



SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER 1999

Society Acquires Old Stone Store

The Society was presented with an unusual opportunity late in the summer; the Old Stone Store, the longest continuously operated business establishment in Sheffield, was available for purchase. The owner had given Berkshire Bank a deed in lieu of foreclosure, and the Bank, interested in assisting the Society and ultimately the town, agreed to sell the building for \$30,000 and return a \$10,000 contribution to the Society to assist in its restoration. Harry Conklin generously contributed his legal services, and the closing took place in early October.

The Trustees have agreed that the later frame addition at the rear of the building will be removed and only the original stone section will be restored. The first floor will become permanent and rotating exhibit space for the Society, and a visitor information center. It is expected that the increased visibility provided by the exhibit space will enhance the number of visitors to the main campus of the Society. The second floor will be converted to rentable office space to provide income to maintain the structure.

John James has agreed to oversee the restoration and will assist the Society in applying for a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Joanne Hurlbut, our Director, is also pursuing grant possibilities. There will be very little work on the building until the status of the grant applications is known because one of the major grants will not fund work retroactively.

In the meantime, however, Joe Wilkinson and crew have removed the mid-20th-century porch, rebuilt a portion of the foundation, reset the marble steps, and tied the front of the building into the new landscaping being done to the town green. Plans call for cleaning the front of the building before winter and repointing some of the masonry.

This is an exciting opportunity for the Society and for Sheffield. The building, constructed of stone from the Hewins quarry, was built circa 1835 by the Ensign family. It has had an important heritage in Sheffield and strategically forms the cornerstone of the north end of the green. When the frame section is removed and grass is planted in that area, the Town Hall, also built by the Ensigs, will be more visible.



Decoration Day 1900
Civil War veterans marching by the Old Stone Store.

Agnes Boardman Memorial Gifts

Agnes Boardman, an early Society member who served as a Trustee and Secretary, passed away recently in Granby, CT. Her family requested that memorial gifts be made to the Sheffield Historical Society and over \$1,000 has been received to date. Agnes, who loved people, and children in particular, was a dedicated teacher and early in her career taught in Sheffield's Brush Hill School. In view of that fact, the memorial will be used to support the school programs held at the Society.

Society Monthly Meeting Schedule 2000*

January 14: "What's It" with Milton Barnum

Join us for the annual "stump the experts" evening. Share your unusual treasures, large or small, with your neighbors.

February 11: "Mysteries of Title Searching" with Lynn Wood

Discover the stories of Sheffield's past as you learn about settlement in areas such as Bow Wow Road.

March 10: American Period Gardening

April 14: "All to the Tune of a Hickory Stick: A Look at Education in the One Room Schoolhouse" with Dennis Picard

Using period costuming and artifacts, Dennis Picard will take you back in time to the school days of multi-generational education and classroom manners.

May 12: "History of Tea" with John Harney

June 9: Annual Meeting

*All meetings will be held at Dewey Memorial Hall at 7:30 pm and are free and open to the public.



Look for special programming in 2000 relating to women's history, in particular exhibitions and programs based on the photographic work of Sheffield's artist Carrie Smith Lorraine (1868-1935). Projects are contingent upon receipt of pending grants.

- 1776. Samuel Church, born in 1721 in Wethersfield, CT, married Thankful Hewitt and settled in Sheffield. His children were all born in town but in 1774 or '75 he traded his Sheffield farm, valued at \$3,000, for 3,000 acres of land in Hubbartown, VT, where he moved, cleared a place, and built a house. His family suffered so much in July 1776 from an attack by a party of Tories and Indians that they started to return to Sheffield, a trip, by a roundabout way, that took them some 350 miles, reaching Sheffield in about three weeks. Two of his sons were prisoners of the British until liberated by American forces in October of that year.

Recent Programs

The Spirits of Sheffield Cemetery Walk

This year's program in the Plain Cemetery saw a cast of seven spirits, from Revolutionary leaders and women who suffered from Sheffield's plagues to a 19th-century preacher and an Irish immigrant. Over 60 visitors attended and gave rave reviews of the performers. A special thanks goes out to everyone who helped with the event from actors to tickets and refreshments volunteers. Our guides were especially indispensable as they led the guests nimbly through the cemetery from spirit to spirit.



Participants stand near the grave of Ralph Little (1785-1856), a Sheffield merchant and part-owner of the "meadow quarry," portrayed by Neal Chamberlain.
Photo by: Kathy Orlando

The Annual Turkey Dinner

Under the skilled leadership of Harry Conklin with Milton Barnum's guiding touch, this year's Turkey Dinner was another resounding success story. Close to \$1000 was raised for our annual scholarship program. One connoisseur of turkey dinners proclaimed this the best one in the tri-state area! Success stories like this happen only with tremendous time and effort expended by a large and multi-talented group of volunteers. Thanks to all involved including the cooks, bakers, pie people, ticket takers, hosts, servers, scrapers, dishwashers, and students. A job well done!

- 1773. Edward Cornwell, nearly five years old, and a "poor child," was apprenticed by the Sheffield Overseers of the Poor to Joseph Ferre, Senior, and his wife, Sarah. Edward was to be taught "the common business of husbandry & also learn . . . to . . . write a fair hand . . . & likewise . . . arithmetick that he shall well understand the rules of addition, subtraction multiplication and division if he the said servant be capable of learning the same & also provide the said servant . . . meat, drink, washing & lodging & all other things necessary in sickness & in health." For his part, Edward was required to faithfully serve the Ferres in all lawful business according to his best power and ability and to behave "honestly, orderly and obediently" in all things.

SHS Volunteer opportunities:

- ◆ ***Decking the Halls for the Open House: Thursday December 2nd***
- ◆ ***Assisting with collections inventory over the winter months***
- ◆ ***Assisting with the Carrie Smith Lorraine exhibition and related programming***
- ◆ ***Festival 2000 Planning***

Call (413) 229-2694 for details

- 1865 ELECTION RETURNS. In March town officials were elected, all Republican without opposition. John D. Burtch was elected clerk and treasurer; selectmen, Emmons Arnold, Grove R. Griffith and R. Dwight Andrews; assessors, James Bradford, Tillinghast B. Strong and M.H. Wickwire; school committee, the Reverend J.W. Beach and H.T. Candee.

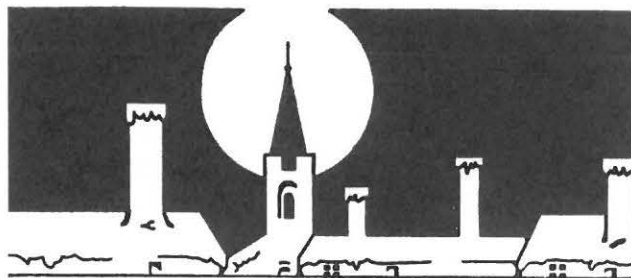


***Dan Raymond House Holiday Festivities:
"Toys over Time" exhibit, & holiday decorations***

- * Open House, Sunday December 5th, 2 to 5 pm, refreshments, hands-on activities and entertainment, free
- * Friday tours, December 3rd, 10th, & 17th, 11 am to 4 pm, members free, adults \$5, seniors \$4, ages 6-16 \$1

***Yuletide Stroll and Dessert in Ashley Falls
Friday, December 10 at 6 pm***

- * Four historic buildings
- * Sounds of holiday music at the Trinity Methodist Church
- * Entertainment, Refreshments
- * Festival of Miniature Trees and Della Robbia decorations, for sale and by raffle
- * Members free; non-members \$5



The Sheffield Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly. For further information contact Joanne Hurlbut, Director, Sheffield Historical Society, 159-161 Main Street, P.O. Box 747, Sheffield, MA 01257 (413-229-2694). The Society's fax is up and running (413-229-3682); since the fax works through the computer, please call to confirm that the computer is ready to receive your fax.

Sheffield Historical Society
P.O. Box 747
Sheffield, MA

Don't Miss These!

**DAN RAYMOND HOUSE HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES
YULETIDE STROLL AND DESSERT IN ASHLEY FALLS**