



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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April 2004

President's Corner



Items being donated to the April 3 Tag Sale are accumulating at the Museum; Jean Hayden and Isabelle Atwood are pricing them and we're lining up cashiers and other helpers to work that day. More items are needed! You can bring donations to the Museum on Mondays and Thursdays (9-5) or arrange a meeting time for dropping them off on weekends by calling Ann Galonska at 429-6575 or 872-8558. We are not accepting computers, clothes, purses, shoes, or books but anything else will be gladly received. We are also planning to have a "treasures" table for items that are a step above the usual tag sale fare and will be priced higher. Don't forget to attend the sale and examine the treasures that are available. And let us know if you can help by cashiering or monitoring tables that day. Please help us make this fund raiser a success!

We have had our new track lighting installed and have received generous donations toward that project from many members. Thank you so much. The lights greatly improve the appearance of the museum and will be better for our collections. The old fluorescent fixtures emitted high levels of ultraviolet light that is damaging to many types of artifacts. The new track lighting system enables us to illuminate our exhibits and meet preservation needs at the same time.

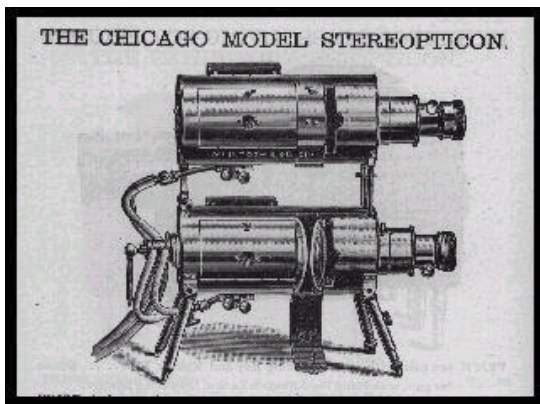
Our Program Chair, Len Seeber, has been setting up some exciting programs that are announced in this *Newsletter*. Mark your calendars now! We hope to see you at these upcoming events.

Jody Newmyer, President

UPCOMING SPRING PROGRAMS & EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **APRIL 3 – TAG SALE, Mansfield Historical Society/Old Town Hall Building, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**
- **APRIL 16 – DAVID BROOKE, MAGIC-LANTERN SHOW, Buchanan Center Auditorium, adjacent to the Mansfield Library, 7:30 p.m.** (See article inside for more information)
- **MAY 14 – CHRISTOPHER RILEY, THE STORY OF NEWGATE PRISON IN EAST GRANBY, Buchanan Center Auditorium, adjacent to the Mansfield Library, 7:30 p.m.** The prison was chartered as a copper mine in 1709, then was sold to the State in 1733 when it began its history as a prison. Christopher Riley has been the Chief Guide at Newgate for 18 years.
- **JUNE 6 – MUSEUM OPENING, Mansfield Historical Society Museum, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.**
- **JUNE 12 – BUS TRIP TO BOSCOBEL AND WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS.** Boscobel is situated on the east bank of the Hudson River opposite the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The mansion dates from the early 19th century and contains one of the nation's leading collections of furniture and decorative arts from the Federal period. In nearby Newburgh, NY, the fieldstone farmhouse of Jonathan and Tryntje Hasbrouck served as General Washington's military headquarters and residence from April 1783 - August 1783. This is the first publicly operated historic site in the United States. We will also visit the adjacent Museum and its "First in the Nation" exhibit. (Further information and reservation forms will follow in a separate mailing.)

APRIL 16 MEETING TO FEATURE MAGIC-LANTERN SHOW



We are in for a treat at our April 16 meeting! David Brooke will present a program on the history of the magic-lantern and, with his Victorian stereopticon, will show many examples from his extensive collection of lantern slides. Society members Jean and Mike Hayden will assist as his projectionists. This program is co-sponsored with the Mansfield Library

Mr. Brooke has had a wide and varied career. Born in England, he was once a British bobby and also served in the British armed forces. He later pursued a museum career in the United States and Canada and is director emeritus of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts. He has been collecting and showing lantern slides for over twenty years, and is a member of both the British and American magic-lantern societies.

The magic-lantern, the ancestor of the modern-day slide projector, was introduced in the 17th century as an optical curiosity and was thereafter used by traveling showmen who put on small-scale productions wherever they visited. The magic-lantern show increased in popularity and became a major form of entertainment in the latter years of the 19th century. Magic-lanterns were everywhere then – used in homes, churches, schools and even large-scale halls and theaters. The lantern slides illustrated stories, songs or sermons and many of them were animated or capable of special effects. Public performances were spirited affairs that featured live music and encouraged audience participation. The arrival of the motion picture soon eclipsed the magic-lantern show but many of its techniques and special effects were adopted by the new film industry.

Please join us at the Buchanan Center Auditorium on **April 16, 7:30 p.m.** for David Brooke's talk and experience this popular old-time entertainment firsthand!

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

The track lighting has been installed in our main display areas and it looks terrific! The track lighting system will enable us to light our exhibits more effectively and will be much less damaging to our collections than the old fluorescent lights. Dimmers will also be installed to allow us to adjust lighting levels to better preserve sensitive artifacts. We are so grateful to our members for their generous support of this major improvement to our museum!

Spring is just around the corner but the Museum Committee is already looking ahead to summer as it plans the exhibits for the upcoming season. Plans are still in the formative stage and details will follow in the next newsletter. The new exhibits for 2004 will be:

- ❖ *The Mansfield Training School* – This exhibit will trace the history of the Training School from its beginnings in 1858 as a private school for “imbecile” children in Lakeville, Connecticut to its closing in 1993 as a state institution run by the Department of Mental Retardation. For three-quarters of the twentieth century, the Mansfield Training School was a large presence in our town. Although it was once considered a model institution, societal changes and new trends in the treatment of mental retardation led to its closing amidst allegations of abuse. Our student intern, Rachel Neumann, has been busy interviewing people associated with the school and tracking down information, photographs and artifacts. Now that 10 years have passed since the Training School closed, it's time to look back and review this significant part of Mansfield's history.
- ❖ *19th Century Samplers* – From the mid 18th century on, working a sampler was an important part of a young girl's education. As the child stitched her letters and numbers, she also learned important needlework skills that would make her a desirable homemaker in later life. This exhibit will display a collection of samplers ranging from simple examples to elaborate pictorial ones made by schoolgirls taught at academies. Joan Gerssen is the curator of this exhibit.
- ❖ *Women's Handiwork* – Using the needlework skills they learned while stitching their early samplers, women embellished all manner of objects during the 19th century. This exhibit will showcase an array of embroidered items from clothing to household linens and crazy quilts. A

collection of sewing baskets, pincushions and other sewing paraphernalia will also be on display. Althea Stadler and Poppy Whitaker are working on this exhibit.

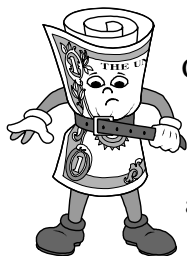
❖ ***The Chronicles of Wormwood Hill: A Long Memory*** – Claude McDaniels was a farmer who lived on Wormwood Hill for most of his 93 years. His family moved to Wormwood Hill in 1915, where Claude lived a lifestyle more akin to his nineteenth century parents, than his twentieth century peers. Claude's poetic eccentricity and remarkable memory for detail drew artists, poets, writers, and photographers who sought the wealth of unrecorded history that he spewed on a daily basis. In this exhibit, photographer Cecelia Chau, of New York City, and singer-songwriter/dramatist Donna Dufresne of Pomfret, will attempt to capture the end of a life well-lived in photographs, stories, and songs that depict the by-gone days of rural Connecticut. The photographs depict Claude in his final days in the fall of 2003. The stories and songs are derived from oral history collected from Claude over a twenty-year period. Cecelia Chau and Donna Dufresne are fifth-grade teachers and graduate students at UCONN in the *Three Summers Gifted and Talented Program*.

If you have any artifacts or memorabilia relating to these topics that you are willing to loan, please contact the museum at 429-6575. We are especially in need of samplers and examples of embroidery. Any information or memories that you can share will also be appreciated.

Ann Galonska, Museum Director

**PLEASE CONTACT THE MUSEUM (429-6575)
if you would like to help. New volunteers
and fresh ideas are always welcome!**

MONC PROGRAM ON MARCH 27



Museums of Northeast Connecticut (MONC) is sponsoring a special program, "Exhibits on a Shoestring: Tricks of the Trade" on **March 27, 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.** at the Lebanon Historical Society Museum and Visitor Center. Joshua Lane, Assistant Curator of Furniture at Historic Deerfield will present a program on creating an exhibition with a limited budget. He will

address the essentials of exhibit planning, development and implementation. Mr. Lane will share some of the "tricks of the trade" touching on proper signs, effective displays and ways to create an exhibit that engages the audience, with limited funding. Representatives from MONC will also set up displays and share techniques they have developed.

Participants are invited to bring a bag lunch to enjoy during the questions and answer period or following the program.

Admission is \$7.00 per person or \$5.00 for two or more from the same organization. Seating is limited. The registration deadline is March 20. Please send your check (payable to MONC) to Roseland Cottage, P.O. Box 186, Woodstock, CT 06281. For further information, call Pam Russo at Roseland Cottage (860) 928-4074 or e-mail: prusso@spnea.org.

FROG ORNAMENT CONTEST

On a dark night in June, 1754, the residents of Windham Center were abruptly awakened by a loud and hideous noise. Fearing that they were under attack by a band of Indian warriors, the citizens armed themselves and fired volleys into the darkness. By morning light, the sounds had died away and it was soon clear that no Indians had been in the area the previous night.

Soon the awful truth was discovered. Around the shore of a small mill pond lay the bodies of hundreds of bullfrogs. After weeks of drought, the pond had been reduced to little more than a puddle. The frogs had apparently engaged in a desperate fight over the remaining water. It is not surprising that ever since that fateful night, the citizens of Windham have been subjected to all manner of jokes about frogs!

In conjunction with the 250th anniversary of that famous Windham frog event, the Windham Textile & History Museum is sponsoring a Frog Ornament Contest to generate local civic pride and commemorate that historic evening.

Artists, individuals, organizations, and students in 5th through 12th grade are encouraged to submit ornaments. The frog ornament entries will be displayed on trees in the Museum starting in the month of June and going into the month of November. All entries must be delivered or mailed to the museum and postmarked by **May 30, 2004**. Please call Bev York at the Windham Textile & History Museum (860-456-2178) for further information.

**We wish to recognize the following members who contributed to our track lighting fund.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

Isabelle Atwood
Frank and Ada Ruth Ballard
Mary Rogers Beckert
Ursula and Mike Beschler
Rufus and Jane Blanshard
Raymond and Jacqueline Bopp
David M. Bradley and Leslie E.
Rollins
Fred A. Cazel, Jr.
Bruce and Donna Clouette
Adelaide K. Corcoran
Ila Fae Cowan
W.A. and Bobbie Cowan
Lee and Donna Dunbar
Josephine B. Eaton
Marion R. Emmons
Kenneth and Camille Forman
Ann Galonska
William A. Hahn
Kay Holt
Holly V. Izard

Alice Jansen
Mary Lou Keables
Quentin and Margaret Kessel
Nancy Kline
Ann Kouatly
Dorothy and Thomas Lackman
Jerome and June Laszloffy
Becky and Scott Lehmann
William and Jean Longeran
Thomas E. Malloy
Stephen and Floy Marks-Hamilton
Herman and Jessie Marshall
Natalie M. Monty
Howard and Gertrude Ogushwitz
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Jay and Joyce Shivers
Roberta Smith
Charles and Lorraine Spofford
Althea Stadler
Virginia Stallman
Jack and Ginny Stephens
Storrs Drug, Inc.
George and Jennifer Thompson, III
Wilfred E. Thompson
Frank and Peg Trainor
Steve and Lee Watts
Frank H. Wemple, Jr.
Jim and Poppy Whitaker
Jean P. Williams
Marilyn C. Wilson
David and Marty Yutzey

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Tag Sale – April 3

Meetings – April 16, May 14

Museum Opening – June 6

Bus Trip – June 12