

## Border Wars Part 2

In the last newsletter, I told the story of the tenant farmers of Sheffield rising up against their landlord Robert Livingston. When we left off the Town of Sheffield had arrested two of Livingston's men. In response, the sheriff of Dutchess County, NY arrested Michael Hallenbeck, one of the revolting tenants. Hallenbeck soon escaped from the jail and fled to Boston with fellow tenant Loomis and their rabble rouser lawyer Thomas Ingersoll.

The dispute was much more than tenants wishing to break the shackles of rent. It was a border war between Massachusetts and New York. Livingston was technically in the right, his family had owned the land for generations before any settlers from Massachusetts laid claim to it. Livingston and the colony of New York contended that it was up to the king to decide the dispute. A New York council weighed in stating: "The committee are of opinion, the attempts of the inhabitants of Massachusetts Bay to make encroachments upon and land granted by Letters Patent under the Great Seal of New York...are disrespectful to his Majesty's Authority, tend to the Disturbance of his Subjects of this Province, and may be the Cause of great Mischiefs and Disorders. That the steps taken by the said Inhabitants, even where the Bounds doubtful and unsettled, are intrusions and disrespectful to his Majesty's Authority." Needless to say, there were stirrings of defiance against the crown in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1750's, reaching as far as its westernmost reaches.

Sheffield settlers claimed more than just the highlands of the Taconics. Robert Noble, brother of Matthew Noble, the first settler of Sheffield, claimed territory in nearby Hillsdale and Claverack. Noble and Hallenbeck were close compatriots, having each captained a militia in their respective and neighboring villages in what is now Mt. Washington/Egremont and Hillsdale against marauding Canadian Indians, this being the time of the French and Indian War. While keeping watch for potential Indian raids, the militia captains put their forces to use attacking the grist mill of another manor lord, John Van Rensselaer. The Dutch patrol sent the Sherriff of Albany out to arrest the rioters, but the crowd overcame him, scurried the sheriff away to Sheffield and jailed him. Thomas Ingersoll set bail for the sheriff at £150. The Lieutenant Governor of New York responded to this bold outrage by sending a posse led by the bailed-out Sherriff Yates to apprehend Noble and his gang. They went right for Loomis, the lead anti-renter who'd started the whole affair those couple of years prior when he defied Livingston by squatting on his Mt. Washington land after the lord had evicted him. The next day they then went to arrest another anti-rent rebel, William Race, in the process killing the man. The Sheffield coroner, William Ingersoll, Thomas Ingersoll's brother, declared it a murder and the Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts put a reward out for the apprehension of the New York sherriff's posse. Prominent Sheffield

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settler Colonel John Ashley further retaliated by issuing a warrant directing Robert Noble to raid Lord Livingston's iron works at Ancram, NY. A band led by Noble arrested all of the iron workers, under the pretense that they were part of the group who had killed Race, and jailed them in Springfield. Those workers had nothing to do with any of the hostilities, but the authorities in Springfield sent them back to Sheffield to be held as hostages until Loomis and the other anti-rent insurgents were released by New York. As one historian put it, "The affair was nothing less than a wanton invasion by an armed force, an actual levying of war against a neighboring province, apparently without a shadow of justification."

The matter of the disputed border finally came before King George II in 1757 in London. The old and ailing monarch would put off the matter, and it was not resolved by his death in 1760. His young heir, George III, did not address it until 1767. In the ten years it was undecided there were further skirmishes and deaths. In 1767 George III decreed that commissioners from each province convene to settle the matter, which sent it essentially right back to the drawing board. The final conclusion was that the border be 20 miles east of the Hudson River. The exact measurements were never satisfactorily determined, and by 1784 it was up to the United



King George III in 1762

States Congress to ascertain the border, then deemed to be along the peak of the Taconics.

The anti-renters had been vanquished. Ingersoll, came to be seen by both Massachusetts

and New York as an unscrupulous land grabber and speculator who had quite literally stirred up a war between the two colonial provinces for his personal gain. He soon lost all of his property to creditors and was left in financial ruin. Lord Robert Livingston had no choice but to relinquish claim to lands east of the mountains, and in 1779 the Town of Mt. Washington was incorporated within the new state of Massachusetts. Yet the anti-rent movement was hardly dead. The Livingston family continued to battle in the courts and in the fields with anti-renters in New York up until 1852. A young up-and-coming lawyer in Hudson named Martin Van Buren made a name for himself by representing the liberty-seeking tenants, securing his path all the way to the White House. Justice cannot be done to this saga in this short article, so click the link below to read further.

*The Western Boundary of Massachusetts:  
A Study of Indian and Colonial History*

Get a head start on holiday shopping. Join us Friday, November 4 for the opening night reception for the Festival of Holidays.

**Whimsical &  
Sophisticated Gifts**  
LOCAL ARTISANS  
**Festival of  
Holidays**

**Nov. 5 – Dec. 31**

AT THE **STONE STORE** Sat. & Sun.  
SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY 11-4

**Opening Night Reception**  
Friday, Nov. 4 7-9 pm

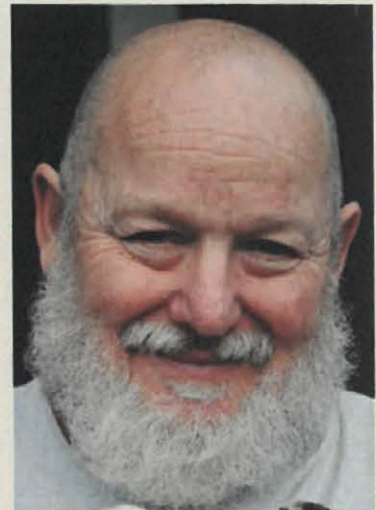
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# Message from the President

Greetings members, friends and anyone who reads this. I hope to be able to provide a note with each newsletter that our dedicated administrator delivers to you. I'd like to take this chance to thank Paul O'Brien, my predecessor. Many of you have seen firsthand his enthusiasm, dedication, commitment of time and service to our great organization. As many leaders leave their posts they seem to fade away leaving all to wonder where did they go to. Paul remains VERY active in the society. One of the most important aspects of the society is the wellbeing of the buildings and grounds and Paul has agreed to take on the duties of "buildings, grounds and facilities manager". Please thank him when you see him.



At some point in your internet surfing time visit [www.sheffieldhistory.org](http://www.sheffieldhistory.org) and see what we are about. Check out the names of our board of directors and appointed positions. Behind every name is a very dedicated being who is very active in keeping the society going strong. We would all like more participation from our members and friends. Come join us at one of our many events, eat, drink and be merry, make new friends, see amazing exhibits & presentations, chat about history or the weather and enjoy yourselves. We are not a bunch of old farts; we are young in mind, spirit, heart and dedication to history and the society. The newsletter needs more substance than my ramblings. If you have something to share, by all means submit it. Even little tidbits of history are fun to read. Everybody has a story to share, so share one of yours with us.

If you have any ideas or recommendations, please contact me (I am a lifelong student of colonial history, hence [tcolonial@aol.com](mailto:tcolonial@aol.com)).

Sincerely,  
Tony Carlotto

PS: I hope you all noticed that I didn't use the the "D" word yet. What's the best nation? DONATION. Consider giving the gift of a membership to a student you know, grade school through college...there's no such thing as "too young" to get involved in history.





## Events

### *7th Annual Mumbet Walk to Freedom*



In 1781, slave Mumbet walked 4 miles to the Sedgwick House on Main St. to ask Theodore Sedgwick to represent her in Court in a suit for her freedom. This was the first civil rights case ever adjudicated in America, and paved the way for the repeal of slavery in Massachusetts in 1783. On August 21st, the 235th anniversary of this event, the Ashley House Property Committee, in conjunction with the Sheffield Historical Society, sponsored a recreation of Mumbet's walk to freedom.



### *Living History Day*

Each year 5th graders at Undermountain Elementary visit the society and learn about what life was like in the 19th century.







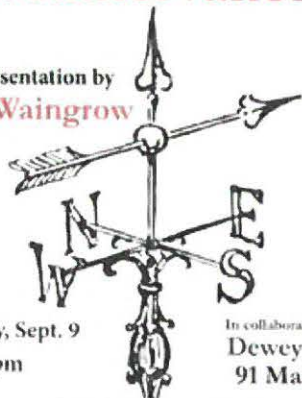
# Programs

*September*

Sheffield Historical Society

## New England Weathervanes

A presentation by  
**Jeff Waingrow**



Friday, Sept. 9  
7:30 pm

In collaboration with  
Dewey Hall  
91 Main St.

Free and open to the public  
[www.sheffieldhistory.org](http://www.sheffieldhistory.org) [sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) 413-229-2694

*October*

Sheffield Historical Society

## A HARVEST OF FIELD & STREAM

A presentation by  
**Dennis Picard**



Friday, Oct. 14  
7:30 pm

In collaboration with  
Dewey Hall  
91 Main St.

Free and open to the public  
[www.sheffieldhistory.org](http://www.sheffieldhistory.org) [sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) 413-229-2694

### *Tools of the Trade: Baseball History as Seen Through Equipment & Technology*



Larry Moore, Education & Outreach Educator for the Baseball Hall of Fame led a hands-on program on the history of baseball technology at the Dan Raymond House in October. We'll welcome him back in the Spring of 2017 for our May monthly program and an exhibit on the rich history of baseball in the Berkshires. Do you have any photos, memorabilia, uniforms, bats, balls, gloves from local teams that you would like to be part of the exhibit? High school, little league, minor league? All info or items are sought. email: [sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or call 413-229-2694



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*from our collection...*

## *Ladies Vanity Items*

These ladies items were acquired by the society in 1989. The fan is made of mother-of-pearl and paper. Painted on the fan is a scene depicting two women doing laundry at a stream. Folding fans were not introduced to Europe and America until the 1600's. This Chinese design quickly became the fashion and most fans from then on were of this style. The two silver-plated brushes are adorned with cherubs and were probably part of a set along with a matching comb and mirror.

Natural bristle brushes like these were used to both style and clean the hair. In the 19th century women did not have the opportunity to bathe daily, so they would instead brush out dirt. The hatpin is capped by a ring of glass rhinestones. Hatpins date back to medieval times, but became very popular in the 19th century when women began wearing bonnets. They were being mass produced by machines as early as the 1830's in America. In the early 1900's laws were passed to prohibit



the wearing of hatpins because of the fear that suffragettes would use them as weapons. The linen handkerchief has a macrame loop fringe. Hairpins, combs or other accessories could be stored in the wooden box painted with flowers. In most homes in 19th century America these items, along with makeup and perfume, would be kept on top of a dresser because there was not enough room for a dedicated dressing table. Those would only be found in wealthy homes. To mimic the look and purpose of the vanity table, dressers would often have mirrors and small tabletop drawers,

### **virtual museum**

In 2013 the Metropolitan Museum of Art had an exhibit on the history of the dressing table called "Vanities: Art of the Dressing Table."

[View the exhibit  
catalog](#)

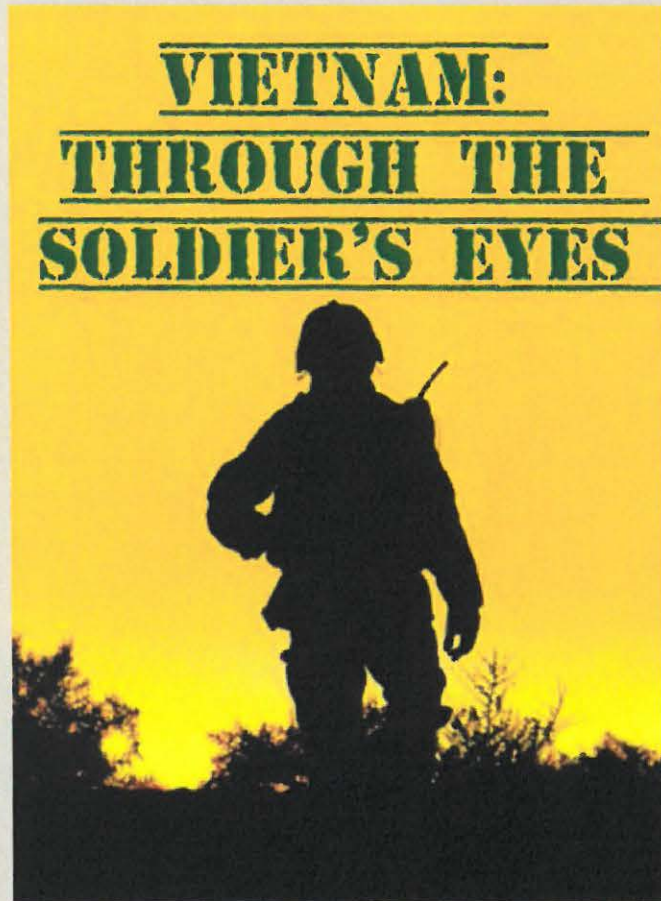
[Listen to NPR  
segment on  
the exhibit](#)





## Exhibits

The Sheffield Historical Society joined organizations across the nation to honor Vietnam veterans as part of the "The 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration." Our fall exhibit "Vietnam: Through the Soldier's Eyes" looked at the war as it was



experienced by the soldier on the ground. The exhibit was designed by Al Romeo, a society board member and Vietnam Veteran, along with Paul O'Brien. Videotaped oral histories along with displays gave a poignant testament to what it was like to go to war...and to come home from the war. Many veterans viewed the exhibit and shared their own stories of their experiences as a soldiers and veterans. As a commemorative partner, the Sheffield Historical Society will be presenting additional programs and events over the next two years.



Al Romeo & Paul O'Brien at the exhibit reception



Learn more about the 50th Anniversary program, view an interactive timeline, check out other events nearby.







*The  
Sheffield  
Historical Society*



**Dan Raymond House**

Jennifer Owens, Administrator  
sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com  
413-229-2694

**Office Hours**

Tuesday 10:00 am-4:00 pm  
Friday 10:00 am-4:00 pm  
Sheffield Historical Society  
P.O. Box 747

137-161 Main St.  
Sheffield, MA 01257

www.sheffieldhistory.org

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**Mark Dewey Research Center**

K.C. Clow, James Miller, & David Prouty, Volunteers  
mdrc@sheffieldhistory.org  
413-229-3682

**Office Hours**

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

**Old Stone Store**

On the Green in Sheffield  
Weekends 11:00 am-4:00 pm  
413-229-2287

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

