



Mansfield Town Hall, Built in 1843

Presently the Mansfield Historical Society Museum

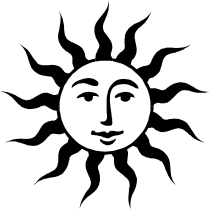
Mansfield Town Offices, Built in 1935

MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 40, No.4

July 2004

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Two very successful events were held this summer by the Society – the Museum Opening/Concert on June 6 and the bus trip to Boscobel and Washington's Headquarters on June 12.

The Museum Opening had an enormous attendance to view the new exhibits. This year's exhibits include a fascinating overview of the history of the Mansfield Training School, a beautiful display of samplers and embroidery, as well as a multimedia exhibit about Claude McDaniels that incorporates art, photography, poetry, video and music. I want to acknowledge and thank museum committee members Althea Stadler, Poppy Whitaker and Joan Gerdsen, guest curators Donna Dufresne and Cecelia Chau, and our student intern Rachel Neumann for their work in mounting these displays. As usual, our director Ann Galonska, put in many overtime hours to pull it all together. If you were unable to attend the Opening, these exhibits will be on view through the end of September; you can see them on Thursday or Sunday afternoons from 1:30-4:30 p.m. Plan to visit!

The highlight of the opening was a wonderful concert by Donna Dufresne of songs she composed for the Claude McDaniels exhibit. Donna performed to a packed house, accompanied by Louise Mueller on the fiddle and Robert Stanley playing bass guitar. The concert was a delight and we thank them for sharing their talents with us. We are also very grateful to the First Baptist Church for hosting the concert.

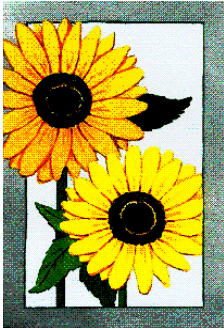
Our well-attended bus trip to Boscobel and Washington's Headquarters took place on a sparkling summer day. Both sites abut the Hudson River – one across the river from West Point, the other near Newburgh, NY – providing outstanding scenic views. Docents at both sites provided informed commentary. We were able to view fragrant rose and herb gardens as well as the interior of the early 19th century house at Boscobel, filled with an outstanding collection of Federal furniture. We also toured the stone farmhouse where George and Martha Washington lived next to barracks housing American troops in 1783. Before we headed home we enjoyed a repast of wine, cheese and other refreshments, courtesy of Len and Jane Seeber and Isabelle Atwood – a pleasant cap to most enjoyable day. We again thank Len for all his work in organizing this trip!

Our next major event will be the Annual Dinner on September 10 at the First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center. Our state historian, Nick Bellatone, will be our speaker. Save the date! Reservation forms will appear in our next Newsletter.

Jody Newmyer, President

Isabelle Atwood will be calling members to recruit hosts/hostesses to man the museum on our open days. Please say YES! We can't have the museum open without your help.

A VERY SUCCESSFUL MUSEUM OPENING!



The museum officially opened for the season on June 6 – a damp and dreary day – but that didn't deter our visitors. The museum was packed with an enthusiastic crowd of over 100 people who came to view the new exhibits.

At 3:00 p.m., we adjourned across the street to the First Baptist Church for a fabulous concert by Donna Dufresne, accompanied by Louise Mueller (fiddle) and Robert Stanley (bass guitar). There was not an empty seat in the church and there were even people were standing in the doorways.

Donna's unique songs were based on an oral history project with the late Claude McDaniels, a farmer who lived on Wormwood Hill for most of his 93 years. "More than anything, I wanted to evoke a sense of place and the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of New England farmers through these lyrical snapshots of the land and the long memory attached to it." – Donna Dufresne. The songs ranged from rollicking dance tunes to sentimental ballads, providing a poetic interpretation of Claude's life and his stories and memories. The performance was most enthusiastically received!

The concert was live-recorded and a CD is being produced. The recording will become part of the Claude McDaniels exhibit and CD's will be available for sale sometime in August.

Rain and all, it was a wonderful kick-off for our summer season! Many thanks to everyone who helped at the event and to the many people who provided refreshments.

We hope you will all visit the museum this summer and please bring your families and friends!

Ann Galonska, Museum Director

IT TAKES MANY HANDS TO PREPARE THE EXHIBITS AND OPERATE THE MUSEUM EACH YEAR. WE WISH TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:

- Our student intern, Rachel Neumann, who prepared the Mansfield Training School exhibit with the assistance of Ann Galonska. Also, the following people who provided valuable information and materials for the exhibit: Gerry Croog, Peg Dignoti (Director of ARC of CT), Mary Donohue (Connecticut Historical Commission), Norman Hanenbaum, Mark Jones

(State Archivist, Connecticut State Library), Steve Ledger, Arlene Mirsky MacNamara, Mike Palmer, David Shaw, Esq., Norman Sills (The Salisbury Association, Inc.) and Sam Witryol.

- Althea Stadler and Poppy Whitaker who mounted the beautiful exhibit of women's handiwork. Also Lorraine M. Marcure and Joyce Passmore who loaned embroidered pictures for the display.
- Joan Gerdson and Joyce Passmore who assembled the interesting collection of samplers. Also the following people who loaned their family treasures: Isabelle Atwood, David Hall, Kay Holt, Nancy Kline, Ethel Larkin, Ed and Joyce Passmore, Dick and Carol Pellegrine, Virginia Valentine and Frank Wemple.
- Guest curators, Donna Dufresne and Cecelia Chau who mounted the multimedia exhibit about Claude McDaniels. Also the following artists and photographers who loaned works for the exhibit: Cecelia Chau, Debra Gag, Michael Geigert, Kitty LeShea, Bill Stallman, Chris Thorkelson, Larry Wasilele and David Wexler. There is also a fascinating videotaped interview with Claude produced by Cait Thorkelson as her senior project at E. O. Smith High School.
- Marty Yutzey, Clarissa Fox and Steven Galonska who assisted with exhibit preparation.
- 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.
- Catherine Roby and other members of the Garden Gate Club who maintain our perennial garden. Be sure to stop by and admire it when you visit the museum.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL ON A JOB WELL DONE!

MORE NEWS!

The Old Town Hall building has been closed for the season due to structural problems with the floor supports. This was a serious loss of space for us but the First Baptist Church and the Town Library

have generously hosted our programs over the past few months. We are very grateful to them! The Town has now agreed to repair the building and the job has been sent out to bid. Hopefully the work will be done this fall. Many thanks to Jim Whitaker who has been busy cleaning out the basement in preparation!



Frank Trainor has also been busy revamping and updating our website. Be sure to check it out at www.mansfield-history.org.

Beginning with 2004, all society newsletters will be archived on the site in .pdf format and can be read using Acrobat Reader (a free downloadable program). Frank is seeking digital photographs of the museum opening and exhibits to add to the website. If any of you are willing to share your digital photos or can photograph the exhibits with your digital camera, please contact Frank at 429-4522 or f.r.trainor@uconn.edu. Thank you, Frank, for all your hard work on this project!

THE HISTORY OF SPRING MANOR FARM

Spring Manor Farm was a major component of the Mansfield Training School, providing food for its tables and occupational training for its clients. However the farm has an interesting history that predates the founding of the institution. It was originally the country home of George H. Reynolds, a local farm boy who became a prominent mechanical engineer. His life story is recounted in *The Commemorative Biographical Record of Tolland and Windham Counties Connecticut*. (Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1903). An excerpt is below:

“George Huntington Reynolds was born Feb. 8, 1829, in Mansfield, and like his brothers, early became responsible for his own support. When quite young he showed signs of that genius that has placed him in the front rank of the calling he is pursuing at the present time. As a mere boy he and his brothers would erect bridges, make wagons, sleds, and other play things with a touch of genuine skill. The bridges which they erected across the small streams on the family homestead, they used in hauling stone and wood, often overloading their wagons so as to break down the bridges, that they might build them up in better form.

At the age of eleven years George H. was employed on the farm of Mr. Tillinghast, who had given his father employment thirty years before. Three months' schooling was allowed him each year; the first year he had \$9, out of which he bought his clothing for the year; the second year, \$11; the

third, \$13; and the fourth, \$16. Work began at daylight and lasted until long after dark. By trapping game, picking nuts, and other side labors, the boy managed to earn enough extra money with which to buy paper, pencils and ink, for use in drawing bridges, vessels, houses and other things in spare moments. The children of today can hardly comprehend the amount of work a farm boy at that time was expected to accomplish. During his third year with Mr. Tillinghast, Mr. Reynolds picked sixteen bushels of hazel nuts, which sold for a dollar a bushel, thus netting his employer three dollars more than his year's wages. As it is said to take sixteen bushels of nuts in the bur to make one bushel of nuts, the lad must have picked 256 bushels of burs. These nuts were picked on land now owned by Mr. Reynolds, and also on land then and now owned by the Merrows...

When he was fifteen he engaged with Chauncey Dunham, of Mansfield, for \$6 a month. Mr. Dunham lived in the house now owned by Mr. Edwin Reynolds [brother of George] as a summer home, and the brick house still standing was made from clay hauled by our subject's father [Christopher Reynolds] when he was eighteen years old. [This house later served as the superintendent's home for the Connecticut Colony of Epileptics, then as the Administrative Building and later, the Physical Plant Building for the Mansfield Training School.]

Soon after this George H. Reynolds attended a select school in August, September and October, taught by a Mr. Dimock, a student from Yale, who was a thorough instructor, and gave Mr. Reynolds more insight into his studies than he had secured from all his previous schooling, particularly in mathematics, in which he was quite bright.

After leaving Mr. Dimock's school Mr. Reynolds was employed as a spinner in woolen mills in Ludlow, Mass. and at Broad Brook, Wilsonville and Merrow, Conn. He was a master of the trade, and at Merrow he could do his work in half the time his predecessor had needed. It was at Merrow that his first mechanical construction work was done. The mill owners were putting in new machinery, and the boss machinist... selected as his assistant Mr. Reynolds, who showed such an aptitude for the work that the "jealousy of the "boss" was aroused, lest his place might be lost. As a result Mr. Reynolds left the spinning trade and devoted himself to mechanical work. Going to Leominster, Mass., he began work on steam machinery, which has been his work to the present day. In 1856 he exhibited a steam engine of his own designing, and a decided improvement on what had gone before to the American Institute Fair, held at the Crystal Palace, New York, for which he

was awarded the golden medal of the Institute, and was made superintendent of the Fair the following year.

In 1859, Mr. Reynolds became chief draughtsman of the Delamater Iron Works, and in 1862 he was made superintendent and general manager of Mystic Iron Works, of Mystic Bridge, Conn. These works were established for the purpose of building ships and engines for the Government during the Civil war, and when the war was over Mr. Reynolds returned to the Delamater works to assume the position of superintendent, which he held until 1884, when he resigned to take a similar position with the Crane Elevator Company of Chicago. He has done more to improve and perfect the passenger elevator, perhaps, than any other one man living, and is still engaged in the study of its problems. His services in this connection are much sought after by builders of elevators, not only in this country but in Europe as well. The dynamite gun greatly interests him, and all the guns so far constructed have been made under his patents. He is consulting engineer of the Pneumatic Dynamite Gun Company of New York, and superintended the gun construction of the dynamite cruiser "Vesuvius." He has also built guns for Italy and England. When the Crane Elevator Company was absorbed by the Otis Elevator Company, Mr. Reynolds was still continued as engineer for the combination. The Locomobile Company of America has engaged him as its engineer. He is one of the foremost engineers of this generation, and has taken out more than a hundred patents in his line of work.

For many years Mr. Reynolds had his home in Pelham Manor, N. Y. In 1885 he built a handsome and attractive home on land in Mansfield, which he has reclaimed from it's primitive condition of forest and boulder, and with the aid of the landscape gardener, has made it one of the most picturesque and charming places in the town. This romantic spot has received the name of Spring Manor, from the many springs of clear cold water that well up on the grounds. The entire estate consists of about a thousand acres of land, on which, as a boy, he spent years of hard work for Mr. Tillinghast, as noted above."

The story of Spring Manor Farm will be continued in the next newsletter. Stay tuned!

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