

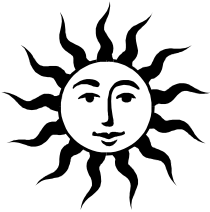


## MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 42, No. 4

August 2006

### PRESIDENT'S CORNER



As we are enjoying the summer, there have been interesting developments at our Historical Society. The Historical Society, in partnership with the Town of Mansfield, has received a grant from the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc. to replace the roof on the Old Town Hall and to repair and then repaint the water-damaged interior walls. The Town will supply most of the matching monies, and we have agreed to raise the \$700 match for interior painting. Please consider helping in reaching this goal by sending a check to the society; in advance, thank you.

One of our current exhibits documents the history of various east European peoples who populate Mansfield and adjoining towns. Please stop by to investigate this popular exhibit on a Thursday or Sunday afternoon, 1:30 to 4:30, and/or mention the exhibit, time and place to friends and acquaintances. A generation or two back many made significant sacrifices to establish their families here.

Soon it will be time for our annual meeting, to be held on September 8, when, after a 6pm dinner we will hear a presentation on UConn history by emeritus professor of history Bruce Stave. Our November meeting is scheduled for November 17 when our Program Chair, Norman Stevens is planning a special Thanksgiving program. The details are below. Please plan to attend these special events.

For additional information, you can always visit our web site – [www.mansfieldct-history.org](http://www.mansfieldct-history.org). Note that “ct” for Connecticut has been added to the address. This has cut down on traffic from those seeking information on other towns of Mansfield.

*Frank Trainor, President*

### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS! – ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER ON SEPTEMBER 8**

**DATE/TIME:** Friday, September 8 - Dinner at 6:00, followed by meeting and program  
**LOCATION:** First Church of Christ Congregational in Mansfield Center, Fellowship Hall  
**SPEAKER:** Bruce Stave, Distinguished Professor of History, Emeritus

Bruce Stave, Professor of History, Emeritus and Director of the Oral History Center at UConn, will be the after-dinner speaker at the annual meeting. He will talk about his new history of UConn, *Red Brick in the Land of Steady Habits: Creating the University of Connecticut, 1881-2006*, that was written as part of the celebration of the University's 125th anniversary. He will talk, in particular, about events and people with a relationship to Mansfield. His book will be available for sale (cost \$29.95) following the meeting and Dr. Stave will be happy to sign any purchases. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS MEETING.** Please send in the enclosed reservation form or call the museum (429-6575) by September 2 to reserve your spot.

## A VERY SUCCESSFUL MUSEUM OPENING!

The museum officially opened for the season on June 4. After torrential rain the night before, for the first time in several years we had good weather for the opening. And did the crowds come! It was the best-attended opening day in memory with over 200 visitors!

Marion Varga, choir director at St. Phillips Church, organized a wonderful musical program for our Opening. Members of the Czechoslovak American Club and CSA Fraternal Life entertained us with a selection of Czech, Slovak and Hungarian folk songs as well as a few dances. Zoltin Paloczi recited some Hungarian poems from memory and also played Hungarian dance tunes on his harmonica. Many of the performers were dressed in traditional ethnic costumes. All of the performances earned enthusiastic applause from the packed house. Afterwards we enjoyed delicious refreshments, including kolaches and other traditional pastries baked by members of the Czechoslovak American Club.



We extend a very hearty thank you to Marion Varga, the members of the Czechoslovak American Club and CSA Fraternal Life and Zoltin Paloczi for making this year's opening such a memorable occasion. All and all, it was a wonderful kick-off for our summer season!

I urge you to visit the museum before we close at the end of September. The exhibits this year are outstanding and the Museum

Committee is to be commended for all their hard work in preparing them.

We were thrilled to receive grant support from the Community Foundation for our exhibit on Czech, Slovak and Hungarian families who settled in this area in the early 1900s. The Willington Historical Society partnered with us on this exhibit. The grant enabled us to do the exhibit in the manner that it deserved and freed up funds for our other exhibits. How wonderful to have more than a shoestring budget for this year's exhibits!

The ethnic exhibit is based on oral history interviews with a number of local families who also loaned many artifacts and costumes representative of their culture. Andrea Ader recently loaned us a collection of Hungarian costumes and textiles, as well as a videotape of Hungarian folk dances, that have all been added to the display. It's well worth another visit to see these!

The Eastern European ethnic exhibit has been drawing a crowd over the summer. Many are visitors who have never been to our museum before and they are pleased to have discovered us! They are finding that there is much to learn about their local community and that we have much to offer.

In addition to the ethnic exhibit in the Old Town Hall, there are many new displays in our main building. The front room features an exhibit about Mansfield in the 1880's when UConn's predecessor, the Storrs Agricultural School, was established. The fascinating display of photographs and period newspaper articles provides some local historical context for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibits at the University. There is also an interesting exhibit of photographs loaned by Greg Cichowski showing the dismantling of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Ash house and its re-construction on his property. Some of the artifacts found during an archaeological dig on the site are on loan from the Connecticut Archaeology Center. Other exhibits include a collection of Victorian planters and jardinières, a display of china place settings and serving pieces from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, and an exhibit on housekeeping and laundry chores in our 1900

period kitchen. **Don't miss out – our last open day is September 28!**

During the fall, we will be completing the educational outreach component of our grant project. The information gathered in the oral history interviews with local Hungarian, Czech and Slovak families will be compiled in booklet form as an educational resource for the local schools and public libraries in Mansfield, Willington and Ashford. It should be a valuable resource for the study of the many diverse cultures that make up our nation.

*Ann Galonska, Museum Director*

### **THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELPED!**

*It takes many hands to prepare the exhibits and operate the museum each year. There were more than usual who helped this year and we are most appreciative! (Please forgive us if anyone is overlooked.)* **Many, many thanks to:**

- John Meyers, Isabel Weigold, Lisa Ferriere and Becky Wright, our student intern, who researched and wrote the text for the Hungarian, Czech and Slovak exhibit.
- Georgiana Booth, John Meyers, Lisa Ferriere, Catherine Page, Vicki Wetherell, Becky Wright and Ann Galonska who conducted oral history interviews with local Hungarian, Czech and Slovak families. Our thanks also to the following who were interviewed and loaned family photographs and memorabilia: Charles and Barbara Nagy, Charles Harakaly, Sr., Margaret Williams, Joe Toth, Catherine Postemski, Philomena Hunyadi, George Bazala, Jr., Paul and Dorothy Marek, Betty and Tom Borovicka, Theresa Navratil Rada, Elsie Vesley LaBonte, William and Sophie Parizek, Joanne and Alyce Douda, Margaret Pivonka, Amalia Zaicek, Marion Varga and Helen Jurkovics.
- The following who loaned artifacts and costumes for the ethnic exhibit: Andrea Ader, Betty and Tom Borovicka, Charles and Barbara Nagy, Margaret Pivonka, Marion Varga, Amalia Zaicek, Catherine Postemski, Betty Robertson and the Willington Historical Society.
- Joan Gerdson who organized the exhibit of china, Cathy Etner Wright who wrote the accompanying text, and the following people who loaned their family china, crystal and/or silver: Janet Atkins, Isabelle Atwood, Ina Ruth Beck, Fred A. Cazel, Jr., Helen T. Clark, Ann Galonska, Joan E. Gerdson, Kay Holt, Ruth Moynihan and Althea Stadler.
- Gregory Cichowski who loaned photographs and wrote the text for the exhibit on the Ash House. Also, the Museum of Natural History and Connecticut Archaeology Center for loaning artifacts found during the archaeological site study at the Ash House.
- Isabelle Atwood who loaned her collection of Victorian planters and jardinières.
- Lisa Ferriere, Cathy Etner Wright, Carol and Tim Stearns, Joanne Goodwin and John Meyers who helped with the kitchen display.
- The following who dismantled old exhibits and/or cleaned prior to the opening: Marty Yutzey, Janet Atkins, Joyce Passmore, Doreen Philpotts, Beverly Beckwith, Carol and Tim Stearns. Special thanks to Joan and Bill Gerdson, Isabelle Atwood and Steve Galonska who stayed to the wee hours to do the final clean-up before the opening.
- Alice Kolega who organized refreshments for the Museum Opening and our many members who baked the delicious “goodies”.
- Isabelle Atwood who has spent many hours recruiting our hosts and hostesses; also the many people who volunteered to host.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL ON A JOB  
WELL DONE!**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS! - NOVEMBER MEETING & THANKSGIVING POTPOURRI**

**DATE/TIME: Friday, November 17, 7:30 p.m.**

**LOCATION: First Church of Christ Congregational, Mansfield Center**



A **Thanksgiving Potpourri** will be a community celebration of this quintessential New England holiday. The program, which is being co-sponsored by the First Church of Christ Congregational, will consist of 12-15 mainly short segments including journal entries, poems, proclamations, sermons, songs, and stories that will give us the flavor of the meaning of Thanksgiving in New England, Connecticut, and Mansfield. A variety of performers will entertain members of the Mansfield Historical Society and the general public. In keeping with a key theme of Thanksgiving, the program will assist Mansfield's Department of Social Services in providing for its clientele at this holiday time. In conjunction with the program we are sponsoring a Pumpkin Pie Contest & Bake Sale in which prizes will be awarded and some pies – including the prizewinners – will be sold and others donated to the Department of Social Services. Further details about the program will be announced later. Comments, questions, and suggestions may be addressed to Norman D. Stevens, MHS Program Coordinator at 429-7051, [normanstevens@mac.com](mailto:normanstevens@mac.com), or 143 Hanks Hill Road, Storrs, CT 06268.

**Mansfield Historical Society**  
**P. O. Box 145**  
**Storrs, CT 06268-0145**

**Web site: [www.mansfieldct-history.org](http://www.mansfieldct-history.org)**  
**E-mail: [mansfield.historical@snet.net](mailto:mansfield.historical@snet.net)**

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**DATES TO REMEMBER: September 8 – Annual Meeting; November 17 – A Thanksgiving Potpourri**

*The Museum is open Thursday & Sunday, 1:30 - 4:30, through the end of September*

## OLD TOWN HALL MATCHING GRANT APPEAL

The Mansfield Historical Society, in partnership with the Town of Mansfield, has received a \$8,200 matching grant from the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor for repairs to the Old Town Hall. The funds will be used to re-shingle the roof and to repair and repaint the water-damaged interior walls and ceiling. The Old Town Hall, now part of our museum complex, was constructed in 1843 and is Mansfield's oldest extant public building. Roberta Smith's book, *Listen to the Echoes: The Early History of Spring Hill*, details its early history.

Both the Town and the Historical Society are committed to preserving this building that has played such an important role in the Town's political history. Following the failure of a support column in the basement two years ago, the building inspector condemned the building. The Town made a significant investment to save the building. New support columns were added throughout the basement and the floor joists were reinforced with additional beams. Replacing the roof will further stabilize this historic structure that served as the center of Mansfield's political life for 128 years. The interior repairs and re-painting will also improve the appearance of the building. Successful completion of the project will enable the Historical Society to continue to use the Old Town Hall for its exhibits and educational programs and will ensure that the historic building remains an important part of the community's life.

The Town is providing the matching funds for the roof replacement and wall repairs. The Historical Society needs to raise \$700 in matching funds for the interior painting. Please help us reach this important goal. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!**

**YES, I WISH TO MAKE A TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIFT OF \_\_\_\_\_ FOR PRESERVATION OF THE OLD TOWN HALL.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to  
The Mansfield Historical Society.

Mail check and this form to:

Mansfield Historical Society  
P.O. Box 145  
Storrs, CT 06268

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### RESERVATION FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER Friday, September 8, 2006

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places for dinner. Enclosed is a check made out to the Mansfield Historical Society in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ at \$12.00 per person.

\_\_\_\_\_ Roast Loin of Pork meal

\_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian meal

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send to:**  
Mansfield Historical Society  
P. O. Box 145  
Storrs, CT 06268

**RESERVATION DEADLINE is September 2, 2005**