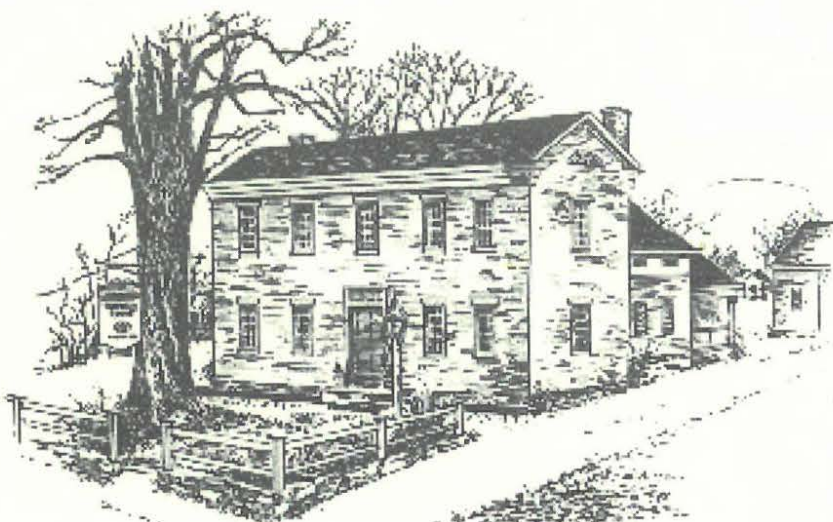


# *The Sheffield Historical Society*

*Autumn 2007*



## **October is Cemetery Program Month!** *Remember to join us for three related events this month*

On Saturday, October 13th Karin Sprague of Karin Sprague Stone Carvers LLC in North Scituate, Rhode Island will give a demonstration of letter cutting along with a talk on the origins of her interest, her techniques and the process that goes into designing her markers. The program will begin at 2 pm in Dewey Memorial Hall.

Karin Sprague is a noted East Coast stonecutter who specializes in custom burial markers that reflect the unique interests and lives of individual customers. Designed and executed in concert with her clients, each piece created at the shop is original, designed by Karin herself, and all of the lettering and sculpture is hand-drawn and hand-carved.

In recent years, the ancient craft of hand-carving stone has become virtually unheard of; in fact, Ms. Sprague's is one of but ten hand cutters still working in the country today. Her work is much admired and sought after. Part of her mission is to preserve this elegantly precise and meticulous craft, making it available to the contemporary individual by selling hand-carved work, teaching carving classes, and leading demonstrations at different locations.

Ms. Sprague has three markers in Berkshire County: two in Sheffield and one in Monterey

Following the Saturday October 13 program by noted stone carver Karin Sprague, a walking tour of nearby Barnard Cemetery will be given by James Miller. His program will focus on the less observed characteristics of markers such as carving styles, stone types and clues that help to date markers.

The work of 19th century Sheffield cutter Asahel Savage will be one emphasis of the informal tour. He learned his stone cutting in the Wethersfield, Connecticut area, creating baroque style grave markers from brownstone. Almost certainly Asahel was

*Continued on page 5*



*Barnard Cemetery circa 1902. An Edwardian woman visits the headstones of Col. John Ashley and his wife Hannah one hundred years after the Colonel's death in 1802.*

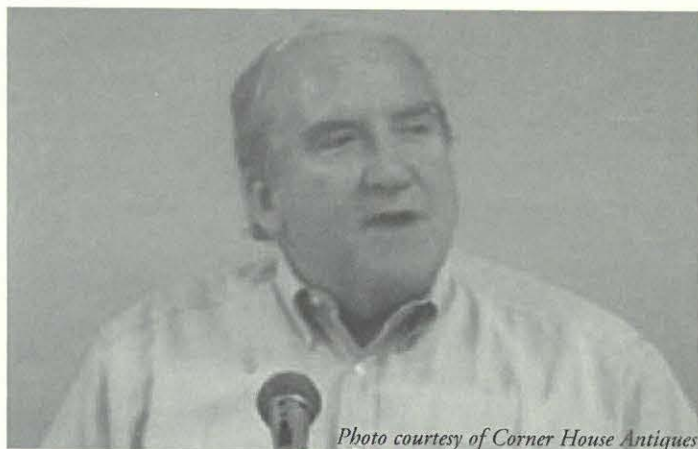
**Saturday, October 13th • 2 pm**  
**KARIN SPRAGUE & JIM MILLER**  
**Saturday, October 27th • 2 pm**  
**SHEFFIELD SPIRIT WALK**



# *Celebrating our Summer events at the...*



*Sabina Ullrich has her vase appraised by the Flints while president, Marcia Brolli, and Joan Brooks, who volunteered to cashier, look on.*

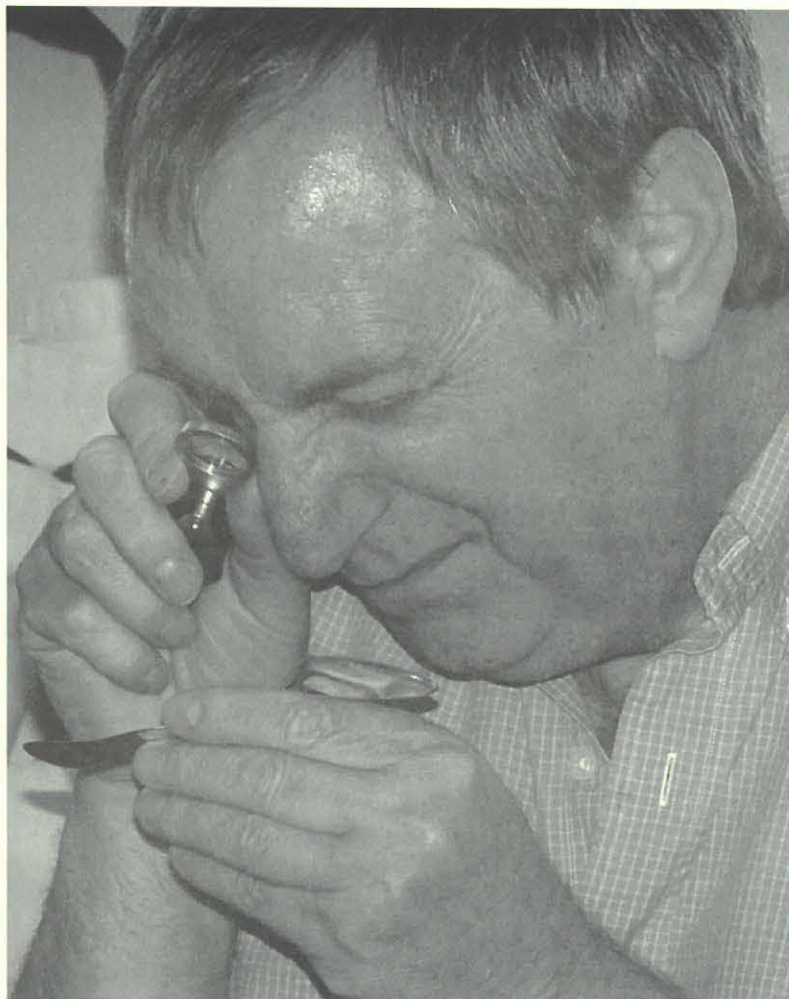


*Photo courtesy of Corner House Antiques*

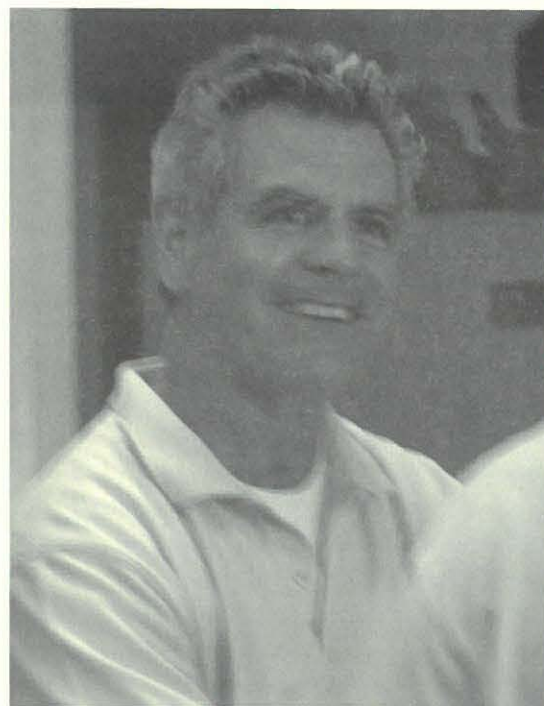
*John Wall, Vice President of the Wakefield Historical Society, was our guest speaker on American Antique Wicker Day. He spoke on the life of Cyrus Wakefield, noted founder of American Antique Wicker. For those of you who missed Wall's lecture, stop by the Society to borrow a DVD recording prepared by CTSB-TV.*



*Catherine Miller demonstrates how one rings a bell without a belfry.*

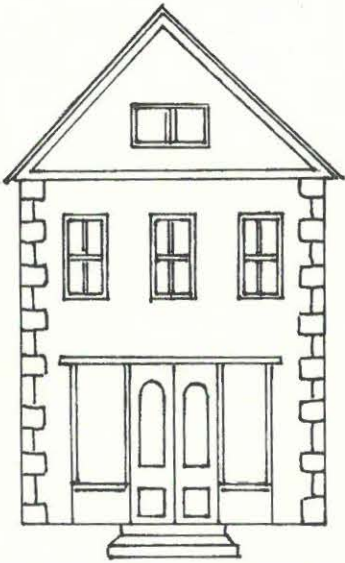


*Charlie & Joy Flint of Flint Appraisals in Lenox spent the afternoon in the Old Parish Fellowship rooms performing Appraisals and assessments on various heirlooms and notables which people brought in for their expertise.*



*Tom Tetro of  
Corner House  
Antiques...*





# Upcoming 2007-8 Events & Exhibition Schedule at the Old Stone Store

September 8th-October 30th

## **Fire & Light in the American Home, 1660-1860.**

An exhibit of American hearth cooking implements and home lighting devices curated by Jim Miller.

Saturday, October 13th, 2 pm. **Sheffield Tombstone Art & Cemetery Tour.**

Lettercarving workshop with Karin Sprague in Dewey Memorial Hall followed by a talk & tour of Barnard Cemetery led by Jim Miller. Refreshments will be served.

*Barnard Cemetery is opposite Root Lane on the south side of town.*

Saturday, October 27th, 2 pm. **Annual Sheffield Spirit Walk.**

Just in time for Halloween! Join us in Center Cemetery for a theatrical reencounter with Sheffield history as memorable residents from our town's past are recast! Learn their stories as they are vividly brought back to life before you.

*Center Cemetery is located on Berkshire School Rd.*

Saturday, November 10th, 2 pm. **Ruth Bass, author of *Sarah's Daughter*,** will present a book talk & signing in conjunction with the Bushnell Sage Library.

*The program will take place at the Bushnell-Sage Library.*

November 10th-December 23rd. **9th Annual Festival of Trees.**

Saturdays & Sundays from 10-2 with occasional extended hours.

Shop for everyone on your list at the Sheffield Historical Society's Holiday Bazaar.

Featuring an array of handmade goods including miniature trees, wreaths, ornaments, jewelry, holiday treats, gifts, raffles. Upstairs holiday tag sale and Stone Store markdowns.

*The Festival will have special extended hours from 11 to 5 on Black Friday (Nov. 23rd).*

Sunday, December 2nd, 4:30-6 pm. **Dan Raymond House Holiday Social.**

Come gather round the festive Keeping Room fireside and enjoy some holiday cheer.

Join friends new and old. Music, merriment and more.

Friday, January 11, 2008, 7:30 pm. **What's It? Night**

The subject as ever has yet to be determined. Curious? Come find out!

*The program will take place in Dewey Memorial Hall.*



# Ruth Bass to Speak on November 10th



Ruth Bass

On Nov. 10th, the Sheffield Historical Society, in conjunction with the Bushnell-Sage Library, will present a book signing and talk by Berkshire Eagle columnist Ruth Bass.

A longtime resident of the Berkshires, Ruth Bass has won many awards for writing and editing and was recently inducted into the New England Press Association's Hall of Fame. Her weekly column on Mondays considers everything from

Tanglewood to preserving summer garden produce, and occasionally, local news controversies. *Sarah's Daughter*, which she will read and discuss, is her first novel.

*Sarah's Daughter*, set in the post-Civil War era in New England, is the poignant story of Rose, a 14-year-old girl who has suddenly lost her mother. Trying her best to "hold up" in spite of her own grief, Rose has the new responsibilities of replacing her mother's role in caring for two younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, and helping her father on the farm, while continuing her schoolwork.

Mrs. Bass's heart-rending story is truly a page-turner, historically researched down to the most common household tasks. The 19th century view of women is paramount, as Rose's love of school clashes with her father's perceptions of a girl's duties at home. Rose's perseverance, encouraged by a caring teacher and the warm-hearted, often funny, support of her girlfriends, and, yes, an older boy, form the heart of this novel.

Ruth's Bass's lecture and book signing will take place at the Bushnell-Sage Library in Sheffield at 2 pm. on Saturday, November 10th.

—Joyce Hawkins, Program Chair

We will be compiling an email list of members so that we can send timely reminders of the programming. If you would like to be included, contact Joanna Jennings at [shs@sheffieldhistory.org](mailto:shs@sheffieldhistory.org)

## In Remembrance of Spirits of Sheffield Past: Meditations on Portraiture & Death

On Saturday, October 27 the Society will present its Annual Sheffield Spirit Walk. Starting at 2pm groups of visitors will be guided through Old Center Cemetery. Featured in the program this year and played by the Society Administrator will be the shade of Carrie Smith Lorraine, Sheffield's first female photographer who owned her own portrait business as early as 1902. Other shades will include Frederick Barnard, Rev. James Bradford, Sophia Curtis, Hannah Spurr, and Graham Root.

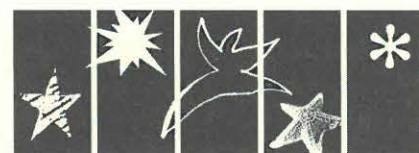
At the turn of the last century in particular there was a fascination with the doppelgänger and death. This preoccupation was undoubtedly influenced in part by the inception of a new medium: photography. In fact, photographic portraiture originally found its tradition in the imaging of the deceased, or post-mortem photography. While an unusual, even shocking practice by contemporary standards, this type of photography was commonplace during this era. We have to remember that untimely death, especially in that of children and women in childbirth was still widespread and photography as a medium was still somewhat novel. Further, photography quickly appealed to the masses because it was affordable: no longer was portraiture restricted to the upper classes in the form of a proper painted likeness. Photography both as a means of index and as the cornerstone in the age of mechanical reproduction is inextricably linked to self-preservation and (im)mortality.

There was a similar thread that ran through poetry dating from this period. Take, for example, the work of Edgar Lee Masters, whose 1916 *Spoon River Anthology* dealt with death in a small mid-western town. Each poem functioned as an epitaph of a dead citizen, delivered by the dead themselves. Some relate their histories and opinions, others make observations of life from the other side, and small-minded ones complain only of the treatment of their graves. However few tell us how they actually died. Speaking candidly, the body of work itself constructs a picture of life in their town that is radically unadulterated.

In both cases, whether the photograph or the lapidary epitaph, the portrait memorializes and seeks to provide and promulgate a lasting legacy of the departed. "Please remember me," the shades beg of Dante in the *Inferno*, "Please remember me."

—Joanna Jennings, Administrator

Sheffield Historical Society is also pleased to announce its 07-08 award from Massachusetts Cultural Council of



\$2500. A portion of this funding will be applied toward programming in the new year. Future plans will be announced as they develop.



October 2007

Dear Members and Friends,

Would you consider helping us finish the preservation of the Sheffield Historical Society's buildings?



Steven Phillips and crew have stayed within the estimate, and in fact have even donated many hours of work beyond the original contract. We need your help in offsetting the cost of unanticipated expenses which include flashing and carpentry repairs on the buildings, sanding, and even a third coat of paint in places.

Our goal is to raise \$3,500 to complete the project. We would be grateful for any assistance you might provide.

This special donation may be sent to:

*Sheffield Historical Society*

*PO Box 747*

*Sheffield, MA 01257*

*Cemetery article continued from page 1*

trained by a relative of his mother, a second or third generation of the notable Johnson family of carvers from Middletown. In Sheffield, however, Asahel did simple cuttings in marble, the local stone of abundance and therefore economy.

The Savage family came to Sheffield in 1806 from Wethersfield, Connecticut. In that year he purchased, in partnership with his brother-in-law, Daniel Deming, a farm of 375 acres. For the next eight or nine years he worked the land, but in 1815, the two men divided the property, with Savage receiving about half the acreage for \$1,000, about 20% of the original purchase price. This low figure suggests that he received land only, with the house and agricultural buildings being retained by Deming. It was probably then, about 1815, that he turned to stone carving. This possibility is enforced by Sheffield assessors' list of the following year. It shows, for the first time, Savage paying a modest tax on "income," an assessment category reserved for merchants and those who charged for services such as craftsmen, lawyers and physicians. About the same time, his first signed

stone appeared.

For about the next 24 years little is known of Savage's work, but he probably purchased marble for cutting grave stones and divided his time between his own cutting and working in shops for others. It was during this period that he trained Richard Paine Brown, 27 years his junior, who developed into a master carver of distinction.

In 1840, in partnership with his son, Hamlin, Savage purchased land, worked a quarry and established a marble saw mill and cutting shop in Sheffield on Bow Wow Road. They made use of water power from Willard Brook to operate their equipment. Asahel died in 1850. The quarry went bankrupt in 1857, possibly due to iron pyrite content in its marble that rendered it less satisfactory than other local marbles. Conveniently, it is this defect that makes the Savage quarry marble so easy to identify today.

—Jim Miller, Archivist



*Dear Members and Friends of SHS,*

*Welcome to the old and the new.*

*This fall and winter, we will be continuing the monthly programs, the Spirit Walk, and the Festival of Trees.*

*As for the new, the Planning committee last February recommended a reconsideration of our monthly programs and meetings. They suggested that we work with other organizations and that we be more adventurous in the times they are held. As a result, two of this fall's programs are being held in conjunction with and at the Bushnell Sage Library. In September we enjoyed John Sedgwick's reading and talk and signing of *In My Blood*, arranged by Jim Miller. Mr. Sedgwick researched the early part of the book at the Mark Dewey Research Center. On November 10 Ruth Bass will speak about her book *Sarah's Daughter*, her novel of early farm life. Both of these book-centered talks are being held at 2 pm on a Saturday afternoon. In 2008 we will be collaborating with the Sheffield Land Conservancy for their February lecture.*

*Your programming suggestions or thoughts are welcome.*

*Details of the October programs are elsewhere in the newsletter.*

*Steven Phillips has nearly finished the painting of the Society buildings. Patience is now needed as we watch the paint peel off the brick portion of the Dan Raymond House. The trustees have been advised that the building could not be painted again until the present paint is gone. Steve and his crew have scraped as much as they can and sealed the bare brick to protect it from the elements. The brick, made on site, is too soft to take any kind of blasting. We are delighted that with the new town parking lot and increased visibility we're able to look so good.*

*Thanks to Phillips Painting and, of course, the folks who keep the grounds so attractive, Anne Riou, our volunteer in the herb garden, and Kathy Moore, who tends the gardens.*

*Plans are afoot for next year's exhibit season in the Stone Store. Jim Miller has been diligent in keeping presentations historical and interesting. If you haven't seen his fiery exhibit of "Fire and Light" yet, do go. Local collectors have lent us some wonderful pieces which, as one volunteer said, prove that you don't need a college education. The spark of American ingenuity is present in every corner of the Stone Store this month.*

*As our administrator Joanna Jennings has gotten to know Sheffield and the Society, she has taken on more and more responsibility. This newsletter is her doing, as are our publicity and tours. She is full of new ideas for the new year. Call her to offer your help. She has become part of our lives.*

*Thank you for your support.*

*See you in Sheffield,*

*Marcia Brolli*

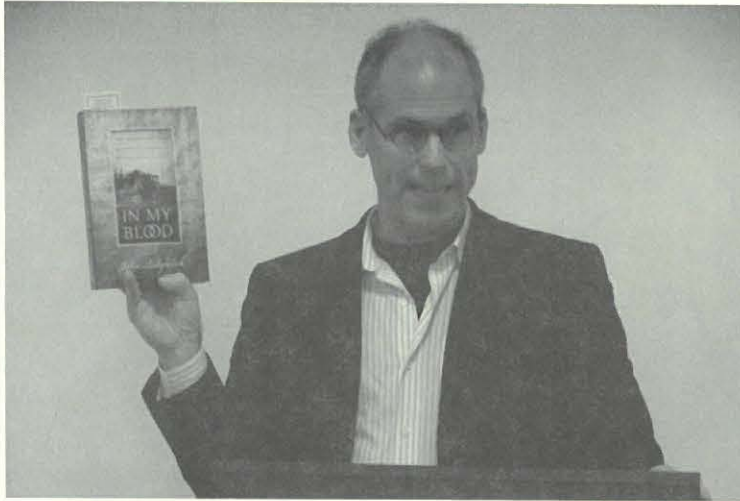


*Our New face :-)*

Tours of the Dan Raymond House have lessened in the past years. We would like to redesign the tours to include volunteer docents and with them build on Sheffield's history as a farming community as well as the location of the Mumbet story and the Sheffield Declaration. A committee will be formed to create this new program under the leadership of Joanna Jennings. Please call her for more information. We can use your help.



# ...Sheffield Historical Society



*John Sedgwick talked about his recent book *In My Blood* and gave a humorous account of the triumphs and sorrows of being a descendant of one of America's most prominent families.*



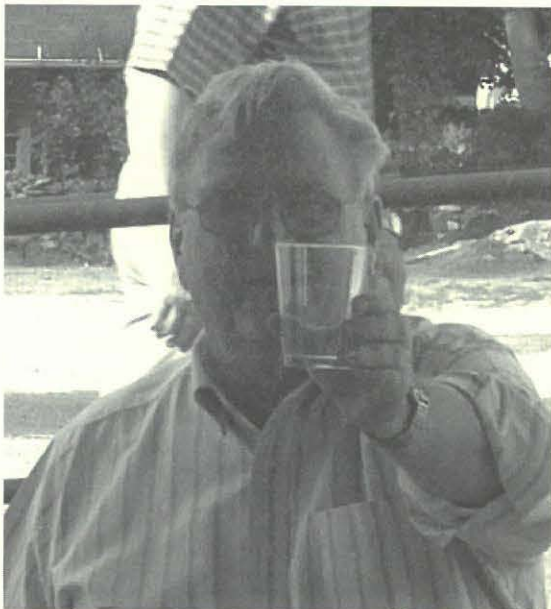
*Sheila Chefetz pauses for a photograph before she signs a copy of her book *Antiques for the Table* for a customer. Proceeds from the book signing were contributed to the Society by Ms. Chefetz.*



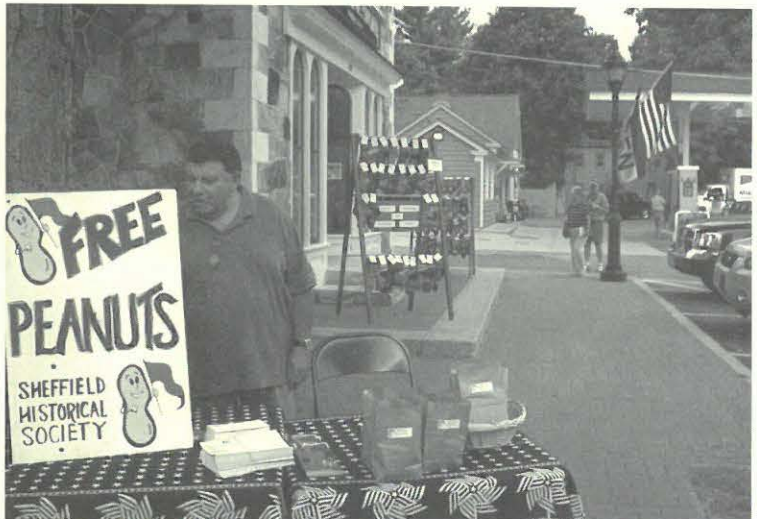
*Sarah Macy and Brian Levinsohn smile for the camera at the 5th Annual Pig Roast, while the other chefs d'oeuvre, Harry Conklin and Grace Campbell look on.*



*Dennis Sears, Treasurer, and Sharon Palma, Executive Director of the Southern Berkshire Chamber enjoy company and light refreshments at the wicker exhibit reception.*



*Ross Hawkins raises a glass to American Antique Wicker.*



*Brian Levinsohn represents the Historical Society during "Sheffield in Celebration" by offering families free peanuts. For their part in the program the Stone Store ladies featured their Pair and a Spare socks.*



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY WISH LIST:

- One contemporary flush toilet
- A handyman to do odd jobs around the house

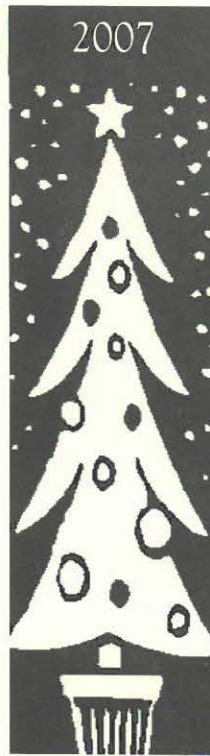
## 2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marcia Brolli, *President*  
 Gillian Hettinger, *Vice President*  
 H. Dennis Sears, *Acting Treasurer*  
 Harry E. Conklin, *Clerk*

Joyce Hawkins  
 Brian Levinsohn  
 Sarah Macy  
 Philip Detjens  
 Mark Ziobro

## MUSEUM STAFF

Joanna Jennings, *Administrator*  
 Betty Chapin, *Volunteer Archivist*  
 James Miller, *Volunteer Archivist*



## Sheffield Historical Society 9th Annual Festival of Trees

The Stone Store, Sheffield Town Green

Weekends in November & December  
 Saturday & Sunday 10-2

*Free Admission*

Miniature Trees, Wreaths  
 Decorations, Ornaments  
 Holiday Treats  
 Raffles & Tag Sale

New Holiday Gifts in Stone Store

*\*\*Special hours on Black Friday from 11-5\*\**

**HOLIDAY TAG SALE ITEMS**  
*Accepted for Festival of Trees*  
 Please contact the office to coordinate drop-off. 229-2694.

*The Sheffield Historical Society's mission is to promote a wider understanding of the people and events that preceded us in this area, and to preserve and transmit that heritage to current and future generations.*



*The Sheffield Historical Society*

Dan Raymond House Museum • Mark Dewey Research Center  
 WWW.SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG

Phone: 413-229-2694  
 E-mail: shs@sheffieldhistory.org  
 1774 Dan Raymond House is open  
 July-October, Tuesday-Thursday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
 Or by appointment.  
 Mark Dewey Research Center is open  
 Monday & Friday, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
 Or by appointment. Email: mdrc@sheffieldhistory.org  
 Old Stone Store is open on weekends,  
 Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
 Closed January through April.

159 Main Street  
 PO Box 747  
 Sheffield, MA 01257