



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 49, No. 1

April 2013

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I write this on the first day of Spring, although the temperatures haven't warmed up yet and we have new snow on the ground. The snows of winter will soon give way to the new growth of Spring.

Our program year will begin on Friday, May 3rd with our first meeting and an interesting presentation by Richard C. Malley on the inn and tavern sign collection of the Connecticut Historical Society. Please note the change in venue for this meeting and program. It will be held in the Council Chambers at the Audrey Beck Municipal Center. Another program, to be determined, will be scheduled in June or July.

Some exciting new exhibits are also taking shape at the museum. You can read more about them in this newsletter. The museum opening will be on Sunday, June 2nd.

This year, we will publish our first two books in the new publication series, THE FRED AND ANNARIE CAZEL EDITIONS. The series was named in honor of MHS benefactors, Fred and Annarie Cazel, who were among the founders of our Society. Roberta Smith, our Town Historian, has written a biography of Shubael Conant (1711-1775) that will be published later this spring. Conant was the first resident of Mansfield to be elected Speaker of the General Assembly and he made significant contributions to the town, the church, the state, and the emerging nation. Rudy Favretti is also preparing a history of Gurleyville and Hanks Hill that will detail the development of these villages and their people and industries. He will provide us with a preview in a special exhibit this summer. More details will be forthcoming when publishing dates are finalized.

At our December 2012 board meeting, the Annual Appeal mailing was moved from the end of the year to the Spring. A mailing will soon be sent out to our membership. Please consider making a contribution to support our outreach services and our efforts to preserve, research and interpret the history in Mansfield.

We hope you will join us at our May meeting and at our opening day in June. As always, we welcome your ideas for bringing Mansfield's history to life. Please feel free to contact Ann Galonska or me at 860-429-6575 or mansfield.historical@snet.net.



Keith Wilson, President

MARK YOUR CALENDARS – UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, May 3, 7:00 p.m.: May Meeting and Program

Richard C. Malley, Head of Research & Collections at the Connecticut Historical Society, will present a program on inn and tavern signs. Between 1750 and 1850, there were more than 50,000 inn and tavern signs produced by American painters but only a fraction of these signs survive. The Connecticut Historical Society's collection of more than 60 signs is by far the largest and most spectacular in the country. Malley will discuss highlights of this collection and show what they reveal about tavern life, travel, and patriotic ideals in early America. **This program will be held in the Council Chambers at the Audrey Beck Municipal Center.**

Sunday, June 2, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.: Museum Opening

ANNOUNCING OUR 2013 EXHIBITS

Work is well underway for our summer exhibits. Lisa Ferriere, Sharry Goldman, Marty Yutzey, Norma Gingras, Cynara Stites and Stephen Feathers are assisting with research and exhibit preparation. Rudy Favretti is mounting a new exhibit in the Old Town Hall.

In the Main Building: In the two front rooms and the adjacent glass display cases, we are preparing a new exhibit about Mansfield during the 1950s. This was a period of great growth and change for the town, as it was for the nation. The post-war baby boom coupled with the expansion of the University of Connecticut caused a population explosion in Mansfield that placed new pressure on town services, especially the local school system.

The town struggled with how to meet the needs of its citizens and ways to finance it. After much debate and study, three new elementary schools were constructed and additions were made to two existing schools. The regional E.O. Smith High School was also built through a unique

arrangement with the University and the land for the future Middle School was purchased. To prevent unregulated future development, the first planning commission was also formed in 1956.

Through photographs, memorabilia and personal accounts, the exhibit will examine the issues of the time and provide a glimpse of life in both the Mansfield community and on the university campus. It will also evoke the era with a display of 1950s clothing, toys and other period artifacts.

In contrast to the 1950s exhibit, our furniture gallery will transport you back another century. It will showcase paisley shawls and other fashion accessories from the mid-1800s.

In the Old Town Hall: The Old Town Hall building will feature a new exhibit on the village of Gurleyville. Today Gurleyville is a quiet residential community with only the stopping and starting of cars at the stop signs, where Gurleyville, Codfish Falls, and Chaffeeville roads intersect at its center, the only noises to interrupt the village's serenity. In the nineteenth century, and even into the twentieth, this was not the case. The screeching of the sawmill,



The inauguration of Mansfield's new voting machines. These voting machines were first used for the local election on October 9, 1952. Prior to then, ballots were collected in locked ballot boxes and were later counted by hand. The voting machines were last used in 2006. One remains on display in the Old Town Hall.

and the tumbling and swishing of the water wheels that powered the mills, and the pounding of the stones that ground the corn, and the clatter of machines within the mills, made the inhabitants aware that Gurleyville was an industrial village, and one complete with a church, stores, and a school, all of which are now gone.

Gurleyville was an industrial village then, and the exhibit to be staged in the Old Town Hall will examine its industrial past. There will be pictures and text to tell the story, as well as samples of the various products that were produced. This exhibit is a preview of one chapter of Rudy Favretti's forthcoming book, GURLEYVILLE AND HANKS HILL. You will want to read more!

Last year's exhibit on the Connecticut Soldiers' Orphans' Home will also remain on view this summer. This state institution operated in Mansfield from 1866 to 1875. Over the course of its nine-year existence, the Orphans' Home cared for 153 destitute children, most of whom were children of Connecticut's fallen Civil War soldiers. Later the former orphanage became the first building of the Storrs Agricultural School, the precursor of the University of Connecticut.

Our museum opening is scheduled for Sunday, June 2 and the museum will be open thereafter on Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., through the end of September. We look forward to seeing you there!



The silk mill built by James Royce in 1848, one of two in Gurleyville. The mill was later operated by Royce's son-in-law, Emory B. Smith. The cross-shaped building was located next to the bridge on Gurleyville Road. The section closest to the road was a boarding house for mill workers. The mill burned to the ground in 1921. Its foundation and sluiceway are still visible.

Were you born before or during the 1950s? We are seeking additional materials for our 1950s exhibit. Do you have any photographs of activities in Mansfield during this period? Are there vintage clothing items or accessories hidden in the back of your closet? Are the toys of your youth still stored in your attic? Please consider loaning them for our exhibit. Help us enrich our display. Please call or email the museum to let us know what you have (860-429-6575, mansfield.historical@snet.net).

Remember "The Way We Were?" Show us the way YOU were in the 1950s. We would like to assemble a collage of photographs showing how our members appeared during this decade. It will be displayed at our opening on June 2. If you would like to be included, please scan a photograph of yourself taken in the 1950s and email it to the address above. If you do not have access to a scanner, bring your photograph to the museum and we will scan it for you. We hope you will join the fun! We have some surprises in store for the opening. All will be revealed in the next newsletter.

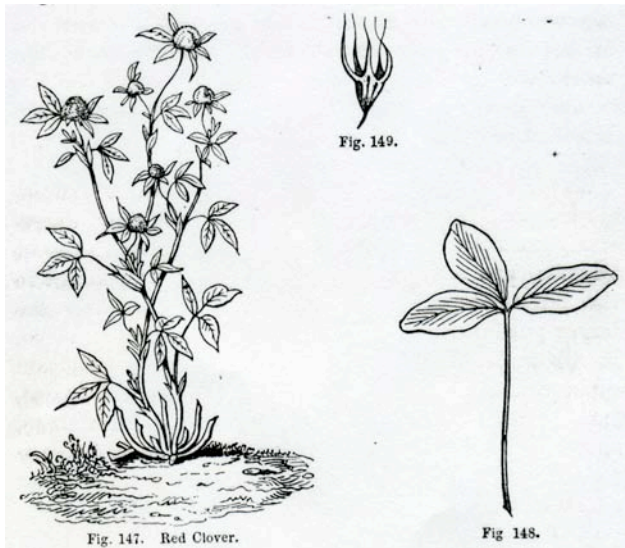
IN MEMORIAM

With sorrow we note the passing of Francis "Frank" R. Trainor on February 12, 2013. Frank was a Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut. He also served as a member of our board for several terms and was president of the Society from 2005-2007. Frank and his wife Peg were always willing to host at the museum whenever needed. Frank would bring his whittling equipment and carve birds while hosting, much to the delight of our visitors. We will miss Frank and extend our condolences to Peg and other family members and friends.

MANSFIELD'S CLOVER MILLS

Have you ever driven down or by Clover Mill Road and wondered about the origin of its name? What is a clover mill and what is its purpose? This article continues our series on some of the lesser known mill types that were once in Mansfield.

As early as 1650, red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) was cultivated as a forage crop in England and was soon recognized for its ability to increase soil fertility. Like other legumes, clover plants contain symbiotic bacteria called *Rhizobia* within



nodules in their root systems. These bacteria absorb nitrogen from the atmosphere and transform it into ammonium compounds which aid the plant's growth. This process is known as nitrogen fixation. When the roots and stubble are plowed under, the decaying plants then release the fixed nitrogen into the soil. Red clover is thus known as a "green manure" crop. Before the development of commercial fertilizers, clover was commonly used in a rotation system to prepare fields for later crops of wheat, corn or other grains.

When the first English settlers came to America, they continued the practice of planting red clover for both feed and to revitalize their fields. However the settlers soon found that red clover did not perform as well in New England as in their native country. Though considered a perennial, it behaved as an annual here due to the severity of the winters and the naturally acidic soil. Therefore it became very important to save the clover seed from each year's crop.

In the days before mechanization, clover seed was collected in the same manner as cereal grains. The whole process involved strenuous manual labor. The clover plants were first cut and dried. Then they were spread on the barn floor upon sheets and manually beaten with flails to break up the flower heads and release the seeds. When the large plant material was removed, the seeds remained on the sheets, along with dust and small bits of broken stems, leaves and blossoms known as chaff. The chaff was removed through a process called winnowing. When there was a breezy day, the seed and chaff were placed on a winnowing tray and then tossed in the air repeatedly. The breeze carried away the lighter weight chaff while the

cleaned seed fell back onto the tray. Undoubtedly much seed was lost using these manual methods.

Clover mills were developed to collect and clean the seed in a more efficient manner. The earliest mills utilized rough cut millstones that crushed the flower heads between them as they rotated. The millstones were carefully leveled and placed just far enough apart to perform this operation without injuring the seed. The seed was expelled out the sides where it was collected. A fanning mill was then used to clean the seeds of chaff. This machine was developed to perform the winnowing operation. It utilized a series of sieves of decreasing sizes that were mechanically shaken to screen out the larger material. Rotating fan blades created a breeze to blow away the lightweight chaff and dust.

In the first decades of the 1800s, specialized threshing machines were also developed to process clover seed. Andrew Meikle, a Scottish engineer, invented the first threshing machine in 1786. His invention harvested and processed cereal grain much more effectively than flailing and winnowing. It would revolutionize agriculture in the coming century. Thomas Jefferson was among the first Americans to recognize the significance of Meikle's invention. He ordered one in 1792 for use on his Monticello estate and eventually owned three threshing machines – a stationary one run by water power and two portable ones operated by horses.

In the first decades of the 1800s, the U.S. Patent Office granted numerous patents for different types of threshing machines. There were variations to process all types of grains and seeds. The first American patents for machines to process clover seed were issued in 1802.

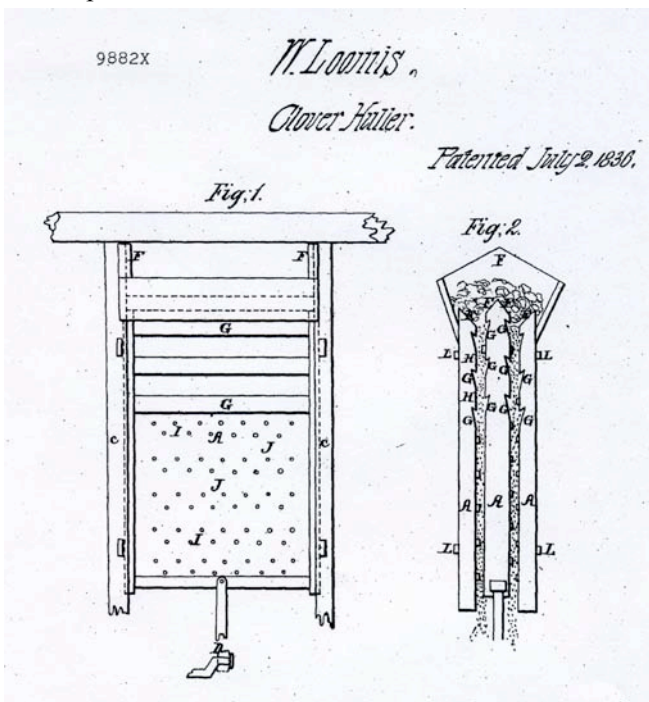
Most of the early threshing machines operated in a similar manner. They had a cylinder to which were attached sharpened, serrated bars. The cylinder rotated at a high speed within a concave, an enclosure shaped to follow the curvature of the cylinder. The plant material was fed through a hopper into the concave where it was broken up by the rotating bars. The grain and chaff then dropped down through a series of shaking sieves while the remainder of the plant material exited through a chute. A fanning mill was usually used in conjunction with the threshing machine to separate the grain from the chaff. Later threshing machines combined these two functions into one machine with the addition of fan blades to blow away the chaff.

The machines designed to harvest and clean clover seed were similar but also had to perform an additional operation. Clover seeds are in a small pod

known as the hull that must be removed to ensure seed germination. Therefore the threshing machines designed for clover also included a rasp-like device that rubbed off the hulls.

There were three clover mills that operated in Mansfield in the first half of the 19th century. One of them was built in Gurleyville by Lucius Gurley, the grandfather of Governor Wilbur Cross. It was located below the falls on the Codfish Falls brook. Like many early clover mills, it was water-powered and utilized rough-cut millstones to extract the seed rather than a threshing machine. A partial millstone from this mill has been recovered. If complete, it would have measured only 18" in diameter, much smaller than those used in gristmills.

In 1822, Lucius Gurley paid \$50 to William Loomis of Ashford for use of his patent for "a clover seed rubber" for a term of fourteen years. Loomis' patent was among those lost in the disastrous fire at the U.S. Patent Office in December of 1836. However it was re-issued on July 2, 1836 as patent no. 9882X. The patent drawing shows a machine quite different from the typical threshing machine but it performed the same function.



Loomis' invention featured a wooden panel that moved up and down within a narrow box-like structure. Sharpened bars were attached to the top third of the panel while multiple teeth studded the bottom part. Additional bars and teeth were attached to the interior walls of the box enclosure. The dried clover plants were fed through a hopper at the top of the machine. As the inner panel moved up and down, the upper bars tore the plants apart to release

the seeds and the lower toothed section acted as a rasp to rub off the hulls. This new invention may have helped Gurley to increase his seed production. Nonetheless his mill was short-lived. It ceased operation sometime around 1830. Gurley dismantled the building and in 1832 he re-used the timber to construct a house opposite his own (now 673 Chaffeeville Road). [You can learn much more about this clover mill in Rudy Favretti's forthcoming book, *Gurleyville and Hanks Hill*.]

Another clover mill was powered by water from the pond known today as McLaughlin's Pond. This pond is located about one-quarter mile north of Mount Hope Road where there was also a saw mill. Before 1806, the main road from Wormwood Hill to Mount Hope passed by this site. Experience Swift built the clover mill sometime after he purchased the property by the pond in 1809. The mill shows up in the 1824 deed when he sold the property to Jedediah Wentworth. Unfortunately no further record of this mill has been found.

About 1834, Thomas Lazel Barrows built the mill to which Clover Mill Road owes its name. Roberta Smith has done considerable research on the Barrows family and this mill. The Barrows family operated it for about 25 years. It was located south of Barrows Pond on Sawmill Brook, now part of Schoolhouse Brook Park. Remnants of the old dam and mill foundation are still visible. The foundation indicates that the mill was quite small, measuring approximately 24' x 24'. The inventory of Thomas L. Barrow's estate (he died January 7, 1865) included a winnowing mill, 1 clover sieve, 12 dry casks, grindstone, a business wagon and \$40.50 worth of clover seed in chaff. Since no other equipment is listed, it's likely that this mill, like the one in Gurleyville, used millstones to extract the seed rather than a threshing type machine. Entries in his brother Joseph's account books show 6 ¼ lbs of clover seed sold to Henry C. Hall in 1853 for \$0.65 and the same amount in 1855 for \$0.78.

It's unusual that this mill remained in business for so long. By the mid-19th century, most of the clover mills in New England had ceased operation. By then clover was cultivated extensively in Pennsylvania and other milder-climate states, enabling the establishment of commercial seed houses. These provided ample supplies of seed to farmers in New England and elsewhere. The small local clover mills were no longer needed.

I wish to thank Rudy Favretti and Roberta Smith for generously sharing their research on Mansfield's clover mills and helping with this article. – Ann Galonska

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Meeting/Program – May 3

Museum Opening – June 2

MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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Member-at-Large: Mary Feathers
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Membership: Marty Yutzey
Hospitality: Joan DeBella
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Newsletter: *Vacant*
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Education: Carolyn Stearns
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Collection Management: Lisa Ferriere
Library: Richard Schimmelpfeng

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS: Ann Galonska (Museum Director), Roberta Smith (Town Historian), Rudy Favretti (Cazel Property Steward)

PLEASE CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING: As you can see, there are a number of vacancies on the Board. With the passing of Isabelle Atwood, we are also in need of a coordinator for our museum hosts and hostesses. Please contact the Historical Society if you are interested in any of these positions.