



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 50, No. 1

April 2014

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I write this column on the first day of Spring, looking forward to the end of a long, cold winter. Although the museum has been closed for the winter, much productive work has been done out of public view. Over the last few years, many artifacts, large furniture pieces, and boxes of documents and photographs were received as gifts from various donors and from the estates of Fred Cazal and Isabelle Atwood. The Museum Committee has been busy sorting and accessioning these items. However finding space to house all these new additions to the collection has become a major issue. The archive storage space in the attic is near capacity and the museum office was crammed with boxes and items in every nook and cranny.

Museum Director Ann Galonska and E.O. Smith student Quin Harper have tackled the attic storage area. They've made progress in reorganizing and re-boxing artifacts to free up more shelf space.

Last fall, Anne Bennett, Ann Galonska and I also began meeting on Monday afternoons to work on organizing and modernizing the museum office. The goal was to improve the functionality, appearance and the work environment of the office for our museum director, volunteers and researchers. Louisa Owen Sonstroem and Quin Harper helped during the process and Jamie Lang-Rodean joined our Monday afternoon club as a regular member.



**Jamie Lang-Rodean and Anne Bennett
sorting items in the museum office**

The office was emptied of boxes, artifacts and miscellaneous items that were moved to other rooms in the museum. We also removed the table, desks and several file cabinets from the back half of the office. We then washed that section of the floor and the Town's Facilities Management staff waxed it. One rickety shelf and a set of old cabinets were also dismantled. Next on the agenda was painting two of the walls and shelves. Ann Galonska, Louisa Owen Sonstroem and myself wielded paint brushes and rollers and the result is a much brighter office. A modern L-shaped computer work station and a wooden credenza were purchased from the UCONN surplus store and two new lateral file cabinets were purchased from Staples. We are very grateful to

the Town's Facilities Management staff for all their help with this project. They did the heavy work of removing the old office furniture and moving the new furniture into place.

Continued on next page

MARK YOUR CALENDARS – UPCOMING EVENT

Friday, April 25, 7:30 p.m.: April Meeting and Program

Carla Bue, quilter, collector and quilt historian, will present a special program "Ancestral Threads: An Illustrated Lecture on a Collection of Family Quilts." The program will be held in the Buchanan Auditorium at the Mansfield Public Library (54 Warrenville Road).

President's Corner continued:

After determining our computer needs, Anne Bennett also ordered a new computer, up-to-date software, a monitor and a laser printer. The hardware has been set up and the software installed.

We have now centralized our office supplies in the new credenza and loaded up the file cabinets. The office is finally back in business. Work on the office continues but there has been a vast improvement. Please check out the changes next time you come to the museum.

We have also begun the process of addressing accessibility issues in our facilities. Pam and Dick Roberts have measured many of doorways and walkways at our site. Pam is preparing an accessibility analysis report to identify possible changes that would improve handicapped accessibility. A dialog has been opened with Town Manager Matt Hart regarding the accessibility issues and also our need for additional storage space.

Thanks to all the volunteers that keep the Mansfield Historical Society going, We couldn't accomplish our mission to keep Mansfield history alive without you. If you wish to help out, there is sure to be a role for you. Please contact the museum at 860-429-6575 or mansfield.historical@snet.net to volunteer.

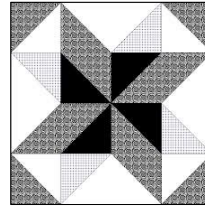
Keith Wilson, President



Museum office before (above) and after (below)



QUILT PROGRAM AT OUR APRIL MEETING



Our April program will feature quilt historian Carla Bue. Her presentation will include a brief history of quilts and quilting techniques, illustrated with a trunk show of 25 quilts dating from the 1800s. These quilts were made by members of the Godard, Hayes, Beach, Allen, and other families from the greater Granby area. Most of the quilts were made in the 1832 house in Granby still owned by Carla's family. Many of them were created from fabric produced by the Ward print works in Riverton.

The quilts that will be discussed have been featured in *Quilts and Quiltmakers Covering Connecticut*, the book produced by the Connecticut Quilt Search Project. Carla Bue has been a member of the Connecticut Quilt Search Project since 1990 and was a contributing author to their book. Many of her quilts were also displayed in the accompanying shows at the New England Quilt Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts and at the Vermont Quilt Festival.

An avid quilter herself, Ms. Bue has made over 150 quilts since 1979. She has received prizes and awards from many New England shows and is a member of four quilt guilds.

We hope you will join us on **Friday, April 25, at 7:30 p.m.**, for this interesting program. It will be held at the Buchanan Auditorium at the Mansfield Public Library. **Admission is free to members and children under 16; \$3.00 for non-members.**

ANNOUNCING OUR 2014 EXHIBITS

As you have read in the president's column, the fall and winter months were spent cataloging new accessions and reorganizing the office and attic storage area. Until recently, the display areas were still filled with furniture and boxes of files and other items from the office. That meant a late start to exhibit preparation. Our original plans had to be scaled back and one exhibit postponed until next year. Nonetheless we still have some exciting new exhibits in the works.

We hope that Carla Bue's presentation on April 25 will whet your appetite for viewing more quilts. It's been 19 years since our quilt collection was last on display and there have been new additions since then. We plan to display our quilts this summer in the Old Town Hall building and in two rooms of the main building. There are examples ranging from the 1840s through 1950s. We would welcome additional quilts

to supplement the display. If you have an antique or vintage quilt that you would be willing to loan, please contact the museum.

In the front room of the main building, we will also exhibit a selection of paintings by local artist, Scott Rhoades. Rhoades had a 35-year career as an art educator in the Coventry school system. Since retiring he has built an art studio and is pursuing his love of painting. He especially enjoys painting from historical photographs. Several of his paintings of Mansfield historic buildings, along with the photographs that inspired them, will be on display. Through an anonymous gift, we recently acquired his painting of the Hanks silk mill for our collection.

There will also be a small exhibit about Charles Emory Smith in the glass display cases outside the office. We recently received some interesting memorabilia regarding his career from one of his descendants. Charles Emory Smith was born in Gurleyville in 1842 and later became an influential newspaper editor in Albany and then Philadelphia. He was active as a Republican in state and national politics which led to some important political appointments. He served as ambassador to Russia from 1890 to 1892 and then as Postmaster General from 1897 to 1909 under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt. The road leading to the Storrs Mansfield Post Office was recently named in his honor.

Our museum opening is scheduled for **Sunday, June 1** 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!

CONGRATULATIONS TO ETHAN OLIVER



We're pleased to announce that Ethan Oliver has attained the rank of Eagle Scout. His Eagle Scout award ceremony was held on December 6 at the Crandall Lodge in Tolland.

For his Eagle Scout project, Oliver planned and carried out a preservation project at our museum. He and members of Boy Scout Troop 61 cleaned out the basement storage area in our main building and built some shelving for us. Ethan coordinated all the work

and raised funds for the supplies needed. The Scouts also disposed of many unneeded or water damaged items and placed pallets around the perimeter of the basement. The pallets and new shelving will enable us to store items off the floor, safe from any future floods. We are very grateful to Ethan and his troop members for completing this much needed project.

We thank Ethan again for his service and congratulate him on his achievement.

IN MEMORIAM

With sorrow we note the passing of Kathryn Jan Scottron on January 8, 2014. When the Mansfield Historical Society was founded in 1957, Jan and her husband Vic were among its charter members. Jan also served as a member of the Mansfield History Workshop that researched and compiled the first edition of the *Chronology of Mansfield*. Her chosen subject of research was Mansfield Libraries. Until recently she regularly hosted at the museum each summer. We will miss Jan and extend our condolences to her family and friends.

CATHARINE MARIA TROWBRIDGE

*Celebrating a 19th Century
Children's Literature Author*

By Nancy M. Kline

Why have I written about Catharine Maria Trowbridge, her work and her life? During my 1970's time of working with the Mansfield History Workshop, the late Ruth Munsell encouraged me to learn more about Miss Trowbridge and to work toward some type of publication. I tried to follow her excellent advice at least twice and failed each time. The time now seems auspicious for a third attempt, so I have purchased nine of Miss Trowbridge's books, conducted some preliminary research, and put some thoughts down on paper.

Catharine Maria Trowbridge, who was born in Mansfield in 1818, began her writing career in 1843 at the age of 25. An anonymous *In Memoriam* account of her life states that she developed "a taste and aptitude for composition" and that she sent an [apparently unsolicited] article to the *Youth's Cabinet*, which was met by "a very favorable reception."

Miss Trowbridge's religious affiliation had begun formally in 1832 at age 14 when she joined the nearby Congregational Church in the South Parish. There were no young children in her immediate

family – she was the youngest of five. But she was apparently able to understand what would attract children (or what parents would make available for their children to read.) Her writing must have been ideally suited to the times. By the time age and illness forced her to stop in 1888, she had published almost 40 childrens' books during the 45 years since 1843, along with an as-yet-undiscovered number of articles for children.

(It's fun to speculate: perhaps publishers of those Sunday-school books saw an equivalent market to Horatio Alger, Jr.'s novels about poor boys who became *monetarily* successful in life. Alger published his first boy's book – *Frank's Campaign* – in 1864 and continued to publish this type of book intensively until the late 1880's.)

The favorable reception of Miss Trowbridge's writing was not limited to publishers of religious materials, such as the Massachusetts or Philadelphia Sunday-School Societies. At least six commercial firms in the United States and abroad published her books, including Alfred Martien and M. W. Dodd, which later became Dodd, Mead and Company. During each of four or more years, she had at least

two books in pre-publication by either the same publisher or more than one publisher. Nine or more of her titles are currently available in their original form from book dealers, as facsimile reproductions in hardcover, as digitally typeset and corrected paperbacks, or as ebooks.

A small number of her books used their titles as an initial way of teaching their lessons, such as *Christian Heroism* (1858), *Mistakes* (1881), or *Snares and Safeguards* (1887). By far the larger number of book titles, however, had an individual's name such as *Nettie Wallace* (1866) or *Frank and Rufus* (1864).

Although her books might have been small in overall dimensions, they were not short in length. *Dick and His Friend Fidus*, for example which was in its fifth edition in 1860, is 231 pages. The type size was not enlarged to help beginning readers. The books were not generally heavily illustrated to help keep an early reader's attention, but depending on the book, there might have been one or more appropriate engraved illustrations. Her texts did not gloss over difficult every-day events – in *Jennie's Bible Verses*



The Constant Southworth House in Mansfield Center (16 Dodd Road). This is the house in which Catharine Maria Trowbridge was born and lived her whole life. It was built in 1763 for her grandparents, Deacon Constant and Mary (Porter) Southworth. The authoress was the daughter of Caleb Trowbridge and Abigail Southworth who married on October 6, 1799.

(1865), for example, Jennie's younger sister Susie died at home after a long illness.

Miss Trowbridge's accomplishments are even more remarkable when her ill health is taken into consideration. She suffered from some type of spinal disease that gradually made her an invalid. Her eyesight was increasingly affected as she grew older, and over time she became almost totally blind. *In Memoriam* also stated that she was able to write only thirty minutes a day, although we're not told what caused this added hardship or when it began.

By 1851, only she and her mother were alive and living in the large 1700's home where she was born. Her mother's health was failing and they became increasingly unable to care for themselves. A family came to live with them and help them in return for housing. This arrangement continued for another 22 years after Mrs. Trowbridge died in 1866.

Following the death of her mother – Miss Trowbridge's only real companion – the Congregational Church pastor intervened in an attempt to provide company and intellectual stimulation for this bed-confined, solitary, almost blind, accomplished author. He organized a small group of young church members who would spend at least an hour a day, seven days a week, in reading to her. Although members of the original group moved on into their more adult lives, others took their place and the practice continued until she died in mid-January 1892 at the age of 74.

As writers in 2014 with all of the tools and means of communication available to us, it is almost impossible to imagine how Miss Trowbridge continued to write and publish so successfully, especially between approximately 1851 and the publication of her last book in 1888. How did she surmount her health problems? Who wrote down what she wanted to have printed, and how was that revised? How was the correspondence with the publishers established and maintained? How were the manuscripts sent and the galleys proofread? Were the proceeds from the sale of her books the only income that provided a living for her and her mother, while the latter was still alive?

The *In Memoriam* author does not provide any details to answer these questions and others. It may be that further investigation in manuscript sources will uncover diaries, family letters, or other useful and informative materials. At the very least, a search of 19th century periodicals such as the *Youth's Cabinet* may result in identifying articles written under her name that can be added to her extensive list of published books.

To be continued ...

SUNDAY SCHOOL BOOKS

Miss Trowbridge's books belong to a unique genre known as Sunday School books that flourished during the 19th century. These children's books were intended to teach moral values in an entertaining way. They became a standard part of religious education.

There are more than 30 examples of Miss Trowbridge's books in our Society's collection. Most sold for 50 cents to \$1.50 each and also came in boxed sets. The American Sunday School Union also marketed such books in packaged Libraries of 100 for five or ten dollars to churches across the country.

Michigan State University has completed a digitization project called "Shaping the Values of Youth: Sunday School Books in 19th Century America." Their website provides historical background and many examples of this once very popular form of literature. To learn more, please visit <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/ssb/index.cfm>.

Below are a few contemporary descriptions of Miss Trowbridge's works from the *Publisher's Uniform Trade List Directory* of 1868:

Dick and his Friend Fidus.

Dick was a poor orphan, who began life under unfavorable auspices. He soon found an abiding friend in Fidus (conscience) whom he often heard whispering, "This is the way, walk ye therein." By following this faithful counsellor, he escaped the temptations, and manfully bore the trials of boyhood. The story is lively and interesting, with a distinct, though not obtrusive moral.

Nettie Wallace; or, The Priceless Ornaments.

It is an excellent story, illustrating the beauty of a meek and forgiving spirit, and the benefit of confessing and forsaking sin. The object of the story is to show what are the true ornaments of a woman, and how dangerous it is to indulge the young of either sex in anything which begets an undue love of dress.

The Two Friends.

Sketches in a graphic and instructive way the lives of two friends, one of whom from girlhood was trained in strict integrity of principle, the other trimmed her course more according to what other people might say, than according to the principles of right and wrong. The folly and guilt of living for other people's opinions rather than living for right, are set in a clear light. The contrasted characters of the two girls impress the teachings of the book strongly upon the memory. We commend the book to all Sunday-school teachers as one deserving a place in the library.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Meeting/Program – April 25 Museum Opening – June 1

MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

ELECTED OFFICERS:

President: Keith Wilson
Vice President: John Meyers
Secretary: Anne Bennett
Treasurer: Keith Johnson
Assistant Treasurer: Anne Greineder

Member-at-Large: Pam Roberts
Member-at-Large: Mary Feathers
Member-at-Large: Sharry Goldman
Member-at-Large: David Landry

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Programs: Bruce Clouette
Membership: Marty Yutzey
Hospitality: Joan DeBella
Research & Publications: Carl Schaefer
Newsletter: *Vacant*
Publicity: *Vacant*

Education: Carolyn Stearns
Genealogy: Richard Roberts
Old Houses: Donna Clouette
Museum: *Vacant*
Collection Management: Lisa Ferriere
Library: Richard Schimmelpfeng

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:

Ann Galonska (Museum Director)
Roberta Smith (Town Historian)