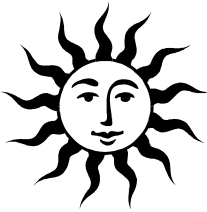


MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 41, No. 5

September 2005

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Thanks to all of you who donated funds to our publications matching grant appeal. We successfully met our goal and have received the \$5,000 offered by our kind anonymous donor. We greatly appreciate the generosity of this donor and of all our members who contributed to the cause. The funds raised through this appeal ensure that our publication efforts can continue. The new edition of *Listen to the Echoes*, Roberta Smith's history of Spring Hill, will be available shortly and other publications will follow in the next year or so.

Our Annual Meeting will be held September 9 at the Mansfield Center Congregational Church; a response form is included in this *Newsletter*. Len Seeber, our Program Chair, has found an excellent speaker for the event. We hope you can all attend.

The Nominating Committee has been hard at work preparing the slate of officers and board members who will be elected at this meeting. I would like to thank Joan Gerdson, Chair; Isabelle Atwood, Joan Quarto, and Tim Quinn for doing such a fine job of finding nominees for these positions.

I will be retiring from the Presidency after the Annual Meeting. I have enjoyed my four years in this office and have very much appreciated the excellent support of the members of the Board and other committee members during my tenure. I also want to thank Ann Galonska for her creativity and dedication as a staff member; fortunately, *she* is not retiring!

See you at the Annual Meeting.

Jody Newmyer, President

ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER TO BE HELD ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

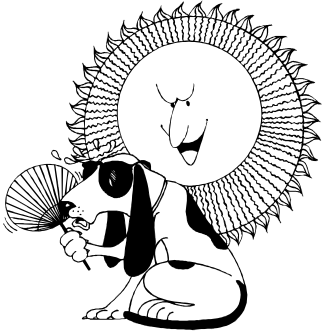
DATE: September 9, 2005
PLACE: First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center, Fellowship Hall
TIME: Dinner at 6:30, followed by meeting
SPEAKER: Gregory Cichowski
TOPIC: The Ash House: Its History, Dismantling and Reconstruction



Our annual dinner meeting will be held on Friday September 9, at 6:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in Mansfield Center. Our speaker will be Greg Cichowski, who is presently reconstructing the Ash House on his property on Old Turnpike Road. This mid-18th century saltbox was originally located on Route 195 next to Mansfield Supply. The house was long known as the Slafter-Ash House, named for Eleazer Slafter who was believed to be its first owner and the Ash family who were its last private owners. Since 1964, the University of Connecticut had used this house as a rental property but, in recent years, it had fallen into disrepair. In 1999, the University offered it for sale, with the stipulation that it be removed from the site. The Cichowskis came to its rescue, thus ensuring that this fine example of 18th century architecture would remain in Mansfield. Mr. Cichowski will discuss the history of the house as well as his own experiences during its dismantling and the first phase of reconstruction. He will also share the findings of the archaeological site study by TRC Garrow Associates, Inc., including their deed research that revealed the true line of ownership.

YOU MUST MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR THIS MEETING. Please send in your reservation form or call the museum (429-6575) by September 6 to reserve your spot.

MUSEUM WILTS IN SUMMER SIZZLER



It's definitely been the "dog days" of summer – hot and steamy for most of July and August. As our gardens and lawns dried up, so did our museum visitation. Don't forget that our museum is air-conditioned and is a great place to escape the

heat and humidity! Please come visit and bring your family and friends too. We are open on Thursdays and Sundays, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., through the end of September. We have some great exhibits this year that should not be missed!

Despite the steamy weather, over 50 people showed up for our ice cream social on July 17. The ice cream donated by the UConn Dairy Bar and the many toppings tasted ultra good on such a hot day. The party was in honor of Jim and Poppy Whitaker who had served the Historical Society in many capacities for over 30 years and were responsible for many terrific exhibits. In appreciation of their service, the Whitakers were presented with an album filled with photographs of their numerous exhibits. The Whitakers have relocated to Maryland and hope to hear from their many Historical Society friends. You can reach them at:

10450 Lottsford Road, Box 3006
Mitchellville, MD 20721-2749
(301-925-7304; jhw17@juno.com)

Although the heat of summer refuses to yield, the busy fall season is fast approaching. Teachers are already calling about school programs and we will soon be participating in the "Know Your Town Fair" and the Archaeology Expo.

We plan to close the season with a benefit concert by Donna Dufresne on October 2 (details following). She is the musician who wrote the music and lyrics for the Claude McDaniels exhibit and performed at our opening last year. She will reprise some of the Claude McDaniels songs and also has a whole new repertoire of romantic music and Mexican-influenced ballads.

With luck, Roberta Smith's book, *Listen to the Echoes*, will be also available by then and we will give it a "coming out" party at the same time. Please join us for an entertaining afternoon! Roberta will be available to sign your book purchases too!

Ann Galonska, Museum Director

ANOTHER SIZZLER LONG AGO

Our hot, dry summer – punctuated by violent thunderstorms – is, of course, not unique to this area. Here are some excerpts from the Willimantic Chronicle that describe a similar summer in 1883. Reporting styles have certainly changed – the author's hyperbole is quite amusing!

Wed Aug 1, 1883: Mansfield. One of the most terrific thunder storms for years passed over here last Saturday causing some damage by hail and lightning. The hail cut buckwheat and other tender plants some but not to injure it much. Lightning struck a large hackmatac tree in front of J.W. Knowlton's house tearing all to pieces. This tree was ultimately designed to be made into furniture for the rising generation of J.W.K. - come and pick up your lumber. ... The lightning also struck a tree near the house of Mr. George S. Hanks, some of the inmates receiving quite a shock.

An unprecedented drought for this season of the year has prevailed over several towns in the central and eastern part of the state for the last two months. In many places on light soil, gardens have been nearly ruined, wells have failed to yield water and many of the smaller streams dried up. The crop of hay over this dry belt is light and corn and potatoes have suffered much, for want of water.

Wed Aug 22, 1883: Mansfield Centre. Last Saturday evening gave us the boss thunder storm. The rain fell, or rather poured in copious torrents, while Heaven's artillery seemed intent on doing a land office business, and gave us a touch of the truly sublime in nature. Some of the timid or perhaps terror stricken, were frightened, and got into as small a compass as possible. Notwithstanding all these necessary precautions the lightning paid us its compliments. Unbidden and unceremoniously, and without formality it entered the Payne dwelling house on the boulevards [30 Centre Street], occupied by Mrs. Eaton and family, tearing of lath and casings, and raising the Old Harry with one room which had just been vacated by the inmates of the dwelling. Damage nominal. The cider mill and storage house combined, belonging to Joseph P. Barrows, the south gamble of which loomed up on the horizon far above the surrounding trees and scenery and standing out in bold relief against a southern sky as if inviting a contact with the fiery balls of Jupiter, received a share of compliments for its bold temerity. The lightning tackled the extreme gable, ripping off

boards, splitting posts and joist, and set fire on the first floor above the basement to a lot of loose and dry debris scattered among some barrels. Mr. Barrow's son Walter was first at the scene and rolling a barrel of vinegar over bung hole down let out the contents, quenched the fire, and prevented the destruction of the building. Sunday evening duplicated Saturdays showers, but with less violence.

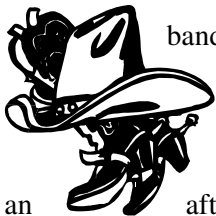
Mark Your Calendars!

**BENEFIT CONCERT BY DONNA DUFRESNE
AND THE GYPSY COWBOYS**

**Sunday, October 2 – 2:00 p.m.
Historical Society / Old Town Hall Building**

**Tickets \$10
Proceeds to benefit the Historical Society**

Donna Dufresne is a local singer/songwriter, and also performs in the character of Prudence Crandall, as well as other historical figures. She teaches fifth-grade in Pomfret, and is a graduate student at UCONN in the *Three Summers Gifted and Talented Program*. She and fellow graduate student, Cecelia Chau, produced the Claude McDaniels exhibit that is currently on display in the Old Town Hall Building.



On October 2, Donna and her band "The Gypsy Cowboys" will perform some of the Claude McDaniels songs as well as selections from their latest CD, *Cowboy Romance*. Come enjoy an afternoon of romantic original music, a mix of hot gypsy fiddling, cowboy swing, yodeling, and Mexican inspired ballads. All the material is written by Donna Dufresne and arranged with Tom Nielsen on stand-up bass and Bob Thurston on fiddle. Those of you who attended our opening last June know that Donna is one talented woman! Refreshments, including some Mexican treats, will be available following the concert. (Please call our Hospitality Chair, Alice Kolega at 423-8126, if you can help.)

**This is guaranteed to be a fun event!
Please come and support your Historical Society!**
(You may order your tickets in advance using the enclosed form.)

WHAT IS STORRS?

This amusing poem by Laddie Widmer was found among a collection of photographs and memorabilia recently donated to the Historical Society by Frances Hoxie. There was no indication of the poem's date or where it was originally published. Enjoy!

No migrant from the middle West can ever understand
About the towns and villages in this part of the land.
He thinks he's in the town of Storrs and surely none can blame him,
Yet next he finds that Mansfield is the town that seeks to claim him.
He asks quite simply "What is Storrs?" but then the explanation
Just serves to mix him up with more and greater complication.
For Mansfield boasts not only Storrs but also Eagleville,
And Mansfield Depot, Mansfield Center, Merrow and Wormwood Hill,
Plus Conantville and Chaffeeville;
Mansfield Four Corners too;
While Gurleyville and Mansfield Hollow add another two.
Our dear outlander further asks, with mingled awe and pity,
"Why should three houses and a barn be labeled Mansfield City?"
To one who is New England born, it's all just as it should be;
To others it is quite senseless as a system could be.

Laddie Widmer

IN MEMORIAM - We are sad to report the passing of Catherine Roby, the Garden Gate Club member who designed and planted the perennial garden behind our museum. She not only created the garden, but enthusiastically tended it for several years until hampered by ill health. We are very grateful for all her work and will certainly miss her. But our memories of her will remain as perennial as the beautiful flowers she planted. We extend our sincere condolences to her family and friends.

**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE WHO HAVE GENEROUSLY DONATED
TO OUR PUBLICATIONS FUND**

Note: Previous donors were acknowledged in the July issue of the Newsletter.

Arthur S. Abramson

Isabelle Atwood

Rita C. Braswell

Albert C. Ching

Helen Collins

Priscilla A. Gilman, M.D.

(In memory of Ruby & Ralph Gilman)

Samuel J. Gordon

Jeanne R. Haas

Mr. & Mrs. Roswell G. Hall III fund

Katherine Holt

Holly V. Izard

Alice Jansen

John W. and Bettejane Karnes

Jean C. Manter

Mabel Welles Owen

Henry and Janice Palmer

Alice and Howard Raphaelson

David and Dawn Rawlinson

Jeanne Rice

Arthur D. Roberts and Joyce A. Donohoo

Betty Robinson

Chauncy and Nancy Rucker

David K. Smith

Francis R. and Margaret Trainor

Dr. & Mrs. Bruce Valentine

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT: The revised second edition of *Listen to the Echoes* will be available by the end of September. This history of Spring Hill, written by Roberta Smith, would make a great gift or addition to your own library!

Mansfield Historical Society

P. O. Box 145

Storrs, CT 06268-0145

Web site: www.mansfield-history.org

E-mail: mansfield.historical@snet.net

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

September 9 – ANNUAL MEETING October 2 – BENEFIT CONCERT November 14 –MEETING

Please join us for these upcoming special events!

RESERVATION FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER Friday, September 9, 2005

Please reserve _____ places for dinner. Enclosed is a check made out to the Mansfield Historical Society in the amount of \$_____ at \$13.00 per person.

_____ Chicken meal _____ Vegetarian meal (Eggplant Roulade)

Name(s): _____

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

Phone #: _____

RESERVATION DEADLINE is September 6, 2005



ORDER YOUR TICKETS FOR OUR BENEFIT CONCERT

Donna Dufresne and the Gypsy Cowboys Sunday, October 2, 2005 – 2:00 p.m.

Please send me _____ tickets for the benefit concert. Enclosed is a check made out to the Mansfield Historical Society in the amount of \$_____ at \$10.00 per ticket. Proceeds will benefit the Historical Society.

Name(s): _____

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

Phone #: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

