



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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May 2005

President's Corner



CAN YOU HELP? One of our members, who wishes to remain anonymous, has offered the Mansfield Historical Society a gift of \$5,000 provided we can obtain a further \$5,000 in donations from others. The Society is in need of these funds in order to cover publication costs for our silk book, our revised edition of *Listen to the Echoes* (the history of the Spring Hill area), and a forthcoming book on Shubael Conant being written by Roberta Smith. We still have not recouped the expenses from our recent publication of the revised *Chronology of Mansfield* and *Historic Mansfield Center*. Our investment in these publications is tied up in unsold books. An insert with a donation form on colored paper is included in this *Newsletter*. The \$10,000 we hope to raise will close our budget shortfall and obviate the need to sell stocks from our endowment to meet our current needs. Please be as generous as you can! We are very grateful for this offer and hope to match the donation quickly.

A very successful Antiques Appraisal Day was held at the Old Town Hall on April 23. Isabelle Atwood organized the event and found many volunteers to staff it. Many other members prepared delicious baked goods that were sold during the event. We are especially grateful to auctioneer E. S. Eldredge, Jr. and to antiques dealers Mary Thompson, Brian Bartizek, and Andrew Oliver-Rudis, all of whom donated their time and expertise to assess the value of the antiques brought in to be appraised. The event raised nearly \$1,400 for the Society. Thank you to all who helped make this event a success.

Two forthcoming events are described in this *Newsletter*: the Museum Opening on May 22, which Ann Galonska and the Museum Committee have organized, and the bus trip to Old Deerfield, planned by Len Seeber. Again, we thank our director and these hard-working volunteers. We hope to see you at both.

Jody Newmyer, President

MUSEUM OPENING ON SUNDAY, MAY 22 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.

The museum will open for the season on Sunday, May 22. We are opening two weeks earlier than usual in order to participate in the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor's Museum Weekend. There will be a **special program at 2:00 p.m.** relating to one of the new exhibits, "Ancient People of the Mansfield Area." Brian Jones and Erik Smith of the Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc. (PAST, Inc.) will present two demonstrations of traditional Native technologies. The first will be a flint knapping demonstration during which they will explain the process of making a variety of stone tools, discuss the importance of artifact reproduction to the interpretation of archaeological finds and answer questions from the audience. The second presentation will be a demonstration of the pump drill, the bow drill and fire-making. Visitors will have the opportunity to try these effective traditional tools themselves.

Please join us on May 22 to view our new exhibits and to participate in this interesting program!

NEW EXHIBITS UNVEILED ON MAY 22

The Museum Committee is scrambling to complete four new exhibits in time for the May 22 opening. This is, as always, a major undertaking that requires the efforts of many. Several new people joined the Museum Committee this year, bringing a multitude of new ideas and talents. This year's exhibits are the collaborative effort of the following people: Lisa Ferriere, Joann Goodwin, Susan Spack, Joyce Passmore, Meghan Connelly, Doreen Philpotts, Marty Yutzey, Isabelle Atwood and Ann Galonska.

An exhibit of photographs and rubbings of Mansfield's outstanding 18th century gravestones is presented in the museum's two front rooms. The Old Mansfield Center Cemetery is most noted for its 18th century stones, but there are many other fine examples in the Old Storrs Cemetery, the Gurley Cemetery, the Ridges Cemetery and at Wormwood Hill. The exhibit describes the Eastern Connecticut Ornamental Style and the gravestone carvers whose work is represented in Mansfield. It also highlights some of the important early residents who were the subject of the carver's art.

In the adjacent room, we travel further back in time with an exhibit entitled "Ancient People of the Mansfield Area." State Archaeologist, Nicholas Bellantoni and Cheri Collins of the Connecticut Archaeology Center have collaborated with us in preparing this exhibit. The Archaeology Center and several members have loaned an array of Native American artifacts found in Mansfield and the surrounding area. These stone tools and implements have survived from the pre-contact era, long before the white man settled in Mansfield. They provide clues to the technologies and culture of Mansfield's ancient people.

The room that houses the Storrs bedroom set has now been transformed into a furniture gallery. It features some of our finest furniture pieces along with information about their history and furniture style. Period decorative artifacts and costumes compliment this display.

This year, in our two period kitchens, we are representing two different seasonal celebrations. The 1800 kitchen features a vignette showing preparations for a Thanksgiving dinner, while in the 1900 kitchen, the dressed mannequins are preparing food for a Fourth of July picnic. The accompanying signage describes the history and celebration of these two national holidays.

And finally, last year's exhibits on the Mansfield Training School and the late Claude

McDaniels have been re-installed in the Old Town Hall building. The Mansfield Training School exhibit traces the school's history 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. The exhibit includes a fascinating collection of historic photographs and other memorabilia.

The multimedia display on 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, artwork and a video showing Claude McDaniels and his farm and is accompanied by songs written by Donna Dufresne.

The museum will now be open on Thursdays and Sundays, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m. through the end of September. Isabelle Atwood will be calling members to recruit hosts and hostesses to staff the museum on our open days. Please say YES! We can't have the museum open without your help.

Ann Galonska, Museum Director

As we prepare to open the museum this year, I am reminded of Ruth Jenkins, a long-time member of the Society who passed away this past winter. Ruth was the coordinator of our summer hosts and hostesses, well into her 90s. Each year she coaxed members to volunteer for this essential duty and delighted in the task. We certainly miss her dedicated service and send our condolences to her family and friends.

A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

The Antiques Appraisal Day on April 23 was a great success, despite the torrential downpours. People brought in a wide variety of antiques and collectibles to be appraised. As on the PBS *Antiques Road Show*, some people were pleasantly surprised while others were disappointed when they learned their antique's value. All in all, it was a fun and educational day. From appraisal fees and the sale of baked goods and books, we raised nearly \$1,400!

Many people contributed to the success of this event. First of all, we want to thank our appraisers, Ernie Eldredge, Mary Thompson, Brian Bartizek, and Andrew Oliver-Rudis, who generously donated their time and expertise. We also want to thank Isabelle Atwood who organized the event and Alice Kolega who coordinated the bake sale. Many of our members generously donated items for the bake sale and we thank them for their generosity. We also want to recognize and thank the following people who worked at the event: Roberta Smith, Joan DeBella, Marty Yutzey, Mary Turcotte, Jane Seeber, Jody Newmyer, Jane Reinhart, Carol Pellegrine, Ann Galonska and Marietta and Keith Johnson.

This was the inaugural event for the newly repaired Old Town Hall. We were pleased and relieved to find that the reinforced floor safely withstood all the traffic. We look forward to many more events and programs in the building!

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

**DAY TRIP TO HISTORIC DEERFIELD, MA
Tuesday, June 7, 2005**

The trees and gardens have all awakened from their winter slumber. What a beautiful time of year for a day trip! Come join us on **Tuesday, June 7** for an excursion to Historic Deerfield in northwestern Massachusetts. This outstanding museum village includes 14 restored homes and the

new Flynt Center of Early New England Life, which opened in 1998.

We will depart from the Mansfield Historical Society Museum promptly at 8:15 a.m. and arrive in Deerfield about 10:00. During the morning we will attend an orientation session at the Flynt Center and then tour the Sheldon House (mid-1700s) and the E. A. Williams house (late 1700s), two of the finest homes in the village.

We will then enjoy a hot buffet luncheon at the award-winning Deerfield Inn. The entrée choices are traditional Yankee pot roast, Boston baked scrod with lobster sauce, or pasta with fresh vegetables and white wine garlic sauce. Also included are the soup of the day, fresh baked rolls, rice or potato and garden vegetables. For dessert, we will have the Inn's famous Indian pudding.

Following our sumptuous repast, we will have a guided bus tour of the entire museum village and then visit the Flynt Center to view their new exhibit, *The Canton Connection: Art and Commerce of the China Trade, 1784-1860*. This exhibition focuses on trade activity and relationships between American and Chinese merchants in the 18th and 19th centuries. It includes more than 120 objects from the museum's outstanding Asian art collection. There will also be ample time to tour the other displays and visit the museum gift shop. We will depart from Deerfield at 3:30 p.m. and return to Mansfield by 5:00.

The cost of the excursion is \$60 and includes transportation, admissions, meal and all taxes and gratuities. Seating is limited so you must reserve your spot by **TUESDAY, MAY 24**. Please fill out the form below and return it with your check, made out to "Mansfield Historical Society".

**RESERVATION FOR DAY TRIP TO HISTORIC DEERFIELD, MA
TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 2005**

Please reserve _____ places on the bus. Enclosed is a check made out to the Mansfield Historical Society in the amount of \$_____ at \$60.00 per person.)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

Please send to:

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

RESERVATION DEADLINE - TUESDAY, MAY 24

THE “UNREDEEMED CAPTIVE” COMES TO MANSFIELD

Deerfield, Massachusetts has an interesting historical connection to Mansfield. On February 29, 1704, the frontier outpost was attacked by a large group of French soldiers and their Native American allies. Fifty-six of Deerfield’s settlers were killed and more than 100 were taken captive and force-marched to Canada. Among the captives were the Reverend John Williams, his wife and five of their children. Over the next seven weeks, 21 prisoners died or were killed on the trail, including Mrs. Williams. The others were held as hostages at various locations throughout New France [Quebec] and were the subject of intense bargaining between the French and the British. After more than two and a half years in captivity, a deal was struck and the prisoners were released. However a few of the captives chose to remain in Canada with French or Native families. Among them was the William’s youngest daughter, Eunice, who was seven years old at the time of her capture. For years the Williams family sought her return, but Eunice remained with her adoptive Native family and assimilated their lifestyle. She converted to Catholicism and later married a Mohawk Indian. She is the subject of John Demos’ book, *The Unredeemed Captive*, published in 1994.

Eleazer, the eldest son of Rev. John Williams, was attending Harvard at the time of the Deerfield attack and thus escaped capture. He became Mansfield’s first minister in 1710 and served until his death in 1742.

In 1741 Eunice, along with her Indian husband and children, came to Mansfield to visit her brother Eleazer and her sister Esther. Esther had married the Reverend Joseph Meacham of Coventry. The arrival of Eunice and her Indian family created a sensation in the area. Reverend Solomon Williams, a cousin and pastor at Lebanon, preached a sermon at the Mansfield meetinghouse (now First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center) that attracted a crowd from as far as twenty miles away. When the church overflowed, the windows were opened so that the people outside could hear. In his famous sermon, later published in Boston, Rev. Solomon Williams called for a “revival of Religion” and cited the return of the “unredeemed captive” as a sign of Divine providence.

Eunice’s return, however, was brief. After her long absence and immersion in Native culture, she must have had little left in common with her siblings. She and her Indian family soon departed for Canada and never again came to Connecticut. Her visits with family members in Massachusetts were likewise brief. Eunice continued to live with her adoptive tribe in Canada until her death at the age of 90.

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

Web site: www.mansfield-history.org
E-mail: mansfield.historical@snet.net
Phone: (860) 429-6575

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

MAY 22 – MUSEUM OPENING, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.; Native American Program at 2:00 p.m.
JUNE 7 – BUS TRIP to Historic Deerfield, Massachusetts (Deadline to sign up – May 24)