



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 40, No. 4

November 2004

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Our Annual Dinner/Meeting was held on September 10 at the First Church of Christ (Congregational) in Mansfield Center. The meal was delicious and our speaker, Nick Bellantoni, State Archaeologist and head of the new Connecticut Archaeology Center, was, as usual, informative, entertaining and much appreciated by his audience. New board members were elected: Joan Quarto, Secretary; Keith Johnson, Treasurer, and Joan DeBella, member-at-large. We welcome them to the board and also bid thanks and farewell to our outgoing board members: Kevin Maines, Secretary; Howard Raphaelson, Treasurer; and Ursula Beschler, member-at-large. We also want to thank our nominating committee: Anne Smith, Chair;

Howard Raphaelson, Dolly Whitham, and Ursula Beschler for doing such a good job! Besides losing these board members, we have also had a resignation from Poppy Whitaker, who will no longer be chairing the Acquisitions Committee. Since she has chaired this committee for over twenty years, she will be much missed but we acknowledge that she deserves a rest!

This newsletter contains the membership renewal notice; we hope all of you will renew your memberships and, if possible, join at some of the upper membership levels or give a contribution in addition to the basic dues. We need additional funding and will be very grateful to you for your generosity. Please review the report of our out-going Treasurer, Howard Raphaelson, for further information.

Listen to the Echoes, Roberta Smith's popular history of the Spring Hill area, has been revised and will be printed in time for the holidays. It contains some new information and photographs acquired since the earlier edition. Consider replacing your old tattered copy with this new edition. It would make a great holiday gift, as would our other publications, such as the *Chronology of Mansfield* and *Historic Mansfield Center*. These are available at the museum, the Town Clerk's Office and the Mansfield General Store. The CDs of Donna Dufresne's wonderful concert at our June museum opening have also arrived and can be purchased at the museum. Do your shopping early!

Our Program Chair, Len Seeber has been busy planning our November meeting and also an exciting holiday-themed bus tour. Details are included in this newsletter. I hope to see you at both of these events!

Jody Newmyer, President

NOVEMBER MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

DATE/TIME: November 12, 2004. 7:30 p.m. **PLACE:** Buchanan Center at the Mansfield Library
SPEAKER: Hill Bullard, Joshua's Trust **TOPIC:** Forgotten Paths, Roads and By-ways in Mansfield

This program by Hill Bullard will certainly be of much interest to the residents of Mansfield. He is a man of many interests, one of which is his passion for the history of this area. The presentation will illustrate many of the paths, roads and by-ways of our town which long ago were abandoned and forgotten. He will use maps and overlays to show where and why these routes were originally chosen and how they relate to the present Mansfield.

Hill's 8th great grandfather was one of the 16 original grantees in 1676 by Joshua, son of the Mohegan Sachem, Uncas, of the tribe's hunting grounds in the heart of Eastern Connecticut. The tract included the present day area of Windham, Mansfield, Chaplin, Scotland, and part of Hampton. The Bullard ancestors (Fitch) owned an upland tract of 300 acres in what is now Chaplin from 1686 to 1699 and Hill lives on a portion of that original family property today. He is now president of Joshua's Trust.

Len Seeber, Program Chair

HOLIDAY BUS TOUR ON DECEMBER 3



Please join us on **Friday, December 3rd** for a bus trip to The Mark Twain House in Hartford and the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield. It will be a special treat to visit these popular historic sites when they are decorated for the holiday season. (Sorry, no buses were available for any weekend during the month on December.)

We will depart from the Mansfield Historical Society Museum at 10:30 a.m. and travel by motor coach first to The Mark Twain House, home of the renowned author Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) and his family from 1874 to 1891. The 19-room, Tiffany-decorated mansion will be adorned as it was for holiday celebrations when the author, his wife and three daughters lived there. The Museum's curatorial staff has extensively researched the holiday season during this period to give visitors a true representation of the late 1800s and the Clemens family.

Following our tour of the house, we will have lunch in the museum's café (see the reservation form for the menu). There will also be ample time to see the exhibits in the new Museum center (opened in November 2003), view the 20-minute biographical film by Ken Burns or visit the gift shop for some holiday shopping.

At 2:00 p.m. we will depart for our next destination – the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield. We will leave behind the Victorian era represented at The Mark Twain House and travel further back in time. We will first visit the Isaac Stevens house built in 1788-89. This Georgian-style home remained in the same family until 1958 when the Colonial Dames acquired it and then restored it. We will see the house decorated to represent Christmas Eve in 1840 when Captain Stephen Francis, his wife and five children lived there.

We will also visit the Joseph Webb House, a large gambrel-roofed house built in 1752. And yes, General Washington truly did sleep here in 1781! The last owner was Wallace Nutting who operated the house as a museum from 1916 to 1919 and also used it as the setting for his well-known colonial-inspired photographs. This year, one room of the Webb house will be decorated to represent a children's Christmas party in 1925. Our journey through time will conclude with seasonal refreshments served by the museum staff. We should return to Mansfield by 4:30 p.m.

The cost of this trip is \$40.00/person which includes the cost of transportation, admission to all sites and lunch. Because of strict cancellation policies at these sites, we must receive your reservation forms and checks no later than **Friday, November 19**. Come

enjoy a taste of Christmas past to kick off the holiday season!

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

It was a busy summer at the museum as more than 500 visitors came to see our exhibits and use our research library. Many were first-time visitors. Our new exhibits had excellent coverage in *The Chronicle* and the topics of the exhibits attracted people who might not have visited otherwise. Many were former employees of the Mansfield Training School or friends of Claude McDaniels. Now that they've seen our museum we hope they will continue to visit each year.

Unfortunately building issues hampered our activities for part of the year. A structural problem in the Old Town Hall forced us to close the building until it could be repaired. As a result, we lost half of our exhibit area as well as our space for holding meetings and programs. This was a severe blow for us. Now, at last, I have some good news to report. The Town has accepted a bid for the repair project and work will begin in early November. We should have full use of our museum buildings for the next season.

During the fall we participated in the "Know Your Town Fair" and the first annual Archaeology Expo at UConn. Special displays were prepared for both of these events. Over 700 people attended the Archaeology Expo, giving us great exposure.

With the museum now closed, it's time to turn our attention to our collections. There are many new accessions that need to be cataloged, entered into our collection database and then properly stored. Poppy Whitaker has just retired as Chair of the Acquisitions Committee and we will surely miss her expertise. She has been in charge of accessions for twenty-five years, serving as curator for part of that time. We are very grateful for her dedicated service in this role. These are big shoes to fill but we hope that some member will volunteer to chair this committee. Please contact the museum (429-6575) if you are interested in this position or would like to join the committee. There's much work to be done!

Ann Galonska, Museum Director

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

My final Treasurer's Report at the annual meeting was less than happy. We started the year with a treasury of \$483 thousand. This fine endowment has allowed us to operate the museum; given us the help of a professional director; allowed us to have a book publishing program; and to keep dues low enough to give us a broad membership.

I would have been happy if we could have accomplished that with the endowment growing only at the rate of inflation. In fact, we ended up short of this by \$27 thousand. We can hope and expect that the

stock market will improve and our portfolio will give us good results, but we also need two additional types of membership help.

The dues are set at a rate that barely covers the cost of the newsletter. We should look on it as an introductory rate, and each give the society a voluntary supplement to the dues, to bring it up to a level appropriate for the value of the society to us and to the level of support it deserves.

In addition, we pay for our marvelous publications when they are printed. We get our money back when they are sold. Right now we have a number of copies of our recent publications waiting for you to buy them for your own library and for gifts.

We also have fine Mansfield Tea Towels and our beautiful Christmas Tree ornaments. These will brighten your house or the house of a friend as well as help the Society to continue its work.

Howard Raphaelson, Outgoing Treasurer

SPRING MANOR FARM (PART 2)

The last issue of the newsletter contained biographical information about George H. Reynolds, the original owner of Spring Manor farm. He was a local farm boy who, in later life, became a prominent mechanical engineer. In this newsletter, we continue the history of Spring Manor farm with excerpts from an article in The Willimantic Chronicle, dated September 19, 1883, that describes George Reynold's development of the land comprising Spring Manor Farm.



“In 1879 Mr. Reynolds purchased a tract of land extending from the town road west to the Willimantic river. The greater part of this tract was covered with timber and brush and to most people uninviting. That part fronting the road was covered with stones and huge boulders and uneven and hilly withal. The western part bordering on the river is a level plain densely covered with stately pines, on the skirts of which runs the N.N. Railroad. What special beauty charmed the purchaser and invited his capital to this rugged and uncultivated forest is best known to himself.

Soon after the purchase he set men to work building a wall by the roadside four feet thick at the base, three feet at the top and four feet high above the ground, being set below the power of frost to move it, and faced alike on each side. This wall was continued nearly or quite half a mile in length to his northern boundary line. A walk was then graded six feet wide between the wall and highway and a row of elm trees along its border, 125 in number, of the cork bark variety, brought from New Rochelle, N.Y...

Additions have been made to the original purchase, the whole tract now comprising 175 acres which has been divided by cross walls into roomy pasture and tillage fields. Bordering on the river is a plain of 18 acres mostly covered with evergreen trees, the outer portion of which as been trimmed up and cleared of underbrush, the center being left in its natural condition...

The walls are all built after one pattern like the one described in the forepart of this article and aggregate 16,000 feet in length... The abutments are built larger and higher than the main wall and are capped with flat stones from the quarry of Mr. Humphrey at Willimantic. A massive foundation has been laid for a new barn, two smaller ones are already built, the largest one to stand between the two. Further up the incline a house is to be built over looking the park and plain below. Near by flows water from a living spring sufficient for man and beast. A drive way has been graded through the premises nearly a mile in length connecting with the highway at each end. Iron grates from the DeLamater iron works, N.Y., of which Mr. Reynolds is superintendent engineer, close the entrance to the grounds and are also used to close driveways between fields. All the stone work has been done by Mr. Joseph Jones of Willimantic, a large part having been laid with his own hands and it is safe to say that he has no superior in laying farm walls...

That Mr. Reynolds expects to see a full return in dollars and cents for his outlay on this rugged tract of wild land is not presumed, but he drinks in the full value in the pleasure of making the improvement on that portion of his native town over which he used to ramble in his youthful days. He was born of good stock, though not in wealth, and is a brother in a family of twelve children all but two of which are now living. Mr. Reynolds is in the prime of his life, just the upper side of fifty years, and is brim full of push so to speak, a self-made man having battled successfully with the elements of business life from his boyhood days to his now riper years. His inventive genius, coupled with an indomitable perseverance has brought him wealth and he evidently takes pleasure in expending it to beautify the earth. We congratulate him in his prosperity and hope that his life may be spared many years to enjoy the fruits of his labor.”

In 1885, after developing his farmlands, George Reynolds finally built a handsome home on a bluff overlooking his farm property and the Willimantic River valley. The Queen Anne style house is embellished with marble and granite fireplaces, elaborate woodwork, sweeping staircases and decorative ceiling stencils and plaster medallions. On the granite mantel in the master bedroom is inscribed:

“I built this house here because I love my native land. Geo. H. Reynolds, 1885”.

Behind the house, a gilt-trimmed elevator car from the Waldorf Astoria Hotel housed the spring from which the property derived its name. The elegant springhouse, now gone, was a souvenir from Mr. Reynold’s days in the elevator industry. George Reynolds bottled the mineral water and marketed it under the name “Tolland Water”. It was advertised that it would “cure Kidney and Liver Troubles, Rheumatism, Gout and Dropsy.”

In 1921, Spring Manor farm was purchased by the State and became part of the Mansfield Training School. It added valuable buildings and 512 acres of farmland to the training school property. The enlarged farm holdings enabled the institution to be almost self-supporting agriculturally. George Reynold’s former home and carriage house served as quarters for training school employees.

Boys from the training school were employed on the farm year-round and performed most of the manual labor. This was considered an important part of their occupational training and was essential for the running of the farm. They helped with the care of livestock and worked in the fields. In the summer, both boys and girls assisted with the weeding of gardens and the harvesting of crops. The farm was one of the most successful departments in training clients for community placement.

Sadly, since the training school closed in 1993, Spring Manor farm has fallen into disrepair and the once cultivated fields are gradually returning to their natural state. What George Reynolds worked so hard to wrest from nature is now being reclaimed.

IN MEMORIAM - We are sad to report the loss of two long-time members of the Historical Society since our last newsletter was published – Theora Whetten and Harold Lucal. Theora passed away in August just a few days short of her 100th birthday. For many years, she and Betty Wardwell worked tirelessly on identifying, organizing and preserving our photograph collection. Hal was also an active member of the Historical Society and served as its Treasurer from 1991-95. We will miss them both and send our sincere condolences to their families.

Mansfield Historical Society
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DATES TO REMEMBER!

November 12- MHS Meeting

December 3 – Holiday Bus Tour

*** SEND IN YOUR RESERVATION FORMS AND MEMBERSHIP DUES TODAY***

MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FOR 2005

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

Individual (\$15) _____
Family (\$20) _____
Sustaining (\$30) _____

Corporate (\$35) _____
Contributing (\$50) _____
Patron (\$150) _____

I wish to make an additional contribution of _____ to support the Historical Society.

PLEASE CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING! Check the volunteer opportunities that interest you.

_____ Host/Hostess _____ Exhibit Preparation _____ Collection Management
_____ Educational Programs _____ Genealogy Research _____ Historical Research
_____ Office Work _____ Special Events _____ Handyman

Please make checks payable to The Mansfield Historical Society. Mail membership form and check to: Mansfield Historical Society / P.O. Box 145 / Storrs, CT 06268.

**RESERVATION FOR HOLIDAY BUS TOUR - FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2004
The Mark Twain House & The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum**

Please reserve _____ places on the bus. Enclosed is a check made out to the Mansfield Historical Society in the amount of \$_____ at \$40.00 per person.

Sandwich/ Salad Choices – Served with home-made potato salad & brownie (Choose 1):

___ Turkey & Cheddar Cheese Sandwich ___ Ham & Swiss Cheese Sandwich ___ Grilled Vegetable Wrap
with Goat Cheese ___ Chicken Caesar Salad ___ Pasta Salad Primavera

Beverage Choices (Choose 1): ___ Pepsi ___ Diet Pepsi ___ Sierra Mist ___ Bottled Water

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

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

RESERVATION DEADLINE - FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19