woodbridge family for six generations.

Raymond and Thelma Woodbridge bequeathed the property to the Manchester Historical Society with the wish that we maintain it as a farm museum.

Since then, we have restored the 18th and 19th century barns, built a new Visitor's Center, and most recently, started a pollinator garden in the foundation of the old house.

Today, Woodbridge stands as a living link to Manchester's past, with stories to tell about old-time farming, the people who lived and worked here, and the challenges of maintaining a historic property.

From May through October, we hold Open Houses on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Our volunteers open the barns, the house, and the Visitor's Center and get ready to greet our guests. We love telling the story of the lives that were lived here – and so often, we learn something from our visitors too.

Some of our recent guests have included a man who was the paperboy for Raymond and Thelma, a local dairy farmer who shared his knowledge of our dairy barn, and a woman whose mother was Thelma's bridesmaid. We love hearing their stories as much as we love telling ours.

There's a great feeling at the end of an Open House, when we talk about who visited and how we connected with people who were interested in the farmstead. It takes a lot to keep the property running and ready to share with the public, and we are always looking for new volunteers to join us.

Whether your interest is history, farming, old buildings, or gardening, we've got a place for you.

Come be part of the Woodbridge Farmstead story. Visit us at an Open House, or contact me directly at DebraShaffer01@gmail.com.



Upcoming Events

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November 1, Sunday 2:00 p.m.
Annual Meeting of the Society at the History Center. Includes a program "10 Years of Dedication, Legacy Art in Manchester"

November 8, Sunday 12:00 p.m. "East Cemetery Walk" at Harrison St. Ruth to cemeteries and explain the symbolism of the artwork

November 14, Saturday 1:00 p.m. "North End History Walk" beginning at Whiton Library. See what remains of the old Depot Square area.

November 15, Sunday 1:00 p.m. "Historic Mile Markers" at the History Center John Presutti of East Hartford Historical Society tells of milestones that once lined our main roads and turnpikes and still do in some places if you know where to look. There is still one beside the road in Manchester, and another in our History Center.

December 6, Sunday 1:00 p.m. "Women in the American Revolution" at the History Center presented by Steve Armstrong discussing women's participation and contributions to the effort for independence

December 26, Saturday 1:00 p.m. "History Hike of Highland Park" 670 Spring St. Explore the Case Brothers Historic District, the cabin and climb to the lookout.

Recognition for Our Veterans

By Noreen Palladino Cullen

The Department of Defense issued a format for recognition certificates starting in 2009 for our World War II veterans. They then issued a similar format for our Korean War veterans in 2010. Finally, the Vietnam War veterans were also honored in 2023 in Manchester with pins that said, "For your honorable service during the Vietnam War."

The DOD sent the formats to each state for them to print and disseminate. Connecticut had several hundred WWII certificates awarded at ceremonies around the state. The Manchester Town Hall was given the certificates for veterans who could not attend the ceremony. Likewise, the Korean War veterans were honored, with unclaimed certificates left over.

The Town offered the leftover recognition certificates to the Manchester Historical Society, where they then were stored in the vault. In 2025, a group of dedicated volunteers took on the challenge of finding the veterans or their family members. For the most part, it would be the widows, children, and even grandchildren who were available to receive their veterans' certificates.

The project was led by Noreen Palladino Cullen, who spent untold hours researching, contacting family members, and mailing out certificates to those now living outside of Connecticut. Each veteran had some connection to Manchester and its surrounding towns, at some point in their lives. Several websites were searched, including the places of employment of veterans' descendants.

The certificates were received with great joy and often astonishment. Since cell phone numbers are not listed anywhere, volunteers John Bowers, himself a Vietnam War veteran, Maude McGovern, Daryl Dwyer, Dennis Gleeson, Noreen and a few of her friends, all fanned out to hand deliver the certificates with an explanatory letter included. Other certificates were picked up at the History Center at 175 Pine Street. Still others were mailed out -- a special undertaking -- since the certificates are 15" tall and 12" wide.

Noreen also volunteers with a website called Find a Grave ([findagrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com)) which allows the posting of images on a replicated digital grave. When a veteran's

gravestone was on the website, Noreen uploaded an image of that veteran's recognition certificate, with a note inviting the family to contact the Historical Society to arrange a mailing of the actual certificate.

As of now, here is where we stand: **WWII** – 417 certificates were in the vault; 74 left after deliveries and Find a Grave postings. **Korean War** – 267 certificates were in the vault; 46 left after deliveries, mailings, Find a Grave postings.

We did a project reaching out to **Vietnam War** veterans in as many ways as we could. This resulted in a list of 25 veterans, 12 of whom requested a Recognition Pin. These pins were mailed from the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs directly to the veterans who wished to have one.

We can still respond to veterans who would like a Vietnam Recognition Pin to be mailed to them. Likewise, we consider it an ongoing project to keep looking for veterans or their families for whom we still have Recognition Certificates. People are welcome to contact the Manchester Historical Society on 860-647-9983 to inquire about a World War II/Korean War veteran certificate or a Vietnam War veteran recognition pin.

Here is a kind thank you note from a veteran:



"A short note to express my appreciation and gratitude for your effort in honoring veterans who served our country. As a Korean War veteran, I am very thankful for being remembered. Please accept my appreciation and hope you will

express my note of thanks to your volunteers' efforts. I remain a proud veteran!"

~ George A. Precourt



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	☐ Student (under age 18)	\$5	☐ Life Couple	\$1,000	☐ Corporate	\$500
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