



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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November 2006

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



This Historical Society's report to you can begin with very good news. As you will recall, in partnership with the Town of Mansfield, we received a historic preservation grant from the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc. for roof replacement on the Old Town Hall. That project was completed during the late summer. Generous contributions by members sent us over our goal for our portion of the required monies for matching funds. Now that the Museum is closed for the winter season, our segment of that project, i.e. inside painting, will begin. Thanks to all who helped in keeping the Old Town Hall secure, and made this fundraiser a success.

Our Annual Dinner/Meeting was held on September 8 at the First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center. Our speaker Bruce Stave, Professor of History, Emeritus, presented an interesting talk on the history of the University. His recently published history of UConn, *Red Brick in the Land of Steady Habits: Creating the University of Connecticut, 1881-2006*, was written as part of the celebration of the University's 125th anniversary. The church, as usual, provided us with a delicious meal.

This was just one of the excellent programs planned this year by our Program Chair, Norman Stevens. Norman has planned an exciting and innovative Thanksgiving program for next meeting on November 17, including a pumpkin pie baking contest. I urge you to attend and participate. Please note that this program will be held at the First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center.

Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Society; a number of the founders are still with us. We are initiating discussions regarding an appropriate celebration/program to commemorate this important milestone. Suggestions are anticipated and welcome. Please contact us with your ideas.

This newsletter contains the membership renewal notice. As you prepare to renew your membership for another year, especially the coming anniversary year, please consider joining at some of the upper membership levels or give a contribution in addition to the basic dues. The basic dues are set at a rate that barely covers the cost of the newsletter. We need additional funding and will be very grateful to you for your generosity. Thank you to all.

Francis. R. Trainor, President

Please join us for a special program A THANKSGIVING POTPOURRI

**Friday, November 17, 7:30 p.m.
First Church of Christ in Mansfield, Mansfield Center**

Members of the Mansfield Historical Society and their family and friends, as well as the general public, are invited to help celebrate this typical New England holiday with us. It will be an evening of entertainment and enjoyment that will also help support the work of Mansfield's Social Services Department. (Details on the following page.) The program is open to all without charge but attendees are asked to bring a non-perishable food item to donate to holiday baskets. There is a special need for tea, coffee, juice and other beverages (not soda), as well as cereal. All contributions will be much appreciated.

THANKSGIVING TIME

*When all the leaves are off the boughs,
and nuts and apples gathered in,
and cornstalks waiting for the cows,
and pumpkins safe in barn and bin,
Then Mother says,
“My children dear,
the fields are brown, and autumn flies;
Thanksgiving Day is very near,
and we must make Thanksgiving pies!”*

A THANKSGIVING POTPOURRI



Our evening will include some old favorites, such as “A Boy’s Thanksgiving Day” (“Over the river, and through the woods...”) and other familiar pieces such as John Greenleaf Whittier’s poem “The Pumpkin.” Other

readings will include: several official proclamations of Thanksgiving, including that of 1936 from Mansfield’s own Governor Wilbur Cross; excerpts from histories and sermons; entries from Albert Waugh’s journals dating between 1941 and 1969; and other reminiscences of Thanksgiving as it was once celebrated in New England. There will be a few musical selections. Selected primarily for their skill as presenters, a number of people will offer us about a baker’s dozen of short works. There will be some opportunity for appropriate audience participation.

Light refreshments will be available after the program. At that time printed copies of Governor Wilbur Cross’ 1936 Thanksgiving Proclamation, as well as of an 1893 Proclamation of Governor Levi K. Fuller of Vermont, will be available for purchase as will copies of the Coventry Historical Society’s *Exclusively Pumpkin Cookbook*.

Norman Stevens, Program Chair

PUMPKIN PIE CONTEST & BAKE SALE

*What moistens the lip and what brightens the eye?
What calls back the past, like the rich Pumpkin pie?”*
John Greenleaf Whittier “The Pumpkin”

Thanksgiving would not be Thanksgiving without pumpkin pie so we are sponsoring a Pumpkin Pie Contest & Bake Sale as part of our

celebration. One first prize and two second prizes will be awarded and pies, including the winners, will be sold after the program. Some pies will be donated to the Mansfield Social Services Department for their clientele. Sales and donations will be possible since entrants will be required to submit a small pumpkin tart, made of the same ingredients as their pie, which will be used for tasting by the judges. A special prize will be awarded for the best square pumpkin pie that was, according to one source, once a feature of some Thanksgiving dinners. Cut into four pieces, each person received a corner piece! So that we can plan for the judging and sale of the pies, we ask those who wish to participate in the contest to complete the enclosed form and return it to Norman D. Stevens (143 Hanks Hill Road, Storrs, CT 06268) no later than November 13th. Further details, including time and place of delivery, will be provided before November 17th. Questions should be addressed to Norman at normanstevens@mac.com, or 429-7051.

REPORT ON MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

The museum closed at the end of September after a very successful season. Our attendance figures were definitely up this year. This was largely due to the exhibit on local Czech, Slovak and Hungarian families, which was a joint project with the Willington Historical Society. There was a great deal of interest in this exhibit and it attracted many new visitors from the surrounding area. They were pleased to discover our museum and its fine array of exhibits. I heard many complimentary comments over the summer and I believe we have earned some more repeat customers.

Although the museum is now closed, we have not been idle. We’ve had displays at both the *Know Your Town Fair* and the 3rd Annual *Connecticut Archaeology Expo*. These well-attended events gave us great public exposure. We’ve also hosted museum tours for the third graders at Annie Vinton Elementary School and students from E O. Smith High School.

Now it’s time to turn our attention to work behind the scenes. There are many new acquisitions that need to be processed and cataloged. The old exhibits have to be taken down and stored and then planning will begin for the new displays. In addition to this routine work we must also complete our two grant projects before the end of the year. AND we are about to embark on an exciting library project that will be discussed below. It’s going to be a very busy “off-season”!

During the next couple of months, we will be completing the educational outreach component of

our grant project funded by the Community Foundation. The information gathered in the oral history interviews with local Hungarian, Czech and Slovak families will now be compiled in booklet form as an educational resource for the local schools and public libraries in Mansfield, Willington and Ashford.

We are also about to proceed with the second phase of the Old Town Hall preservation project, funded by the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc. Now that the roof has been re-shingled and the leaks stopped, the interior work can begin. We need to take down the exhibits and clear out the building so that the water-damaged walls and ceiling can be repaired and repainted. This should take place in November. We can look forward to a refurbished space for our programs and exhibits next spring. Thanks again to all who contributed to the matching grant fund for this important project!

One other piece of good news – our student intern, Becky Wright, plans to return during the spring semester and do an exhibit as her senior honors thesis. She was a pleasure to work with last year and I will be thrilled to welcome her back.

Ann Galonska, Museum Director

BIG CHANGES COMING FOR OUR LIBRARY



For some time our library and office area has been bursting at the seams. Every shelf and file drawer is filled to capacity and we've had to resort to temporary file boxes for storage. Now, at long last, we can finally address the space issue.

We have just purchased some surplus metal library shelving from the University of Connecticut. The old School of Pharmacy building is about to be demolished and the shelving used in the old Pharmacy Library was available at a reasonable price. We have purchased five banks of shelving that will extend from floor to ceiling, giving us additional space for our growing library collection. The new shelving configuration will also enable us to squeeze in a much-needed new file cabinet.

Once the school tours have wound down, we plan to pack up all the books and move them and the old shelving out. Then we will re-paint the walls before the metal shelving is installed. The Town has been generous in providing assistance for this project and we are most grateful!

The new shelving and reorganization of our holdings are not the only improvements planned for the library. Over the summer, our librarian, Richard

Schimmelpfeng, worked with Ann Galonska to develop a database to manage our library records. Both our books and archival materials will be included in this database, making it a valuable tool for researchers. Once all the records have been entered, it will be possible to search and print lists of our holdings on any subject without having to consult two separate card files. This will be a vast improvement over our current manual system. If you can help enter records in the database, please contact the museum at 429-6575.

MANSFIELD'S CRANBERRY INDUSTRY

In the late nineteenth century, the Eaton family operated a thriving cranberry business in Mansfield Center. The cranberry bog was located in the vicinity of Chaffeeville Road, Dodd Road and Route 195 in an area that was originally a cedar swamp. William S. Eaton and his brothers cut the cedars, drained it at the north end, and then brought cranberry shrubs from Cape Cod to plant along with the wild ones already there.

The water supply came from a branch of the Schoolhouse Brook that was diverted through a stone-lined aqueduct under what is now Route 195, then along Chaffeeville Road to Dodd Road and finally through a culvert under Chaffeeville Road into the north end of the bog. The flow was allowed in freely there until the berries ripened and were ready to pick. Then the gate was closed and the water was drained from the bog at the other end.

It was for some time a successful business. *The Willimantic Chronicle* reported in October 1880 that Eaton Bros. "harvested about 500 bushels of cranberries from their Mansfield meadow. A large yield and the quality is excellent." Pickers were paid 5 cents a quart for their efforts. The cranberries were packed and shipped to fine restaurants and stores in Boston, Hartford, New Haven and other places. During this period Dodd Road was called Cranberry Lane.

Following the hurricane of 1938, the U.S. Government purchased the land around the former cranberry bog up to the Fenton River for the Thames River Basin Flood Control project. When the Mansfield Hollow Dam was built, a small dike was constructed on Baker Road just beyond the north end of the bog. This area is now used as an overflow area for the river in time of great flooding. There are still enough cranberries growing wild in this area to keep the birds interested – just a small reminder of a once thriving Mansfield industry.

With Gratitude

We want to recognize the following people who contributed to the matching gift fund for the Old Town Hall preservation project.

Arthur S. Abramson
Ray and Carol Anselment
Janet G. Atkins
Isabelle Atwood
Vicki Avery
Frank and Adah Ruth Ballard
Ray and Jackie Bopp
Rita C. Braswell
Fred Cazel
Norman Chance
Albert Ching

Bruce and Donna Clouette
Helen J. Collins
Shirley G. Corcoran
Adelaide Corcoran
Elna Daniels
Samuel J. Gordon
Jeanne Haas
Kay Holt
Holly Izard
Alice B. Jansen
Keith and Marietta Johnson
Quentin Kessel
Iris Kinnard
Bill and Jean Lonergan
Jody Newmyer
Elizabeth Norris
Mab Owen
Janice and Henry Palmer
Carol Phillips
Vivian Putnam
Joan Quarto
David and Dawn Rawlinson

Mary Rogers
Chauncy and Nancy Rucker
Carl Schaefer
Richard H. Schimmelpfeng
Vic and Jan Scottron
Walter H. Simson
Paul and Laura Smith
Virginia Stallman
Nora and Norman Stevens
Richard and Phyllis Swanson
Mary Thatcher
Frank and Peg Trainor
Elizabeth Wardwell
Florence Waxman
Isabel Weigold
Catherine B. Willett
Jean Williams
Marilyn Wilson
Martha P. Yutzey

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

NOVEMBER 17- MHS Meeting & Special Thanksgiving Program

MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FOR 2007

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

Individual (\$20) _____
Family (\$30) _____
Sustaining (\$40) _____

Corporate (\$50) _____
Contributing (\$60) _____
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.

PUMPKIN PIE CONTEST

Entry Form

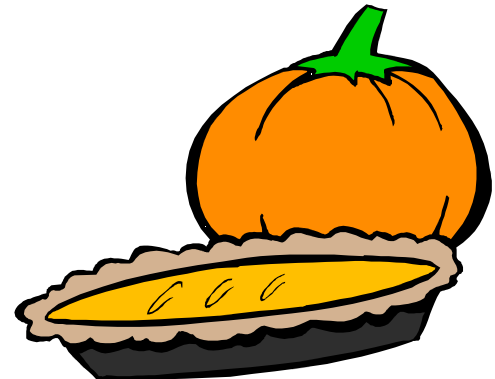
I plan to make and donate to the Mansfield Historical Society a pumpkin pie accompanied by a small pumpkin tart made from the same ingredients.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____



Please return form to Norman D. Stevens (143 Hanks Hill Road, Storrs, CT 06268) no later than **November 13th**. Further details, including time and place of delivery, will be provided before November 17th. Questions should be addressed to Norman at normanstevens@mac.com, or 429-7051.