



The Fisher-Richardson House



The Fisher-Richardson House is owned by the Town of Mansfield, with tours conducted by the Mansfield Historical Society during the summer months.

The Fisher-Richardson House takes its name from the family of Mary Fisher, the daughter of Mansfield's first minister. Mary inherited the house in 1763 following the deaths of her father, the Reverend Ebenezer White, and her brother Benjamin. This was the home of her children and grandchildren, including her granddaughter Evelina Fisher who married Ira Richardson. Evelina and Ira's daughter Martha was the last person to live in the Fisher-Richardson House.

In February 1930 the Town of Mansfield acquired the house as a gift from Martha Richardson's heir, Emma Frost. Town meeting voted to restore the building to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Commonwealth.

In September 1930, the house opened to the public as a museum with a historical pageant that included Fisher and Richardson descendants and the town's historian, Jennie F. Copeland.

The house stands as a rare example of a modestly sized rural home of the mid-18th century. The east end of the house, approximately 600 square feet, was built first. In about 1800 the west end was added,



*Rendering of house c. 1750
by Lou Andrews*

and the arrangement of the east rooms was changed. A restoration attempted to return the east rooms to their original appearance.

Visitors to the house can view early gun-stock posts, feather-edged paneling, and decorated ceilings, among other architectural details, as well as artifacts owned by the Mansfield Historical Society.

**The house will be opening on
June 8th from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Admission is free**

Can't wait to visit the Fisher-Richardson House?

[Click here for a 3D virtual tour.](#)

Returned Home



Pictured is a washstand with bowls, pitchers, cup, and chamber pot, back to its home at the Fisher-Richardson House.

It was donated from the estate of Joyce "Joy" Fisher.

Joy is believed to be the last of the Mansfield's Fisher family. She passed away in 2023.

Thanks to Jenny Nathans for facilitating the donation.



Meet Our Sestercentennial Parade Grand Marshal: Lou Andrews

by Andrew Todesco

Mansfield has been blessed with many dedicated public servants. But over the past five-plus decades few have been more visible or energetic than our Sestercentennial Parade Grand Marshal: Lou Andrews.

Louis Andrews was raised in Newton Upper Falls, MA. He served four years of active duty in the United States Air Force, stationed for over a year in Korea.



Lou arrived in Mansfield in 1968 at the age of 27. Today's residents might find his main motivation for coming here interesting: inexpensive housing!

He enjoyed a career as an electrical engineer, employed at multiple electronic firms, including Northrop Corporation where he designed test equipment on guidance systems for the Tomahawk and cruise missiles. He then worked as Director of Technical Operations at Analog Devices' system division in Norwood. Later he opened Andrews Computer Systems on North Main Street in Mansfield.

Lou first settled on Chauncy Street in a house that was moved in the early 1980's to make way for the new Route 140. He moved to Willow Street and now resides on Fruit Street, with his wife Mary, in an historic house built in 1875 by selectman Darwin Deane. Restoring the Deane home has been a source of great pleasure for Lou, who is also a talented woodworker. He enjoys "making sawdust" in his home woodshop where he builds furniture.

However, Lou's greatest contribution to Mansfield is his long and dedicated public life, serving in both public and private capacities dedicated to Mansfield's improvement. His public service includes: the Mansfield Jaycees, which he served as President; the Mansfield Lions Club, which he served as Treasurer; the 2004 Mansfield Sister Cities Organizing Committee, when Mansfields across the world gathered here; the Mansfield Democratic Town Committee which he served as Treasurer; the Board of Health; the

Conservation Commission; the Great Woods Study Committee; and various ad-hoc committees. Lou also played a leading role in designing and coordinating the construction of the new Mansfield Animal Shelter, which opened in 2011. Lou served on the Mansfield Airport Commission for 18 years. He authored lease agreements that made the airport profitable, and he worked on coordinating construction of the new administration building.

Lou Andrews' impact on Mansfield is more than transitional: it is lasting. This can be seen in what he considers to be his chief interest of his public career, his involvement in the Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield. Lou was a founding member of the NRT upon its formation in 1971, and would serve as its president. Dedicated to acquiring and maintaining conservation land in town, he was involved in negotiating the purchase and gifting of hundreds of acres of land for conservation.

Through the NRT Lou compiled and published a collection of historical articles authored by his friend and fellow NRT member, Harry Chase. The books, known as "This Old Town" and its sequel "This Old Town – Revisited" will be treasured by the townspeople for years to come. Lou has also served on the Mansfield Historical Commission where he championed the restoration and reopening of the Fisher-Richardson House. This included a complete overhaul of the displays at the historic homestead, which are now greatly enjoyed by visitors. Lou remains a valued member of the Mansfield Historical Society, where he began an extensive project to catalog and scan photographs and other historical materials owned by the Society.

In an interesting connection to the events of this year, Lou was active in the Mansfield's Bicentennial celebration in 1975. His work included the coordination of Bicentennial parade, giving marching bands, floats, and other celebrants the "okay to go" signal so the parade would be spaced out properly. It is quite fitting that as Mansfield observes its Sestercentennial celebration of 2025 Lou will be where he belongs, serving as Grand Marshal, a great tribute to his years of service to the people of Mansfield. Thank you, Lou Andrews, on a job well done!



Betsey Parker: A single woman owning land — *by Nancy Breef-Pilz*

When our family first moved into our Greek revival farm house on South Main Street, we knew that it was old. Traces of its history were everywhere: cozy low-ceilinged rooms, an iron cook stove from 1899, wide yellow-pine flooring, old ceramic sconces, a claw foot tub, and makeshift closet spaces tucked into the eaves upstairs. The barn in back had a second floor filled with hay under which I found an 1888 children's diary, various 19th-century bible tracts, 1920s newspapers, a rowboat, yards of pine planking, and canning jars. In a flour box in the cellar, there were old school books, 1910s movie magazines and sheet music, and, amazingly, an 1825 Koran, translated into English.



605 South Main Street

After visiting the Northern Bristol County Registry of Deeds in Taunton and working my way backwards through the deeds for the property, I discovered that 605 South Main Street was part of a 17-acre "tract of woodland" first purchased in 1849 by Betsey Parker. A single woman owning property was unique for the time, so I investigated further, checking town maps, directories, and census records, and even gravestones, for any information I could find. From my research, I pieced together that Betsey was born in 1795, one of the seven children of Elkanah and Mehitabel Hall, who lived on what is now Hall Street (50 Hall). Earlier generations of the Hall family were the original buyers of the Taunton North Purchase, including portions of Mansfield; Betsey's father, who had served in a Bristol County regiment during the American Revolution, was among the Hall descendants who "settled the area as farmers and businessmen" (Halls of New England, 568). In 1822, Betsey married James B. Parker, of Norton, and they moved to Petersham, MA, where they owned a farm and had four daughters, one of whom died at age one. In 1846,

James died of consumption, and Betsey (likely accompanied by her daughters) returned to Mansfield. Her brother Hermon, who lived in a large house on South Main Street (600 South Main), and her brother-in-law Darwin Deane, who lived by what is now Mansfield Airport (255 Fruit), sold her land, adjacent to theirs, where she built a small farmhouse.

There is little additional information in the historical record about Betsey Parker. Given the existing barn and land, it is likely that she kept animals and a small farm. Her oldest daughter, Elizabeth, married and moved to West Bridgewater in 1850. In 1854, Betsey's youngest daughter, Joanna, died of typhoid fever, at age 25. Her brother Hermon, who had worked as a school teacher, surveyor, and justice of the peace, became a Mansfield selectman starting in 1849 (Halls of New England, 637). And, as Jennie Copeland noted in 1929: "All the Halls were interested in education. Hermon Hall was one of the seven men who built and helped finance the Mansfield Academy from 1842 to 1851 or there about, so that their children might receive an education in town." (Mansfield News, August 9, 1929). Betsey lived in the house 24 years and died in 1873, at age 78. She was buried in the Old Town Cemetery, near her parents, Elkanah and Mehitabel, and her daughter, Joanna.



Betsy Parker Grave Stone

While several other families over the years have added their own stories to the home, we purchased an historical marker



to identify Betsey Parker as its original owner and recognize the house as part of the cluster of Hall family-associated homes along Hall and South Main Streets.

Where Have All the Gladioli Gone? — *by Nancy Breef-Pilz*

In the 1920s Mansfield boasted the most professional Gladioli growers in all of New England, who were shipping bulbs all over the United States. "No other town in New England had so many enthusiastic growers of gladioli on such a large scale." According to a March 9, 1923 article in the Mansfield News there were about 15 acres of land in Mansfield devoted to Gladioli, an industry valued at, conservatively, \$75,000! (That's about \$1,402,627 today.)



As the story goes, these flowers were introduced to our town by John Zeestratton, a native of Holland, who started growing a variety of species in his garden as a hobby. Many growers were attracted by these "spikes of brilliantly colored flowers" and

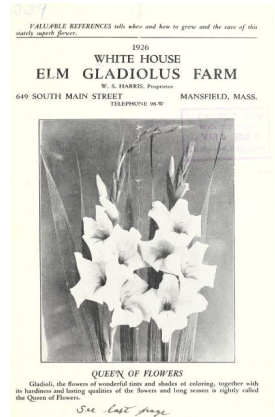
started growing their own. Among the most prominent, as reported by the Boston Globe in August 6, 1922), Frank O. and F.F. Shepardson, father and son, were the first to grow and sell professionally, and established their business about 1914. They had about 3 acres of land devoted to Gladioli fields "on the direct road from Mansfield to Norton," and they attracted the interest of those passing by! One of their neighbors, Robert Walker, was the largest grower in Mansfield, starting with some sixty quarts of bulblets, and eventually expanded his fields to about three and one half acres of flowers. He was "formerly an automobile salesman, but abandoned this work in order to give all his time to his flowers and bulbs." (Boston Globe, August 6, 1922) Located on South Main Street, William S. Harris was a poultry raiser who also became a flower grower. He was said to have kept the chickens on one side of the road and the gladioli on the other. He was well known for having the most varieties of any growers in Mansfield; over 250 varieties and growing. (I found his 1926 catalogue online at <https://archive.org/details/CAT31323544/page/n1/mode/2up> .) Miss Jane Bushnell and Mrs. Elsie Tragardt were two women among the successful but smaller gladioli businesses. Both lived in West Mansfield. As reported by Harry Chase in an article from This Old Town, "practically everyone in Mansfield grew gladioli" including his mother, who "grew a showy garden of 'glads' every year."

There were so many growers in Mansfield that they started a

society: the Mansfield Gladiolus Association, which included both professional growers and enthusiasts. "Annually, a feature of the association program is the gladiolus show, which has assumed such proportions, and quality of exhibit that it closely rivals the metropolitan shows. The exhibition not only attracts the best of exhibits but countless admirers." (Mansfield News, March 9, 1923) This was held every August in the large auditorium on the second floor of the Old Town Hall on Union Street.

In a December 27, 1973 Mansfield News article commemorating Rudolph "Rudy" Koukol's 80th birthday, he reminisces about returning to Mansfield in 1919, after the army, and "found employment with Frank Shepardson at a time when Mansfield was just beginning to become one of the top gladioli raising centers of the country." After six months, Koukol bought a portion of Shepardson's business and by 1925 he started the Bay State Gladioli Corporation which he continued to operate until his son, David, acquired it a few years before the article was written. He remembered shipping to all 48 states, and "Sears Roebuck & Co. was one of my bigger customers." At the date of the article, there were only a few of the growers left in Mansfield besides his son. Frank Shepardson and Albert Lehan were "still in the business over half a century."

It seems that gladiolus have lost popularity over the years. It is even hard to find them in flower shops when ordering an arrangement. They are considered "old fashioned" and outdated compared to newer, trendy varieties. They are also associated with funerals and mourning, making them less appealing for general decorating; however, keep your eyes open for them this summer. In celebration of the town's Sestercentennial, the Garden Club of Mansfield is going to be planting 100s of gladiolus bulbs throughout the Town in the town gardens that the Garden Club maintains. The Club will also have some gladioli bulbs to "give away" at the plant sale on Saturday, May 10th. I have already started my "glad" bulbs in the house and hope to have some "spikes of brilliantly colored flowers" in my garden this summer and fall.





Historic Marker Program

The Historic Marker Program was established to honor and celebrate the history of the town of Mansfield and to create visibility, awareness, and interest in the individuals and families who helped shape our community.

Many people are curious about the house where they live and visit the Historical Society to find out more about their home and the many diverse people and places that made Mansfield what it is today.



The Historic Marker Program is a way for residents to share that knowledge with the broader community by purchasing a custom-made, dated sign that helps preserve the story of Mansfield.

[For details click here to visit our website.](#)



250TH ANNIVERSARY SESTERCENTENNIAL EVENTS

- Saturday, May 17th 11:00 AM start
250th Anniversary Parade
- Friday, August 22nd through Sunday the
24th Incorporation Weekend
- Saturday, October 4th (Tentative Date)
250th Finale Event TBD
- Saturday, October 18th
Bonfire & Fireworks
- Saturday, December 13th
Cultural Celebration

For more information go to
www.mansfieldma.com/604/250th-Anniversary-Sestercentennial-Celeb



Did you know?

- ☞ The Copeland House is open to the public on Monday nights from 6:00 to 8:00 PM; Saturdays 10:00 AM to noon. (Except holidays)
- ☞ The Mansfield History Center, in the Copeland House, has an extensive database of photographs, documents and historical items.
- ☞ Mansfield memorabilia, maps, and books are available at our [website](#) or at the Copeland House.
- ☞ Anyone can join. We welcome new members and hope that you can help by volunteering at the Copeland House or serving as a docent at the Fisher-Richardson House. All levels of interest are welcomed. As a member you will be informed by email of upcoming meetings and will be able to participate in our annual meeting. We appreciate your support.

Upcoming Events

☞ Quarterly Mansfield Historical Society Meeting

Monday, May 12th, 6:00 PM:

Copeland House, 53 Rumford Ave



Mansfield Historical Society Newsletter

Lou Andrews, editor

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