

The Buckland Times #10

65¢

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December 1996

The Buckland Times would like to remember Richard Reichenbach and Walter Perrett Sr. Both were great friends of the B.T. who passed away during the last year. I always enjoyed talking with them. Their support and interest helped to make the B.T. possible. We will miss them.

Thinking that it's usually a good idea to start at the beginning I searched back in time for Meekville's beginnings. Eventually I could see that even a very small village has an interesting story to tell. By then I seemed to have a mountain of information, too much for one issue. So, you will hear from your old neighbors Beaton Case and Alice Jackson Cusson in the next issue which I will start putting together right away. Here you will find the early history of Meekville and the family of John and Jane Meek, a story I was sure you would want to know with something of an echo in it of our last story. If you have any pictures of Meekville or anything you'd like to contribute (or corrections) for the next issue, I'd be glad to hear from you.

Meekville

Have you heard of it? Do you know where it was, or where it has gone? I know some of you do, some are trying hard to remember, while others don't have a clue.

Meekville today is home to some very handsome hawks, ground hogs and so on, but the only sign of the human community that once lived here is a neat row of trees and Meekville Rd. disappearing among the weeds next to the railroad tracks. With that fact in mind I thought it was important to reproduce the map below provided by Manchester's Engineering Dept., but it was too long to fit on one page without making it too small to read. So the map which appears below continues on from page to page and you may follow the road to Meekville as if you were coming from East Hartford. It had no official name when this map was made in 1923, but at that time it hooked up with Tolland Tpke. at both ends making it possible to avoid two railroad crossings. That alone might explain the road's origins. Our first job here will be to try to understand how Meekville came to be. The houses on Tolland Tpke. to the east west and south of what became Meekville Rd. though technically not part of Meekville as I understand it were considered to be part of the neighborhood. These were in fact the oldest houses in the area. The houses on the south side of Tolland Tpke. being the oldest. The Gilman family may have been the first European settlers to live on and farm this land. As you can see they still lived here in 1923.

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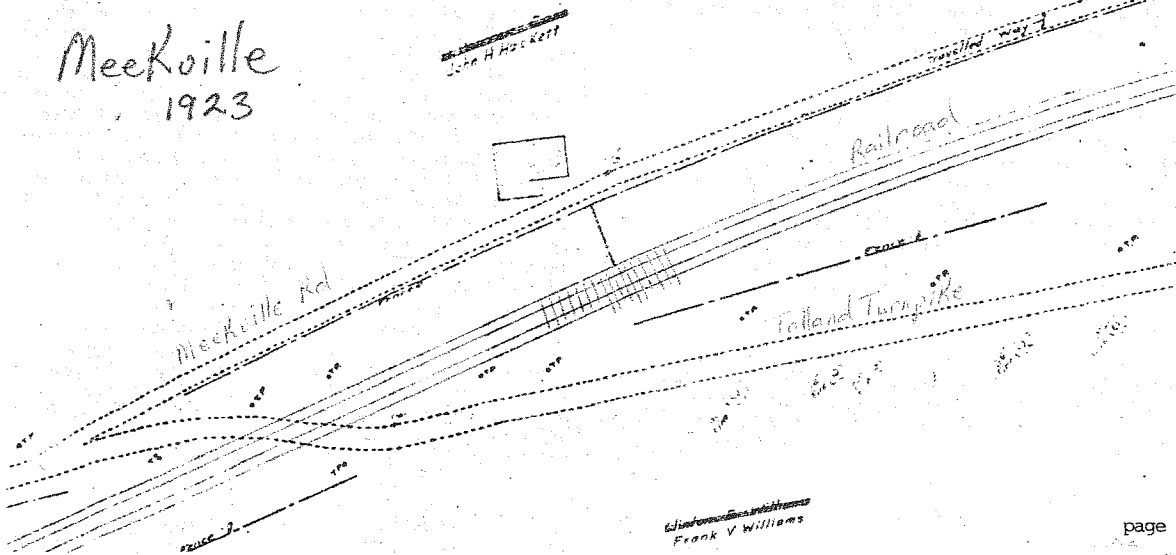
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Meekville
1923

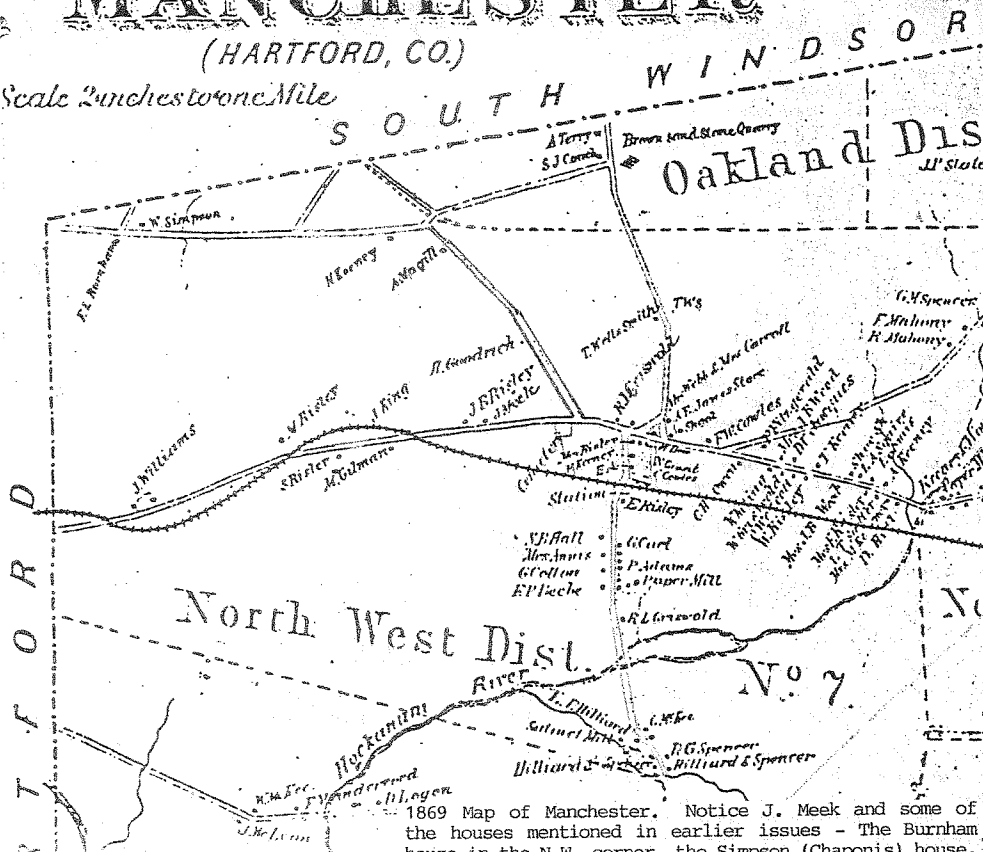


Information from
Frank V Williams

MANCHESTER

(HARTFORD, CO.)

Scale 2 inches to one mile



1869 Map of Manchester. Notice J. Meek and some of the houses mentioned in earlier issues - The Burnham house in the N.W. corner, the Simpson (Chaponis) house, H. Keeney (Lathrop) house, T. Wells Smith (Healey), M. Keeney (Herbert S. Keeney)

My guess is that when Connecticut's founding fathers went about the business of buying land from the Indians and creating towns they didn't give much thought to what size town would be most convenient or practical for its future residents to live in, work in, or govern. Why is Manchester 5 miles square and quite different in size and shape from its neighbors? My impression is that this purchase that became Manchester was just a convenient block of land to purchase from the Indians. When settlement began villages soon formed, usually centered around some sort of economic activity. Social life, political activity, school building and so on all began at the village level.

Asked where he lived someone like Charlie Glode would say Buckland first and Manchester later. Someone else might have said Highland Park or Manchester Green. People in one village often knew very little about what was happening in other villages even those nearby. Manchester has contained over the years a remarkable number of these villages eventually giving rise to the descriptive phrase "City of village charm". And small town friendliness in a big town.

A Very Small Place

Meekville was surely one of the smallest of these villages. It was always part of Buckland, and therefore part of Manchester's Northwest District which later became the 7th district (1859 to 1932 when the schools were consolidated). Until 1932 there must have been an annual District meeting, District officials, etc. although I have not heard these mentioned by anyone except for Walt Keeney who was the 7th District tax collector for many years. The District system itself would seem to be recognition of the practical facts of people's lives, and the practicality of local decision making.

Although small Meekville has been home to more than just a few people over the years. The names listed below are those I could find, mainly those listed in the Manchester City Directories. There are a flock of children that go with these names who grew up in and around Meekville and grandchildren who will remember visiting there, not to mention the people I've surely missed. *see page 3 **

To my mind every family has an interesting story to tell, and home is more than just a piece of property. Home, wherever that may be, plays an

important part in the story, and families in turn will change the place. The 1923 Manchester City Directory describes Meekville as "a section off 1353 Tolland Turnpike near the railroad crossing". . . . But how and why did it come by a name of it's own that appears on maps for many years and an identity firmly established in the memories of many people?

Hmm . . . a Mystery to Solve

Gladys Adams, in her book Buckland, The North West Section of Manchester Connecticut tells us (p. 105) that "In 1872 John E. Meek bought a parcel of land on the north side of Tolland Turnpike west of Buckland Street. He subdivided it into one hundred foot lots and created Meekville." She goes on to say "John E. Meek disappeared from Manchester records, and Meekville remained a part of Buckland until recently." Disappeared? Hmm . . . I thought, another mystery. Perhaps we can learn something more about John Meek. But, if Meekville had an economic or geographic reason for existing as a village it's not obvious today, and was not obvious to those who grew up there in the 1920's either. There was no quarry, no woolen mill in Meekville, no industry of any kind until after the 1920's that we're aware of. But perhaps there are some clues in what we already know. Among the most prominent features in the landscape of this part of town in 1872 were acres of farm land divided by Tolland Turnpike (established as a Turnpike in 1801), and the Hartford, Providence & Fishkill Railroad (built in 1849) which cross each other 3 times in a short order. These crossings beginning on the east side of Meekville were known as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd crossings. The toll gate stood at one time just west of the 2nd crossing. Perhaps this is all we need to know. The 1869 map of Manchester shows J. Meek living in a house north of Tolland Tpk. east of the 1st crossing. He apparently thought people would want to live here, perhaps because of it's proximity to the Railroad. Why else subdivide for houses. North Manchester had been growing rapidly since the building of the Railroad in 1849. Perhaps he was hoping for the same kind of development here.

John Winslow ? 1869 ?

But notice that I've said he appears on the 1869 map. It's true that Manchester land records show that he first purchased land in Manchester in 1872. This record is listed in the Grantees (buyers) Index,

Meekville Road & Angel Street *

Edward Hayes (wife Mary)- farmer 1903
Peter P.Traygis (wife Mary) also Edward, Frank, William
John Yurgel (wife Eva) - employed Cheney Brothers
John Irish - mason son Harold B. (served and died World War I)
Harper W. Case (wife Henrietta)- tobacco farmer
Louis C. Noltimier (wife Johanna)- employed E.E.Hilliard Co.
Joseph Burnett (wife Maggie) both born in Lithuania
Edward S. Culver (wife Sarah) - Foreman Hartford

Andrew Titcomb (wife Astrid) - auto repair

Tolland Turnpike

#1277 Anthony Strugas (wife Julia) - tobacco worker
Charles Wylangewicz (wife Agata) - farmer
Emilia Daigle (widow of Peter)
#1315 Julian Palmes (parents Henry W. & Nellie)
Joseph Mateunas (wife Francis J.) - weaver Cheney Brothers
Antoni Kleiza (wife Nellie) - tobacco worker
#1343 M.J.Burns
Amelia Bennett
John P. Jackson (wife Mathina) - tobacco farmer
#1444 Fred H. Newcomb (wife Mabel J. - Auto painting (Depot St.)
Martin Gilman (wife Mabel, son Orlando) - tobacco worker
Daniel Calnan (wife Catherine) - general farmer
#1632 Williams Clinton E. (wife Ester) - general farming
#1633 Herbert McIntosh (wife Jessie) - tobacco farmer

sealers

but the Grantors Index shows that John E. Meek obtained a mortgage on 38 of apparently the same acres in 1866 from a John Winslow. A deed dated 1872 confirms that when John Winslow's estate was settled that mortgage had been repaid and the land belonged to John and Jane Meek. You can't mortgage a piece of land if it's not yours, which suggests to me that John and Jane were given the land most likely by one of their parents. Who was John Winslow? The deed says he was "of East Windsor". His will was filed in Bristol in 1871 leaving his property to his wife Charlotte to be divided among his children upon her death. His children are not named, but perhaps he had already given some of his land away. Although I have not yet found proof of this it seems very likely to me that John and Charlotte Winslow were Jane Meek's parents.

In later years the train did stop at the first crossing and perhaps that fact alone explains how Meekville got it's name on the map, after having first made it onto a Railroad schedule. When the Jackson family moved to Meekville from Glastonbury in 1922 they came by train and changed to the Interurban Line at the round house in East Hartford which stood near the S curve in Burnside Ave. The Interurban let them off at the 1st crossing almost directly in front of their new home. The Manchester City Directories show that some people who lived in Meekville did work in Hartford.

Sash and Blind Maker

John Meek may have done some commuting himself. Hartford City Directories in 1851 list J.E & J.L. Meek as Sash & Blind manufacturers at the rear of Windsor St.. There home is listed as 379 Main St., Hartford. By 1857 James L. Meek, John's brother I presume, is a House Builder and later a Real Estate Agent. John E. Meek continues to be listed as a Sash & Blind Manufacturer up until the 1864-65 edition, after which he is no longer listed and they apparently moved to Manchester. But he continued to be a Sash & Blind Maker according to census records. Where did he set up shop, in Meekville or Buckland or East Hartford? Manchester Directories don't date back into the 1870's. Land records only mention buildings, not being specific about their use. I did not find an answer to that question.

While for some people this apparently was a convenient place to live, some of the woman found it to be rather inconvenient for grocery shopping etc. which had to be done frequently in those days. It was not very convenient for children getting to school either. Particularly South Manchester High School when it was built. In spite of the railroad Meekville was still out in the middle of farm country. John Meek may have had some trouble selling his idea, or he may have come up against the builders worst enemy, economic recession. According to A Basic History of the United States by Charles A. and Mary R. Beard (1944 p.320) the last half of the nineteenth century was "characterized by panics and depressions, nationwide in scope, unprecedented in extent, unemployment, poverty, violence, and the destruction of property. Of the years between 1870 and 1910 about

~~John H. Hackett~~
~~John H. Hackett~~



Meekville Rd

NY NH & H RR CO.

John H. Hackett
John H. Hackett

Tolland Turnpike

Lewis L. Grant
Lewis & Grant



Charles E. Grant

2/3 of the years were years of depressions, long or short in duration: for example, 1873-78". Manchester land records show that on 11 Feb., 1878 the Dime Savings Bank of Norwich foreclosed on a piece of property owned by John E. and Jane O. Meek 100 ft. wide by 200 ft. deep, bounded on the south by a highway near the Railroad track and west on a contemplated street (Angel St.?) on which "Meek has just erected a dwelling house". The Meeks eventually lost three pieces of property through foreclosure the last one being their home on Tolland Tpk.. The house described in this deed must have been the one which in 1922 became the Culver's home, and later the Grondin's. So, John Meek built at least one of the houses in what became Meekville and did more than we realized to leave his name to this village. More research would be necessary to say if he built any other houses. Their apparent financial troubles would seem to explain at least in part why the Meeks "disappear" from Manchester records.

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Mary L. Hayes

~~Atterton~~
 Henrietta Case

Martin L. Gilman

Martin L. Gilman

— PLAN SHOWING —
 — PROPERTY IN MEEKVILLE —
 — ROADS - IN - THE VICINITY —
 — MANCHESTER — CONN —
 — SCALE 1" = 80' — MAR 1921 —

While Meekville's beginnings and it's eventual fate may have been determined by it's nearness to the Railroad it seems to have thrived because it was in the middle of good farm land. John P. Jackson bought his land because he believed it was good farmland as did Harper Case and others. Good farmland outweighed the everyday inconvenience as Mrs. Jackson and her daughter Alice saw it. Meekville had it's "commuters" but they were outnumbered by it's farmers. It may have been a little more than ordinarily convenient for a farmer. At one time the Eastern States Farmers Exchange which later became Agway was located east of the 1st crossing and south of Tolland Tpk. Hauling farm supplies and produce must have been a little easier for Meekville's farmers, and perhaps gave added meaning and reason for it's name and place on the map.

If you would like to subscribe, or would like to have copies of the Buckland Times sent to someone, please write to me at the address below.

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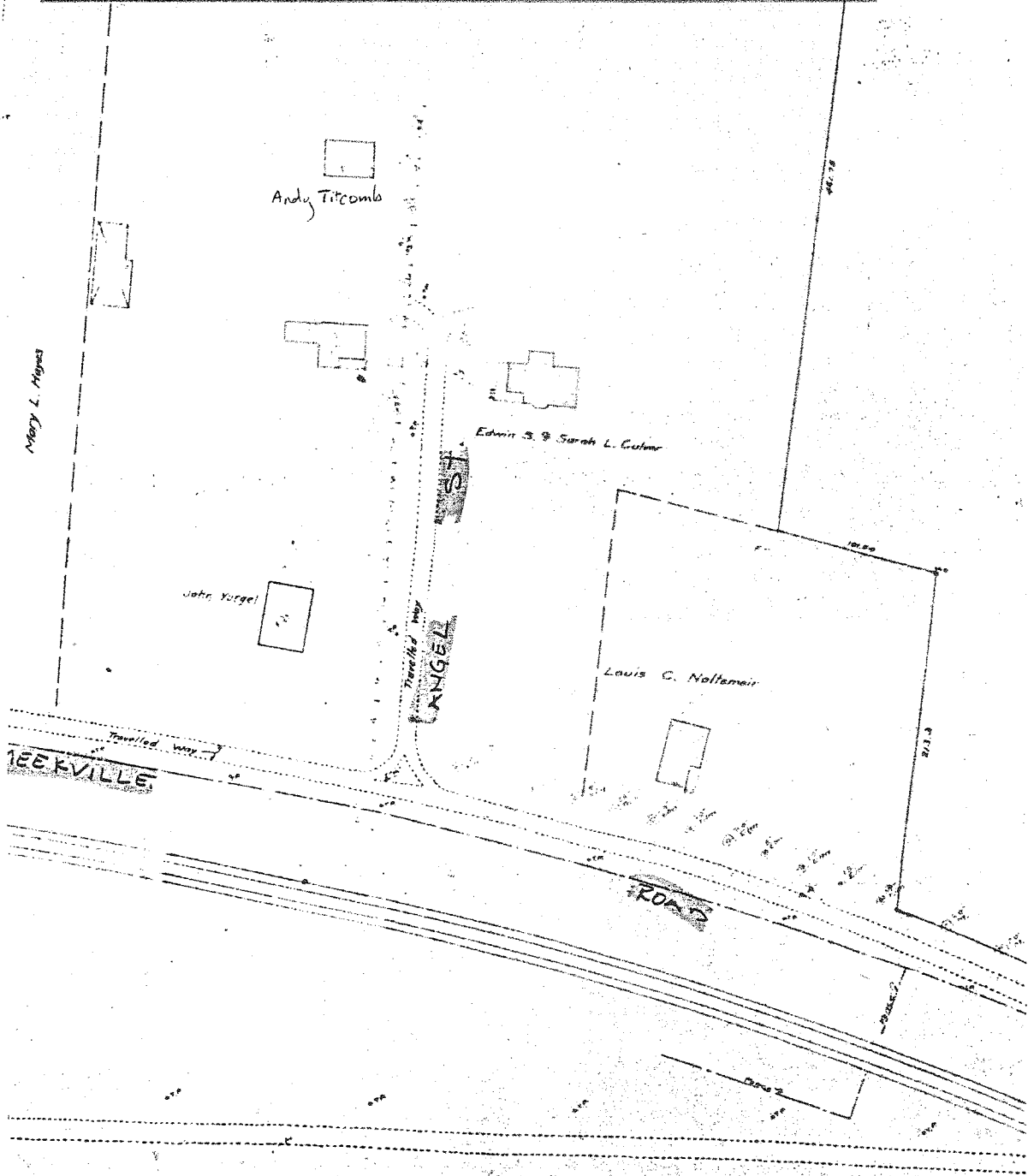


Rainy Day Genealogy

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Now We Know Perhaps Why, but Where did the Meeks Go ?

John and Jane Meek are not buried in Manchester. There is no record of their deaths here. They are not listed in the Cemetery Inscriptions and Death Notices Index at the State Library in Hartford. This would suggest that they didn't die in Connecticut, but does not prove this. Some graves never had stones and so no inscription, other stones are missing. My experience so far tells me that it can be very difficult to find someone who has left the state unless they have left some sort of clue as to where they went. There are just too many places to look. But I may have found such a clue. I searched Connecticut Census records to learn more about the Meek family, and found them first in Hartford in 1850 & 1860. If you'll look at the copy here you'll see John E. Meek aged 23, born NH (New Hampshire) his wife Jane aged 20 born in Vt (Vermont). Living in the same household are apparently his parents and 5 siblings. His father John born in Mass. his mother Elanor born in Vermont. Their daughter Ellen aged 15 born in N.H., sister Lydia aged 13 born in Ct. All of which tells us they moved to Connecticut about 1836. I found no record in Hartford of the marriage of John and Jane, and thus no confirmation of her maiden name and her parent's names. John Sr. and

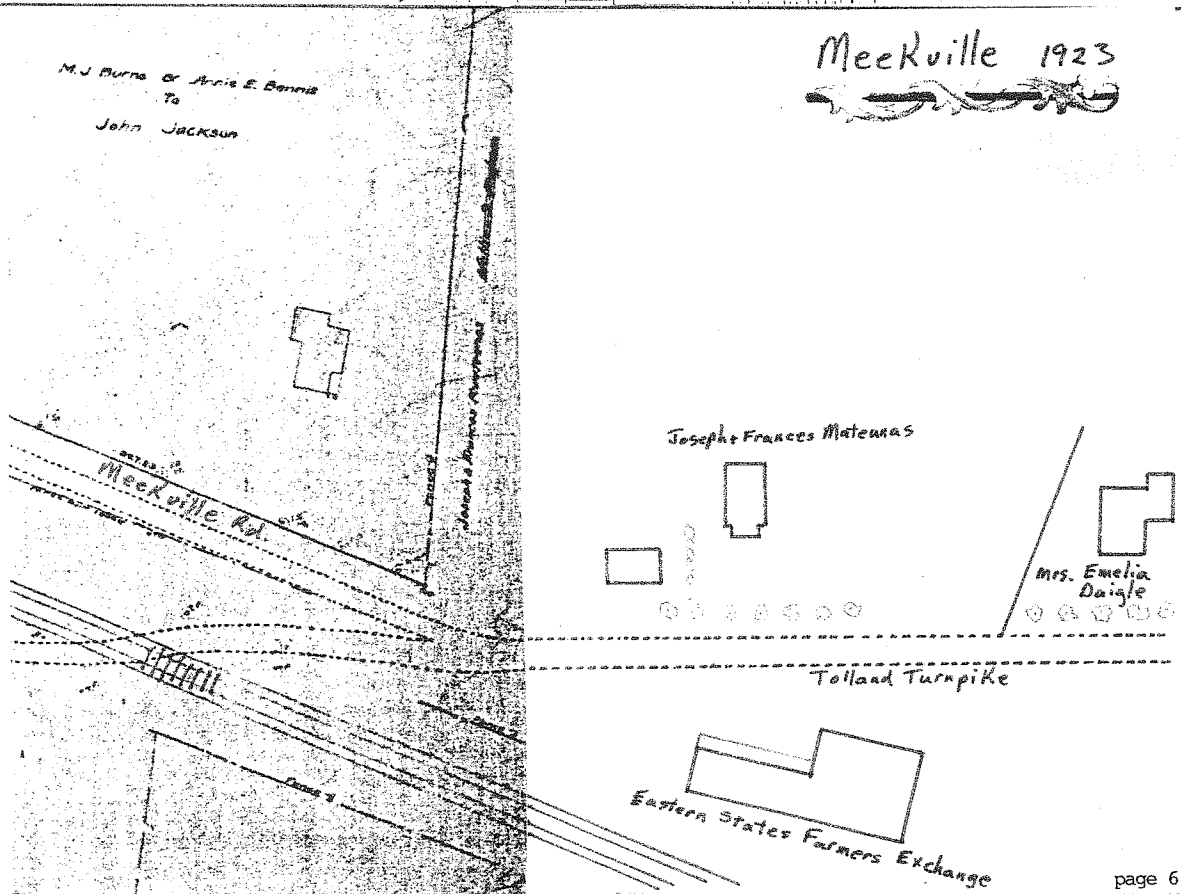
Elanor are buried in Hartford. As far as I could discover John and Jane had only 2 children Imogene who died at age 6 and is buried with her grandparents in Hartford and Emma J. born in 1861.

Born in Missouri !

The 1880 U.S. Census records show the Meeks living on Tolland Tpk. with their daughter Emma and her husband Henry E. Kish (according to this record), a farmer of German birth and their granddaughter Rosa. Manchester's index to vital records however tells us that Emma J. Meek married Henry Keish. There are also several children listed as born to Henry and Emma Keish (spelled in several different ways). With the spelling Keish I managed to find Emma Keish in the 1900 Census living on Middle Tpk. in Manchester. Her husband is not listed, but 4 of her children are. Glancing over the information my eye was caught by the word Missouri in column #13 -place of birth. The census taker stopped in the middle of a long list of Connecticut to write Missouri. Did they all go to Missouri after losing their home on Tolland Tpk. perhaps intending to homestead in the West? Did John

1850 U.S. Census record. Hartford, Ct. the Meek family -below-

15	45	53	John E Meek	23	m	Shaker	MASS
16			Jane	20	f		VT
17	54		John	45	m	"	MASS
18			Elanor	40	f		VT
19			Ellen	15	f		NH
20			Lydia	13	f		CT
21			Mary	10	f		"
22			George	8	m		"
23			Parkina	4	f		"
24			John & Jane	20	m		Tolland
25	46	55	David Philbary	52	m	Printer	CT



Pitkin	Harnatt	W	F	58						born	born	born
	Emiller	W	F	23	Daughter					born	born	born
	Clinton	W	M	28	Son	Farmer				born	born	born
	Hornis	W	F	17	Daughter					born	born	born
Robinson	S. D.	W	M	34		Farmer				W	W	W
	A. K.	W	F	58	Wife	Keeps house				born	born	born
	Haldo	W	M	16	Son	Farmer				W	W	born
Meeker	John E.	W	M	53		Sage's Blind Man				born	N. H.	N. H.
Keish	Henry C.	W	M	28	Son in Law	Farmer				Germany	Germany	Germany
Meeker	Jane C.	W	F	40	Wife	Keeps house				W	W	W
Keish	Emma J.	W	F	19	Daughter	Keeps house				born	born	born
Keish	Rosa R.	W	F	2	G. Daughter					born	born	born

and Jane spend the rest of their lives there? Or did they meet with some disaster along the way that cost John and Jane Meek their lives or perhaps the life of one of Emma's children causing them to change their plans and return to Connecticut? [Please see the B.T.#9 for a story very much like this.] Notice that column #11 & #12 tell us that Emma had 9 children but only 5 are living. I can account for 8 children with the Manchester vital records index. Other questions come to my mind. Did John Meek have trouble selling the house he built in Meekville because so many people were moving West? Were farmers like Henry Keish having trouble competing with the products of all those thousands of acres of new farmland being cultivated in the West? If we to continue the search for John and Jane Meek in the West we might start by searching Missouri vital records and land records, but we don't know if they stopped their journey in Missouri or went further on to the Dakotas or Oregon or California. We would have to be prepared for the possibility of a long search, and we might never learn where John and Jane Meek died. I understand that there are many unmarked graves along the way. But Emma and Henry Keish came back to Manchester and they might have grandchildren and great grandchildren still living in this area. The vital records index tells us that Etta Keish married George Chamberlin and Anna Keish married Richard Winkler. Fredrick Keish married Mary Meyers. Perhaps someone in the family knows the story, or part of it. Are you or could you be one of John and Jane Meek's great greatgrandchildren, or do you know someone who might be? We would all be very interested to know the rest of this story.


People have asked me if any of the Meeks who have lived in Manchester in recent years are related to John and Jane Meek. Phil Meek who was the longtime caretaker of the Cheney Homestead here in Manchester died just last March 1996. There is a story about him in "The Courier" the publication of the Manchester Historical Society. From that I learned that Phil was born in Hartford. John Meek also lived in Hartford and had at least two brothers so it seemed possible that there might be a connection. Eventually I was put in touch with Phil's brother Bob who lived on Windsor St. at one time, about as close as you could get to Meekville without being there. He started his trucking business there about 1951 - Meek's xpress which later moved to Adam's St. and one of the old Adams Mill buildings. He tells me that there were 11 children in their family 7 boys, 4 girls. They moved from Hartford to Vernon to Buckland Rd. South

1880 U.S. Census Record - Manchester

Windsor before 1938. They lived in one of John Hackett's houses next door to the Paquin family - just over the Manchester line. So they attended Wapping School. Their father was Reginald Meek and was born in Canada, their mother was born in Germany making it very unlikely that they are closely related to John Meek of Meekville. They could of course be distant cousins. You all have more distant cousins than you have probably ever taken the time to imagine - like the stars above uncountable.

Editor's Note
Old and new health problems came together this year to use up the time I would have liked to put into the Buckland Times, but I have made slow progress with both. I expect to carry on hoping to make better progress. I want to thank my readers who have been so patient, helpful and encouraging. My thoughts are with all of you especially those whom I know have not been well. I hope this will stir some fond memories.

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Joining the two previous books is our latest publication, Silk & Guns: The Life of a Connecticut Yankee: Frank Cheney (1817-1904). Written by his great-granddaughter, Alice Farley Williams, this 203-page book contains 25 illustrations, 275 names and places from Manchester's past as well as new insights into the Cheney Family, their affectionate regard for Manchester and their impact on Manchester's human history. Half of the 500 books have already sold. Don't miss your opportunity to own a copy for just \$23.00

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1900 U.S. Census Record - below -

LOCATION		NAME	RELATION	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION				SATIVITY						CITIZENSHIP	OCCUPATION TRADE, OR PROFESSION		
IN CARES	Male	of each person whose place of abode on June 1, 1900, was in this family.	Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	DATE OF BIRTH		Married	Single	Place of birth of each person and month of each parent's nativity. If born in the United States give the date and State. If foreign birth, give the country only.			Place of birth of father.			Naturalized	Years in U.S.	Profession	Years in U.S.
				Month	Year			Country	Month	Year	Country	Month	Year				
220	2	Phonon Frank	Son	W	M	1884	5	Canada	Canada	Canada	1897	3	1	Silk Mkr			
		Keish Emma	Daughter	W	F	1861	38	Germany	Germany	Germany							
		Etta	Daughter	W	F	1871	29	Canada	Canada	Canada							
		Arthur	Son	W	M	1881	19	Canada	Canada	Canada							
		Ellen	Daughter	W	F	1887	13	Canada	Canada	Canada							
		Biden	Son	W	M	1895	5	Canada	Canada	Canada							
		Helen	Daughter	W	F	1897	3	Canada	Canada	Canada							
		Carl	Son	W	M	1893	7	Canada	Canada	Canada							