

Out&About

Preserving history
in Manchester

Four Manchester properties have received recognition for efforts by the owners to preserve the historic character of their buildings. The awards were presented by the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District Commission at a May 22 reception at Manchester Town Hall. This advisory commission is appointed by the town to promote, encourage, and secure the preservation and rehabilitation of the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District. May is National Preservation Month; the commission has presented local awards since 2001. Commission members and Manchester Mayor Jay Moran thanked the award winners for their work to preserve Manchester's history and charm. The purpose of the awards is to recognize property owners who "have maintained their property in a manner that preserves its historic values and character." The commission looked at properties throughout town, searching for examples of buildings restored to condition similar to the original.



The circa 1830 wood-shingled building at 21 Hartford Road is owned by South Methodist Church. The structure was originally the home of George Wells Cheney (1799-1840). The church purchased the property in 2003 and restored it to house a youth minister and church offices. Pictured from left are architect and church board member Jim Hoagland, Manchester Mayor Jay Moran, and Earle Bidwell, music director, who also serves on the church's board. Hoagland said the project "helped to re-establish this wonderful old home's presence at the eastern end of the Great Lawn. The preservation efforts will allow the home to serve the church for many years to come." The renovation was made possible by a gift from lifelong church member Virginia Ryan (1919-2015).

The 1926 craftsman-style bungalow at 20 Green Hill St. has been owned by Gary Cesca, pictured with Manchester Mayor Jay Moran, and his wife, Sarah, for about 15 years. They have worked to preserve the house using materials appropriate to its historical period. The couple were told their property was a "kit house," popular in the 1920s and 30s. They were sold by Sears, Montgomery-Ward, and other companies. Kits were sent by train to the homeowner with instructions on how to put the house together — like assembling furniture. Cesca said he and his wife looked at many houses, but it wasn't until they saw this one that they made an offer. Green Hill Street was promoted by realtors E. J. Holl and G. Bidwell beginning in 1912 as "Greenhurst," in the Manchester Green area, between Munro and Parker Streets.



The 1926 wood-shingled, four-square style house with hip roof at 32 Westminster St. has been owned since 1992 by Tim and Debra Gurski. The house was built for Henry Smith, a salesman for the Watkins Brothers Furniture Store in Downtown Main Street. The couple, pictured above with Manchester Mayor Jay Moran, has carefully preserved the house, which is near the East Cemetery in the "Hollywood" section of town, named for real estate developer E. J. Holl. Debbie Gurski said that she and Tim "used to drive around to look at houses, and always liked this one, and were very pleased when it came on the market."

The 1904 traditional wood-clad house with decorative shingles at 44 Ridge St. has been owned by Pat and Richard Cannon since 2009. They bought the house from the Krause family, who had bought the land from Cheney Brothers in 1901. Krause family members lived in the house until the Cannons purchased it. The renovations and improvements have been extensive. Their friends Joanne and Rick Meier were so impressed with the effort and work that Pat and Richard put into the house that they nominated it for a preservation award. The exterior wood has been restored and painted, and original historic features kept in place both outside and in: porch decorations, coffered ceiling and beadboard walls. Pictured from left are Pat Cannon, Manchester Mayor Jay Moran, and Richard Cannon. Pat said that Richard has done 90 percent of the renovation work himself and that "we are so honored by this recognition. The charm of an older home is what we wanted. The process has been enjoyable and rewarding — there is always more to do."

