

The Sheffield Historical Society



Fall 2013

Sheffield 100 Years Ago: Selected items, from *The Berkshire Couriers*, 1913, extensively condensed and edited.



January 2. Fire gutted the interior of A.M. Little's general store. The building was saved from destruction by the prompt and efficient service rendered by the telephone operator, Miss Elizabeth McDonnell, who was awakened by a choking sensation caused by the heavy smoke which poured into the office. She quickly went to the switchboard and commenced calling members of the volunteer fire company. In this way a number of men were soon on the scene and dragged the hose cart to the building. The plucky telephone operator stuck to the board while the fire was being fought below. It was only when she was able to operate the switchboard by touch alone, because of the dense smoke and when she had literally been driven from the building by some of the firemen, that Miss McDonnell left the room. Note: The structure, now gone, was just south of the Congregational Church.

January 30. The question of electric street lighting has been discussed again of late and further negotiations have been started. The old kerosene street lamps are almost of no use at best. What lights are provided now are under the care of the Village Improvement Association.

April 3. The annual town meeting was held in Sheffield last Monday. The day was one of sunshine and shadow in proportion of one part sunshine to about nineteen parts shadow, with wind and rain thrown in, but there was a good turnout of voters in the forenoon and the church sheds overflowed with teams whose owners were discussing candidates and town matters.

April 10. The adjourned town meeting opened at 2:30 o'clock Monday afternoon. Moderator Cande presided. George Hall moved that \$1500 be appropriated for an agriculture course in the high school. Mr. Roraback argued that the expense of the course would be about \$700 to the town and that already the tax rate was too high. F. B. French advised that the town wait a year and see what success was had in Stockbridge. Following Mr. French's remarks the question was unanimously voted down. Stockbridge also later voted it down.

James M. Wallace is to move his barber shop to new rooms in about two weeks. The new shop will be fitted up in the manner of all up-to-date barber shops, with modern facilities, including hot and cold water.

April 17. A good 25 cent supper will be served this Thursday evening from 5:30 to 8 o'clock at the inn of George G. Peck. The proceeds will go toward the lighting of the streets and everyone is urged to attend.

Compiled by James Miller

Milton & Marion Barnum and the Barnum Tool Collection

When you ask people with a twenty year or more Sheffield connection - locally born, transplants, second home owners or visitors, what couple they think best represents Sheffield qualities, you'll get a lot of great names. Ask them to narrow it down to who best represents traditional Yankee qualities; you'll get a smaller list. Ask them to narrow it down to who best helped preserve the look and feel of Sheffield, the list gets even smaller.

Finally, ask them who on the remaining list they think of when they hear the words "Sheffield Historical Society", and I'll bet you the names you'll hear most are Milton and Marion Barnum.

René and I first met Milt, as everyone knew him, and Marion over 25 years ago when, as weekend Staveleigh House visitors, we were invited to one of the wonderful turkey dinners the Sheffield Historical Society held in the Legion Hall. Milt started the fundraising dinners to restore the old covered bridge. I had no understanding then that, years later, I would be getting up in the morning, looking at the Covered Bridge and the American Legion, thinking of those great turkey dinners, and remember all of the wonderful people we've met there. After just one sample of Milt and Marion Barnum's talents in putting on the "SHS Turkey Dinner", especially after experiencing Marion's lemon meringue pie, we were hooked as members and volunteers of the Sheffield Historical Society.



As we talked with the Barnums and listened to stories about them from others over the years, we came to the conclusion that without them the Sheffield Historical Society would probably not exist today, or, at the very least, would be a much different organization. Milt was one of the 7 citizens with the foresight to establish the Sheffield Historical Society. During the start-up of the Society, Milt partnered with Ed Warren to buy and hold the Dan Raymond House property until the Society could take ownership. Milt used his building skills to lead the Dan Raymond property renovation and guide the volunteer labor he rounded up for the task. I could talk about his similar work with the Mark Dewey Research Center, the Parker Law office, the construction of the well house, relocation of the smokehouse from the Episcopal Church grounds, etc., but I'd soon run out of Newsletter space without getting to the major point I want to talk about: Milt's tools.

Milt's tools are a legend on their own. One of the first Sheffield Historical Society programs I remember was "What's It? Night". This was my first introduction to another Milt and Marion Barnum phenomenon: the Barnum tool collection. In this program held annually for many years in January at Dewey Hall, 30 or more "tools" were selected from the Barnum collection of over 1,000, placed on tables and the audience would have a certain amount of time before the start of the program to look at all of them, and guess what it was called or used for. Years later I would visit Milt and Marion, and he'd let me pick out items from the place they were stored or from those Marion held sway over in the house. We'd sit in the kitchen, chat, and he'd explain the use of each item. I'd take a photo and create a cheat sheet, which I used the few times I had the honor of leading the program. The story of how the Barnums acquired some of the tools is also very interesting and perhaps a topic for a future SHS Newsletter.

The Barnum family has generously allowed the Society to purchase the entire Barnum Tool Collection below market value, and we have accepted their offer. During Milt's life, he used these items to educate not only Society members and the children of South County in the ways of the past, but also allowed their use in various programs and exhibits. Our plan is to continue the Barnum legacy and use the Barnum Tool Collection to give children and adults a deeper, hands-on appreciation of local history and a look at a way of life long passed.

To continue this legacy created by Milt and Marion Barnum, the Society is establishing the "Milt and Marion Barnum Tool Collection" on Society property and seeks your financial support in order to hold, maintain, and properly display it, as well as continue to make it available for educational purposes. To that end, the Society has a goal to build a modest structure to house the tools and honor the legacy established by Milt and Marion. Our goal is to raise at least \$25,000 to meet the collection purchase price balance and construction costs. The Society has received a challenge grant which will match dollar for dollar every dollar of the first \$10,000 raised.

We invite you to consider a gift to help us meet this challenge reach the goal we have set. If you have any questions, contact me or one of the other two members of The Milt and Marion Barnum Tool Collection Committee, Jeff Browne and Paul O'Brien.

I thank you for your consideration of this idea and hope you will help us honor a couple who gave much to this country and Sheffield for over 80 years.

Dennis Sears



**The Sheffield Historical Society and
The Lenox Garden Club**

invite you to save the date

October 18, 2013 - 6pm – 8pm

for

SPIRITS AND MORE

Preview Party for

BERKSHIRE HAUNTS,

a frighteningly good Flower Show.

Please join us for a
bewitching cocktail party featuring
hors d'oeuvres and liquid spirits.
You will be spellbound to preview
prize winning floral designs,
spooky horticultural entries and
educational exhibits with frightfully
important information.

Mark your calendar

October 18, 2013

for this hauntingly charming
Cocktail Party

Reasons to Reserve Your Ticket Today:

- Reserving your ticket is easier than ever before!
- You'll get \$10 off your ticket price for buying in advance
- You'll be the first to know the prize winners of the local and national awards for the displays
- You'll ensure your spot at the Halloween social event of the season!

Advance Tickets: \$30

At the Door: \$40

*Reserve online at www.sheffieldhistory.org
or mail us your name, number of guests, and payment.*

Community Connections

"The welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all." - Helen Keller

I'm sure we've all heard it said that success can be a direct result of who you know. No man is an island, there's no "I" in "Team," many hands make light work, and all those other clichés. The trick, though, is trying to figure out how all of that translates into real efforts that can be made to help a place like the Sheffield Historical Society. Over the past month or so, we've been exploring just that: how we can forge stronger connections throughout our community in order to gain mutual benefits on a number of fronts.

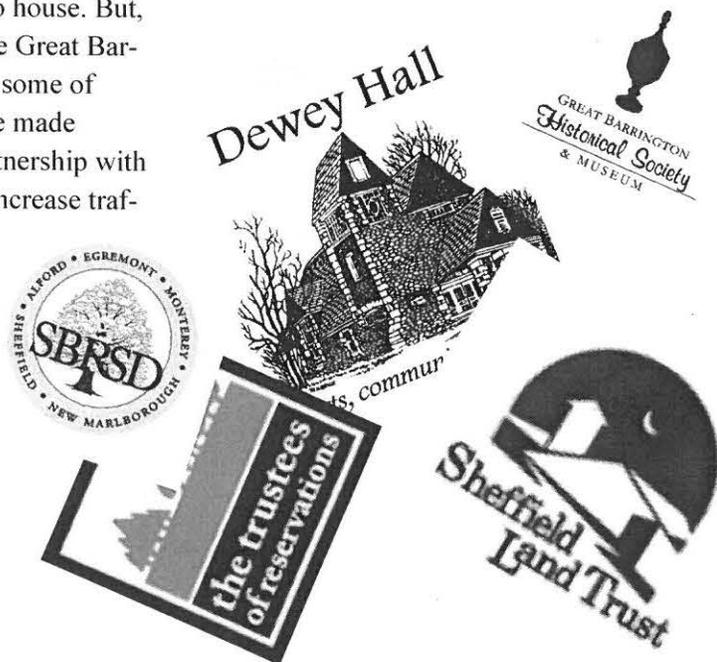
One area where we have started making connections is, logically, other local historic organizations. Sheffield is full of them, and, when you take that even a bit further into the rest of the Berkshires and across the border into Connecticut, there is a huge pool of resources, many of which have been standing on their own, doing their best to succeed and keep their doors open. We have been working on finding ways to bring many of these different organizations together and build a more cooperative relationship.

Each organization has different assets that can help others out. For instance, we have a store that is open every weekend in the center of town. It's a perfect location for selling the beautiful Mum Bet dolls that help fund the Colonel Ashley House. So we share that space with them to help keep their house on its feet. In turn, we have acquired a large carriage that we currently do not have the space to house. But, instead of us having to lose that piece, the Great Barrington Historical Society kindly offered some of their space for us to borrow until we have made room. We have also been working in partnership with Dewey Hall to share advertisement and increase traffic to both places.

Other networking has also proved to be very important to the Society. Our Mark Dewey Research Center has many resources that are useful to the community, so we recently hosted the director of the Bushnell Sage Library and a librarian from Mount Everett High School to have a tour of our archives and discussed ways to interconnect our separate research materials. We have started projects with student volunteer groups, as well as the special education department, to work on getting youth involved in local history while learning skills that will benefit them in their future. Our September monthly program on barns was put on in conjunction with the Sheffield Land Trust, so we were able to have the best of both worlds, discuss the historical importance of our barns while, at the same time, helping spread the word about their barn census project. We have also entered the world of social networking with the creation of our Facebook page, so we can grow new connections directly with individuals in our community.

There is no reason why the Sheffield Historical Society, or any local organization for that matter, should be a stand-alone entity. There is so much that this area has to offer, and, through these community connections, we will continue to spread the word and keep each other going.

Mandy O'Connor



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Exhibits at the Old Stone Store

Open Saturdays from 10am-3pm and Sundays from 11am-3pm

"From Alphabet Blocks to Zoetropes: A History of Toys in America" **September 7- October 14**

Berkshire Haunts Flower Show **October 19 & 20**

SpiritFest 2013

"Hauntings and History: Haunted Houses of the Berkshires" **October 11, 7:30pm- Dewey Hall**

Zombie Building Contest **October 12, 1:00-3:00pm- Dan Raymond House**

Berkshire Haunts Flower Show Preview Party **October 18, 6:00-8:00pm- Dan Raymond House**

Scary Movies on the Lawn **October 25, 7:00pm, Dan Raymond House Lawn**

SpiritWalk **October 26 (27 if raining), 2:00-4:00pm, Center Cemetery, Berkshire School Rd**

Pumpkin Carving **October 29, 3:30-5:00pm, Dan Raymond House**

A Walk on the Dark Side **October 30, 6:00-7:00pm, Dan Raymond House**

Upcoming Programs

Dewey Hall, 7:30pm

Festival for the Holidays Opening **November 15**

Holiday Party **December 15**

How to Trace Your Genealogy *by Dennis Sears* **January 10**

Colonial Courtship *by Gillian Hettinger and Joyce Hawkins* **February 14**

The Sheffield Historical Society invites the support of you and your friends through membership.

Name(s) _____ E-Mail _____

Address _____

Please check: New Renew

Individual (\$5 - \$50) Family(\$51 - \$100) Patron (\$101 - \$500) Sponsor (\$501 - \$1,000)

Please make checks payable to: The Sheffield Historical Society. Send to : P.O. Box 747, Sheffield , MA 01257

Haunting Evening to Launch Society's SpiritFest

"From ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggety beasties and things that go bump in the night, Good Lord deliver us!" These words from an old Scottish prayer may describe feelings after the Sheffield Historical Society's October program. "Hauntings and History" will be presented by Josh Mantello of the Berkshire Paranormal Group on Friday, October 11th, at 7:30 p.m. at Dewey Hall.



Mr. Mantello's talk, "Histories and Mysteries", will show how one must be a historian in order to investigate paranormal experiences. Beginning with the Houghton Mansion in North Adams, he will describe suspected hauntings in the Hoosac Tunnel, North Adams, Ventfort Hall in Lenox, October Mount in Pittsfield, and The Mount in Lenox, among other locations.

Berkshire Paranormal was founded approximately 10 years ago by Josh and his father Nick Mantello, both members of the Masonic Lodge in North Adams which is reputed to be haunted. After hiring an investigative group to test the mysterious happenings in the Masonic Lodge, they became intrigued by the whole process and decided to form their own paranormal group, now numbering six investigators. This also involved purchasing photographic and other equipment used to investigate claims of paranormal experiences. After the Masonic Lodge, they took on the Houghton Mansion in North Adams, as well as clients who requested searches of their homes or businesses. Over the years they have investigated sites in the Berkshires, Eastern New York and Southern Vermont.

Josh has taken an extreme interest in Paranormal Photography and has become one of the better known experts in this field. He also lectures and teaches on other subjects in the paranormal field and has attended multiple conferences and events on many subjects, from Ghost Hunting and Paranormal Investigative Techniques, to Paranormal Photography. Josh has also taught a Paranormal Investigating or Ghost Hunting class at local schools, teaching middle to high school aged students about modern day paranormal investigating techniques.



After Mr. Mantello's description of alleged hauntings in well-known historic sites in the Berkshires, audience members will be encouraged to offer their own stories of mysterious happenings in their homes and elsewhere. Join us on October 11th for "Histories and Mysteries", the inauguration of the Historical Society's "SpiritFest", a month long series of spooky events celebrating the Halloween season.

Joyce Hawkins





From the Administrator

So you may have been wondering who this "Mandy O'Connor" is that you've been getting e-mails and letters from for the past month or so. Well, the easiest answer is: that's me. I'm Mandy O'Connor. More rel-

evantly, I'm happy to say that I'm the new administrator for the Sheffield Historical Society. Many of you I've already had the pleasure of meeting, but still more I have not, so let me tell you a bit about myself so we're not strangers.

I was born in Great Barrington, spent a few of my early years moving around the area, and finally landed in Sheffield when I was about 10 years old. I attended Undermountain Elementary and the Mount Everett High School, and grew up with the comfort of having most of my extended family nearby, since they live almost exclusively in the Southern Berkshires. I went on to study at Williams College, where I spent four wonderful years in what is fondly referred to as "The Purple Bubble" by everyone who goes there. I enlisted in the Army National Guard two days after graduation and did some work at the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce while I waited for my training to begin, which it did in November of that year. I spent two years on active duty traveling around with them, but there was one thing that was consistent no matter where I went. I was always talking about home.

Of course I missed my family and my house and my pets, but that's not really what I mean when I say I was always talking about home. I mean that, no matter where I was or the great things I saw, nothing could really compare to how much I loved the place that I was from. My friends couldn't get me to stop talking about our trees, our hills, or our history. So when I came home and saw the opening at the SHS, I didn't waste any time applying. I knew that this was a place where I could make a difference in my community while learning even more reasons to love it.

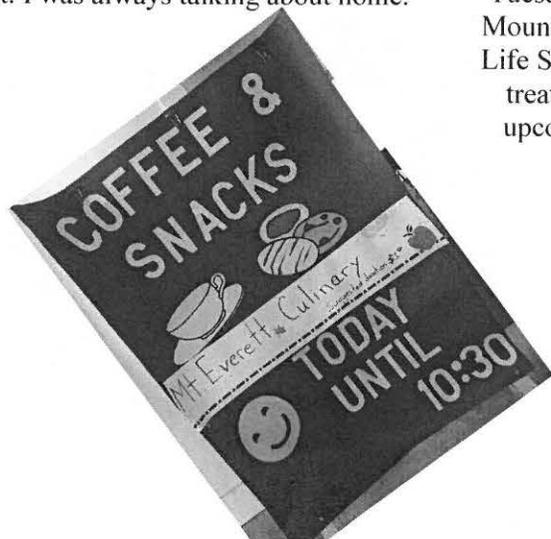
So we've looked at my history, now let's take a quick peek into the future. As administrator, my main goals are to build our internet presence, start educational programs to engage our town's youth, and create a better network between historical organizations in our area. There are many new projects in the works, which will be the culmination of our combined efforts, so keep an eye out for all sorts of exciting new things that will be happening in the near future! In the meantime, I look forward to meeting all of you! Stay well!

Mandy O'Connor

Mount Everett Students at the Old Stone Store

Have you stopped by the Old Stone Store on Monday or Tuesday morning? The Sheffield Historical Society and the Mount Everett Regional students from the Culinary Arts and Life Skills programs are offering up hot coffee and breakfast treats. Drop in and say hello, hear about the exhibits and upcoming events of the society as you enjoy a hot cup of coffee and a muffin!

**Mondays and Tuesdays
8:30 - 10:30am**



GO GREEN

Help us in our efforts to "Go Green" by sending us your e-mail address! By adding yourself to our e-mail list, you will be more promptly informed of activities going on at the Sheffield Historical Society. If you'd like to receive our e-blasts on upcoming events, please let us know. Otherwise, we'll only e-mail you when we need to contact you directly. Thanks!

Name: _____

E-Mail: _____

Please add me to your mailing list: Yes _____ **No** _____

Please either e-mail us with your information to shs@sheffieldhistory.org

-OR-

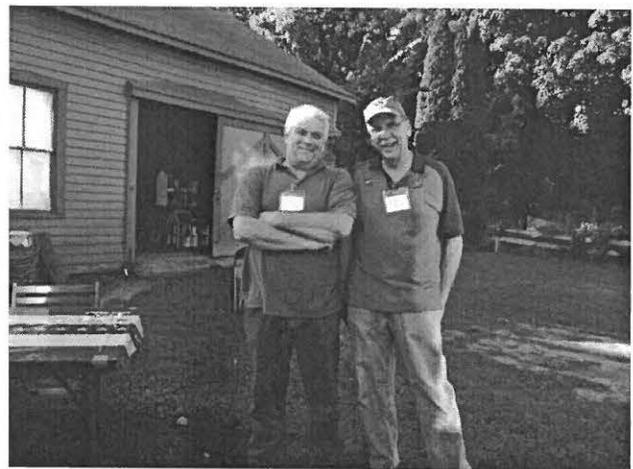
Mail this form in to:

PO Box 747, Sheffield, MA 01257

Thank you!!



Salad Bar during Sheffield in Celebration 2013



Jeff Browne and Paul O'Brien at the Volunteer Cookout



SPIRIT FEST 2013

Part of the fun of living in such a historic town is getting to play with all the spirits that go along with it. This October is filled with fun and exciting events that will bring out the spooky side of Sheffield. You won't want to miss it!



Our SpiritFest kicks off with **"Hauntings and History,"** a program on **October 11 at 7:30pm** at Dewey Hall. Berkshire Paranormal Group will be giving a talk on the ghosts they've met at many of our local historic homes, including Ventfort Hall, The Mount, the Houghton Mansion, and more! Then the public will be invited to share their own ghost stories. Not to be missed! Then, the following day at the Dan Raymond House, on **Saturday the 12th 1:00 to 3:00pm**, you can participate in our **Zombie Building Contest**. Bring a team of friends, or some people from your own local organization, and try your hand at bringing your zombie to life!

On **Friday, October 18, from 6:00-8:00pm**, the highlight event of our SpiritFest will take place in the **Berkshire Haunts Halloween Flower Show Preview Party**, in partnership with the Lenox Flower Club. Start at the Dan Raymond House for a bewitching cocktail party featuring hors d'oeuvres and liquid spirits. Visit the exhibits. You will be spellbound to preview prize winning floral designs, spooky horticultural entries, and educational exhibits with frightfully important information. Can't make it to the party? Don't fret! The **Flower Show** will be open to the public for the rest of the weekend in the Old Stone Store.



The following week, on **Friday, October 25 at 7:00pm** on the lawn behind the Dan Raymond House, the Sheffield Historical Society and SADD will be hosting a **Scary Movie Night**. Free for all, bundle up and bring the family for a fun night of (not so) spooky movies, including "The Children," a campy film shot right here in Sheffield, and "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein." Refreshments will be served inside the Education Center. Then, on **Saturday the 26th from 2:00-4:00pm** (or Sunday if it rains), you will have the chance to meet the spirits of Sheffield citizens past at our annual **SpiritWalk**. The Center Cemetery on Berkshire School road will, quite literally, come to life! Come hear the stories of those buried there and ask them your questions!

To finish up the SpiritFest, we will be hosting **Pumpkin Carving** at the Dan Raymond House on **Tuesday, October 29th, from 3:30-5:00pm**. Graciously donated by Howden Farm, we will supply the pumpkins so you don't have to worry about finding a pumpkin last minute before Halloween. Finally, on **Wednesday, October 30th, from 6:00-7:00pm**, come to the Dan Raymond House and take a little **Walk on the Dark Side**. See all our spooky zombies and jack-o-lanterns and get a little early trick-or-treating in!



Mandy O'Connor

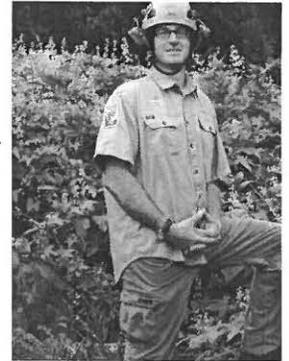


Barrett Tree Services to the Rescue!!!

You may have noticed the very large remnants of a 60 year old pine behind the Dan Raymond House, if you look back there today ,you will see that it has been removed. Barrett Tree Services donated their time and equipment to remove the rather large load of pine from our property.

Hats off to a great job! THANK YOU!

Visit Barrett Tree Service at www.barretttreeservice.com.



From Alphabet Blocks to Zoetropes: a History of Toys in America

The Sheffield Historical Society opened a brand new exhibit in our Old Stone Store on Sept. 7. The exhibit includes paper toys & game boards, dolls, wooden toys, and metal toys, dating from as early as the 1840s and extending through crucial parts of 20th century American history. Toys are brought up to date with Trivial Pursuit, Hello Kitty, and Barbie dolls. The exhibit isn't all about learning the history of toys, it's also interactive to remind us that we're all children at heart, and everyone, young and old, plays with toys.

There is a 19th century circus puzzle, zoetrope, and mechanical bank, and many 20th century games such as



Candy Land, Connect 4, Memory and Twister to play with. The oldest toy in the exhibit is a complete set of General and Mrs. Tom Thumb paper dolls produced by McLoughlin Bros. in 1840. There are also beautiful examples of toy theatres from Europe which would have been popular in the mid-19th century and three wonderful tea sets from around 1930 made of three different materials and in their original boxes. The dolls on display represent every decade from mid-19th century right up to 1990s. They are made of every possible material – rag dolls, porcelain, bisque, metal, and plastic. Did you know that all dolls had brown eyes until Queen Victoria? During her lifetime dolls began to be made with her blue-colored eyes.

In conjunction with the Sheffield in Celebration events on Friday, Sept. 6, the exhibit opened with over 20 people, mostly kids, having the opportunity to see it first. And then the opening reception on Sunday, Sept. 8th gathered many members old and new as well as Sheffield neighbors to view it. The Historical Society will be hosting this exhibit until October 13th on Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. There is something for everyone, young and old. So take a journey with us through decades of childhood fun! Who knows, maybe you'll even find an old favorite... or a new one!



Lisa Reynolds

From the President

Your Sheffield Historical Society has been busy! We just finished celebrating our fortieth year as a Society, and we are looking forward to the next forty. We started the year with two outstanding exhibits. The first was an exhibit on the Ashley Family Records, and the second was an exhibit on Antique Toys. Both exhibits received rave reviews from our record crowds. The "If This House Could Talk" self guided walking tour of historic houses in Sheffield was a wonderful compliment to the exhibits.

As the fall approaches, we will be holding our second annual SpiritFest (see article and schedule in the newsletter) Rounding out the year, we will be having the grand opening of the Old Stone Store / "Festival of Holidays", and our annual members' Holiday Party on December 15th at the Dan Raymond House. This year, the Dan Raymond House will be decorated for the holidays by several of our local designers. The House will be open on the weekends during the holiday season for tours, which is a new and exciting activity for the Society!

A big "Thank You" to our members for their continued support of the Society, and a special "Thank You" to all of our dedicated volunteers that help us in presenting the many and varied activities of our society. On to year Forty-One!

*Paul O'Brien
President*



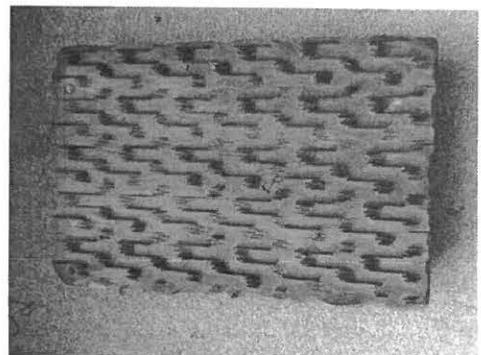
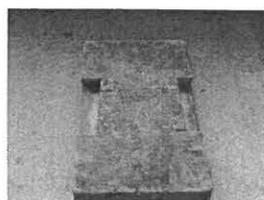
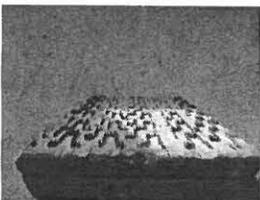
Wray Gunn and Brian Levinsohn grilling at the Volunteer Cookout



Paul O'Brien and a few visitors at the What's It? Table

What's It?

*Can you name the item below and guess what it was used for?
(Answer Underneath)*



Sheffield Historical Society Board Members:

Paul O'Brien (President), Wray Gunn (Vice President), Lois Levinsohn (Treasurer), Susan Pitman (Secretary), Dennis Sears, Jeff Browne, Joyce Hawkins, Lisa Reynolds, K.C. Clow, Peter Kinne, Tony Carlotto

Answer: To be honest, we're not completely sure! Our guess is a printing block for a faux wood pattern.

*The
Sheffield
Historical Society*



*Dan Raymond House Museum * Mark Dewey Research Center * Old Stone Store*

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 transmit that heritage to current and future generations.

WWW.SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG

137-161 Main Street
P.O. Box 747
Sheffield, MA 01257

The Dan Raymond House is open Saturdays,
9:00am to 5:00pm, or by appointment.
Phone: 413-229-2694
Email: shs@sheffieldhistory.org

The Mark Dewey Research Center is open Mondays & Fridays,
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., or by appointment.
Phone: 413-229-3682
Email: mdrc@sheffieldhistory.org

The Old Stone Store
On the Green in Sheffield
Phone: 413-229-2287

We need your help!

The Sheffield Historical Society runs on the support we get from volunteers. Your work serves the community, and now we are searching for better ways to serve you. We don't want to fill your inbox with requests, but we also don't want you to miss out on opportunities you might be interested in. To make sure you never miss a beat but hear only about things you like to do, please check off your volunteering interests in the table below and send it back to us at: PO Box 747, Sheffield, MA 01257, e-mail us at shs@sheffieldhistory.org, or call us at 229-2694. THANK YOU!!!!

	Cooking		Classes
	House-Keeping		Maintenance
	Living History/Reenactment		Old Stone Store
	Docent		Gardening/Landscaping
	Tools (Organizing, Cataloguing, etc)		Research
	Decorating		Art (Posters, Logos, Graphic Design, etc)
	Events		Other