



## ***SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPRING NEWSLETTER 2000***

### ***Sheffield: Through the Lens of Carrie Smith Lorraine (1868-1935)***

The Sheffield Historical Society's traveling exhibition of photographic works by Sheffield native Carrie Smith Lorraine will open in April. The images preserved by Lorraine on glass plate negatives create a window into life in Sheffield at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**The Sheffield Historical Society is the recipient of two grants for this project; the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation awarded \$1000 and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities awarded \$2,465 to SHS to underwrite the exhibition.**

The Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

*Sheffield: Through the Lens of Carrie Smith Lorraine (1868-1935)* will be divided into



three segments, to highlight Sheffield structures, individuals, and daily events. The opening reception will be held at Dewey Memorial Hall on Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, at 3pm. Nationally and internationally known local photographer Ann Shanks will present a lecture on women and photography of 1900.

Can you identify this 12 year-old photographed by Lorraine?  
Hint: She is an SHS member.

The exhibition will then travel to the Bushnell-Sage Library, opening on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. A school project in conjunction with this exhibition will result in local student works being added to the Library showing. Jim Miller will present a lecture on May 20<sup>th</sup> entitled "Material Culture of Sheffield at the Turn of 1900." Additional exhibition programming includes summer workshops for youth.

### ***Documentary Heritage Grant Award***

*Discovering Local Resources*, a collaborative endeavor by the Sheffield Historical Society, the Egremont Historical Commission, and the Town of Sheffield, has been awarded \$3,801 through the Documentary Heritage Grant Initiative. The program is sponsored by the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board, the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

During April, records management consultants Peter J. Parker and Cynthia G. Swank of New Hampshire will survey the local historical records and create a comprehensive study of the resources available at each location. **This information will then be disseminated to the public through a "Records Access Workshop" to be held on May 10<sup>th</sup> from 1 to 3 pm. An all-day follow-up workshop, "Getting Started with Preservation," will be presented on May 18<sup>th</sup> by the Northeast Document Conservation Center. Both workshops are free and the public is encouraged to attend; reservations are required. Call 229-2694.**



***Dog Tale from the  
Mark Dewey  
Research Center***  
*(From a CT family genealogy)*

Captain Abijah Ranney of Sheffield, Mass., was a son of one of the first settlers. The Captain lived in Cromwell until he had grown to manhood. He married for his second wife Mrs. Annah Stillman Tallcott of Glastonbury, grandmother of Judge Thomas H. L. Tallcott of that town. Captain Ranney was the owner of a dog remarkable in many ways, and who once saved the Captain from being robbed, and, perhaps, murdered. Judge Tallcott often heard the story in his youth, and related the tale to a reporter recently. The story runs as follows:

Early one morning a man called at the Captain's house and said the Captain's dog was killing his sheep. Captain Ranney said it couldn't be his dog, as the canine was shut up in the woodshed and had not been let out that morning. They visited the woodshed and found the dog in his bed. The man said: "It isn't your dog that is killing the sheep, but one that looks just like him." Other complaints were made, but on going to the woodshed the dog was always there. Finally one morning a man drove up at top speed and said to the Captain: "Your dog is in my sheep; I left him there and raced my horse to get here before he did."

"Well," said Captain Ranney, "we will look in the woodshed."

They went to the shed. The dog was there, but covered with blood and licking himself. The only way out of the shed, except by the door, was a small opening just a little larger than the dog's body and about four feet from the floor and the same distance from the ground outside. Through this small opening the dog had leaped in and out in his trips to the sheep field. The idea that the dog could use the opening to enter and leave the shed had not occurred to the Captain, and he was greatly surprised. Turning to the visitor he said: "It is my dog that is killing sheep! I won't keep a dog

that kills sheep." He told his sons to tie the dog up back of the barn, and that after breakfast he would shoot him. The boys put a rope on the dog, and evidently tied it very loosely, as they felt bad at the idea of losing the dog, who was much liked by the family. When the Captain and the boys went out after breakfast the dog was gone. He was not seen again in Sheffield that summer, and no more sheep were killed.

Captain Ranney sold his cheese and other farm products to a merchant over the New York State line. It was the custom to collect in the fall for the product taken. The fall of the same year in which the dog left his home, Captain Ranney went on horseback to the New York town, made a settlement with the merchant and was then ready to start for home, intending to go to the next village, where he would remain over night. It was nearly dark, and the merchant and others tried to persuade him not to start until morning. There was a long and dark piece of woods between the two villages, and several persons, who had started to go from one village to the other, had never been seen after entering the woods. It was supposed that they had been murdered.

Captain Ranney said he had a good horse and thought he would get through all right. He had proceeded well into the woods when a man sprang into the road from behind a large rock, and grasped the horse by the bridle. A large dog followed the man. The man said to the dog, "Seize him!" The dog looked up at the Captain and whined. The man repeated, "Seize him, I tell you seize him!" Still the dog would not obey the man. Captain Ranney looked at the canine and saw it was his old dog. He turned to the man, who still held the bridle, and said: "You have tried your luck with the dog, now I'll try mine." He called the dog by his old name and said, "Seize him!" The dog instantly jumped at the robber and had him by the throat, tearing open his jugular vein. The dog looked up at Captain Ranney and whined. The Captain said to him, "You can go home with me. I'll keep you now if you kill all the sheep in Sheffield." The dog leaped about in an ecstasy of joy at meeting his old master again and the permission to return home with him. Captain Ranney continued on to the next village and reported to

the officers. A posse started at once and found the dead body of the man near the rock. The next day there was a general turning out of the men of the village, who made a thorough search of the woods to find the quarters of the robber. They found the place about a mile from the road. There were evidences of graves of several persons, the skeleton of a horse, and a peddler's wagon, accounting for the mysterious disappearance of a peddler some months before and also of other persons.

Evidently the man had trained the dog to aid him in killing his victims.

Captain Ranney continued home the day after his adventure, taking his dog with him. Great was the joy of the family at seeing the animal again, and it is not stated that he was ever again guilty of killing sheep.

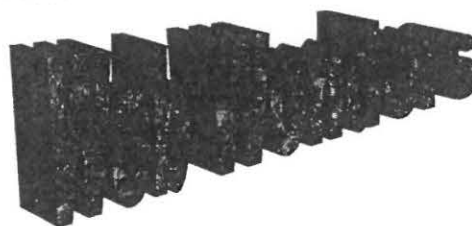
### **Spring Travels**



(Photograph by Carrie Smith Lorraine)

Get ready for that Spring touring trip! On Wednesday, **May 17<sup>th</sup>**, travel through the Hudson Valley region to discover the lifestyle of the "landed gentry," stopping first at the **Clermont State Historic Site**. View the home of the socially and politically prominent Livingston family of New York for over 230 years. Then travel on to **Montgomery Place** for a box lunch on the squash court. Finish with a tour of the 1804 Federal-style home of Janet Livingston Montgomery, remodeled in the 1860s into a Classical Revival mansion. Car travel, admission to the museums, and the box lunch are all included for approximately \$20. For further information or to register for the trip call SHS at 229-2694, Marion Whitman at 229-2129, or

Twiggs Myers at 229-2811. Drivers are needed!



The Sheffield Historical Society web site is now operational! Click on **sheffieldhistory.org** and you will arrive at the home page. From here you can go to the new e-mail address **sheffhs@bcn.net** with a click of your mouse, or you can contact the Office directly via the Internet. A big thanks goes out to Gregg Siter, who was instrumental in getting SHS on line!

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

- 1) Looking forward to the summer? Help us organize this year's Artisans Festival.
- 2) School groups will soon be here--can you help with the *A Place in Time* program?
- 3) Do you have that artistic flair? Join us for the Carrie Smith Lorraine exhibition.

### **New Education Brochure Available for Teachers**

SHS's first such brochure is being distributed to local teachers. If you know of any educators in the area, such as home school leaders, who could benefit from our programs including the MDRC archives, please call the SHS Office with the contact name and address.

### **SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



**EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
2000-2001**

### ***Membership Renewal Reminder***

Please keep in mind that as of September 1999, your membership expiration date, month, and year are indicated in ( ) to the right of your name on the mailing label. If you still have a (9/99) next to your name, that means your membership has lapsed. Please use the enclosed membership mailer to update your membership.

### ***Upcoming Meetings:***

***April 14--"All to the Tune of a Hickory Stick" with Dennis Picard***

***May 12--"History of Tea" with John Harney***

***June 8--Annual Meeting***

***Special Event: July 16<sup>th</sup>--"The World of George Washington," concert by nationally known David & Ginger Hildebrand, plus activities (look for more details in the June newsletter)***

### ***Wish List***

If you have any of the following objects in good condition, but you no longer need the item, consider donating to SHS. Monetary contributions to be used in purchasing the items are also welcome.

Floor lights, Screw gun, Glue & Staple guns, Folding chairs, WWI & WWII info, Old scrap books

### ***Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area designation being sought to preserve and enhance our local resources.***

Join the Tri-Corners History Council and local community organizations to seek government approval of this national treasure. Learn about the process and goals for this proposal on Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, from 10 am to 1 pm at the Mt. Everett High School. A lecture by Ed Kirby, author of "Echoes of Iron," will be presented. Cultural organizations will be there to showcase their offerings to the public. Call the SHS Office at 229-2694 for further details on ways to get involved, especially in the local political realm.

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



***SHEFFIELD:  
THROUGH THE LENS OF CARRIE SMITH LORRAINE***

**OPENING RECEPTION & LECTURE on "Women and Photography"--APRIL 15<sup>th</sup>  
LECTURE on "Material Culture of Sheffield at the Turn of 1900"--MAY 20<sup>th</sup>**