

The Sheffield Historical Society



Fall 2014

Newsletter

"Family Reflections:" Christmas in Sheffield

Sheffield Historical Society

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Office Hours

Friday 1:30pm-5:00pm
Saturday 9:00am-3:00pm
Sunday 9:00am-3:00pm

Mark Dewey Research Center
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Office Hours

Friday 1:30pm-4:00pm
or by appointment

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

Sheffield Historical Society
P.O. Box 747
137-161 Main St.
Sheffield, MA 01257

Visit us on Facebook



In the 1980's Ruth Barnum Leffingwell (1916-1998) wrote down her recollections of her childhood in Sheffield in a short unpublished manuscript called "Family Reflections." Beginning this issue, and continuing on in future issues, we will be bringing you excerpts from her manuscript.

Another very special time at the farm was Christmas time. It was also a special time at school and at church. At school there was usually a program directed by the teacher. Of course everything was prettied up with red folding bells and red and green tissue paper. Also we would color different things with crayons. We usually had pieces to speak. I remember Pa teaching me mine. Everybody was dressed up. Of course, the lamp was lighted. Just being back at the school with your family at evening was so nice.

At Christmas the church was even prettier than the school. There was a tall decorated Christmas tree. The altar was nice, and again everybody was

dressed up. There was really pretty Christmas music, and we children spoke our pieces. We exchanged gifts by pulling names, that way everybody got a gift. The church gave us all an orange plus a bag of Christmas candy. It seems that everything we did really didn't cost any money to attend. I think Pa and Ma were so good to us by taking us to those nice places so

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MERRY CHRISTMAS



The American tradition of enjoying oranges at Christmas and Hanukkah began in the 1880's when the

trans-continental railroad system allowed for fresh citrus fruits to be shipped all across the country even in the dead of winter.

Early 20th c.
orange box labels



From the Administrator



In this issue we thought we'd share with you stories and photos that represent what the Holiday Season in Sheffield was like at the turn of the 20th century. In addition to the excerpt from Ruth Barnum Leffingwell's "Family Reflections," we are showcasing some of the wonderful photos we have in our collection. Sheffield has many holiday traditions, and one of them is the Historical Society's annual *Festival of Holidays*. In its 15th year, there is once again a wide assortment of hand crafted and locally-made gifts, ornaments, and delectable treats for sale. To see some of the items before you stop by the Old Stone Store, please visit the *Festival of Holidays* website: <http://theoldstonestore.weebly.com/>

-Jennifer Owens



Some of the items for sale at the Old Stone Store



we could get the meaning of it all. We were really taught about Christmas and the meaning of it all at home too.

Now at our home, Christmas was really something else. Pa always got us a tree, and we made all the decorations for it. We would pop corn and string it. We kept it for a few years. We also cut and mixed some flour and water for paste and made circles for the tree. We colored little pieces of paper. We used the same ribbon over and over. We mostly got things like stockings and shoe laces. If we all got a new pencil that was rare. Ma always seemed to get some candy with walnut meats in it. I don't know where she hid it, but it was there. Pa used to crack the butternuts and take the meats out for her. We had a nice butternut tree right down by our well. We had walnut trees too.

Now that I am older, I wouldn't have

A slightly more sumptuous Sheffield Christmas morning, 1906

exchanged my childhood for anything else. We were all so happy, had fun, and worked hard. Our parents loved us and taught us. Of course, we didn't miss money, because we never had any; I can't believe people back in those days with money had a better life than we did. I believe you have to work for what you get out of life to fully enjoy it, and that we did.



FESTIVAL *of* HOLIDAYS

hand-crafted gifts for
everyone on your list
MADE BY LOCAL
ARTISANS

at the
**OLD STONE
STORE**

MARGARET BUCHTE
cards

**CATA (COMMUNITY
ACCESS TO THE ARTS)**
craft & paper goods
jewelry

PAMELA DALTON
scherenschnitt

**KRISTEN
KANTER**
wooden
items

MARIA GAY
hand-carved painted Santas

MARISA JOYCE
photography

GARY LEVEILLE
books & postcards

AMANDA MORGAN
knitted infant sweaters

MARY ELLEN O'BRIEN
jewelry

ELIZABETH O'DONNELL
Long Road jewelry

PENROSE DESIGN
hand-blown glass jewelry

ELIZABETH THORNE POST
felt &
cloth
dolls

ARTISANS

**CHARLENE
REARDON**
chalkware Santas
& holiday cards

GEORGE REEVES
leather goods

JUDY & GARY SCHUMER
books & cards

JEFF SPUGNARDI
gravity wine bottles holders

LYNDA WIECHNICKI

**November
8th**

**December
21st**

**Saturdays
10 am~4pm**

**Sundays
11:00am~3:00pm**

**DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING
10:00am~4:00pm
CHRISTMAS EVE
10:00am~3:00pm**

Let it snow



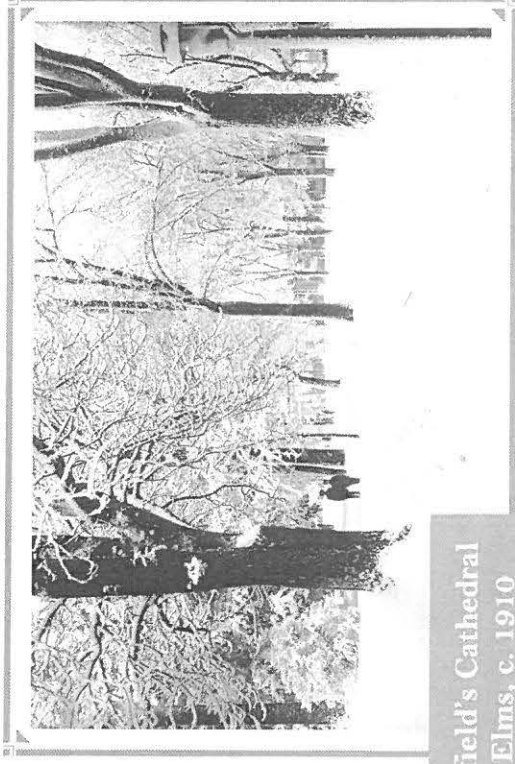
A boy and his dog at the icy
Housatonic, c. 1915



Children "enjoying"
winter, Orchard Shade,
c. 1915



Turkeys awaiting the inevitable,
Maple Ave., c. 1910



Sheffield's Cathedral
of Elms, c. 1910



Look what Santa brought...a
platform horse with wheels!

Sleighbells ring...



The Samuel Fox family, c. 1920



Moonlight bobsled excursion, c. 1920

A one pony open sleigh



Holiday Recipe

From: "Cooking Favorites
of Sheffield," Sheffield Grange No. 224
A "yule kaga" is a spiced and candied
Norwegian holiday bread

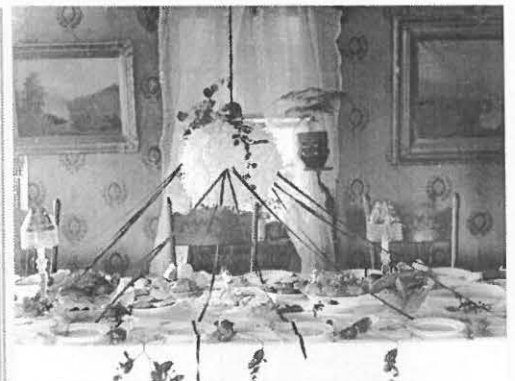
YULE KAGA

Mrs. Richard LeGeyt

2 c. scalded milk
1/2 c. shortening, scant
2/3 c. sugar
2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. cardamom seed
2 pkgs. dry yeast
1/4 c. lukewarm water

2 eggs
4 c. sifted flour
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 c. light raisins
1 c. cherries
1 c. citron
4 more c. flour

Scald and cool milk with shortening, sugar, salt and cardamom seed. When cool, add yeast which has been dissolved in water. Add 4 c. flour, cinnamon and fruit. Add additional 4 c. flour. Raise until double in bulk. Punch down. Knead. Raise until double in 2 bread tins. Bake at 350 degrees 45 minutes. (Shell cardamom seeds may be crushed between two spoons.)



An opulent Sheffield
Christmas dinner, 1908

Recent Exhibits & Programs

September-October

Distilling, Drinking & Prohibition Exhibit

Rounding out a year of well-received exhibits, was "Distilling, Drinking & Prohibition." An assortment of antique alcohol making apparatus from Sheffield was on display, ranging from an apple cider press to a liquor still to the bottles and jugs that held those prized locally-made libations. The monthly program at Dewey Hall, "Traditional New England Cider Making, History and Techniques," welcomed Dennis Picard who gave a highly-informative and enjoyable presentation on the history and traditions of hard cider making.

SOCK HOP

Our first Sock Hop featured a classic car show, an oldies concert, a hula hoop contest, and vintage treats.



Jeannie Romeo crooning all of the favorite oldies

Spirit Fest 2014

OCTOBER MONTHLY LECTURE PROGRAM:

"In a Preternatural Way:" 17th-Century Witchcraft in Connecticut and Western Massachusetts, a talk by Lisa Johnson

SPIRITWALK

The spirit of Eliza Sage recounts a life as a teacher and suffragette



HALLOWEEN Trick-or-Treating



Madison Ryan in costume, handing out candy to Trick-or-Treaters going door-to-door at the Society's historic buildings

Sheffield Historical Society Board Members:

Paul O'Brien (President)
Wray Gunn (Vice President)
Lois Levinsohn (Treasurer)
K.C. Clow (Secretary)
Tammy Blackwell
Tony Carlotto
Mandy O'Connor
Al Romeo
Rebecca Schopp
Dennis Sears
Kathy Staripoli

Student Advisors

Madison Ryan
Alexander Valentini

Living History Day

In October we welcomed the 5th Grade class at Undermountain Elementary School to participate in a "Living History Day". This is the second year we have run this program, and plan to continue and expand it in the future. The students rotated between stations where they learned about and participated in activities that brought to life what it was like to live in Sheffield in the 19th century. They made candles and butter, worked with antique tools, listened to a lawyer's account of a famous trial, and learned their lessons at a recreation of an one-room schoolhouse. A popular station was genealogy, where the children were guided through tracing their ancestors using the society's records online genealogy resources. But as anyone who has set out on the journey of uncovering their family history knows, it takes much more than a twenty minute session to dig deep into the past. So we hope to welcoming the students back to continue tracing their genealogies.



HOW MANY RELATIVES DO YOU HAVE?

1 YOU
2 parents
4 grandparents
8 great grandparents
16 gg grandparents
32 ggg grandparents
64 gggg grandparents
128 ggggg grandparents
256 gggggg grandparents
512 ggggggg grandparents
1,024 gggggggg grandparents
2,048 ggggggggg grandparents
4,096 gggggggggg grandparents
8,192 gggggggggg grandparents
16,384 gggggggggg grandparents
32,768 gggggggggg grandparents
65,536 gggggggggg grandparents
131,072 gggggggggg grandparents
262,144 gggggggggg grandparents
1,048,576 gggggggggg grandparents
2,097,152 gggggggggg grandparents
Grandparents

From The Family Tree, August/September 1999

Always been curious about uncovering your family history?

Whether you have ties to Sheffield or not, the historians at the Mark Dewey Research Center can guide you in finding the right resources for your genealogy quest. The Center is open 1:30pm-4pm Fridays or by appointment. Contact us at mdrc@sheffieldhistory.org or 413-229-3682

Upcoming Monthly Programs and Exhibits

Look out for them in the new year!

Extreme Weather

An exhibit presenting historic photos and accounts of severe weather events in Sheffield: floods, record snowfalls, droughts, and tornadoes. Frank Lowenstein will give a talk on the local effects of climate change at the monthly program.

Have you ever heard of Berkshire Crystal Water? Help us solve the mystery of the history of this Sheffield bottling company. Email or call us with any info or memories you have.

Berkshire County Antique Bottles



This monthly program lecture and exhibit will feature long-time Berkshire County resident Jim Thomas's collection of bottles found throughout Berkshire County. These, along with bottles from the Society's collection, will explore the beauty and function of this simple vessel.

*The
Sheffield
Historical Society*



Sheffield Historical Society

P.O. Box 747

Sheffield, MA 01257

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

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

Name(s) _____ E-Mail _____

Address _____

Please check: ☐ New ☐ Renew

☐ Individual (\$15 - \$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