
23 Walks with the Town Historian During 2023

Pictures, clockwise from upper left: Hartford Road sandstone bridge • Case Mountain summit • c. 1900 photo of the South Manchester Railroad depot by Horace B. Cheney • 1914 panoramic view of the old North End from a special Manchester Herald edition • Intersection of Comstock Road and Arvine Place in the Lakeview development. Contemporary photos by Town Historian Susan Barlow.
Learn about Manchester’s history during our 200th-birthday year by participating in free history walks. Special reward for those who attend at least 10 of the 23 walking tours — receive a bicentennial coin (first 200 winners). More info and activities: [https://www.manchesterct.gov/Activities-Events/Manchester-Bicentennial](https://www.manchesterct.gov/Activities-Events/Manchester-Bicentennial) Hikes are rain-or-shine. Extreme weather cancels.

*Your hosts,* Susan Barlow Town Historian
And the Bicentennial planning committee.

Participant’s name and contact info: _____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When. (All times 1:00 p.m. except Oct. 7)</th>
<th>Where to meet</th>
<th>Attendance Stamp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, January 1, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Great Lawn walk. 146 Hartford Road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 28, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Cheney Railroad. Rear of 220 North Main or 8th district, 18 Main St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, February 4, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Botti Farm. 330 Bush Hill Road.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, February 19, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>North End &amp; Bon Ami. 8th District, 18 Main St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, March 5, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Downtown. Forest St. lot, 1050 Main St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 18, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Hollywood. Plaza, 283 E. Center St. near corner of Lenox</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, April 8, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Porter St. and reservoirs. 395 Porter St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, April 22, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Hockanum River. 65 N. School St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Time</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Location Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 20,</td>
<td>Cheney Railroad. 146 Hartford Rd.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, May 28,</td>
<td>Incorporation date, Town Center. 41 Center St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, June 3,</td>
<td>Center Springs Park. 39 Lodge Drive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, June 4,</td>
<td>Salter’s Pond, 123 Lydall St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, June 17,</td>
<td>Great Lawn, mansions. 146 Hartford Rd.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, July 1,</td>
<td>Historic Downtown churches. 896 Main St., enter parking lot from Church St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, July 9,</td>
<td>Manchester Green. 549 Middle Turnpike East</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, August 6,</td>
<td>Buckland Cemetery. 1210 Tolland Turnpike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, August 26,</td>
<td>West side. Washington Sch., 94 Cedar St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, September</td>
<td>Center Memorial Park. 41 Center St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, September</td>
<td>Cheney District walk. 146 Hartford Rd.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, October 7,</td>
<td>Charter Oak Park, ECG, 50 Charter Oak St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTE: 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, October 21</td>
<td>Lakeview. Corner of Comstock/South Main</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, November 5,</td>
<td>North End, Apel. 41 North Main St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, November 25, 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Highland Park. 670 Spring St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, Dec. 31,</td>
<td>Reception. 175 Pine St.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our Birthday: Legislature approves incorporation, May 28, 1823

It was during the May session in the year 1823, that the General Assembly resolved “that the parish of Orford, be, and the same is hereby incorporated in a distinct and separate town by the name of Manchester,” and that “the first town meeting in said new town shall be holden at the meeting house in the parish of Orford, on the sixteenth day of June next.”

Signed by Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Governor of Connecticut 1817-1827 and, earlier, a member of George Washington’s cabinet.


But, of course, it all started earlier than 1823
The human history of the area now called Manchester pre-dates 1823, including the significant but mostly unwritten history of the indigenous people who lived on this land before European and English ships came across the ocean. Their encampments and fishing areas included the springs at Highland Park and Center Springs Park, encampments at Love Lane, Bush Hill, Hillstown Road, and Olcott Street.

English colonists moved into the area in the 1600s, and John Allen’s saw mill in Hilliardville was operating before 1672. However, we were part of Hartford until 1783, then a part of East Hartford. Find out more in these two → comprehensive histories, mentioned above.
Circa 1950 map by Hazel Lutz (1902-1985), in a school booklet, “This Is Manchester.”
Sunday, January 1, Great Lawn walk  
1:00 p.m. at Fuss & O’Neill, 146 Hartford Road.  
Former mansion resident Tom Ferguson and Town Historian Susan Barlow will lead this annual 90-minute walk to view the iconic lawn that is part of the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District, comprising 175 acres, and encompassing the Cheney silk mills, the 1785 Cheney family homestead, several 19th and 20th century mansions built for the Cheney family, schools, churches, and halls, and over 275 residential structures built for company workers and their families. Rain or shine, so wear sturdy shoes. Be prepared for hilly, bumpy ground. Pictured at left, Horace B. Cheney house, c. 1900.
Saturday, January 28, Cheney Railroad Walk, north to south
1:00 p.m. Rear of 220 North Main Street or 8th Utilities
District office at 18 Main Street

Meet at the north side of the railroad tracks, at the southeast end of the strip mall, close to the back of Key Bank

Hikers will have an easy, fairly flat, 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 freight-and-passenger railroad in the United States.

We will hike at a moderate pace along the one-mile portion owned by the Manchester Land Conservation Trust and then on to the bridge overlooking Center Springs Park and Bigelow Brook, about three miles round trip.

Participants will hear about the history of the railroad. More detail: Meet at the north end of Main Street, in the parking lot of the strip mall on the north (right) side of the tracks, across from Farr's Sporting Goods, 2 Main Street, Manchester, CT 06042. Please do not park in Farr's parking lot.

A special favor will be given to children who attend the hike. We will hike if light rain or snow -- bring an umbrella -- but extreme weather cancels. No dogs, please.

← Scan for website of the Manchester Land Conservation Trust where there are maps of trails on the Trust’s 600+ acres in Manchester and five nearby towns.  www.manchesterlandtrust.org .
Saturday, February 4, old farm walk, 1:00 p.m.
330 Bush Hill Road

One-and-a-half-mile walk at the former Botti farm, to enjoy the winter scenery and learn about the Botti family's immigration to the United States from Italy, as well as about patterns of immigration in Manchester and New England. The 177.5-acre preserve at one time included orchards, a gravel-pit operation, and a pig farm. We’ll talk about farming in Manchester, and how Land Trusts have historically preserved open space lands. Family members and a Unico representative will join us. Hikers will have a somewhat hilly walk over farm roads and meadow. The walk will take about 90 minutes, but all are welcome to stay longer to explore four additional miles of trails at the property. Rain or shine, but extreme weather cancels. Questions may be directed to 860-643-1823. Botti family photos from the 1920s through 1950s.
Sunday, February 19, North End walk, 1:00 p.m.
8th District office, 18 Main Street, rear parking lot

Come explore the Union Village Historic District, listed on the National Register in 2002, recognizing one of Manchester’s early industrial areas. The Union Cotton Mill was established in 1794 by Samuel Pitkin, using water power from the Hockanum River. The mills were located west of Union Street, below the huge dam at Union Pond. As with other mill areas, worker housing was provided, and many examples of these houses are part of the district. The cotton mills closed about 1900, and nothing remains of the bricks and stone near the river. We will visit the former Bon Ami factory, famous for its soap products, and the unique railroad display upstairs. We’ll walk about one and half miles round trip in the historic district, and see what remains after Urban Renewal in the 1960s brought about the demolition of the main business area, including the railroad depot, restaurants, grocery, hardware, variety stores, professional offices and a pharmacy. Rain or shine, but extreme weather cancels.
Sunday, March 5, Downtown and reuse of historic buildings, 1:00 p.m. Forest St. parking lot, 1050 Main Street, meet at corner of Forest and Main Streets.

Exploring the history of our Downtown, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, with buildings dating back to 1875-1876, when St. James church was built in the Victorian Gothic style. Before 1890, Main Street was a tree-lined mostly residential neighborhood, punctuated with the three churches: Center Congregational, St. James, and Methodist Episcopal, now South Methodist. The development of Main Street began at the southern end, and gradually moved northward in 1895. The eastern side of Main Street was always more built up than the west side, since the Cheneys owned the west side from Hartford Road to St. James Street, and until hard times came upon the Cheneys in the 1930s, it was occupied by residences. Our 1.5-mile walk will include Bennet Academy, the old high school, Firestone (formerly Watkins) building, and the Cheney Block. Rain or shine, but extreme weather cancels. Manchester has been able to save older buildings for adaptive re-use, e.g., the former House & Hale store and Watkins furniture, now office condominiums.

*Photo montage of original Watkins building and panoramic photo by Dick Jenkins.*
Saturday, March 18, Hollywood, 1:00 p.m. Lenox Plaza, 283 East Center Street, meet at intersection of Lenox and East Center Streets

Exploring a suburban development envisioned by E.J. Holl (1874-1967), a remarkable man in Manchester's history. He moved here from his native England in 1903 and became a land tycoon and developer, with a thriving business in real estate, investments, insurance, and mortgages. One of E.J.Holl's slogans was "He cuts the Earth to suit your taste," and he did cut up many housing developments, in our Town, e.g., • Homestead Park, off West Middle Turnpike east of Broad Street • Pinehurst, between Main Street and the Turnpike • Forest Heights • Fairview • Clairmont • Greenhurst, etc. Hollywood, of course, plays off his name, and includes streets named with English themes — Westminster, Lancaster, Scarborough, etc. The development’s curving streets were laid out in 1925. People who bought the house-lots could choose a house-style, sometimes from pattern books, and choose their own builders. In the days before zoning and subdivision regulations, homeowners were assured they would live in a refined area, without factories, stores, and farming nearby. The lots were rather small compared to some of today’s developments.
Saturday, April 8, Porter Street and reservoirs, 1:00 p.m. Highland Park School, 395 Porter Street, meet at corner of Porter Street and Ferguson Road.

A unique neighborhood with reservoirs, a Nature Center, and the home of Hart Porter (1812-1891), whose house, built about 1820, is on the Connecticut Freedom Trail, as a secret stop on the Underground Railway.

Before today’s Highland Park School, the wooden Porter Street School was located at this site. It closed in 1928, and the new Highland Park School opened that same year; it was one of five schools built in the 1920s, and the last to be built in Manchester until 1950, when Manchester undertook an extensive school building program. It was threatened with closure, but recently enjoyed a renovation and expansion.

Going up Ferguson Road, into the “Rockledge” development, we can enter the Town’s Porter and Howard Reservoir area. From the Spiess & Bidwell History of Manchester, “By 1889, the demand for “city water” in South Manchester had increased to such an extent that Cheney Brothers organized the South Manchester Water Company, and in the following year it constructed the Porter Reservoir with a capacity of 35,000,000 gallons. The Howard Reservoir, 124,000,000 gallons, was completed in 1905. There was a small textile mill here at Porter Brook, along with housing for workers, dating back to 1826.
Saturday, April 22, Earth Day and a Hockanum River walk, 1:00 p.m. Robertson School, 65 North School Street, front steps of old building. Union Village designated a National Historic District in 2002.

Our walk starts at Robertson School, named for John T. Robertson (1856-1922), organizer of the J.T. Robertson Soap Company, maker of Bon Ami scouring powder, with interests in the Orford Soap Company, in Manchester, Syracuse, N.Y., and Montreal, Canada. Mr. Robertson was one of the organizers and original directors of the Manchester Trust Company.

We’ll walk along streets in the North End to Union dam, originally built in 1866, where the Hockanum river flows out of Union Pond. On this 53rd annual Earth Day, we’ll acknowledge the Hockanum’s drastic change from pollution to recreation, and the benefits of the clean air and clean water legislation of the 1970s.

We’ll see housing originally built by the Union Manufacturing Company for its employees. The cotton mill was established in 1794 by Samuel Pitkin, and operated through various ownerships until 1900, when the treasurer absconded with its funds. Cheney brothers bought the buildings and water rights, and built an electric generating plant in 1901 on North Main Street next to the river. No buildings remain at the site of the former mills.
Saturday, May 20, Cheney railroad south to north, 1:00 p.m.
Front steps of Fuss & O’Neill, 146 Hartford Road

Built in 1869 to connect the Cheney silk mills to the main rail line in the North End, the South Manchester Railroad, a 2.5 miles, was the shortest freight-and-passenger railroad in the United States. Passenger service ended in 1933, but freight still rolled along these rails into the 1980s. Hikers will have an easy, fairly flat, moderately paced walk along the rail trail. We’ll walk along streets in the National Historic Landmark District, entering the park-like trail just after the silk vaults on Elm Street, and then on to the bridge overlooking Center Springs Park and Bigelow Brook, returning the same way, about three miles round trip. Participants will hear about the history of the railroad, and the history of putting the railroad back together as a public hiking path. A special favor will be given to children.

← Scan for website of the Manchester Land Conservation Trust where there are maps of trails on the Trust’s 600+ acres in Manchester and five nearby towns.
The Governor signed legislation to incorporate Manchester as a separate town (from East Hartford) on May 28, 1823.

Our walk in the Town center will recognize the role of the Congregational Church in early government. The present building at the intersection of Main and Center Streets, is the fifth house of worship for this congregation, and it has been known by nine different names over the years. From *Center Congregational Church, 1779-1979* page ix, “...the story of this church and the early history of the area (now Manchester) are one and the same. Records show that members of the Ecclesiastical Society conducted church business and community business such as setting the tax rate, laying out school districts and maintaining the highways.” Meetings often met at 1:00 p.m., and ended “with the setting of the sun.” We will also visit the former Hall of Records, constructed in 1896, which later served as the police station, now the Probate Court.
Saturday, June 3, Center Springs Park and its indigenous &
industrial heritage, 1:00 p.m. Front steps, 39 Lodge Drive
1.5-mile loop walk in a 55-acre urban park, moderate pace with some hills. In the geographical center of Town, this park is a gorge, with geological and historic interest. The Podunk Indians fished for eels at the falls in the area.

Timothy & Benjamin Cheney had a clock factory along Bigelow Brook. Their work is listed in *Mantle Fielding’s Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors and Engravers*, published in 1926: “Engravers. These clock-makers of East Hartford, Connecticut. (Note, we were still part of East Hartford then), and their well-engraved brass clock-faces show very considerable skill in handling the burin.”
Sunday, June 4, Salter’s Pond with industry and recreation, 1:00 p.m. 123 Lydall Street

One-mile walk to explore a former mill pond in the Lydallville section of Manchester. Note the 1850 map below, showing the Salter and Strong paper mill. Later, Henry Lydall operated mills here — as well as the needle factory farther east on Lydall Street. Starting in 1946, Salter’s became a town-operated public swimming area. In 1959, the Salter’s arrangement changed – Lydall-Foulds and Colonial Board leased the area to the town for a dollar a year. The companies continued to own the water rights, but the town paid for maintenance and insurance. In 1961, the Town opened the current paved pool with its nearby brick building for changing clothes and storing chlorine. In 1980-81, the pond and surrounding shore were donated to the Manchester Land Conservation Trust by Lydall, Inc. (six acres) and by Green Manor Corporation (three acres).
Saturday, June 17, Great Lawn walk, 1:00 p.m. Front steps of Fuss & O’Neill, 146 Hartford Road

Explore this unique and iconic landscape and meet a mansion owner(s) on this 1.5-mile walk with Tom Ferguson and Susan Barlow. We’ll stroll in the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District, and see the mansion where Newbery-medal-winning author Emily Cheney grew up. Her 1968 young-adult, semi-autobiographical novel *Traveler from a Small Kingdom*, describes growing up in 1927 on The Place, with dozens of cousins, long Sunday walks, and a governess, gardener, and cook. Cheney family member Charles Adams Platt designed several mansions here: those for Philip, Frank, Jr., Clifford, and James Davenport Cheney. Platt also designed for the Astors and Delanos in New York City, and the Beldings in Rockville. He designed libraries, schools, fountains, and the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Demolished in the 1930s, “Big Red,” the mansion of Frank Woodbridge (“F.W.”) Cheney and Mary Bushnell Cheney was described in *Great Oaks, Memoirs of the Cheney Family*, by F.W.’s granddaughter, Antoinette Cheney Crocker. See below right, interior view of the library of the F.W. mansion).

Hikers should be prepared for hilly, bumpy ground.
Saturday, July 1, historic churches Downtown, 1:00 p.m.
Church Street side of St James Church parking lot
Manchester’s churches are gems of architecture, community, and spirituality. We will visit some churches in the Downtown area, and explore nearby streets, about one mile round trip.

Our Downtown is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but an Urban Redevelopment was proposed that would counteract the “deterioration” of the Downtown area. “The existing wide street from Myrtle to Forest was to become a pedestrian mall. A new wide roadway was to be constructed to the west, eliminating St. James Church and a number of other buildings. The whole cost was estimated to be about $17,000,000, with the federal government and the state paying most of it. The town’s share was to be about $2,000,000. By a small margin the voters rejected this plan in a referendum in October 1966. A new, simpler plan never reached the referendum stage.” — William E. Buckley, *A New England Pattern*, page 285, published 1973.
Sunday, July 9, Manchester Green, Woodbridge Farmstead, 1:00 p.m. Front steps of the Senior Center, 549 Middle Turnpike East. When parking, note one-way traffic signs.

The first post office and stagecoach stop were at Manchester Green, and the Woodbridge family was prominent in farming and tavern-keeping. We will walk from the Senior Center, past the old mill (see, at bottom, 1910 and 1980 views of this mill), to the Woodbridge Farmstead, which will be holding an open house. There’s a restored 18th-century barn and a brook in the backyard of what remains of Meadowbrook Farm. Both the tavern and the stables (for the stagecoach horses) are gone, but there are plenty of vintage sights to see at the Green.
Saturday, August 6, Buckland Cemetery, 1:00 p.m.
1210 Tolland Turnpike

Buckland, in older times famous for its quarry, dinosaurs, pony rides, and tobacco, is now a vast shopping area. The 1849 map below shows some of the Buckland residents, including Dr. Calvin Jacques, whose family is buried in the cemetery. Dr. Jacques, whose wife was a Buckland, lived in the quaint house on North Main Street, pictured above.

We’ll visit the gravestone of Aaron Buckland, whose family originally started this cemetery; it was given to the public in 1811, and is our third cemetery. Aaron Buckland served, along with six immediate family members, when the call came for the Lexington Alarm. His Revolutionary War pension was 1000 acres of land in Buckland, valued at 17 cents an acre.
Saturday, August 26, West side, 1:00 p.m. Front steps of Washington School, 94 Cedar Street.

Explore the West Side, beginning at the school built in 1915 (photos: on right, dated 1915; and below from the 1980s).

We’ll also visit the West Side oval playing fields, streets with houses for employees of the silk mill, and the site of a former boarding house, an interesting “housing” chapter in the history of immigration and getting started in a new country.

Pictured below, circa 1900 photo of “Forest House” or “Four Acres” boarding house on Cooper Street, across the backyard from Washington School. Scan the QR code to read more about this and other boarding houses, dating back to the late 19th century. Below left, 1859 school, Cedar St.
Sunday, September 17, Commemorative monuments in the park, 1:00 p.m. Front steps of Town Hall, 41 Center Street.

The Civil War statue was unveiled on September 17, 1877, the anniversary of the battle of Antietam in Sharpsburg, Maryland. The unveiling was a huge event — thousands came from Manchester and surrounding towns. There were drum corps, marching bands, and speeches. Hear more about the ceremony and about the monument in the park that honor veterans, as well as viewing works by renowned architect Charles Adams Platt. We’ll re-enact the speeches of General Hawley and Governor Hubbard, including these words by the General, “I am glad to see these monuments arise; glad to see the people of New England towns performing their simple duty to this regard. It is a duty to the dead. The soldiers on the field were comforted by the thought of the regard felt for them at home; the thought that they would be cared for if wounded and their memories cherished if they fell…. The record of these dead soldiers is the noblest possession of the American people. ...What a story this statue will tell us in the far future, a story of a great struggle when the life of the nation was threatened and from the quiet of their homes, 300,000 young men went forth and gave their lives for their country. None of you who see this monument will ever consent to hear it called an unholy war. It was a holy war: none other could have so called out the young men of New England.” General Hawley expressed his faith in the stability of the Union, and concluded by reading the memorable address of President Lincoln at Gettysburg.
Saturday, September 30, Labor Relations and Cheney District walk, 1:00 p.m. 146 Hartford Road

Hosts Chris Paulin and Susan Barlow will lead this 48th annual walk in the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District. Find out about the huge brick buildings that remain from the days of the world-famous silk mills. Who worked there? Who owned the mills? Where did workers and owners live? We’ll see Cheney Hall, the former silk mills, South Manchester Railroad, machine shop, silk vaults, neighborhoods of worker housing. The walk takes about two hours with a distance of about one mile.

The District walking tour began in 1976 under the leadership of MCC’s Institute of Local History. Scan the QR code below left for a map and then-and-now photos of the Landmark District, listed on the National Register in 1978. The District extends for about 1.25 miles from east to west and about 0.6 miles from north to south and covers approximately 175 acres. It encompasses all of the existing Cheney Brothers silk mills, the 1785 Cheney family homestead, several 19th and 20th century mansions built for the Cheney family, schools, churches, and halls built by Cheney Brothers for their employees, and over 275 residential structures built for company workers and their families. A town-appointed commission advises on changes within the district, with an eye to maintaining its historic appearance.

*Photo of former Dye House by Dick Jenkins.*
Saturday, October 7, “RIM” walk, 10:00 a.m. NOTE TIME — 10:00 a.m. At the park kiosk, 50 Charter Oak Street.

Sponsored by the Rotary Club, this annual event explores the East Coast Greenway, local bike trails, and offers a history walk in Charter Oak Park and environs. The famous landscape architectural firm, Olmsted Associates, worked on two projects along Hartford Road, which we’ll hear about in this two-to-three mile walk.

Before there was a park at Charter Oak, there were woolen, cotton, and paper mills that used the water for power and disposal of waste. In the 1920s through 1950s, a produce auction offered fruit, especially strawberries, to bidders from restaurants in Hartford and beyond.

The QR code at right takes viewers to the archives of the Manchester Herald, a substantial resource for historians, genealogists, and researchers. You’ll find local and national news, information on the sale of mills, advertisements, town gossip, sports scores, old crossword puzzles, classifieds listing help wanted.
Saturday, October 21, Lakeview, 1:00 p.m. Comstock Road at corner of South Main Street.

We’ll stroll in the Lakeview development, platted in 1925 (see map below). The "Lake" which it overlooks is actually Globe Hollow Reservoir, with its pretty causeway that you can drive along to get to the golf course, and beyond that into Glastonbury. Lakeview was "platted," in 1925 – that is, the plat or map of proposed streets and house-lots was laid out by the developers, C.E. & F.E. Watkins. According to a 1998 Historic Resources Inventory (Connecticut Historical Commission), the development was considered part of the "growing automobile suburbs, usually situated near the community's principal roads… During the 1920s and 1930s, many Manchester residents occupied new homes…in the 'Lakeview' subdivision…which had emerged as an enclave of large suburban homes situated just north of the newly opened Manchester Country Club…Homeowners bought the lots and then built a variety of houses of "attractive types, including Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial, and Picturesque English Cottage examples." Above right, 1929 photo of 233 South Main Street.
Sunday, November 5, Visiting Apel Place and Hudson Street, 1:00 p.m. Bank parking lot, 14 North Main Street.

Charm in the old North End, although many historic buildings were demolished in the 1960s with Urban Redevelopment. Apel’s Opera House remains, despite many changes, including a fire.

Bernard C. Apel came from Germany to the U.S. about 1874, and soon started an undertaking business. By 1888 he had constructed the large slate-roofed brick opera building. An advertisement with his picture states, “B.C. Apel, Dealer in Furniture, Carpets, Paper Hangings & Curtains, Crockery, Lamps, Glassware, Stoves, Ranges, Clocks, Trunks and Traveling Bags. Pictures and Picture Frames, Organs, Pianos and Sewing Machines. Upholstering in all its Branches, Undertaking & Embalming, Hacks & Hearse Furnished….Proprietor and Manager, Apel’s Opera House,” hosting local church groups’ bazaars and plays, school graduations, and traveling shows. The opera house accommodated 1000 guests in the audience.

We’ll walk to Hudson Street to see some of the charming houses there, and then down Main Street past the former LeClerc Funeral Home, Whiton Library, and the “Y.” Pictured at right, an award-winning house on Hudson Street.
Saturday, November 25, Historic Highland Park, 1:00 p.m.  
Near picnic table, 670 Spring Street.

We'll start with a history hike, with commentary about the Case Brothers National Historic District, added to the National Register in 2009, and visit the paper mill, mansion area, and unusual bridge-dam, an icon of Manchester. From the District nomination form, “The historical significance of the district originates with the area’s Native American associations. The Highland Park springs were one of three mineral springs on the east side of the Connecticut River visited regularly by indigenous peoples, who recognized the medicinal value of the mineral water as a purgative and supposed the springs to have mysterious healing powers. The Native Americans called the Highland Park springs ‘‘Nipow.’’

Those who want a short walk can pause to view Case Pond, and return to their cars. For those who want a more strenuous event, we will continue along the carriage path and trails to the summit of Lookout Mountain, encountering steep, bumpy, and rocky terrain, but worth the effort, especially on a clear day, when the Heublein Tower is visible to the west. About 3 miles.

Please wear sturdy sneakers or hiking boots; bring water. No dogs, please. Check the street signs before parking to avoid parking tickets.

Images, top to bottom: • Approved and signed nomination form, listing the Case Bros. district on the National Register. • Former Case reservoir. • 1860 portrait of A. Wells and A. Willard Case, born 1840.
Saturday, December 2, possible re-scheduling date, if inclement weather for one of our 23 walks.

It’s unlikely that any of the walks will be cancelled, but just in case, we’ll set aside this date! Keep track of our hikes via Facebook, the Bicentennial website, or contact the editor of the Manchester Historical Society e-news at newsletter@manchesterhistory.org


Manchester’s charm

“A City of Village Charm,” our motto, was submitted to a contest by Malcolm Mollan, who won $25 when his creative slogan was chosen by the Civic Progress Committee of the Chamber of Commerce on December 5, 1935. Mr. Mollan was an editorial writer at The Manchester Herald. Over 600 slogans were reviewed. It was the only slogan that Mr. Mollan entered, and he said that he “took but little time in writing it and maintained after he had the inspiration that he wouldn't try to find another since he was satisfied with that one.”

Reuse of historic buildings: Examples of Manchester’s preservation efforts include the former • South Manchester High School, now Bennet Apartments, at 1151 Main Street • South School, now Lutz Museum, at 247 South Main Street • Hall of Records, now the Greater Manchester Probate Court, 66 Center Street • Firehouse, now the Connecticut Firemen’s Historical Society Museum, 230 Pine Street • Post office, now part of the Town Hall complex, 479 Main Street • Hilliard woolen mills, 642 Hilliard Street, now small-business spaces.

National Register of Historic Places: Manchester has 10 listings, a substantial accomplishment for a town our size.
Sunday, December 31, Reception and wrap-up, 1:00 p.m.
Manchester History Center, 175 Pine Street.

The public is invited to the History Center for a festive event, where we’ll announce our winners, socialize, enjoy refreshments, and talk about the history and charm of Manchester. There are several exhibits to view, including Then and Now, designed to celebrate Manchester’s past and present. Parking is limited at the History Center, so guests are encouraged to carpool or park carefully on various side streets.

Note the following open houses during the year, or check websites:

Saturday, June 10: Connecticut open museum day, with free admission to museums around the state and also here in Manchester: Fire Museum, Pitkin Glass Works, Cheney Homestead, Woodbridge Farmstead, Old Manchester Museum.

Generally • Woodbridge Farmstead’s open houses are noon to 2:00 on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, from May to October, weather permitting, 495 Middle Turnpike East. • The Homestead at 106 Hartford Road, Manchester, is open on the second Sunday of the month from 1:00 to 4:00, along with the replica Keeney Schoolhouse on the Homestead grounds (during the warmer months). • History Center at 175 Pine Street, open Wednesday through Friday from 10:00 to 2:00, and Saturday noon to 4:00. Special tours arranged, such as the visit pictured on right of students from the Early Learning Center. • Old Manchester Museum at 126 Cedar Street, is owned by the Town of Manchester, and the Society has rented it since the 1980s. Open first Saturday of the month, May through December from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Waterways map, circa 1950, by Hazel Lutz.

Geology and geography shaped Manchester’s history. Indigenous people were attracted to the mineral springs, fishing areas, rivers, and streams. Early colonists felled trees, built houses, farmed, and in the Industrial Revolution used the fast-flowing waterways to power mills and factories. Today, we enjoy the scenic landscapes, including Case Mountain, Salter’s Pond, Northwest Park, Union Pond, Oak Grove Nature Center, and trails along the Hockanum River.

Below, circa 1920 photo at Case Pond, near the intersection of Spring Street and Glen Road, by prolific photographer John Knoll (1887-1955)
23 walks with the Town Historian and friends.
Contact me at newsletter@manchesterhistory.org or (emergency only) 860-808-7103

Sign up for free e-news, delivered weekly on Fridays to your email inbox. On the home page of the Historical Society’s website www.manchesterhistory.org click the red rectangle