

## MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 40, No. 3

May 2004

### President's Corner



First, we want to thank all of you who helped make our tag sale a success; we earned \$1,526 at the sale and had many pleased customers, who wondered why they had never come to one before. We explained, over and over, that there had never BEEN one before—but we expect, if we have another, that we will have many repeat attendees.

Another piece of good news – we have received word that Chronology of Mansfield, 1703 – 2002 will receive an Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations at their annual meeting on June 7. I encourage you to purchase a copy of our award-winning book, if you have not already done so!

Unfortunately we also have some bad news to report. The Town building inspector and a structural engineer examined the Old Town Hall building and found that the lolly columns supporting the floor have been weakened by rust and no longer provide adequate support. Fortunately this was discovered before there was a major failure. New footings will have to be poured and new supports installed. In order for this to proceed, we need remove everything that is stored in the basement and place it in temporary storage. With assistance from the Town and University, we have found housing for the displaced items. We will not be able to use the Old Town Hall until all the repair work is done, probably not until after the summer is over.

Our museum committee and guest curators are hard at work completing the exhibits that will open on June 3. The First Baptist Church, across the street from the museum, has generously offered the use of their facility for the concert which is to accompany our museum opening. Plan on attending this exciting event!

You will have received a notice about our projected bus trip to Boscobel and Washington's Headquarters on Saturday, June 12. This promises to be a most interesting excursion and we thank Len Seeber for planning it. Reservations are due by Friday, May 28. Hope to see you there!

*Jody Newmyer, President*

### **MUSEUM OPENING AND CONCERT ON JUNE 6**

The museum will open for the season on Sunday, **June 6 from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.** One of the new exhibits, "An Extra-Ordinary Life – The Photographic Memory of Claude McDaniels" was conceived by Cecelia Chau and Donna Dufresne, fifth-grade teachers and graduate students at UConn in the *Three Summers Gifted and Talented Program*. The exhibit resulted from an oral history project they conducted with the late Claude McDaniels, a farmer who lived on Wormwood Hill for most of his 93 years. It consists of photographs taken by Cecelia Chau of Claude McDaniels near the end of his life as well as earlier photographs and paintings of him and his farm, done by local artists. Also included in the display are Claude's original poems and interpretive songs and essays written by Donna Dufresne.

In conjunction with the opening, at **3:00 p.m.**, there will be a concert at the First Baptist Church across the street from the museum. Donna Dufresne will perform the songs she composed for this exhibit, accompanied by Louise Mueller (fiddle) and Robert Stanley (bass, guitar).



"The songs you will hear in this performance were inspired by local history and the memory of a rural life that was kept alive by the late Mr. Claude McDaniels of Wormwood Hill. Some were taken directly from an oral

history, and others are sentimental or poetic interpretations of Claude's stories. 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. I hope that the music takes you on a journey that will make you laugh and perhaps make you cry for the empty farms and fallow fields. This concert is dedicated to the local farmers who work so hard to preserve an old way of life." – Donna Dufresne.

Please join us on June 6 to view all our new exhibits and to experience this unique performance!

### **MORE MUSEUM NEWS**

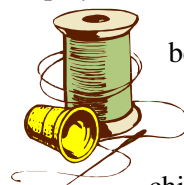
The Museum Committee is scrambling to complete four new exhibits in time for the June 6 opening. This is, as always, a major undertaking that requires the efforts of many people. This year, thanks to the generosity of the Town and our members, our exhibits are being showcased in a much-improved building with new track lighting and freshly painted ceilings.

With the temporary loss of exhibit space in the Old Town Hall building, we have had to make some adjustments. The silk exhibit in the main building has been taken down and the "Claude McDaniels" exhibit, already described, has been installed in its place. (Note: With the silk exhibit gone, there will not be any live silkworms at the museum this summer.)

This year, the front room is dedicated to an overview of the history of the Mansfield Training School. Our student intern, Rachel Neumann, adopted this exhibit as her special project. She has done a tremendous job of compiling information from numerous sources and conducting a series of oral history interviews. The 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. It's a long story to tell in a limited amount of space but we have attempted to hit the highlights. The exhibit includes a fascinating collection of historic photographs and other memorabilia.

In our lighted glass display cases, Joan Gerdson has assembled an interesting collection of samplers dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Working a sampler was once an important part of a young girl's education. As she stitched her letters and numbers, she also learned important

needlework skills that would make her a desirable homemaker in later life. Several of the samplers on display have a local connection.



A related exhibit in the Storrs bedroom showcases other examples of women's handiwork from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Progressing from the simple samplers of their childhood, women embellished all manner of objects with embroidery. Althea Stadler and Poppy Whitaker have mounted a beautiful display of embroidered work including clothing, household linens, crazy quilts and many decorative items. A collection of sewing baskets, pincushions and other needlework paraphernalia are also on display.

In addition to these new exhibits, last year's kitchen display, "Preserving the Harvest" will remain for this season. It is a "compare and contrast" exhibit that illustrates food preservation techniques used in the 1820s and 1920's.

Please come and enjoy the museum this summer. There is much to see and much to learn about our town's unique history!

**THE MUSEUM WILL BE OPEN THURSDAYS  
AND SUNDAYS, 1:30 TO 4:30 P.M.,  
THROUGH THE END OF SEPTEMBER**

**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 FOND FAREWELL TO OUR STUDENT HELPERS**

Sadly, it's time to bid adieu to our student helpers, Rachel Neumann and Carissa Fox. Rachel just graduated from the University of Connecticut with her degree in history. She interned at the museum for the entire academic year and received credit for her work. Rachel tackled a large backlog of cataloging work and was instrumental in researching and mounting the Mansfield Training School exhibit. Now that she's received her degree and completed her very successful internship, she's considering graduate school and perhaps a career in the museum field.

Carissa will be graduating from E. O. Smith High School in June and will attend the University of Connecticut next year. She volunteered one

afternoon a week throughout the year as the community service component of her senior project. Carissa helped in many ways around the museum and spent a lot of time sorting and tagging items for the tag sale.

I so appreciated Rachel's and Carissa's help this year and I wish them both the best in their future endeavors!

*Ann Galonska, Museum Director*

## TWO SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISERS

We've had two very successful fundraisers this year. Our most recent was the Tag Sale on April 3rd which raised over \$1,500. Many of our members generously donated items for the sale and we thank them for their generosity. We also want to recognize and thank the following people who devoted many hours to sorting and pricing sale items and working at the event: Isabelle Atwood, Jean and Mike Hayden, Joan DeBella, Marty Yutzey, Mary Turcotte, Jane Seeber, Alice Kolega, Peg Trainor, David and Carolanne Markowitz, Jody Newmyer, Jane Blanshard, Al Ching, Carissa Fox and Ann Galonska. We are also grateful for the assistance of Ed Passmore, George Savoie and Louis Comeau, the volunteer firemen who provided traffic control for the event - a very necessary service.

Our members also responded generously to our appeal for donations towards our lighting project. We raised almost \$3,000 - more than enough to cover our share of the costs for the track lighting system. With the additional funds received, we had the ceilings repainted and will also be able to purchase replacement light bulbs and additional fixtures as needed. The Town provided half of the funding for both the lighting project and the painting and we greatly appreciate their continuing support.

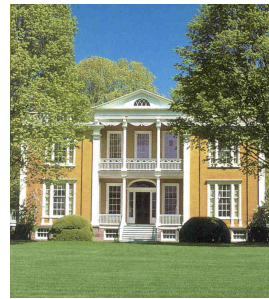
Since the last newsletter was published, we received donations towards the lighting project from the following people: Harry and Honey Birkenruth, John and Peg Christie, Kenneth and Mary Feathers, Harry Frank, Walter and Mary Harper, Vic and Jan Scottron, Richard Schimmelpfeng, Peter and Anne Strutt, John and Patty Tanaka, Keith Wilson and Marjorie Hayes, and Catherine B. Willett. Rudy Favretti has also directed the royalties from his new book on Mansfield Four Corners to this project.

**THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT! When we work together, we make great things happen!**

## BUS TRIP TO BOSCOBEL AND WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 2004

There's still time to sign up for our bus trip on June 12 to two historic sites in the Palisades Region of New York. We will depart from the Mansfield Historical Society at 8:00 a.m. and return about 6:00 p.m.

Our first destination will be Boscobel in Garrison, New York. This neoclassical mansion dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and contains one of the nation's leading collections of furniture and decorative arts from the Federal period. Much of its furnishings were made by premier New York cabinetmakers such as



Duncan Phyfe and Michael Allison.

Originally located in Montrose, NY, Boscobel was saved from demolition in the 1950's and was reconstructed at its present site on the east bank of the Hudson River across from West Point. The 29-acre grounds offer panoramic views of the Hudson River and include a magnificent rose garden, an orangery, an herb garden and a Woodland Trail with rustic cedar structures. The gardens are sure to be lovely in June!

Following our tour, we will enjoy a catered box lunch served in one of the mansion rooms. Those who wish to bring their own lunch can picnic on the grounds (a limited number of picnic tables are available). Luncheon choices are as follows:

- **Roast Turkey Sandwich:** Roast Turkey Breast on Challah Twist Roll with Lettuce & Tomatoes; Yukon Gold Potato Chips; Old-fashioned Cookie
- **Ham and Cheese Sandwich:** Honey Baked Ham & Jarlsberg Cheese on Panini Roll; Country Cole Slaw; Chocolate Fudge Brownie
- **Tuscan Vegetarian Sandwich:** Roasted Eggplant, Red Pepper & Fresh Mozzarella Cheese on Multigrain Baguette; Terra Original Chips; Old-fashioned Cookie
- **Chicken/Pear Salad:** Mixed greens with Chicken, Pear, Walnut & Blue Cheese; Terra Chips; Old-fashioned Cookie

Following lunch, we will travel to nearby Newburgh, NY to visit the Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site. 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.

The cost for the trip is \$50 per person and will cover the bus, museum admissions and lunch. (Without lunch, the cost is \$40/person). A mid-afternoon snack and beverage will also be provided. **Seating is limited, so you must reserve a spot by FRIDAY, MAY 28. Call the museum, (860) 429-6575, to secure your seat and then return the reservation form below with your check.**

**RESERVATION FOR BUS TRIP TO BOSCOBEL AND WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS  
SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 2004**

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places on the bus. Enclosed is a check made out to the Mansfield Historical Society in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ at \$50.00 per person. (\$40.00/person without lunch)

**Lunch Choices:**

\_\_\_Turkey Sandwich \_\_\_Ham & Cheese Sandwich \_\_\_Vegetarian Sandwich \_\_\_Chicken/Pear  
Salad

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**RESERVATION DEADLINE - FRIDAY, MAY 28**

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

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**JUNE 6 – MUSEUM OPENING, 1:30 – 4:30; CONCERT, 3:00 at the First Baptist Church  
JUNE 12 – BUS TRIP to Boscobel and George Washington's Headquarters**

