



“OVER 55 YEARS OF PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY”

The Courier

SEPTEMBER 2023

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President's Message

By Dennis Gleason

Our historical society is a tool to educate and preserve Manchester's history. To help celebrate the Town's 200th anniversary we created an "Art and Map Show" at the History Center and at Cheney Homestead. In addition, the History Center has been exhibiting the "Then and Now" display along with our new display of business signs from throughout town, which has elicited memories from the childhood of many visitors.

The volunteers at Cheney Homestead gave tours of the Homestead and the Keeney one-room schoolhouse to some five hundred 3rd grade students. They got an idea of what everyday life and schooling was like two hundred years ago, when our town finally became "Manchester."

We have just reprinted the book "Silk and Guns" by Alice Farley Williams, which has been out of print for over 25 years. It is an excellent source of information about one of the most influential of the Cheney brothers, Frank Cheney. It describes his early travels, his time in California during the Gold Rush, his participation in the Civil War, travels to the Orient, his time as president of Cheney Brothers, and later travels to Florida and California.

This year our history walking tours have provided exercise and have educated between 50 and 120 people on each tour. Several more are scheduled through the fall. We have provided outreach to other groups and are always open to give tours of our museums

to civic groups. Our History Center, Loom Room, Old Manchester Museum, Cheney Homestead and Woodbridge Farmstead are all open for the fall (please check the Calendar of Events in this issue). We welcome anyone who would like to volunteer at one of our properties. The Woodbridge house and the Cheney house have both been repainted, and tree work carried out at both properties.

Our History Center Library has a good amount of information on the town and local families. The Genealogy Group, which meets on the second Wednesday of the month, is putting together a file of Manchester families, which will be available to the public.

During September there will be a talk on the Civil War at the History Center on the 10th and the following weekend a Civil War reenactment at Wickham Park on the 16th and 17th. Our Annual Membership meeting will be held on Sunday the 24th of September, and will include lunch and musical entertainment.

Finally, if anyone is interested in becoming a member of the Society's Board of Directors, please contact me for an interview.

Save the Date

Sunday September 24

Annual Member Meeting 11:00
and Luncheon 12:00

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A newsletter of the
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Woodbridge Farmstead News

By Peggy Newton

Shorter days and cooler nights remind us that fall is approaching at the farm. Accordingly, we have several special events planned for the season.

Our small peach tree has yielded just a few peaches this year, but our Pound Sweet apple tree (also called Pumpkin Sweet) has been so bountiful.. The branches have been weighed down with loads of apples and they live up to their name. As part of Manchester Green history, the Pound Sweet was originally propagated by the Lyman family at the eastern end of Middle Turnpike (near Shady Glen). We will put them to good use along with other types of apples at our open house on September 10. We will press the apples with our antique cider press to make fresh apple cider, and will offer other treats that day.

In addition to the apple “fun” we will have an old fashioned Game Day. The games were researched by our own volunteer Beverly Logan. Other volunteers will demonstrate games and encourage children and adults to join in and try them.

The open house scheduled for September 24 will be canceled due to our annual Membership meeting at the History Center.

As the crisp October days approach, the farm’s maple trees will be ablaze with color. An especially beautiful tree is located in the middle of the back yard. Please come to see that tree and our garden of painted rocks, painted by visitors to help celebrate the Town’s 200th anniversary.

The October 8 Open Farm will celebrate all things pumpkin. There will be a pumpkin weighing contest and pumpkin decorating.

The final Open Farm day on October 22 will celebrate Halloween with costumes, treats, and some scary fun and a few tricks. We will reopen next May.

The Woodbridge Farmstead always needs volunteers. We value all folks who help keep the farm going as a museum and learning opportunity. It is a Manchester treasure. If you would like to join us in keeping the lights on please call the History Center (860-647-9983) or Peggy Newton (860-305-7310).



Landfear Organ Back in Manchester

By Dave Smith

Several months ago we received an email from the University of Michigan. Their Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments, perhaps the largest collection of musical instruments in the United States, was beginning the process of deaccessioning some of their musical organ collection. An issue for many museums and historical societies is lack of suitable storage space, and the Stearns is no exception. Somehow, there was a note with this particular organ which was made by Mervin T. Landfear of Manchester about 1850, indicating that the Manchester Historical Society might be interested in acquiring it.

We immediately replied that yes, we were most definitely interested. We had acquired our first Landfear some 12 years ago under similar circumstances (a phone call out of the blue from Knoxville, Tennessee). However, this one was different, being larger and with 10 more keys. So, I arranged to pick it up in mid-July, driving to Ann Arbor and back in just 4 days.

The organ had been in a Michigan museum (the Heiss Haus Museum) for many years. When the museum closed about 20 years ago it was acquired by the Stearns Collection. It had not been put on display in all that time.



There are very few Landfear organs known to exist, perhaps only two or three others. This recent acquisition is now on display at the History Center. The other organ is on display at the Woodbridge house, about one mile from where it was made almost 175 years ago.

Wanted: Race Car Photos and Stories

Manchester has had a history of racing; horses, bicycles and cars. The Historical Society is looking for stories, reminiscences and photos of Manchester folks and their vehicles that raced over the years, either in Manchester or elsewhere.

This interest has been sparked by the recent donation of a Soap Box Derby racer piloted by Joe Moriarty about 40 years ago. It is now on display at the History Center.

If you have information or pictures of racing please contact us at 860-647-9983.



Little Red raced by Joe Moriarty

Calendar of Events

History Center Office, Museum Store and exhibits at 175 Pine St., open Wednesday to Friday from 10:00 to 2:00 and Saturday noon to 4:00 p.m. located in the former Cheney Machine Shop building. **Then and Now** and business signs exhibits, research library and museum store open. 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. through December. It is also open by appointment. Please call our office at 860-647-9983 for further information. Exhibits include some early Manchester manufactures, our elementary schools, both past and present, Pitkin Glass Works bottles, and the story of the Spencer Rifle and its inventor Christopher Spencer. A new display of quilts is on exhibit. There is also a museum store in the lobby.

Cheney Homestead and Keeney Schoolhouse at 106 Hartford Rd. are open the second Sunday of the month from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. An early American home with period art and furniture.

The Homestead was donated to the Manchester Historical Society by the Cheney family in 1968 for the purpose of a museum to exhibit and explain the impact of the Cheney family on Manchester. Guided tours include the 1751 Keeney one-room schoolhouse, a partial restoration of one of Manchester's earliest one-room schools.

Woodbridge Farmstead at 495 Middle Turnpike East, is open the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 12 noon to 2:00 p.m. (except during June when it will be open Saturday June 10 and Sunday June 26). An 1830 house, Visitor Center and late 1700's barn on the site of the former Meadowbrook Dairy. Early farm equipment is on display along with a one-horse open sleigh and a pony wagon. The new Visitor Center has displays of the history of Manchester Green. 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.

23 Bicentennial history walks throughout Manchester, commemorating our town's past and celebrating our future. The walks take place rain or shine. The series of free walks continues through November 25, with a December 2 rain date. Guests who participate in at least 10 walks will be eligible for a free commemorative coin (first 200 winners) and a reception at the History Center on Sunday, December 31, 2023 at 1:00 p.m., celebrating Manchester and its 200th birthday. Printed copies of the free booklet are available at Town Hall customer service and at the Manchester History Center during regular hours.

Sunday, September 10, noon to 2:00 p.m. open house at the Woodbridge Farmstead. Apple fest activities including pressing apples with our antique cider press and old fashioned games

Sunday, September 10, at 1:00 p.m., Presentation about Manchester's connections to the Civil War, at the History Center. Historical Society President Dennis Gleeson has conducted research about Manchester's Civil War soldiers and conditions on both the home front and at the battle lines. His presentation is free and open to the public. No RSVP needed -- just come.

Sunday, September 17, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., open house and exhibit opening at the Cheney Homestead, 106 Hartford Road. The afternoon will feature a new exhibit room — the Industry and Ingenuity Room. The exhibit displays examples

of early wooden gear clocks and describes the Cheneys' role in this important craft, the arc of inquisitive minds in Early America and their role in the world we know today. Sturbridge Village master craftsman Tom Vaughn will share knowledge and showcase his additions to the exhibit.

Sunday, September 17 at 1:00 p.m., Center Memorial Park walking tour commemorating the monuments, with emphasis on the Civil War statue, which was unveiled on September 17, 1877, the 15th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam. Meet at the front steps of Town Hall, 41 Center Street. Moderately paced one-mile walk.

Sunday, September 24 at 11:00 a.m., Annual Membership Meeting at the History Center. The meeting will be followed by a luncheon.

Calendar *continued from page 4*

Saturday, September 30 at 1:00 p.m., free Cheney District walk starting at Fuss & O'Neill, 146 Hartford Road. 48th annual history tour of the former silk mills, employee housing, Cheney Hall, and other landmarks of the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District (CBNHLD), with two members of the CBNHLD commission. About two hours, slow pace. This popular walk focuses on silk manufacturing, labor relations, and the Cheneys as industrialists and community members.

Saturday, October 3, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Old Manchester Museum open

Sunday, October 8, noon to 2:00 p.m. at the Woodbridge Farmstead. Celebrating pumpkins and all things pumpkin. Guess the weight of the large pumpkin.

Sunday, October 8, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Cheney Homestead open house.

Sunday, October 22, noon to 2:00 p.m. at the Woodbridge Farmstead. Halloween is the theme. Wear a costume and join the fun.

Saturday, November 5, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Old Manchester Museum open

Sunday, November 12, noon to 2:00 p.m. Cheney Homestead open house.

Saturday, December 3 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Holiday open houses at the Cheney Homestead and the Old Manchester Museum. Festive decorations at the Homestead by the Manchester Garden Club.



Open Gates at Pitkin Glass Works

By Bob Kanehl

If you have noticed, the gates to the Pitkin Glass Works have been open a number of times this year.

Unlike the Ancient Roman Janus Gates which were closed only during peace, the gates to the Glass Works have been closed from a lack of activity at the site. But this year, the Pitkin Executive Council has

been busy with various digs and informational days.

Among the activities this year have been the annual Open House Day and two student digs arranged with Samantha Bell the Project Program Coordinator at the Manchester Youth Service Bureau.

On June 10 the site was open to the public as part of the State Open House Day. About 50 people visited the site, including about 20 youngsters. The kids were invited to "dig" for artifacts using trowels and an artifact sifter. Everyone went home with a souvenir of their efforts.

The latest dig was held for middle school students in Manchester Youth Service Bureau's Summer

Camp. On Thursday, August 3 the dig brought to the site students aged 10 to 13. Exploring the methods professional archaeologists employ when researching a site, these students conducted an actual scientific dig.

Joining the Pitkin Council representatives, were Friends of the Office of State Archaeology (FOSA) volunteers Regina Gatmaitan and Isabel Grzegorek. These FOSA volunteers guided the students through the various aspects of proper archaeological procedures.

Besides this dig, the YSB and the Council held an event in May. Students in high school were treated to an enlarged experience with archaeologist Scott Brady, who brought a team of FOSA volunteers to the site. The local students performed every aspect of a true historical dig from preparing the site to filling out the paperwork.

During both student digs, a number of interesting artifacts were discovered including pieces of pottery which might have been parts of crucibles used to melt glass, several bottle neck pieces, and even a piece with a scalloped edging design most likely from a sunburst faced flask.

The council is always looking for members; if you are interested please contact President Dave Smith (at info@manchesterhistory.org)

Cheney Homestead

By Kevin Drake

The Cheney Homestead is the ancestral home of the Cheney Family, donated to the Manchester Historical Society in 1969. Built c. 1785 by farmer/miller, clockmaker, and Revolutionary War Captain Timothy Cheney and his then 14-year-old son George, the property represents the beginnings of a great American story and a family integral in the development of Manchester. Six of George and Electa Woodbridge Cheney's sons founded Cheney Brothers, the largest silk producer in the world, from the mid-1800s through WWII. The Cheneys saw value in treating their workers fairly and investing in their community. Grand homes were built, but within view of both the Mills and the family seat, the Homestead. With the remaining mansions privately owned, the Homestead offers an intimate view into early American life here in our own community and through a family many Manchester residents still have ties to.

The museum has transitioned in the last several years to exhibit/focused spaces. Better signage and lighting enhance the visitor experience. New in 2023 for Manchester's Bicentennial, the Museum features a fresh coat of exterior paint and several new exhibit rooms. Opened in March 2023, the Women of the Cheney Family exhibit room celebrates the contributions and accomplishments of women in the family – including Electa Woodbridge Cheney, Mary Cheney, twins Dorothy and Majory Cheney (the last Cheneys to live in the Homestead) to contemporary Cheneys like artist/businesswoman Kate Chappell and Carol Cheney, President of the Cheney Cemetery Association.

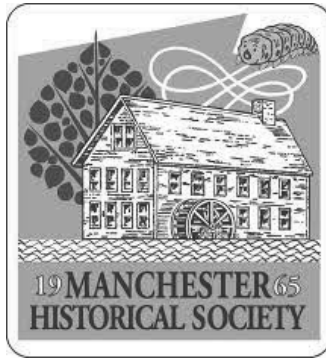


These wooden clock gears are typical of the gears used in Cheney clocks.



Although the clock dial is inscribed "Timothy Cheney Hartford", the clock was made in present day Manchester some time before 1783, when this side of the Connecticut River became East Hartford.

A new exhibit room to debut on September 17th is the Industry & Ingenuity Exhibit Room. Timothy Cheney and his older brother Benjamin popularized the use of wooden gears for clockworks in pre-Revolutionary War America where brass was expensive and made by consent of the King. The brothers are believed to have apprenticed Benjamin Willard (of the Massachusetts Willard Clock dynasty), their own sons/nephews and Eli Terry. Terry mastered the process of stamped wood clock works – the first known instance of mass production in the United States and credited as the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in America. The exhibit will have a representation of an early American clock workshop and show how the Cheneys – like many Americans – were eager, inquisitive, and transitioned early technologies into new areas of Industrial America and paved the way for life as we know it today. Guest speakers will include Tom Vaughn of Sturbridge Village.



The Manchester Historical Society
Invites You
to the
Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Sunday September 24, 2023
Manchester History Center
175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT

Annual Meeting 11:00
Catered Luncheon 12:00

The luncheon will be catered by:
A Villa Louisa

Buffet including – Chicken Piccata/Seafood Stuffed Sole/Mixed
Green salad/Oven Roasted Potato/Carrots
\$35.00/person

Entertainment provided by the Silk City Jazz Band

RSVP by September 9, 2023
860-647-5235

admin-assistant@manchesterhistory.org

mail checks to: Manchester Historical Society
175 Pine Street, Manchester CT, 06040



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The Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street, Manchester, CT 06040

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|--------------------|--|-------|--------------------------------------|---------|--|-------|
| Type of Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Individual | \$60 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Individual (65+) | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Couple | \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Family | \$100 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under age 18) | \$5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Couple | \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate | \$500 |
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