PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings! As the museum season winds down, I’m pleased to report that our exhibition of local women’s fashions, 1850-1910, and the exhibit of 18th century gravestone art have been a great success. The museum has been well attended and visitors have spent much time learning about the history of the fashions and other artifacts on display. Many thanks to Laura Crow for organizing and curating such an amazing display of our rarely seen costume collection.

The colonial gravestone exhibit also provides an excellent look at this folk art form. Thank you to museum director Ann Galonska and student intern Henry Kennell who prepared this exhibit and to Kathryn Myers who photographed many of the gravestones. And kudos to all the volunteers who assisted with exhibit preparation and hosting this season.

The success of this year’s exhibits is due in part to collaboration with the University of Connecticut. We are very grateful to Anne D’Alleva, Dean of the UCONN School of Fine Arts for the generous loan of dress forms, reproduction undergarments, and items from the historic costume collection which made the fashion exhibit possible. We also appreciated the assistance of Lynne Bassett, Acting Curator of the Historic Costume Collection, who facilitated this loan. Thanks are also due to Dan Buttrey, of UConn’s Photography Department, who printed the large-scale photographs of gravestones, using paper donated by the Department of Art and Art History. He also loaned a computer for use in the fashion exhibit. In addition, the Department of Dramatic Arts loaned props for the millinery shop display. These loans and assistance from the university community enabled us to create two high caliber exhibits and we are very appreciative of their help.

Thanks are also in order to our resident tech guru Scott Dunstan and his employer, Computer Rescue for stepping in to help with a failed computer hard drive. All files were able to be extracted and a loaner computer was supplied while attempts were made to resurrect the museum’s computer. Scott’s help was invaluable at a critical time when we were working to complete this year’s exhibits. We can’t thank him enough for his efforts which saved the day.

Continued on next page

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Friday, October 12, 6:00 p.m.: ANNUAL MEETING - DINNER AND PROGRAM
Mallory Howard, Assistant Curator at the Mark Twain House and Museum, and Jason Scappaticci, Director of the New Students and First Year Programs at Manchester Community College, will present “Mark Twain and the American Presidents.” This event will be held at the First Church of Christ (Congregational) in Mansfield Center (549 Storrs Road). Reservation forms for the dinner are included in this newsletter.

Friday, November 9, 7:30 p.m.: NOVEMBER MEETING AND PROGRAM
Nancy Shoemaker, Professor of History at the University of Connecticut, will speak on the history of the American whaling industry from the vantage point of Mansfield, Connecticut. This program will be held at the Buchanan Auditorium, at the Mansfield Public Library (54 Warenville Road, Mansfield Center).
President’s Corner continued:

On August 15th the Society hosted a workshop for the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding its tax credit program. This program is available for owners of houses listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places. Announcements were sent to homeowners in the historic districts in Mansfield and several surrounding towns. Alyssa Lozupone of SHPO led the well-attended workshop. The participants were pleased to learn that preservation work on their historic homes could be eligible for a 30% return on expenses. Many thanks to Ann Galonska and Bill McMunn who compiled the address list of homeowners in each town’s historic districts. You can learn more about the tax credit program at http://www.cultureandtourism.org.

During the coming year we hope to move forward in addressing some of the water leakage and structural issues in our buildings. In March of 2017, we received the condition assessment report on the two town-owned historic buildings that we occupy. This study was funded by a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, with matching funds provided by the Town of Mansfield. The Nelson Edwards Company Architects LLC produced a very comprehensive report that documents the current conditions of the buildings and describes the repairs needed to correct the problems. The necessary repairs were prioritized, with cost estimates provided. We look forward to again partnering with the Town in applying for grants to assist in funding the repair work. Our hope is to begin to lay the groundwork (literally – drainage is the first big issue) for ensuring that our museum buildings are preserved and are as inviting and engaging as our exhibits and resources.

The board currently has vacancies for a Secretary and a member-at-large. If you are interested in filling either spot or would like more information, please contact Ann Galonska at the museum or myself at my email dhlandry@me.com.

Thank you again for supporting the Society this season. If you have not yet seen our current exhibits, the museum is open Saturday and Sunday, 1:30-4:30, through September 30th. We also have some exciting programs lined up for the fall. You’ll find the details in this newsletter. I hope to see you there!

David Landry, President

COME ONE,COME ALL!
ANNUAL DINNER MEETING - OCTOBER 12

Our annual dinner meeting will be held on Friday, October 12, at the First Church of Christ, Congregational in Mansfield Center (intersection of Rtes. 89 and 195).

We hope you will join us for an evening of fine food and entertainment. Following dinner and a brief business meeting, Mallory Howard, Assistant Curator at the Mark Twain House and Museum, and Jason Scappaticci from Manchester Community College, will present “Mark Twain and the American Presidents.”

Noted for his rapier wit, Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain) was considered “the greatest American humorist of his age.” His frank observations about American culture in the Gilded Age often ring true today. Corruption, national identity, the power of big business, and America’s global role were just as contested then as they are now. His funny, insightful observations about the presidents of his day apply readily to the modern presidency.

As Mark Twain stated in one of his autobiographical dictations (June 20, 1907): “The political and commercial morals of the United States are not merely food for laughter, they are an entire banquet.” (Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 2, University of California Press, 2013). Don’t miss what should be an informative and entertaining program. It will certainly be food for thought!

Meet our presenters:

• Mallory Howard is the Assistant Curator at The Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford and has worked at the museum for over 8 years. She has a special interest in Mark Twain’s marginalia and was fortunate to discover new marginalia at the Hartford residence in 2011. She earned her BA in American History at Central Connecticut State University and also holds a certification from the Modern Archives Institute in Washington D.C.

• Jason Scappaticci is Director of New Students and First Year Programs at Manchester Community College. He is also active in local politics and is currently serving in his second
term on the Manchester Board of Education. He earned a BA in history from Utica College and an MA in American Studies from Trinity College in Hartford.

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THE DINNER. Please send in the enclosed reservation form or call the museum (860-429-6575) by October 5 to reserve your spot.

Those who wish to attend the PROGRAM ONLY should arrive by 7:30 p.m. General admission is $3.00. Free admission for MHS members and children 12 and under.

SAVE THE DATE!
NEXT MEETING & PROGRAM ON NOV. 9

At our November meeting, Nancy Shoemaker, Professor of History at the University of Connecticut-Storrs will present a program on the history of the American whaling industry from the vantage point of Mansfield, Connecticut. Like other New England towns, Mansfield contributed laborers to the industry and benefited as consumers of whale products.


This program will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Buchanan Auditorium, at the Mansfield Public Library (54 Warreenville Road, Mansfield Center). General admission, $3.00; free for MHS members. More details will follow.

THERE’S STILL TIME! THE MUSEUM IS OPEN THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30

If you have not already done so, we urge you to visit the museum before it closes for the season on Sunday, September 30. The museum and library are open on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.

This is a rare opportunity to view some outstanding examples of women’s fashions from our collection. Twenty four outfits are on display, dating from 1850 to 1910, along with numerous hats and bonnets of this period. Most of the garments and hats were worn by local women; many of them have never been exhibited before. The extensive text provided by curator Laura Crow is very informative and provides great historical context for the fashions. The display is also enhanced by photographs of local women and illustrations from period publications.

Our other new exhibit examines the art of 18th century gravestone carvers working in what has been dubbed the Eastern Connecticut Ornamental Style. Several noted carvers working in this tradition are represented in Mansfield’s colonial cemeteries. Photographs and rubbings of gravestones carved by Obadiah Wheeler, Benjamin Collins, Josiah Manning, Gershom Bartlett, Jonathan Loomis and others are on display.

This year’s exhibits have been very well received and have drawn in numerous local visitors as well as many others from outside the area. Approximately 75 people attended the museum opening on June 3. Since then, visitation has at least doubled compared to the previous two years.

After the museum closes, images of the costumes in the exhibition will be added to the University of Connecticut Digital Costume Museum (http://costume-museum.usitt.org). Kathryn Myers has already photographed each garment from numerous angles in preparation for this digitization project. In the virtual museum, you will be able to view the costumes in 360 degrees and zoom in to study their details at close range. You will also be able to view many other historical garments and textiles from the university’s collection. A link to the virtual museum will be available on our website (www.mansfieldct-history.org).

In other news, the museum recently received two important artifacts that belonged to Col. Edwin Fitch (1812-1875), Mansfield’s noted architect-builder in the Greek Revival style. A daguerreotype of Edwin Fitch was given to us by Lloyd Grovesnor Marsh, who wrote his Master's thesis on Fitch. We also received a handsome mahogany dresser box from Charles F. Scott. It belonged to Col. Fitch and was likely made by him as well.

Our costume collection has also been enhanced by a gift from Shirley G. Brooks. It includes the wedding dress and veil of Frances Davis who married the wedding dress and veil of Frances Davis who married when she was flower girl of Edwin Fitch (1812-1875), Mansfield’s noted architect-builder in the Greek Revival style. A daguerreotype of Edwin Fitch was given to us by Lloyd Grovesnor Marsh, who wrote his Master's thesis on Fitch. We also received a handsome mahogany dresser box from Charles F. Scott. It belonged to Col. Fitch and was likely made by him as well.

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PLEASE NOTE: We are still in need of museum hosts on Saturday and Sunday afternoons through the end of September. Please consider helping out. Hosting is also a great chance
to spend time with the exhibits before the museum closes. The museum is also air-conditioned!

You can check out the available dates and sign up to host on our website. Just click on the Host/Hostesses tab in the upper right of the menu bar and follow the instructions for signing up. Or you may contact our membership and volunteer coordinator, Pam Roberts, at 860-428-2406 or drpampt@gmail.com. Thank you for volunteering!

Ann Galonska, Museum Director

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELPED
PREPARE THIS YEAR’S EXHIBITS!

Exhibit Volunteers: Donna Clouette, Mary Feathers, Lisa Ferriere, Anne Greineder, Fiona Leek, Kathryn Myers, Pam Roberts, and Henry Kennell (student intern).

Colleagues and Friends of Laura Crow who also assisted: June Gaake, Edward Maeder, Anya Sokovskaya, Neda Izadi and Kathleen Clark (proof-reading).

Individuals who loaned items for the exhibits: Laura Crow, Ann Galonska, Kathy James-Stebbins, Jean C. Hill, Zoe and Gerry Leibowitz, Bette Manter and Anne Smith.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Heading into the last quarter of our MHS 2018 membership year, we thank the 197 households (78%) who renewed or joined in 2018. Second notices were mailed in the spring. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to report by our Annual Meeting that over 90% of our planned-for 2018 renewals were received? We rely heavily on dues income to support our annual budget. If you have questions about the status of your 2018 dues, contact Pam Roberts, mailto:drpampt@gmail.com or call/text 860-428-2406. YOU make the work we do to preserve and celebrate the history of Mansfield and its residents possible.

The 2019 membership renewal requests will go out in late October with a member’s interest survey and list of volunteer opportunities. Please fill it out and return it with your 2019 dues payment. My goal in 2019 is to better engage your varied interests, skills and expertise to benefit the Society.

To explore joining the Mansfield Historical Society, be in touch with Pam, or visit the Museum on September weekends to pick up a membership form. Thank you for your interest.

Pamela Roberts, Membership Chairperson

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

Following the death of Richard Schimmelpfeng in March 2017, the MHS Executive Council voted to hire Daniel Allie to continue the work of our long-time librarian. At the time, Daniel had already been volunteering in our archives.

Under his original service agreement he was tasked with migrating the library/archives records from the old card system into a new database. When his contract was renewed last January, his duties were expanded to include the accessioning and cataloging of a large backlog of materials for the library and archives. As you will see in his report below, he has made tremendous progress and has brought our library to good order.

Daniel is now taking a leave of absence to pursue a Master’s degree in Library and Information Science at Syracuse University. He plans to continue working in our library during his breaks in study. We wish him much success in his studies!

The past eight months in the library and archives have been quite productive. The number of records in the Access database have grown from 2,956 at last report to 3,945 currently. I announced in my last report that my main intention was to complete transcription of our manuscript records in the card file to our Access database, and this part of the task was completed in April.

After completing the transcription, I did a thorough check of all manuscript items, and located many of them in the incorrect folders, at which time I moved them to their correct locations. I compiled a list of any items that could not be located.

After completing these checks, I’ve worked on adding new items to the manuscript collection, most of which were received from Richard Schimmelpfeng’s estate. I have added 327 items to the manuscript collection at this time. The remaining Schimmelpfeng items now total three boxes, though they comprise several hundred items.

Aside from this work on the manuscript collection, I have also added 25 books to the book collection, many of which were property of some of the original libraries here in town, such as the Social Library. These are very important to the history of the town of Mansfield, and I am happy to have catalogued them in our records for easier access.

I have also integrated the Almanac collection into the pamphlets, as Almanacs are in fact
pamphlets, and are not of a great enough number to warrant their own collection.

In addition to these accomplishments, I have also worked on preserving newspaper clippings in our collection by photocopying them onto acid-free paper, and have been protecting more fragile volumes among our books by creating custom acid-free covers. Books with these covers can also be easily located thanks to labels stating accession number, author, and title which I have pasted on the outside. Our Exhibit Books, many of which belonged to Wilbur Cross, are now safely housed in lidded boxes, and can be easily located through our Access database.

To conclude, it’s been a productive year. While I regret that my progress going forward will be less frequent due to my beginning my studies at Syracuse, I hope to return more knowledgeable, and to put my skills to work again here, particularly during the summer of 2019.

Many thanks to the Board for allowing me to continue my work. I hope to keep in touch going forward.

Daniel Allie

THE WEDDING DRESS OF LOUISA CHASE ROSEBROOKS

This beautiful two-piece wedding dress of brilliant blue silk stands out in our current exhibit. It was worn by Louisa Jane Chase when she married George Lewis Rosebrooks on New Year’s Day in 1872. Both were employed by Augustus Storrs at his Mansfield estate – she as his housekeeper and he as his farm manager. As his wedding gift to the bride, Mr. Storrs purchased the silk fabric for the gown in New York City.

On January 9, 1922, the Hartford Courant reported on the couple’s 50th wedding anniversary. The celebration was attended by some 50 guests, including four generations of the family. For the occasion Louisa Rosebrooks again wore her wedding dress and her husband wore his wedding suit. How many of us could fit into our wedding attire 50 years later?! Both garments were preserved by couple’s descendants and were given to the Mansfield Historical Society in 2010 (Estate of Lucille Storrs Manning, through Mary Ann Thonen).

Laura Crow provided these comments on the dress: “With the invention of coal tar dyes in the mid nineteenth century, there was a passion for new vibrant colors mainly in the blue, green and purple palettes. This brilliant turquoise was the color of the moment and often seen in gowns of this period.

In 1867 Butterick produced a magazine titled The Ladies Quarterly of Broadway Fashions that was so popular that it became a new monthly magazine The Metropolitan. In 1873 Butterick created yet another magazine with many other subjects of interest for women along with the latest patterns - The Delineator. It included articles about manners, tips about cooking and many articles about craft projects from bonnet making instructions to patterns for embroideries. The result was that a middle-class woman like Louisa Chase could have her wedding gown created in the latest fashion with the fullness of the silk taffeta swept to the back, with a long train that has not yet been gathered up into a bustle.”

George Lewis and Louisa Jane (Chase) Rosebrooks

THE ROSEBROOKS OF MANSFIELD

The Rosebrooks family is closely associated with the early history of the University of Connecticut. Born on September 8, 1841, George L. Rosebrooks was raised on his family’s farm in Oxford, Massachusetts. As a young adult, he put his farming experience to use in managing other people’s farms. He came to Mansfield in 1868 to take charge of the Augustus Storrs farm. He would serve as its superintendent and manager for the next 30 years.

In 1869 his younger brother Charles also came to Mansfield. He worked for three years on the farm of Otis Storrs and then took another farming job in Upton, MA. He returned to Mansfield two years later and married Julia Chapman on April 8, 1874. They settled on her parent’s farm which adjoined the Augustus Storrs estate. Charles purchased the farm
in 1878. The two Rosebrooks brothers were now close neighbors and their children would grow up together.

For the greater part of each year, Augustus Storrs lived in New York City, where he operated a business with his brothers, Charles and Royal Otis. During his absence, George Rosebrooks was fully in charge of the Storrs farm while his wife, Louisa, managed the household. In the summers, Mr. Storrs would return to Mansfield to assume the role of “gentleman farmer.” He envisioned creating a model farm. He had the funds to do so and had hired the right man to bring his plans to fruition.

According to the *Commemorative Biographical Record of Tolland and Windham Counties, Connecticut* (J. H. Beers & Co., 1903), the Storrs farm was not self-supporting at the time that George Rosebrooks took charge of it. Under his management, it would become one of the finest in the state. “A herd of 150 cattle was established... new buildings were put up, the appearance of the place radically changed...”

His model farm achieved, Augustus Storrs had another dream – the establishment of a state agricultural school. In 1880, Augustus and Charles Storrs offered the state 170 acres with buildings and $5,000 in cash for this purpose. The gift included acreage from Augustus Storrs’ farm and the buildings and land of the former Connecticut Soldiers’ Orphans’ Home which he had purchased in 1876. Charles Storrs provided the seed money.

On April 21, 1881, the General Assembly accepted the Storrs brothers’ gift and passed an act that established the Storrs Agricultural School. Its purpose was to “educate boys and young men in the practical knowledge of intelligent and scientific farming.” From its humble beginnings as a small agricultural school, it would grow to become the state’s land grant college and then the University of Connecticut.

On August 17, 1881, a lengthy article about the new school, re-printed from the *Hartford Times*, appeared in the *Willimantic Chronicle*. It included this description of the Augustus Storrs farm: “Attention is almost immediately drawn to the large residence and splendid barns of Augustus Storrs, the donor of the property for the school. His house is plain, but exceedingly neat in appearance; his smooth lawn tastefully dotted with variegated flowers; his outbuildings, some of them quite new, constructed on the most improved plan for economy of space, and convenience...”

One discovered in rambling over his farm that the best agricultural implements and methods were in use there. The farm is stocked with something like a hundred head of cattle of good breeds, Durham, Ayrshire and Jersey grades, from the sale of which alone Mr. Storrs makes a handsome income. The utter absence of weeds and the neat solid appearance of the walls and fences also impressed the observer with the enterprise, taste and thrift of the ruling genius of this neighborhood.”

In fact, the favorable appearance of the property was in large part due to the hard work of George Rosebrooks. At the direction of Mr. Storrs, he had supervised all the improvements to the farm and oversaw its maintenance and the daily care of its livestock.

Between 1872 and 1881, George and Louisa had five children – Fred, Walter L., Louisa J., George L. and Hattie. As their family grew, they moved from the Augustus Storrs residence to the old Crane place – another property owned by Mr. Storrs. The house was located near to where Gulley Hall stands today. Their three sons and oldest daughter all attended the Storrs Agricultural School. When Louisa Jane (named for her mother) began classes in the fall of 1891, she was among the first three women to attend the school. She graduated in 1894, the first year that women were officially admitted to the newly re-named Storrs Agricultural College.

George Rosebrooks continued to manage the Storrs farm, now part of the agricultural school, later college, until 1898. While residing in Mansfield, he had also served ten years as first selectman and in 1883 represented the town in the General Assembly and served on the committee on Agriculture.

In 1898 he left Mansfield to take charge of Henry F. Dimock’s 400-acre farm in Coventry. Mr. Dimock was a successful lawyer in New York City who, like Augustus Storrs, maintained an estate in his native town and summered there. He too wanted to create an “ideal farm.” George Rosebrooks served as superintendent of Mr. Dimock’s farm until 1917 and oversaw many improvements to the property. Following his retirement, he and his wife moved to Willimantic. She died in 1923 and he in 1927.

Today, more than 100 years later, the Rosebrooks name can still be found about campus. Charles Rosebrooks’ house and barn are still prominent features at the north entrance to campus on Route 195. His 160-acre farm was purchased by the State of Connecticut in 1917. For many years the 18th century house was home to the university’s police dept. and later Parking Services. The red barn, built in 1875, was long used by the Nutritional Sciences Dept. for research.

In 1992, the university celebrated “100 Years of Women at UConn” with a series of special programs. An English knot garden was planted in
80 YEARS AGO: THE HURRICANE OF 1938 STRUCK CONNECTICUT

The terrible storm arrived without warning on the afternoon of September 21st. The U.S. Weather Service had tracked a hurricane off the Atlantic Coast, but believed the storm died at sea on September 19. When the storm roared into southern New England two days later, no one was prepared.

For three hours, wind and rain ravaged the countryside. The wind averaged 110 mph, peaking at 180 mph. Four previous days of heavy rain had already saturated the ground and caused rivers to flood their banks. When the winds came, trees fell like dominoes. By evening, most of Connecticut was a disaster zone.

Today the storm would be classified as a Category 3 hurricane. The Town of Mansfield and the Connecticut Agricultural College suffered tremendous property damage and loss of trees, but thankfully no one was killed.

In 2008, the Mansfield Historical Society presented the exhibit, “Voices from the Storm: Memories of the 1938 Hurricane in Mansfield,” curated by Cathy Etnier Wright. It featured accounts of the storm as experienced by several local people. Ethel Rosebrooks Larkin was among those who shared their memories.

Some farmers’ children didn’t have the luxury of ducking indoors. Their parents needed all hands to save livestock and secure buildings. The experience of 13-year-old Ethel Rosebrooks on a dairy farm across the Willimantic River probably mirrored that of her Mansfield counterparts. She, her father, and grandfather “had to get our cows into the barn, out of the awful wind and rain.” But the cows were too frightened to cooperate. “They did not want to turn and face into the heavy rain and wind. They wanted to stay in the orchard area,” despite trees plunging all around. The Rosebrooks fought the elements to herd the panicked cows to the barn. Once there, her grandfather noticed that the eastern haymow window was wide open, letting the storm in. Ethel had to wrap her arms around her grandfather to keep him from blowing over while he pulled the window closed. Then the three family members waited in the barn for the storm to end.

In the Rosebrooks family, only adults ever drank coffee. But when Ethel and her father struggled back to the house after the hurricane died down, the first thing he said to her mother was, “Give this kid a cup of coffee.” Clearly, he thought Ethel’s heroism signified that she had accomplished a rite of passage.
We want to recognize the following people who helped make this year’s museum season a success. Special thanks are due to Pam Roberts who coordinated all the volunteers and to Nancy Rucker who organized refreshments for our meetings and the museum opening.

- **Those who helped out at the opening event and/or provided refreshments:** Janet Atkins, Sheila and Kenneth Clark, Donna and Bruce Clouette, Laura Crow, Mary and Ken Feathers, Lisa Ferriere, Ann Galonska, David Landry, Zoe and Gerry Leibowitz, Carol McMillan, Kathryn Myers, Pam and Dick Roberts, Nancy Rucker.

- **Our museum hosts (to date):** Donna Clouette, Laura Crow, David Landry, Mary Feathers, Lisa Ferriere, Christina Gordon, Anne Greineder, Holly Izard, Jamie Lang-Rodean, Kathryn Myers, Anne Paton, Pam and Dick Roberts, Cynara Stites.

- **Those who prepared refreshments for the SHPO Tax Credit workshop:** Donna Clouette, Ann Galonska, Mia Mitoma and Pam Roberts. And those hosted at the museum following the event: Laura Crow, Donna Clouette and Dave Landry.

- **Members of the Garden Gate Club** for their work in maintaining our garden and landscape plantings.

Please forgive us if anyone was overlooked. We appreciate all our volunteers!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!