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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.



Four New Members Join the Board of Directors

The MHS Board of Directors is very happy to welcome Robyn Harrington, Melissa Oliva, Sarah Cavanagh, and Meg Kenny to the board. Robyn is a managing director at Manchester Capital Management and lives in Sunderland. She is taking over as treasurer from Laura Heinel. Melissa is currently the alumni engagement coordinator at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine. Sarah is a freelance product developer and lives in South Londonderry. A resident of Manchester, Meg was a history teacher for many years and is currently the associate head of school at Burr and Burton Academy. Both Sarah and Melissa are graduates of Burr and Burton Academy.

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1897 SOCIETY



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CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

In celebration of Women's History Month, we thought we'd share the story of some of Manchester's remarkable women who contributed so significantly to the social and cultural life of Manchester in the 1890s and beyond.

Frances Skinner Willing (1848-1904)

In honor of the Manchester Community Library's 10th Anniversary

Frances Skinner was born in Chicago in 1848, the fourth child and third daughter of Judge Mark Skinner and his wife Elizabeth. In 1870, at age 22, Frances married Henry Jenkins Willing, a prominent young businessman who was at one time a partner of Marshall Field's. She and Henry had two children, Evelyn Pierpont Willing and Mark Skinner Willing.

Her father had been born in Manchester in 1813, the son of early settler Richard Skinner, who was governor of Vermont from 1820-1823. He loved Manchester, and the Skinner family returned every summer from Chicago and stayed in the original Skinner cottage on Main Street just south of the Equinox. Judge Skinner died there on September 16, 1887.

As a monument to her father, Frances could think of no better gift to the town than a



library. She conceived of the idea as early as 1889 but it wasn't until 1893 that plans began to come together. She provided \$55,000 (\$2 million in today's money) for the construction and outfitting of the building. D.K. Simonds was persuaded to move his house across West Road (now the Reluctant Panther). Franklin Orvis also sold her some land in 1893. In 1895 she hired architect Frederick W. Stickney of Lowell, Massachusetts, who had designed Edward Isham's

home in Manchester in 1889. On July 7, 1897, the Mark Skinner Library opened its doors with a formal dedication ceremony, with Mrs. Willing and her family in attendance.

Frances died in Pasadena, California, in 1904 at the age of 56. Her body was returned to Manchester and on May 19 lay in state in the library she had named for her father. Frances was buried in Dellwood Cemetery beside her father. In her will she left an additional \$40,000 to the library endowment (roughly \$1.5 million in today's money).

The Mark Skinner Library and the Manchester Historical Society were both founded in 1897. Many of the same people were responsible for their establishment, including Mary Campbell Munson and two members of the Hawley family.

Mary Campbell Munson

A great-niece of Josiah Burton, Mary graduated from Burr and Burton Seminary in 1880, and then attended Smith College for two years. In 1882 she married Judge Loveland Munson, a prominent Manchester lawyer and Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court. He was the first president

MANCHESTER'S REMARKABLE WOMEN (continued)



Mary Campbell Munson
(continued)

of the library. In addition to the library, Mary was very active in a number of community organizations, including Burr and Burton and the First Congregational Church, where for over fifty years she taught the Sunday School class for girls and wrote a well-regarded history of the church. She was also a founding member of the

Monday Club, a local group of women who came together for regular intellectual discussions on topics of their choice.



Wilhelmina Hawley

Wilhelmina Hawley was the unmarried daughter of Eli J. Hawley, Manchester's most successful businessman at the time. Her great-grandparents were early settlers in Manchester and their family at one time owned much of Equinox Mountain as well as a large farm south of Manchester Village. An 1876 graduate of

Burr and Burton, Wilhelmina became a college professor in Ohio, but she spent every summer at her home in Manchester Village.



Julia Hawley

Julia Hawley was Wilhelmina's cousin. In addition to their work on behalf of the library, they were two of the founding members of the Manchester Historical Society, also in 1897. In 1899 Julia organized the Twentieth Century Club. Its purpose was the "study of Art, Belles-Lettres, and Ancient and Modern Social Customs and Functions"[sic]. Meetings

were held in the summer and the public was invited to attend. The club continued to meet until 1932. She was also a charter member of the Monday Club.

The Daughters of the American Revolution, Ormsby Chapter, was chartered in 1896. They placed markers on the graves of all the Revolutionary soldiers in Manchester. Over the years, the chapter also arranged for the placement of seventeen milestones on the old New York-Montreal post road from Bennington to Dorset. In 1937, the group was responsible for placing the stone marking Route 30 as the Seth Warner Memorial Highway.



Frances and Marcia Snyder

Frances and Marcia Snyder, teachers at Burr and Burton, along with Mary Orvis and Mary Campbell Munson, founded the Monday Club in 1895. The purpose of the club was to bring together likeminded women for regular intellectual discussions on topics of their choice. The

group, which still meets today, was limited to sixteen members, with new members nominated by current members when there is a vacancy.



Louise Arkell

Louise Ryals de Cravioto married Bartlett Arkell in 1929 and together they enjoyed many happy summers at Point O' View, their beautiful Manchester Village home. The Arkells were early supporters of the Southern Vermont Arts Center founded in 1933. During the lean years of World War II, Louise Arkell raised three times the amount of

money needed for the 1942 annual art exhibition. When the Southern Vermont Artists purchased the Webster estate on West Road in 1950, she worked tirelessly to bring the plan for Manchester's first arts center to fruition by hosting fundraisers at her Manchester home. When it was decided to add a music shed in 1953, Louise gave the lead gift of \$1,000 (roughly \$11,000 today) with another \$500 for the music program and continued her fundraising efforts for the next three years. The \$40,000 (\$460,000 today) goal was met, and on July 1, 1956, the Music Auditorium, what is today the Arkell Pavilion, was dedicated. Louise continued her support of the Southern Vermont Arts

Center throughout the 1960s, where the music, arts, and dance programs, as well as outreach to engage children's participation, continued to grow.



Sarah Given Larson

Sarah was the granddaughter of the food magnate H.J. Heinz and had been coming to Manchester during the summer months for many years. Her parents, John and Irene Heinz Given, built the large home on Taconic Road called The Gables and were generous members of the community.

During her many years as a resident of Manchester, Sarah was known for her quiet and effective generosity to the Manchester community. She was a dedicated supporter of the Manchester Historical Society and many of her photographs taken in the 1950 and 1960s are now part of the MHS collection. She was responsible for a new classroom wing at Burr and Burton completed in 1965. Manchester's current Town Hall was originally the Mount Laurel School, which she had made possible. The Mark Skinner Library in Manchester Village was able to expand its facility through a gift she gave in 1963 in honor of her parents. She was an advocate for childcare for working mothers, and in 1971, she donated her house on Highland Avenue in Manchester Center to the Northshire Day School, a childcare center which had been established in 1968 to answer a growing need. Her gifts to Manchester were important at the time and are still today.

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

1897 LEGACY SOCIETY

The 1897 Legacy Society honors the generous donors who have made a planned gift to MHS. We are so grateful to them for sharing our love of Manchester history and our commitment to making sure our community's stories are available to future generations.

Michael Heinel
Sharron and Frank Kropa
Lyman Orton and Janice Izzi
Barbara and Mike Powers
Ruth Stewart
Frederica and Mark Templeton

When you support the Manchester Historical Society with a gift from your estate, you become a member of a special group of individuals who recognize the ongoing value of MHS and the importance of its place in our community's future. If you would like to know more about how to make a legacy gift, please contact Frederica Templeton by email info@manchesterhistoricalsocietyvt.org or by telephone 802.549.4582.

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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