



# Sheffield Historical Society

## Fall 2003 Newsletter

### ► Baskets and More Baskets! ◀



Did you know that some of America's most prized baskets are made from black ash? Want to learn more about this multipurpose household object?

Then join us at our season-opening meeting on **Friday, September 12, at 7:30 p.m.** for a program on the **Harvest of Black Ash from Trunk to Basket with JoAnn Kelly Catsos.** This nationally honored basket weaver will tell the history, art, and culture of basket weaving through slide and lecture. The evening's event is free and open to the public and will take place in the **Fellowship Room of Old Parish Church, Sheffield.**



Catsos began teaching rattan reed basketry to children and adults throughout the Northeast in 1986. Currently she is teaching her original black ash basketry designs at basketry conventions and craft schools around the country, and exhibiting her one-of-a-kind pieces. Catsos and her husband, Steve, process the black ash splint, make molds, and do the wood-working involved with her black ash baskets. Formerly an elementary school teacher, she loves teaching basketry and meeting people in the

process. She has written and published 21 basketry patterns to date.

Her work has been published in the 1999 edition of *Splint Woven Basketry* by Robin Taylor Daugherty; in the July/August 1999 issue of *Early American Homes* magazine; in *Directory of Traditional American Crafts*; and in the Fall 1999 and Winter 1999/2000 issues of *Shuttle, Spindle & Dyeplot*. She was honored to have a woven black ash ornament selected for the White House Christmas Tree in 1999. In 2003 she received the Certificate of Excellence, Level I: Technical Skills in Basketmaking, awarded by the Handweavers Guild of America.

Spend an enjoyable day weaving a **Sheffield Berry Basket** made of **black ash splint** that was harvested in the Berkshires. The Sheffield Historical Society is sponsoring a basket workshop on **Saturday, September 13, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with master basketmaker JoAnn Kelly Catsos.** The Sheffield Berry Basket is designed as a functional basket similar to what would have been made in New England 100 years ago. The combination of traditional

black ash splint basketry techniques and modern expertise produces a basket that is both beautiful and useful. The Sheffield Berry Basket is 6½ inches in diameter and 8 inches tall with handle. No experience needed – just bring a desire to learn how to weave with wood.

Catsos states: "Making baskets of black ash satisfies some of my most basic inner needs. Working with wood keeps me in touch with nature, while creating the basket satisfies my artistic need to express myself. Weaving high-quality miniature baskets is definitely a challenge. My goal is to maintain the highest level of craftsmanship possible in both my miniature and full-size black ash baskets."

The expert basketry of Catsos has won many awards – including Viewer's Choice at the North Carolina Basketmakers Association, Association of Michigan Basketmakers, and the Indiana Basketmakers Association Annual conventions.

**The workshop fee is \$75, which includes all materials.**

**Pre-registration is required.**

**Call the office at 229-2694.**



## Fall Schedule, cont'd



**Saturday—October 4—Cemetery Walk with James Miller at 10 a.m.** (part of Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area weekend). The Sheffield Historical Society is offering a tour of two of Sheffield's oldest cemeteries, where stones of unusual interest, importance, or distinction will be pointed out and discussed. Our own historian James Miller will conduct the tour. The walk begins at the Society's Dan Raymond House headquarters, 159 Main Street (Route 7), Sheffield. Participation is limited and advance registration is suggested. The tour will last about 1 to 1½ hours. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Call (413) 229-2694 to reserve a place. Free and open to the general public.

**Friday—October 10—Under the Quabbin: The Lost Town with Ed and Libby Klekowski at 7:30 p.m.** The creation of this huge reservoir in Central Massachusetts submerged small towns and settlements. Ed and Libby Klekowski, from the University of Massachusetts, researched the construction and flooding of the Quabbin Reservoir and produced a WGBY program on the project. The Klekowskis, with the assistance of University of Massachusetts students, found fascinating stories during their research. (This program was

postponed from an earlier date.) The evening's event is free and open to the public and will take place in the **Fellowship Room of Old Parish Church, Sheffield.**

**Saturday—October 18—The Spirits of Sheffield Cemetery Walk from 4 to 6 p.m.** One of the Society's favorite programs! This year the visitations with local inhabitants from Sheffield's past will take place at the Barnard Cemetery, located on Route 7. Men and women from the 18th and 19th centuries will recount the struggles they encountered in war and peace. Each has a unique story to tell. If you are interested in playing a leading role in this year's event or if you wish to help with the logistics of the program, please call the office at 229-2694. Refreshments. Free to members, \$4 general public.



**Wednesday—October 22—Fall trip to a mystery location.** Details will be revealed at the September meeting or you may call the office.

**Saturday—November 1—Festival of Trees exhibition opens at the Old Stone Store.**

**Friday—November 14—Arlo, Alice & the Anglicans with Laura Lee at 7:30 p.m., Old Parish Church.**

**Saturday—November 29—Festival of Trees.** Look to the

November newsletter for details.

**THANK YOU** for another successful summer season! The opening event was the annual Garden Party, and what a day it was! If you liked rain, then this was the party to attend. Mother Nature shared her moisture with us all afternoon, but there were no soggy spirits at this party. Thanks to the Browns' generosity, the party was moved indoors and even those walking or touring about in the rain thoroughly enjoyed the day.

A number of new faces joined us this year for both Family Day and the Revolutionary Period tours. The summer ended with fine foods at the Pig Roast. All of these events could not have occurred without the talents and services of so many members. A job WELL DONE!

**Thank you to all those who have given to the Society's first Annual Appeal, which began in April of 2003. In addition to the listing in the June newsletter, contributions have been received over the summer months from:**

Neil and Kathleen Chrisman  
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Collins  
Mr. Abbott Combes

Robert Duncan Corser  
Hilde Guttentplan  
Joyce and Ross Hawkins

Kingsley and Sally Kelly  
Rev. John S. Lis  
John-Arthur and Trudy Miller  
Bob and Nancy Rathbun  
Ann M. Riou

Howard Justus Swanson  
Don and Claire Ward  
in honor of James Welch Jr.



## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Dear Members and Friends:

The Society is beginning to chart its course for the next five years and seeks community input for that planning process. Please feel free to offer your suggestions on ways in which the Society would be the logical organization to fill a need that will better serve the community. Your input is a critical part of planning for that future.

Please keep in mind that the Sheffield Historical Society was formed in 1972, through the efforts of many community members who sought to preserve their local heritage for future generations. The Society's collection focuses on the 1700s through about 1950. The Society has grown in every direction, to the point where it now maintains seven historic structures from the 18th and 19th centuries and carries out year-round programming.

The Society held an initial planning meeting in June. The following areas for future consideration were raised: **Educational Programming**--includes school age and adult, **Financial**--includes annual appeal, fundraising, rents, grants, **Collections and Facilities**--includes buildings & grounds, maintenance, inventories, **Stone Store**--includes shop, exhibits, rentals, **Mark Dewey Research Center**--includes equipment, cataloging, publications.

The following are questions the Society wishes to have public responses to (but feel free to address other issues).

- ▶ Are there new ways in which the Society can raise the level of its active membership and involve more members of the community in its programming?
- ▶ Are there programs that you would like to see the Society offer?
- ▶ Are there workshops that the Society should be offering to the public?
- ▶ Are there ways in which the Society can increase its revenues and secure financial stability?

Please use the back of this form to provide additional comments.

Choose the response form that is easiest for you. You may call the Society at 229-2694, drop this form in the mail to the Sheffield Historical Society, PO Box 747, Sheffield, or e-mail us at [shs@sheffieldhistory.org](mailto:shs@sheffieldhistory.org). Feel free to call the Society if you have questions, or if you would like to work with us in a greater degree, as we develop this plan. THANK YOU! (Please feel free to send in this form anonymously if you prefer.)

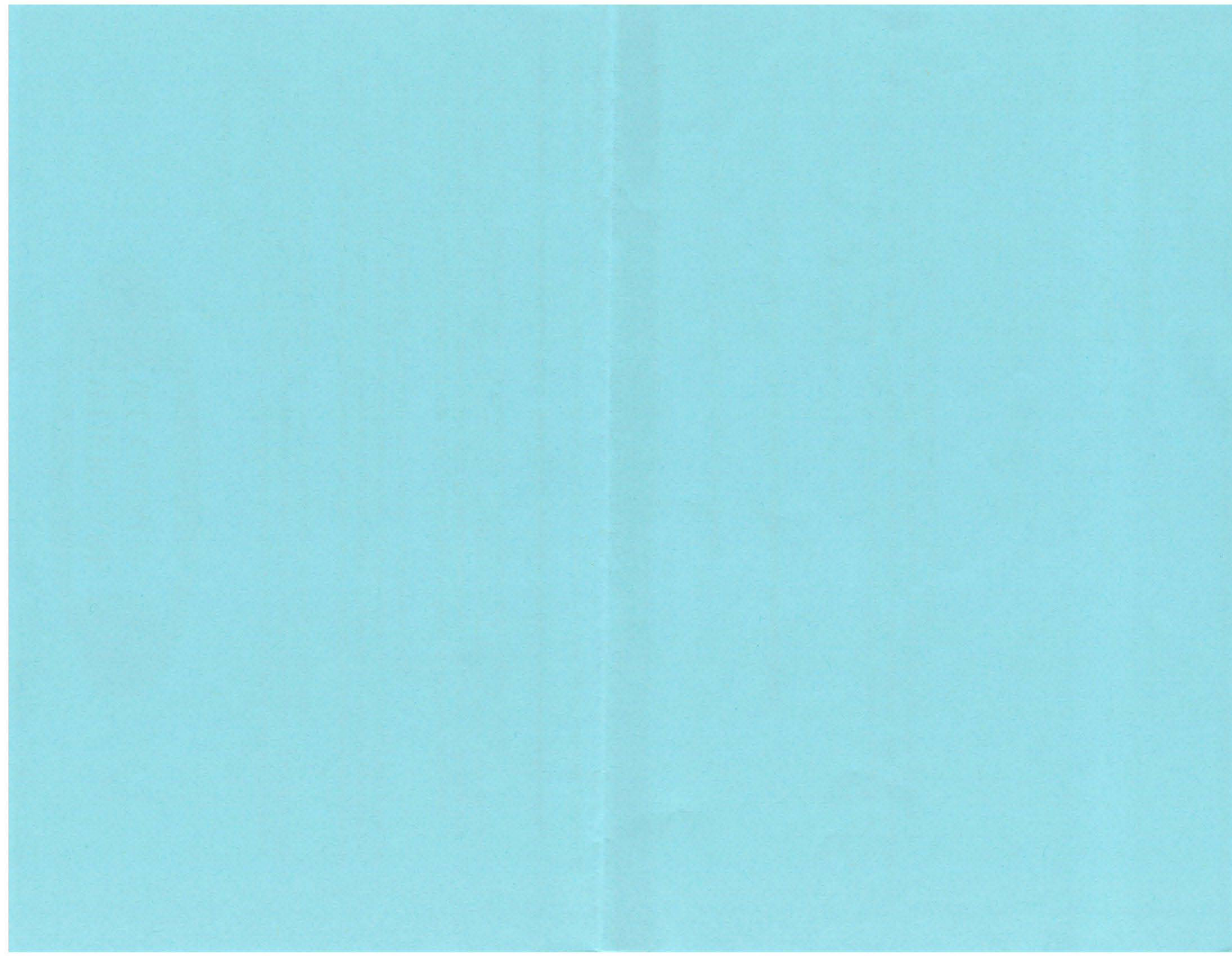
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to participate in a focus group on one of the above five topics \_\_\_\_\_

The focus group I am most interested in is \_\_\_\_\_





## Reports

### President's Report

As the new president of one of the most active Historical Societies in Berkshire County, I feel honored to have been selected as your President for the next two years. It will be a truly challenging task for me to follow in the footsteps of Dorothy Marosy, the outgoing president, who led the Society through a time of both difficult endeavors and impressive growth. Dorothy put in countless, tireless hours for the benefit of keeping the Society on its feet and moving forwards, with the help of the many volunteers and our executive director Joanne Hurlbut. I only hope that I can do half as well as she did. Thank you, Dorothy, for a job well done.

I am grateful for the presence of such dedicated volunteers. Manning the Stone Store on Saturdays and Sundays is one of the biggest challenges for our members. I am a regular Stone Store volunteer, so I speak firsthand when I say that it's a task you will enjoy doing! I am counting on more members to help work at the Store, so call me (229-2668) or the office (229-2694) to find out more about the job or to sign up.

As of now, we will continue to offer the educational programs that we have had in the past, and we will try to get additional grants for new programs and activities. Other projects that will be carried on are the daily tours, special cemetery tours, and the upcoming Festival of Trees event.

I look forward to sharing with you at the September meeting the successful tale of the first major event of my tenure, the Pig Roast, which took place on Saturday, August 23.

Fund raising over the next year will be a major emphasis for the Society. Right now, we are continually running in the red and trying to keep our head above water. We are fortunate in that we do have some funds to draw upon and that our annual appeal will help bring in new revenues.

So with that all said, let's get on with the work that has to be done.

Wray Gunn

### Treasurer's Report

#### Sheffield Historical Society, Inc. Statement of Activity of the Year Ended June 30, 2003

<u>REVENUE</u>	
Annual Appeal, Grants	22,943
Donations – Stone Store	8,557
Donations – In Kind	10,588
Store, Book Sales, Programs	<u>18,579</u>
<u>TOTAL REVENUE</u>	<u>60,667</u>

<u>EXPENSES</u>	
Salary & Taxes	36,271
Program Expenses	10,976
Special Events	3,869
Scholarship	1,500
Utilities	7,347
Maintenance	6,525
Insurance	3,761
Supplies	2,138
Postage/Newsletter	1,914
Meetings	992
Professional Fees	2,730
Miscellaneous	1,889
Investment Fees	3,023
In-Kind Expenses	9,288
Depreciation	<u>31,992</u>
<u>TOTAL EXPENSES</u>	<u>124,215</u>

#### CHANGE IN NET ASSETS BEFORE OTHER ITEMS (63,548)

Investment Income	24,407
Realized Gains(Losses) Investments	(90,844)
Interest Expense	(3,451)
Net Change/Unrealized Gains(Losses)	<u>53,324</u>

#### CHANGE IN NET ASSETS (80,112)

#### NET ASSETS – JULY 1 1,461,337

#### NET ASSETS – JUNE 30 1,381,225

### Finance Committee Action

Concerned with a growing deficit for the past several years that threatens the survival of the Society, its Finance Committee has recommended to the Board of Trustees, three possible courses of action: 1) reduce expenses even further; 2) increase fund raising; 3) redeploy assets, which could include selling or renting Society real estate. In spite of containing expenses, the Society ended this year with a \$35,000.00 deficit. In addition, the mortgage on the Old Stone Store is \$77,000.00.

The Society hopes its members will take time to consider the future of the Society. A page is enclosed on the Strategic Planning process. Please be sure to take the time to fill it in and return it with your ideas. You are welcome to participate at any stage of the process.



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PO Box 747  
Sheffield, MA 01257

Phone: 413-229-2694  
Email: [shs@sheffieldhistory.org](mailto:shs@sheffieldhistory.org)

Tours of the 1774 Dan Raymond House are available Thursday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and by appointment.

Mark Dewey Research Center open Monday and Friday afternoons, 1:30 to 4 p.m., and by appointment.

Stone Store hours are Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
[SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG](http://SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG)

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### *Board of Directors*

Wray Gunn, *President*

John-Arthur Miller, *Vice-President*

Catherine Miller, *Treasurer*

James Miller, *Clerk*

#### *Trustees:*

Harry Conklin

Barbara Delmolino

Cory Hines

Rene Wood

Joanne Hurlbut, *Director*

## MDRC Archival Facts

In 1901 Sophia Curtiss, probably the first car owner in Sheffield, brought her new machine, large enough to carry several of her friends, to Sheffield. It was purchased in New York and she was able to ride the entire distance in one day.

The Berkshire Street Railway came to Sheffield on May 29, 1911, when a car carrying company officers stopped in front of George Scott's drugstore (Bartholomew Block). Eventually it was possible to travel by streetcar from Canaan, Connecticut, via Bennington, Vermont, to Hoosick Falls, New York.

In 1905 the Conway House, a hotel on the present site of Gulotta Brothers Mobil Station, could accommodate 75 tourists. Room and board was \$9.00 per week for adults, \$5.00 for children.

### EXHIBITIONS

The exhibition now in the Stone Store is *Spend a Summer in Sheffield & Environs: The Tourism Trade in the Railroad Era*. The new exhibition in the Dan Raymond house is *Sheffield's Chapeaus: Hats from A Bygone Era*. Both exhibitions run through October.

#### Save these dates:

October 4—Cemetery Walk  
October 18—Spirits of Sheffield  
November 29—Festival of Trees