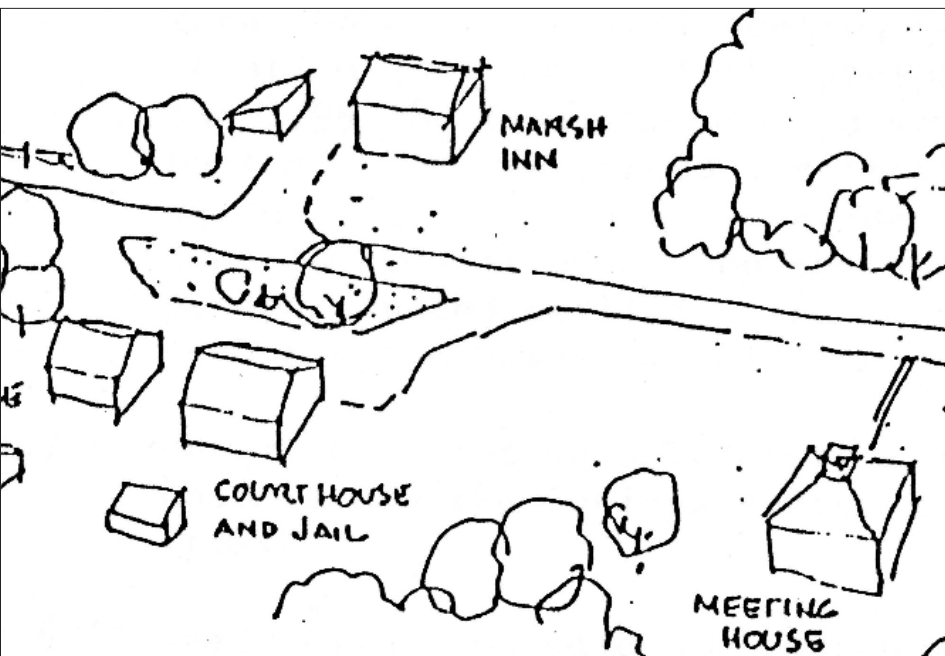




Colonel William Marsh: A Fateful Choice

Manchester was established in 1761 by a group of land speculators known as the Proprietors, who lived in Amenia, NY, 265 miles south of Manchester. The land they had acquired was in the New Hampshire Grants, so-called because it had been sold by Benning Wentworth, the royal governor of New Hampshire, after payment of substantial sums. Almost from the start there was trouble.

The men who secured property here were interested in establishing homes for their families and farming their own acres. The first house was built in 1764 by Samuel Rose. As more settlers arrived, a community began to take shape. Gideon Ormsby and Jeremiah French, both original large landowners in Manchester, laid out the north-south road, which was essentially a dirt path going from Manchester to Dorset. By 1768 more of the wilderness had been cleared,

a few farms established, and additional roads carved out, though at this point they were little more than bridle paths.

William Marsh was also one of the largest landholders and held leadership positions in early town government. He had married Jeremiah French's sister, Sarah, while living in Amenia. He and his young family moved to Manchester in 1769, where he promptly erected one of the first buildings in the village: a tavern. The plain, two-storied wooden building lot, located where the southern wing of the Equinox is today, was only 50 x 45 feet, but from the start was an important gathering place where many critical decisions were debated in the years before Vermont became a state. Offices he held in the town government included road commissioner and town treasurer.

During the years prior to the war with Britain, the settlers were constantly harassed by landowning interests in New York, who coveted land they believed was legally theirs. Their efforts were met with fierce resistance by the men



In the foreground, Lyman Orton with Ted Hopkins at a Manchester Historical Society gathering.

IN MEMORIAM

TED HOPKINS, 1933-2025

Our dear friend Ted Hopkins died on May 28, 2025, at the age of 92. He was a member of the MHS board of directors for several years, but it was his cheerful willingness to donate his services to MHS over the years that made him so special to MHS.

In 2013 he spearheaded the renovation of “Little Eli,” a 19th-century fire pumper that had been given to MHS in 1909. Ted also expertly crafted our Exceptional Service plaque which hangs outside our collection room in the library and along with his son, Ed, helped us with many projects at our Rocking Stone Cottage.

Though he was born in Connecticut, Manchester was his home. He spent summers in Vermont with his grandfather, A. Ray Ball, who owned the historic Equinox Hotel. When he was 13, he enrolled at Burr and Burton Seminary, graduating in 1952. The following year, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving during the Korean War as a machinist mate on the USS Stormes destroyer. When his tour of duty ended, he hitchhiked back to Manchester with \$15 in his pocket.

Ted took up carpentry and went on to become a master carpenter who was widely respected for his exceptional skill at using hand tools. After working for Orrin Beattie for 17 years, he established Ted Hopkins & Sons where he worked alongside his son Ed until he retired at age 88. There are many examples of Ted’s craftsmanship throughout Manchester and Dorset in homes and inns. On your next visit to the Dorset Inn, take a look at the beautiful fireplaces that Ted built of Dorset butternut, white pine, and Danby imperial marble.

In 1960, Ted joined the Manchester Fire Department. During his 25 years as a firefighter, he was Fire Chief for four years (1977-1981), and also served as president of the Vermont State Firefighters’ Association. A memorial service for Ted was held on June 29 at the Manchester Firehouse. It was a moving service done with warmth, dignity, and humor, befitting a man who encompassed all three.



The plaque that Ted made for MHS that lists the recipients of the MHS Exceptional Service Awards. Himself included!



Ted and Eric Severance at MHS's Manchester History Day.

A full obituary may be found at www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bennington/name/edward-hopkins-obituary

1897 LEGACY SOCIETY

Be remembered for what you value most.

A simple bequest of whatever size that you include in your will is one of the most everlasting gifts you can make. A bequest to the Manchester Historical Society reflects your love of history and the importance you place on the preservation of the past and education for the future.

We are so grateful to the lovers of history and supporters of MHS who have included us in their estate plans.

Colonel William Marsh *(continued)*

who had already divided and settled the disputed land. In 1770, a group of citizens came together under the leadership of Ethan and Ira Allen, and Seth Warner, to oppose the New York claims. They called themselves the Green Mountain Boys. William Marsh was an original member, given the rank of colonel, and trusted enough to be put in charge of supplies during their capture of Fort Ticonderoga in 1775.

Once the struggle for independence from Great Britain began, the colonists, most of whom were of English descent, were faced with a choice: Should they throw in their lot with those who wanted complete separation from the mother country, or should they remain loyal to the King? For patriots like Ethan Allen, the choice was clear. But there were others who were not entirely convinced the rebellion would be successful. One of them was William Marsh.

Marsh had one goal in mind: to keep his lands. In 1777, with the news that General Burgoyne was moving south from Canada with the intention of taking Albany, Marsh knew he had to act. The property disputes with New York had continued with no resolution in sight. The ever-present threat of seizure of their lands caused great anxiety to the settlers in Vermont. The Continental Congress offered no help, nor did King George III.

Marsh was willing to take the risk. After much thought, he chose to join Burgoyne and the British forces. If the British won, he believed he could count on the laws of Britain to protect his lands. Knowing well that the patriots consisted of a free-floating army of local militias with little central leadership, he gambled they could not win.

Marsh fought with the British against his own friends at the Battle of Bennington. He was captured but, after paying a fine, was released and allowed to return to his home. A friend warned him that he was very likely to be killed for his treason to the cause, and he soon fled to Canada, leaving his wife, children, and father behind.

Marsh had sold some of his property in Manchester before he left, but what was still there was confiscated. His family moved to East Dorset where his father owned property. Marsh stayed in Canada, serving in administrative roles with the British army, until the war was over. He received amnesty in 1793 and returned to Vermont where he died on June 9, 1816, in East Dorset, aged 78. His 1818 gravestone in the East Dorset Cemetery has two badges: one from the SAR (Sons of the American Revolution), and the other from U.E. Loyalist (United Empire Loyalist)... a unique recognition to say the least.

Interestingly, Vermont dropped out of the war in 1780 over the refusal of the Continental Congress to recognize its independence from New York. It is the only state in the Union to have originally been a republic. During these years, there were negotiations underway to have Vermont become a province of Canada. Marsh took part in these efforts, which became moot once Vermont was admitted to the Union in 1791, after thirty years of holding off New York, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, as well as the British.

William Marsh's name is today remembered for the tavern he built in Manchester Village, rather than the fact that he was a Loyalist who was forced to flee to Canada in 1777. Perhaps he might also be remembered as a loyal Vermonter who loved this state, but who gambled and lost.

Summer History Series

The Great Battle of Bennington

August 9, 2025

**Manchester Community Library
1-2 pm**

On Saturday, August 9, renowned Vermont historian and author Howard Coffin will give a presentation on the Revolutionary War's tide-turning Battle of Bennington. The event is the third in our Summer History Series in celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the nation's founding. Please join us for this close look at a critical turning point in the War for Independence.



Honoring Hildene's Anniversary

Curator Shawn Harrington gave an address on June 22 in Hildene's new Lincoln Hall, "The Lincolns and Manchester: Commemorative Talk in Celebration of 120 Years to the Day Since the Lincoln Family Moved into Hildene." He gave the rapt audience of 150 a wide-ranging overview of why the Lincolns came to Manchester, their decision to build Hildene, and their early years here, including numerous rare photographs from family photo albums. See it online: gnat-tv.org/lincolns-and-manchester-hildene-120th-anniversary/

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The mission of the Manchester Historical Society is to collect, preserve, interpret and present the story of Manchester through the research collection, exhibitions, programs, and publications.

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MANCHESTER'S HISTORY

Short podcast-style audio and visual tour of Manchester Village, Manchester Center, and Manchester Depot.

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- The tour works on both iPhone and Android systems. To begin, click on the white triangle within the green circle at the bottom right of the screen.
- The App includes information on 20 Historic Sites.
- You can also enjoy TravelStorys GPS on your desktop or laptop in the comfort of your home at <https://www.manchesterhistoricalsocietyvt.org/walking-tour>



Focus your camera on the QR code and then click the link.

The Manchester Historical Society,
located in the lower level of the Manchester Community Library,
is open Fridays 1-3 pm and by appointment.

You can always find more interesting history and up-to-the-minute MHS happenings on social media. Ask us a question about local history and we'll do our best to find an answer.



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