



Volume XXII, No.3  
August, 2006

# MANCHESTER

## Manchester Area Historical Society

PO Box 56  
Manchester, Michigan 48158

Meetings: 7:30 pm  
Second Thursday each Month,  
September through June  
Village Room, 912 City Rd.



### 2005-2006 Officers

Carl Curtis, President

Jim Wilson,  
First Vice-President

Howard Parr,  
Second Vice-President

Betty Cummings, Secretary  
Rosemary Whelan, Treasurer  
Don Limpert, Imm.Past Pres.

Reno Feldkamp, Trustee  
Doug Howell, Trustee  
Jerry Swartout, Trustee

### August 2006

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## SEPTEMBER

## MEETING

The first meeting of the new year will be held on September 14th at Ray and Karen Berg's new barn, 7705 Eisman Road (between Bethel Church Rd and Austin Rd).

Ray and Karen gave a presentation of the building of their barn last April and that slideshow will be available to be seen again at the September meeting.

Election of officers for the Historical Society will be held during the business meeting. The Nominations Committee will present the slate of officers listed below. Nominations will also be opened to the floor.

President, Carl Curtis  
First Vice-President, Jim Wilson  
Second Vice-President, Jerry Swartout  
Secretary, Betty Cummings  
Treasurer, Rosemary Whelan  
Trustees, Reno Feldkamp, Doug Howell,  
Howard Parr

Refreshments will be served by the Bergs.

## President's Message

After two months off, welcome back to the Manchester Area Historical Society regular schedule of meetings and activities. September's meeting is the annual meeting of the Society with the election of officers and trustees for the ensuing year. The Nominating Committee will present its slate, nominations from the floor will be taken, and then the election will be held.

Programs are in place for the start of our regular meeting schedule and once again luminaria supplies will be sold in December.

In June the 2007 calendar was distributed to the local businesses who generously support the MAHS by selling the calendars. The calendar has been well received and I encourage everyone to continue to support the businesses that support the MAHS.

In July the MAHS continued its educational mission with an exhibit moving from the Village to the Manchester Community Fair and then to the Blacksmith Shop for Chicken Broil Day.

The day-to-day activities are running smoothly and there are not likely to be any problems in that regard. I do perceive, however, a real challenge coming upon the MAHS as the membership continues well into the senior citizen classification. The same few people have been handling the major MAHS projects for several years and some of these people are tired and want to hand the jobs over to other members, preferably younger and more energetic. The challenge, however, is the lack of younger, energetic members. I do not have an immediate solution and I ask for any ideas, suggestions, and help to broaden the base of younger adult members in the MAHS.

Carl Curtis, President



## MEETINGS AT A GLANCE

**September 14, 2006.** Our September meeting will be a field trip to Ray & Karen Berg's new barn at 7705 Eisman Road.

**October 12, 2006.** Annual Show and Tell meeting at the Village Room.

**November 9, 2006.** Karen Hinckley will present a program on the history and significance of the Luminaria in Manchester.

## CORRECTION

With apology, we note two errors that appeared in the Merriman Farmstead Preservation article in the last issue:

The Merriman farm was featured in the March 1991 calendar (not 2001).

Thomas Dodd of the Historic District Commission was incorrectly identified as John Dodd.

# HISTORY OF THE MANCHESTER MILL

The Manchester Area Historical Society held its regular monthly meeting on May 11, 2006 at the Village Hall.

Following a short business meeting, Karl Racenis presented a program on the history of the Manchester Mill.

The mill was originally built 175 years ago because there was a lot of grain farming the area, water power was available, there were steep banks that made it a good place for a dam, the dam provided a river crossing and the mill attracted farmers who needed an “exchange place” for goods and services.

Thus did Manchester’s downtown main street become known as Exchange Place

In 1826, John Gilbert, a Major in the U.S. Army, received a grant from the federal government for the land.

The mill operated under many different names over the years and was bought and sold many times between

1838-1853 and between 1867-1878. Those were hard economic times and the mill was not very profitable.

Several disasters are associated with the mill. It burned in 1853, along with several blocks of downtown. In 1875 and again in 1908 the dam washed out. In 1924, the mill building burned again; the heat from the burning mill broke windows in several other downtown buildings.

In 1939, young David Wolff drowned at the dam.

In 1940, the Mann family bought the mill and in 1954 added the grain elevator.

When Don Limpert bought the mill, he closed it as an operating mill, did some reconstruction and put in small shops. Racenis is the current owner of the mill where it is still home to several

small shops. A listing of tenants in the mill was given in the February 2006 newsletter.



## Significant Mill History

**1826** John Gilbert gets Land grant from U.S. Government.

**1832** Emanuel Case and Harry Gilbert build mill with lumber hewn by W.S. and Elijah Carr. Richard Fogy becomes the first millwright.

**1833** The first bridge, made of planks, is built across the river.

**1835** The Mill is sold to Stephen Fargo and operates as the Manchester Mill Company.

**1838-1853** Repeated changes of ownership as the Manchester Flouring Mill economically struggles.

**1853** William Vreeland buys the Mill, only to see it burn to the ground.

**1854** George Sedgwick buys the property and has John Kief rebuild the Mill.

**1855** Sedgwick sells the Farmer’s Grist Mill to Jabez Fountain, whose family will own the Mill for the next 12 years with others through Sedgwick mortgages.

**1867-1878** George Sedgwick continues to finance the Mill to several buyers. The frequent mortgages and ownership changes suggest economic distress.

**1908** Dam washes out on March 10. A temporary dam is built and it washes out in May.

**1940** Sale to Ernest G., Earl, and Willard Mann.

**1976** Willard & Dorothy Mann buy out E.G. Mann & Sons.

**1981** Sale to Don Limpert.

**2001** Sale to Karl and Pat Racenis.

# 30 YEAR HISTORY EXHIBIT FINISHES ITS RUN

The Society was honored by the Community Resource Center at their November 11, 2005, banquet at Chelsea Community Hospital. For that meeting a special exhibit was prepared to summarize activities of the Society since incorporation in December, 1976. A plaque marking the occasion was presented to the Society.

The exhibit on three bulletin boards used about 50 selected items to outline major activities of the Society, on-going projects developed over the years, and projects in which the Society assisted others. To round out archive materials from our files, items were borrowed from Betty Cummings, Gerald Swartout and Wilma Lentz.

The exhibit then was displayed in the generator room at Village Hall for several months. It was re-moved to become our exhibit at the Manchester Community Fair where old calendar issues were added and visitors were encouraged to take issues of interest to them, for a donation.

After the Fair, the exhibit was moved to the Blacksmith Shop for Chicken Broil day. Many more than the 140 who signed in that day visited us. A representative of the Tecumseh Historical Society picked up a copy of each calendar since 1984 (except the



1989 issue which is out of print). The Society remains indebted to the blacksmiths and docents who worked the broil at our “cool” shop that day. Blacksmiths for the day were Tim Armentrout, Dave Goodrich and Alex Gleason. Docents were Jerry Swartout, Ann Walton, Dave and Margaret Goodrich, and Doug Howell, assisted by Sue Gleason and Art Gleason. It is reassuring to know we have a new crew to replace what the Knauss-Armentrout family had volunteered to do at the

shop for so many years on broil day. Let us hope their health problems permit them to come back soon.

For both days receipts amounted to about \$140.00, primarily donations for back issue calendars. The de-commissioned exhibit has been returned to the files and the generous donors after an unusually long run. Thanks to all.

*Howard Parr*



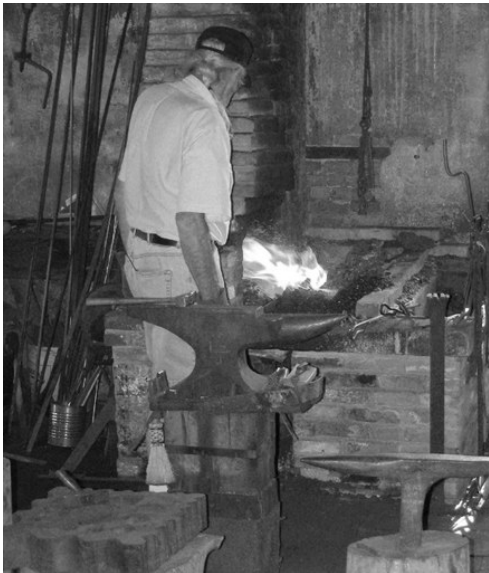
For many years, Margaret Goodrich has sent calendar information to the Washtenaw County Genealogy Society for indexing in a genealogy report. The 2007 Calendar has been forwarded to the WCG Society to be included in the master file and report. Each name in a calendar is listed and indexed by the year, month and calendar page where it appears. This report is also on file at the Blacksmith Shop, and is frequently helpful to those seeking information about their families. Thanks to Margaret for starting this project and for continuing it each year.

# ANNUAL PICNIC



Annual Picnic  
Chi-Bro Park  
June 8th, 2006

No meeting, no business, no minutes,  
just great fun and good food!.



## Michigan Association of Blacksmiths

Dave Goodrich has requested use of our Blacksmith Shop on November 11, 2006 for an Association meeting. We are happy to help them with our facilities. After all, blacksmithing remains one of our identified objectives!

## A Tale of Two Railroads

The 2007 calendar has been printed and is now available at many local businesses; another beautiful edition! Reno Feldkamp has chaired and co-chaired the calendar committee for many years and has always been in charge of calendar ad sales. Doug Howell has produced the last three calendars -a wonderful job! Thank you from the organization to all those who have helped with this major fundraiser.



### Manchester Exhibit at Village Hall

For the dedication of that building in 2003 we were asked to set up a display in a large, lighted permanent display case along a busy basement walkway. One hundred items from our collection, each either with *Manchester* printed on it or of significance in local history were arranged on the three glass shelves. It became so popular that it has remained there until this summer when elevator installation began nearby. We were requested to remove it to avoid damage. After construction I'm sure there'll be another invitation to us to set up another appropriate display. We're always open to your suggestions.

### HELP WANTED

Several of those responsible for activities of the Society have expressed a desire, or need, to pass some or all of their duties on to others.

**Howard Parr** has arranged with **Jerry Swartout** to take over many of his duties as Vice President and House Committee chairman. Thank you Jerry for agreeing to step up!

**Reno Feldkamp** has chaired the calendar committee for many, many years and has asked for relief.

**Doug Howell** has produced the calendar for three years and would like help so he can spend more time working on the website.

And finally, **Sharon Curtis** has finished four years as newsletter editor and would welcome a break.

Please talk to any of these volunteers to see how you might be able to help.