



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Summer is on the way, although the night time temperatures make one question how soon that will be.

There has been much activity at the Mansfield Historical Society since December. A grant application for a Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant was submitted on December 1st, thanks to the efforts of Ann Galonska, Bruce Clouette and Rudy Favretti who prepared the application. In February, we were notified that the matching grant in the amount of \$16,012 was approved. The Mansfield Town Council has committed to match \$15,000 and the Mansfield Historical Society will contribute the remaining \$1,012. This grant will help fund a conditions assessment of the old Town Hall and the former Town Office Building, both occupied by our Society.

In order to prepare for the condition assessment, it was necessary to provide unencumbered access to all exterior walls within the buildings. Consequently, much of the collection has been moved from the attics to temporary storage in the old Town Hall. Furnishings on the first floor of the buildings and materials stored in the basements have also been moved away from the walls. It took many hours over three weeks to complete this project. Thanks to the many volunteers who contributed their time to accomplish this task, Ann Galonska for directing the effort, and especially to Pam Roberts for coordinating all the volunteers.

Unfortunately, it was necessary to postpone the Sixties exhibit until next year. Due to the condition assessment project, most of the display areas are currently being used for temporary storage. Thank you to everyone who offered to loan material for the exhibit. We have compiled a list and you will hear from us next year.

The research library will be open on weekends this summer and there will be two small exhibits in the front room of the museum and the display cases outside of the library/office area. The remainder of the museum will be closed to the public.

Our first program is scheduled for Friday evening, June 24th. Damien Cregeau will present a program on Revolutionary War spy rings. You will recognize many of the names because most were Connecticut men, many from this area of the state. I attended a presentation of the program at the New London County Historical Society and found it fascinating. You won't want to miss it. Additional programs are also planned for this summer. On Saturday, July 23rd, Richard Roberts and I will host a program on searching for information on both free and pay Genealogy websites. Bruce Clouette will also present an Old House Research program on August 20th.

I would like to thank two board members for years of work on the Mansfield Historical Society Board. Keith Johnson was elected Treasurer in November 2004 and served alternately as Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer until he retired this April. Sharry Goldman served as a Member-at-Large since November 2012 and also left the Board in April. Their contributions have been much appreciated.



Volunteers Tim Reynolds and Kevin Segar move part of the store exhibit in preparation for the condition assessment project.

Keith Wilson, President

REVOLUTIONARY WAR SPY PROGRAM



On Friday, June 24, Damien Cregeau will present his popular program "Spies and Traitors of Connecticut during the American Revolution." The talk includes interesting information on why Nathan Hale failed as a spy, the famous Culper Spy Ring of New York, Long Island and Connecticut, General Benedict Arnold's treason, and lesser known spies from Connecticut. It also includes a fascinating look at the techniques used by spies as well as General Arnold, including invisible ink, ciphers and codes.

Historian Damien Cregeau earned his B.A. in history from Hillsdale College in Michigan and his M.A. in history from Colorado State University. After teaching history for several years at independent schools, Mr. Cregeau has since 2007 given lectures on colonial American history throughout the northeast, including dozens of PowerPoint slideshow presentations on spies during the American Revolution. In 2014 he gave a presentation on spies in New York during the Revolutionary War to the FBI's New York Office. He most recently gave his talk "Spies and Traitors of Connecticut during the American Revolution" to the New London County Historical Society in February and to the Norwich Historical Society at the Slater Museum in April.

The program will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Buchanan Auditorium at the Mansfield Public Library (54 Warrenville Road, Mansfield Center). Admission is free to MHS members and children under 16; \$3.00 for non-members.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Online Genealogy Workshop - Saturday, July 23, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.** This program will demonstrate the wealth of genealogy information available on both free and pay genealogy websites. It is a hands-on workshop so please bring a laptop if you have one as Wifi will be available. The workshop will be led by Richard C. Roberts, former head of the History and Genealogy Unit of the Connecticut State Library and Keith Wilson, a genealogist with more than 30 years of family research experience.

- **How to Research an Old House Workshop – Saturday, August 20, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.:** Society member Bruce Clouette will present our second summer workshop. This workshop will focus on a case study of an 18th-century house in Mansfield and will cover historic map research, deed research, probate records, and other sources of information. Bruce's "day job" is researching historic properties for National Register of Historic Places nominations, archaeological background reports, and environmental-impact studies. He's been at it since 1975 and has picked up a few tricks along the way.

Both workshops will be held in the Buchanan Auditorium at the Mansfield Public Library. Details will follow later in a separate flyer.

SOCIETY RECEIVES GRANT FOR CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The Society has received a grant that will partially fund a conditions assessment of the two town-owned buildings it occupies at 954 Storrs Road, the Old Town Hall (1843) and the former Town Office Building (1935). The grant, called a Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant (HPTAG), is a matching grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation in partnership with, and with funding from, the Connecticut State Preservation Office in the Department of Economic and Community Development. The grant program is funded through the Community Investment Act.

The purpose of doing a conditions assessment is to identify all the physical issues — code compliance, roof leaks, structural deficiencies, etc.— that would need to be remedied in order to assure that the buildings will serve us well for many years into the future. Sara Nelson, of Nelson Edwards Architects in Branford, is the lead consultant for the conditions assessment, and she will coordinate the work of other specialists, such as a structural engineer. Already, as-built measurements of the buildings have been completed. Preparation for this task required volunteers, under the direction of Museum Director Ann Galonska, to move all furniture and other items away from the interior walls, an especially onerous undertaking in the case of the attics which house most of the museum's collection.

This grant will not fund any repairs, but the conditions assessment is a necessary first step in order to qualify for other grants that would pay for the

actual repair work. Having a professional assessment of what needs to be done is something that granting agencies want to have in place so that they know that whatever work is being applied for is needed and is being undertaken in the proper sequence of priorities.

The conditions assessment is scheduled for completion in September 2016. The assessment will include floor plans and elevations, a list of major conditions issues, ballpark cost estimates for the various repair items, and a prioritization plan identifying the things that are most important to be done, as well as a suggested sequence.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

It took many hands and a lot of muscle power to relocate all that needed to be moved in preparation for the conditions assessment project. We appreciate the assistance of the following volunteers and Pam Roberts who coordinated the volunteer effort.

Pam Roberts	David Landry
Ann Galonska	Jim Raynor
Keith Wilson	Bruce Clouette
Anne Greineder	Donna Clouette
Richard Roberts	Alice Kolega
Mary Feathers	Nancy Rucker
Marietta Johnson	Michael Kubeck
Keith Johnson	Edward Dorgan
Daniel Allie	Kevin Segar
Jamie Lang-Rodean	Tim Reynolds

THE MUSEUM GETS SCANNED

The first stage of our condition assessment grant project has begun. Because there are no existing architectural drawings of the old Town Hall (1843) and the former Town Office Building (1935), it was necessary to have measured drawings created. The latest in laser scanning technology was used to accomplish this. On April 22, our buildings were successfully scanned by Melody Padrah of Existing Conditions Surveys, Inc. Both the exterior and interior spaces of each building were scanned. The whole process took about five hours.

Laser scanning is a quicker and more accurate method to document a building than manual measuring. Before the scanning begins, magnetic orbs are placed around the space to be scanned to serve as reference points. The scanner sits on a tripod and rotates 360° while emitting laser beams that bounce off every surface, measuring their distance

from the scanner. It captures everything within 330 meters with an accuracy down to 2 mm. When the scanner completes its rotation, it is moved to another area and the scanning resumes. Using the orb reference points, all the scans can be later joined together into 3-dimensional images of the building and all its interior spaces. Any extraneous items such as furniture can be manually edited out of the scans by Existing Conditions technicians.



Melody Padrah setting up the scanner to survey the attic of the main building. Two of the magnetic orbs are visible on the shelf behind her and on the box in the background.

Using the information from the scans taken at our site, basic measured floor plans and elevations of both museum buildings will be created. The data file will also allow for future generation of full interior elevation drawings and building sections at such time as they are required by the Town / Historical Society. The scans will provide essential information for all future renovation and repair work.

The next step of the grant project will be the physical examination of both buildings by the Nelson Edwards Architects and their consultants. That hasn't been scheduled yet. But, thanks to the hard work of all our volunteers, we are ready for it whenever it occurs.

A VERY BUSY SPRING AT THE MUSEUM

So far 2016 has brought some challenges along with exciting developments.

We were fortunate to have two wonderful student interns to assist us during the spring semester. Helen Stec is a double major in History and English. In addition to her studies, she is a reporter for the student newspaper and also does podcasts for the student radio station. Madison Savage, the other intern, is also majoring in History and is president of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. Both have just completed their sophomore year in the Honors program at the University of Connecticut. It's amazing that both of these busy students had time to intern at our museum, but we are so grateful that they did!



Interns Helen Stec (left) and Madison Savage (right)

The first hurdle that had to be crossed came just two weeks after Helen and Maddie started their internships. Museum Director Ann Galonska needed surgery and was out on medical leave for most of February. Fortunately members of the board took the reins and were able to keep business going as usual. Pam Roberts scheduled the volunteers and also helped to provide coverage at the museum along with Keith Wilson, Anne Bennett, Anne Greineder, Keith Johnson and Rudy Favretti. Jamie Lang-Rodean and Lisa Ferriere mentored the interns during Ann's absence. Many thanks to all who helped out during this time.

While Ann was out, Jamie Lang-Rodean worked with Helen and Maddie on a museum education project. Janet Pagoni, a first grade teacher at Goodwin School, had requested four artifact boxes to be used for a unit on "Wants and Needs." She wanted items from "100 years ago" to contrast with "wants and needs" today.

During the short time prior to her leave, Ann helped Jamie and the interns select various artifacts and photographs that could be used to illustrate the theme. Helen and Maddie then scanned the photographs and worked with Jamie on assembling the loan boxes. Items that were unique or too fragile to be handled were set aside for a Skype lesson.

Goodwin School's technology staff arranged a method whereby the more valuable artifacts and the museum's country store exhibit could be viewed by the class via Skype. It was an experimental lesson that was observed by several professors of Education. In her email thanking the Society for our help, Janet Pagoni wrote: "The lesson and skyping went beyond my expectations! The technology worked perfectly and the children loved seeing the exhibit. . . The professors were very excited to see how well the skyping and lesson went and are now thinking about the ways it could be used in the future." We hope that this successful project will lead to further collaborative efforts.

During Ann's leave, the interns also worked with Lisa Ferriere, chair of our Collection Management Committee. They tackled a large backlog of cataloging work and made great progress.

An Exhibit Planning Committee also formed, led by board members Keith Wilson, Anne Bennett and Jamie Lang-Rodean. They made initial plans for a large exhibit focusing on the 1960s and early '70s that would occupy both museum buildings. With limited materials from this period within the Society's collections, they reached out to the membership with a request for photographs, clothing and other memorabilia. Many members responded to the email blast with generous offers to loan items. A database of available materials was compiled.

When Ann returned to work in March, she and the interns dove into research for the exhibit. They compiled timelines of national and local events during the '60s and '70s, located all items within the museum collections pertaining to this period, and searched through the Hartford Courant database and issues of the Daily Campus for news articles. Helen and Maddie also explored the university archives at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center for photographs and other materials that might be useful for the exhibit.

Work on the exhibit was still in the initial stages when plans were suddenly derailed. We were excited to learn in February that our grant application had been approved. However we were blissfully unaware of what would need to be done to prepare for the condition assessment project. When the contract arrived from the Nelson Edwards Company, we

learned that we would have to provide unobstructed access to all exterior walls within the buildings so they could be fully examined. We were instructed to clear out a minimum of four feet around each exterior wall. This would necessitate relocating most furnishings as well as large portions of the collections that were stored in the attics. There was only a month to accomplish this monumental task before the project was scheduled to commence.

At a board meeting held on March 31, there were extensive discussions about where to relocate the collections and how to accomplish the move. Various offsite storage solutions were discussed but all had security concerns. It was finally decided to temporarily store the contents of the attics in the old Town Hall. Items on the first floor of the main building and in the basements would be consolidated in the center of those spaces. Unfortunately this would leave most of the display areas unusable. Reluctantly, the decision was made to postpone the Sixties exhibit until next year and to partially close the museum. Instead, small exhibits would be mounted in the front room of the main building and the display cases outside of the library/office. The research library and this small section of the museum could then be open this summer.

Within a week, Pam Roberts had recruited and scheduled a crew of volunteers to assist in relocating all that had to be moved. Boxes of artifacts were carefully packed and locations noted for their later return. Furniture, spinning wheels, household goods and innumerable other artifacts were passed down the attic stairs fire brigade style and carried to the old Town Hall. Upstairs, downstairs, the entire museum was on the move! With so many helping hands, the work was finished in less than three weeks.

Although this necessary work was very disruptive and caused us to completely alter our exhibit plans, it will have some future benefits. By relocating a large portion of our collection, we have not only provided the needed access for the conditions assessment, but we now have a rare opportunity to re-examine our collection and do some long needed cleaning and reorganization work in our storage areas. When the artifacts are finally returned to storage next fall, they will be inventoried and rearranged in more orderly manner.

ANNOUNCING OUR NEW EXHIBITS

During all this upheaval, work on the Sixties exhibit was suspended and various topics for smaller exhibits were explored. With less than two months remaining before the scheduled June opening,

decisions had to be made quickly. Work began almost immediately on two small exhibits for which we had ample resources and felt could be achieved within the limited time frame.

- **Edwin S. Fitch, Master Builder-Architect:** Known today as the Fitch House, the grand home that Edwin Fitch built for his bride in 1836 introduced the Greek Revival style to Mansfield. Other examples of Fitch's work can be found throughout northeastern Connecticut. From 1832 to 1860, Fitch built some sixty major structures, including factories, churches, stores, a court house, a toll house, and numerous dwellings. Our interns located many of the surviving houses and churches built by Fitch and photographed them for this exhibit. In addition, Kay and Tony Holt, owners of the Fitch House, graciously allowed them to tour their home and photograph many of its architectural and decorative features. Historical photographs of Fitch's work and some of his account books are also included in the display. The Society is fortunate to have seven of Fitch's business ledgers in its collection.
- **"Claude's Place": Photographs by James S. Klar:** A series of silver images made by noted photographer James S. Klar are also on display in the glass cases outside the library/office. These photographs were taken in 1978-1980 at the Mansfield farm then owned by Claude McDaniels. With an artist's eye, Klar captured the 18th century farmstead with its deteriorating barns, meandering stonewalls and boulder strewn fields. Following Claude McDaniels' death in 2003, MHS members Greg and Emine Cichowski purchased the property. The barns are now gone, but Greg Cichowski is restoring the historic house. David Landry photographed the restoration work in progress and Greg has provided some of his own photographs that document the work. These will augment the Klar photograph exhibit, providing an interesting before and after component.

The Museum will open for the season on Saturday, June 4. No opening event is planned this year.

The museum and research library will be open on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., through the end of September. We look forward to seeing you there!

NEWS OF OTHER PROJECTS

The Society is currently participating in two cooperative projects with other institutions and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Efforts are underway to digitally reunite the records of the Connecticut Soldiers' Orphans' Home and to make these resources available online. The records are held at the Mansfield Historical Society, the Connecticut Historical Society and in the Archives and Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut. Surviving records include the superintendent's day book, the orphan log book, the secretary's and treasurer's records as well as published annual reports and bulletins.

In August of 1866, Edwin Whitney donated all of his property to the State, including a boarding school building and his 50-acre farm in Mansfield as the site for the Connecticut Soldiers' Orphans' Home. Over the course of its nine year existence, the Connecticut Soldiers' Orphans' Home cared for 153 destitute children, most of whom were children of Connecticut's Civil War soldiers. After the orphanage closed in 1875, the property reverted to Edwin Whitney's widow. Mrs. Whitney eventually sold the property to Augustus Storrs. It was this property, with additional acreage, that the Storrs brothers offered to the State of Connecticut in 1881 to establish the Storrs Agricultural School, now the University of Connecticut.

As the first stage of this project, the superintendent's "Daily Record of the Conn. S. O. Home" from our collection has been digitized by University Library staff. To view it, visit the Dodd Center's website: <https://archives.lib.uconn.edu/>. Click on Digital Collections and then type "Connecticut Soldiers' Orphans' Home" in the search bar.

In a separate project, the Society is also working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the design of an informational kiosk to be installed at the Mansfield Hollow Dam site. The kiosk will include historical information, photographs and maps, largely drawn from our 2015 exhibit about the flood control project. It's hoped that the kiosk will be ready for installation before the end of the year.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

We are always grateful to the generous donors who help us build our collections through their gifts of artifacts, photographs and documents.

Since the beginning of the year we have received several significant gifts. Elizabeth Larkin Sawyer and Margery Larkin Gerard donated an extensive collection of materials from the estate of their mother, Ethel Larkin. Ethel was one of the charter members of our Society and was greatly interested in local history. Her extensive collection of books and papers relating to genealogy and local history as well as her research files now enrich our library and archives. The collection also contains a large number of photographs and other materials associated with the Storrs, Gardiner and Rosebrooks families, including clothing items dating from the 1850s to the 1920s.

Augmenting this collection, more Rosebrooks and Gardiner family memorabilia were recently received from the estate of Lucille Storrs Manning of Lebanon.

In March Douglas W. Fellows also donated a number of artifacts from the estate of his parents, Irving and Justine Fellows. His gift includes a framed 1857 map of Tolland County, an 1850s rifle with powder horn and powder flask, a Native American made beaded pocket watch holder, a wash bowl set, and a number of other 19th century artifacts. All had belonged to members of the Freeman family of Mansfield.

A year ago, the Society received numerous gifts in memory of Ethel Hawkins. In recognition of Ethel's work on the Collection Management Committee, the board earmarked these funds for future purchases for the collections.

This memorial fund enabled us to acquire some interesting materials at a recent auction. The items all came from the Brown family farm on Browns Road in Mansfield. Among the items purchased are Brown family photograph albums, the records of the Chestnut Hill school district dating from 1828-1899 and a ledger of the Chestnut Hill Book Club containing the member list and meeting minutes for 1884-1885. Box lots included farm records and account books for a family operated general store. One such ledger has transactions dating back to 1812 and contains examples of bartering with "silk trees" at the height of the mulberry craze in the 1830s. Other interesting finds were two journals containing handwritten recipes, probably compiled by a member of the Brown family in the early decades of the 1900s. All predate the modern electric oven and have no baking temperatures, just estimated baking time.

Richard Schimmelpfeng, Daniel Allie, Lisa Ferriere and the student interns have been working on processing and cataloging this large influx of new acquisitions.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Currently 77% of our members have paid their 2016 dues. The membership renewal drive resulted in additional donations to the Society as well. Thank you to all who have renewed and donated. Your support assists the Society's Executive Council in making decisions and strengthens our membership profile, increasing our negotiating position for collaborative local, state and federal opportunities.

Please help us increase the percent of 2016 paid memberships. If you have misplaced your second dues notice from February, just contact me at drpampt@gmail.com or 860-428-2406. Let's get that renewal rate up closer to 100%. We count on your support.



Pam Roberts organizing boxes of artifacts as they were brought from the attic of the main building to the old Town Hall

As Membership Chair I wish to engage you in ways your varied interests, skills and expertise can benefit the Mansfield Historical Society. Many of you rallied to assist with clearing spaces necessary for the Condition Assessment in April and in office coverage in February. Additional needs will arise in the coming months for refreshments, mailings, organizing, sorting, and cataloging collections, assisting with research requests, and yes – more cleaning, sorting and storing. Our Museum hosts will be called on to cover when staff requests a weekend off. When contacted, I hope those of you who are local will respond to emails and phone calls for help as your schedule allows. Thanks to those who completed the volunteer interest survey at the bottom of your dues renewal form, we know how you wish to help and I, or others, will contact you to arrange ways for you to contribute.

Pam Roberts, Membership Committee Chair

IN MEMORIAM: We note with sadness the loss of one of our long-time members. Elizabeth “Lib” Norris passed away on March 21, 2016. A member since 1962, Lib had served on the MHS Executive Council as Secretary (1989-90) and as Membership Chair (1998-2000). She also enjoyed hosting at the museum each summer. We shall miss her.

50 YEARS OF TRUST

This is the 50th anniversary of the founding of Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, and the Mansfield Historical Society (MHS) should be proud since we were one of its parents. In 1966, when the Trust was established, MHS was nine years old. Annarie and Fred Cazal, two of the founders of MHS, expended much effort seeking ways to preserve the Gurleyville Gristmill and Wilbur Cross Birthplace because it was threatened by developers approaching its owner with appealing offers to purchase the historic site.

In 1963, through enabling legislation passed by Connecticut's General Assembly, Mansfield's selectmen approved the formation of a Conservation Commission (CC), whose mission was to identify land and historic sites to be preserved and then to present this list to the Town. As an official town agency, the Conservation Commission could also apply for certain state and other grants. Soon after the CC's founding, MHS began sending members of its Executive Committee to the CC's monthly meetings to encourage the two organizations to work together to find a way to preserve the Gristmill-Birthplace site as well as other important places. Rudy Favretti and Bob Norris were regular representatives from MHS; others attended as well.

After much discussion at these meetings, and upon the advice of several consultants, it was decided that a Trust must be formed to acquire and manage several important sites not just in Mansfield, but also in nine other towns that formed Joshua's Tract. The CC asked the selectmen to call a town meeting which they did on April 27, 1966. Over fifty people attended and after a few short talks and some discussion, the Mansfield Conservation Trust was formed. At a meeting of the steering committee of the new Trust, it was decided not to have the Trust be just for Mansfield but to also include nine other towns (now a total of fourteen). This was forward thinking for New Englanders where a town is sacrosanct.

(Continued on the next page)

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Special Programs – June 24, July 23 & August 20

The Trust was not able to purchase the Gurleyville Gristmill-Birthplace site until 1979 when its owner, Anthony Douda, died. In the interim several other sites were acquired, and over the years the Trust acquired and now oversees through Conservation Easements a total of 4,500 acres maintained by many volunteers.

As part of its anniversary celebration, Rudy J. Favretti was asked by the Trust to write a commemorative history of Joshua's Trust. The book, entitled *Fifty Years of Trust*, was presented to the public on April 23, 2016.

The book may be purchased at the Mansfield Historical Society Museum and other sites in town. The cost is \$10 and all proceeds benefit Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust.



The Gurleyville Gristmill and adjacent saw mill, circa 1910

Rudy J. Favretti