

SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER, 1998

Dennis Picard Appointed Director of Society

Upon the recommendation of the Search Committee, the Board of Trustees unanimously agreed to appoint Dennis D. Picard the first professional director of the Society. Dennis, whose duties began July 13, comes to the position with twenty years of experience, having served most recently as Program Coordinator of Storrowton Village Museum in Springfield and, prior to that at Old Sturbridge Village. An extensive background in developing and implementing programs for school age children, senior citizens and the general public as well as experience with historic house museums and their collections provide a good fit with the Society's needs. In addition to his keen interest in history, Dennis finds time to pursue 18th and 19th century shoemaking, restore 18th and 19th century textile machinery and firearms and participate in historic military re-enactments.

A Few Words from Dennis Picard

Entering my new position as Director of the Sheffield Historical Society has been a wonderful experience. Catherine Miller, other Board of Trustee members and volunteers have gone out of their way to make me feel welcome and help me begin to learn about the unique qualities of Sheffield and the Society. I am grateful for all the kind assistance each person has so willingly offered.

I believe this coming year will witness the presentation of a unique group of programs centered on the historic Dan Raymond House as well as some of the other structures on the Society's site.

The annual Festival of Country Arts & Artisans holds the promise of not only showcasing some of the best crafts people in New England, demonstrating unique skills, but also an event that will introduce many visitors to the value of Sheffield and the Historical Society. I hope this program will help to invigorate the enthusiasm of Society members and our neighbors. To make any event run smoothly, many volunteers are needed. If you have not heard from Nancy Elliott, won't you please call her at 229-8338 and let her know when you could help.

The Dan Raymond House has been receiving some attention. A new office is being constructed at the rear of the kitchen, and I expect to move into that space by the middle of August. Some of the furnishings are being shifted among rooms to enhance the story of the house and its early residents. There is a small core of volunteer interpreters who will share the house with visitors. However, in order to expand the hours throughout the year, more volunteer interpreters are needed. Anyone who is interested in learning more about this important part of the Society's life is urged to contact me at 229-2694 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. There will a training session and handbook to assist you in sharing the life and times of the House with others. It will be fun and interesting and I hope you will consider becoming a member of this team.

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Please join us in the coming months for as many of the events as your schedule allows. A calendar of activities will be available shortly. I look forward to meeting all of you and invite you to stop by the Society's headquarters to see for yourself the changes that are occurring. I believe there is a wonderful future ahead for us as we look into Sheffield's past!

Business & Professional Community Invited to Meet Dennis Picard

The Trustees will host a reception for business and professional people from the Sheffield and Ashley Falls areas on August 18. This will be an opportunity for people in the community to visit, many for the first time, the Society's headquarters and meet Dennis Picard.

Dennis will be introduced again to the Society on Friday, September 11, (first meeting of the new year) so those who were unable to attend the Annual Meeting will have an opportunity to talk with him then. He also will be actively involved in the Festival in August, so please introduce yourself to him.

The Spirits of Sheffield Will Walk Again

This October, the Society will offer a new and unusual program. Using one of the local cemeteries as a teaching resource, visitors will be invited to partake in a guided tour of one of the historic burying grounds to meet the spirits of a few of the 18th and 19th century residents.

Research has begun and there appear to be any number of fascinating stories. One interesting anecdote concerns Elizabeth Allen who resides in the Barnard Cemetery. She died in January, 1821 at the age of 67, a victim of yellow fever while visiting New York. There is Timothy Boardman who slumbers near Elizabeth Allen. He died in the 1780's at the age of 15, from a fall from a horse. Both of these stories would provide an opportunity to talk about the uncertainties of rural life in Sheffield.

Anyone of any age who would like to be involved with this program is most welcome. Individuals are needed to play the parts of the historic residents of the cemetery. Others are needed to serve as guides, ticket takers and the like the evening of the program. Volunteers should plan to attend some planning sessions and a rehearsal. Please let Dennis Picard know (229-2694) if this is something with which you would be willing to assist. It promises to be fun and educational.

Festival of Country Arts & Artisans, August 22

The Planning Committee has been hard at work laying the groundwork for the fourth Festival. It will be August 22 from 10 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on the grounds of the Society. Approximately two dozen craft persons from throughout New England will demonstrate their 18th or 19th century trade. A country store, overseen by Dorothy Marosy, will feature items created by the craft people as well as books and pamphlets of the Society. Children's activities will include ruler making workshops with Milton Barnum and clothes-pin dolls and tee shirt painting with Lisa Caputzal and others. There will be a variety of food and beverage as Rene Wood has organized a wonderful assortment. Home made pies are still needed, so please consider creating one for the

event. Those associated with the Antiques Show in the past will remember that the homemade pies drew people from afar! Pauline Dennis and volunteers from the Mark Dewey Research Center will offer two workshops on various aspects of genealogy. Dennis Sears and James Miller will have the Internet connected for other research. And, Betty Chapin will present a display of early tax and excise tax records of Sheffield, along with photographs of antique vehicles. Kathy Orlando and Dennis Picard will oversee tours of the Dan Raymond House, and Sandra Preston will orchestrate the evening meal for the craft persons and those Society folks who are willing to contribute \$3.00 to help defray expenses. Ann Riou has masterfully laid out the grounds and arranged for the various logistical aspects of the day. **If you have not been contacted by Nancy Elliott who is handling the scheduling of the work force**, please do not hesitate to contact her at 229-8388. She would love to hear from you and learn what you would like to do for a few hours on August 22. See you there!!

September 10- First Meeting of the New Year

The year will begin with a warm welcome to Dennis Picard, and a business meeting which will provide members and guests with insights into the activities and educational programs that are planned for the year. Dorothy Rowe of Pittsfield will present an informative program on Shay's Rebellion. Ms. Rowe has taught for many years in the Pittsfield school system and became interested in the Rebellion when she realized that many people had heard of Shay's Rebellion, but few seemed to have any understanding of the event. Ms. Rowe will make a connection between Shay's Rebellion and other agrarian revolts, such as Rhode Island's Dorr Rebellion and Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion of the late 18th century.

Society's 26th Annual Meeting

Members and guests of the Society gathered at Dewey Hall on Friday, June 13 for a potluck supper and to receive reports from officers and committee chairs, as well as to elect officers and trustees for the ensuing year. Several members were presented with prizes for having provided either the most creative, most humorous or most attractive dish.

Our new Director, Dennis Picard and his wife Joanne were introduced.

The meeting marked the 26th year of operation by the all volunteer organization. The scope and breadth of activities and programs during 1997 - 1998 was impressive, as highlighted in the reports that follow. Their length precludes publication of the full reports; they are available at the Dan Raymond House for any member that wishes to read the complete version.

Mark Dewey Research Center (formerly Family History Center)

Volunteers staffing the Center on Monday and Friday afternoons and other times by appointment donated 875 hours this past year. Questions were answered for private citizens, national media, authors and school children. The subjects ranged from simple points of interest to architecture, genealogy and photography.

A major goal was to increase publicity and to that end the Center enjoyed being the subject of an article in the Berkshire Eagle, a radio interview on WSBS and an article in the Berkshire County Family History Association Bulletin. The Center is also listed in Everton's Genealogical Helper, a national publication devoted to helping family history buffs solve their research problems.

The collection underwent voluminous expansion during the year with some of the more important acquisitions being a complete set of cemetery records; original copies of the Berkshire Courier beginning in 1865; a large collection of indentures of poor persons, Sheffield, 1752-1849; reports on the construction, condition and repair of bridges in Sheffield, 1830-1847; Sheffield town financial records, including canceled checks, 1879-1882; journal of Marriah Candee showing genealogy of many early Sheffield families; personal correspondence and family business papers of Giles Andrews family, consisting of 650 items covering virtually all of the 19th century, There are many, many more additions; conservatively speaking, well over 1,000 documents were catalogued. James R. Miller, Director/Archivist

Programs (Friday meetings)

The monthly programs were varied and spanned many subjects. They included: Chris Bailey, horologist of the National Watch and Clock Museum, Bristol, CT - Ornamentation of Clock Cases; Mason Dutcher, Sheffield, MA - Early Glass and Its Identification; Tom Driver, Sheffield, MA and New York - A Reading of A Child's Christmas In Wales; Milton Barnum and Chris Coenen, Sheffield, MA - What's It; Cynthia Hoogs, Great Barrington, MA - Cemeteries in Sheffield; Barbara Darlin, Philadelphia, PA - Unlacing the Victorian Woman; C. Twiggs Myers, Sheffield, MA- Battlefields of the Potomac; Sheffield residents - Artistic Visions of the Past. Virginia J. Drury, Program Chair

Interactive Programs

A variety of interactive programs were woven into the fabric of the year. Mr. & Mrs. Dan Raymond invited members and their guests to a Masquerade Party at their home on Main Street in Sheffield. Twenty guest enjoyed games, dancing and hilarity! In November eighteen members traveled to the Lunt Silver Design Center and the Springfield Quadrangle (museums and library). Friends and neighbors joined members at the Dan Raymond House in December for the annual holiday open house. The house, decorated for the season, featured in the north parlor an extensive display of miniature lead farm animals (and some toy soldiers!) provided by Bob Ledlie. During March, the Dan Raymond House was the site of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Paul Harney of Harney & Sons Fine Teas discussed tea and its origins. Thirty guests enjoyed a sampling of several teas and sweets along with an exhibit of tea related items. In April eight participants enjoyed a wonderful workshop on the art of vinegar staining. Each person left the session with a decorated piece that was completed during the program. Each of the programs was well received by the participants, and demonstrated that there is interest and enthusiasm for such activities. Dorothy Marosy, Chair

Education Programs for School Children

A variety of opportunities were provided for the eighth grade students to become more acquainted with local history. Milton and Marion Barnum entertained eight eighth graders and two teachers in October. They made chicken pot pie in their brick bake oven, along with ginger bread. Potatoes were boiled in an iron pot on the crane in the fireplace, and apple pies were baked in the Dutch oven on the hearth. The students were fascinated to see the amount of time involved in preparing a meal one hundred or more years ago.

The Society's Annual Turkey Dinner (4th Sunday in October) once again saw eighth grade students and their teachers serving as wait staff during the first seating. The proceeds of the event are directed to the Society's Education Fund, a portion of which funds eighth grade activities that are related to Sheffield and its history.

In March, the students who assisted with the Turkey Dinner were treated to a full breakfast at the Dan Raymond House. Society members in period costume prepared a colonial breakfast which included scrambled eggs, pancakes, bacon, spiced fruit, orange juice, hot chocolate. Milton Barnum cooked the pancakes on the hearth and students tried their hand at making toast in front of the hearth as well. This was followed by a mini What's It, presented by Chris Coenen.

Following this, there was a What's It session in the eighth grade classroom. Objects were held up and Milton Barnum would answer questions with "yes" or "no". It was interesting to see how many of the objects the students were able to identify.

In May, Milton was invited to the "Old Time Days" at the school. There were many objects and animals on display. Milton, with the use of Boyd Hutchison's shave horse, demonstrated how to make wood roof shingles. Students were provided with an opportunity to try their hand at the same.

In June, the eighth grade made its annual visit to the Society's grounds. Interpreters in period costume provided tours of the Dan Raymond House, a visit to a one room school house, the law office and the Carriage House where the old tools and three hole back house held great fascination for the students.

Milton Barnum, Chair

Education Committee

The Society sponsored a Barrington Stage production of Hannah Pixley, The Autobiography of a Berkshire County Woman, 1862 - 1953 for the students in the local school district, as well as a traveling exhibit and a study guide which were used by schools throughout the county.

The Society continues to provide a \$1,500 scholarship to a graduating senior who plans to pursue studies that are broadly related to history and/or its preservation.

Marion Whitman, Chair

Search Committee

The Search Committee convened in October, 1997 with a challenge of finding a suitable candidate to recommend to the Board of Trustees for Director of the Sheffield Historical Society. The Committee spent several weeks reading articles and other background material from the Bay State Historical League and other sources; interviewing other directors and members of search committees, and individuals with valuable experience; and refining and describing the necessary qualifications, and the job itself -- a lengthy and thought-provoking process.

Advertisements were placed in several professional publications at the end of January. In addition a press release was prepared and information packets, cover letter and job descriptions finalized. Numerous applications were received and the Committee selected seven for follow-up. Two committee members conducted telephone interviews with each of the seven. References were checked, and finally five candidates were invited to Sheffield for the interview process. On June 4, at a special meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Board agreed unanimously to make a formal offer to Dennis Picard. Mr. Picard agreed to the terms that were spelled out in a contract.

Katherine G. Ness, Chair

Report of the Curator

Early in the year, Lillian Preiss presented the Society with a number of history oriented books to be housed in the Sally Scanlon Library of the Dan Raymond House. These are a fine addition to the collection which covers the history of the area and its people, furniture styles and architecture.

The Trustees determined that the house should be furnished to reflect the mid 18th century through the early part of the 19th century. Near the end of the year, several Victorian items were deaccessioned. The Society was able to purchase an 18th century highboy which resides in the north parlor, and a small desk which replaced the larger one in the south parlor. Several items have been relocated to other rooms in order to provide a new look and a story for each setting. With the advent of a Director who will serve as curator, it is expected that the wonderful old house will come to life as we step backward in time in a forward looking manner.

Penny Browne, Curator

Endowment (formerly Development) Fund

The development fund continues to perform extremely well. In addition to having provided nearly \$20,000 to the operating account, the fund appreciated about 14% in the last year. The fund consists of two elements: fixed income funds from which the Society derives monies for operating needs, and equity funds with the interest and dividends reinvested for future needs. At the end of Fiscal Year, 1998, the funds were approximately 30% fixed income and 70% equity.

Changes in the portfolio during the year were minor. The Society changed its money market fund from BankBoston to Berkshire Bank in order to maintain local access to funds.

H. Dennis Sears, Investment Manager

Operating Fund

Income: July 1, 1997 - June 30, 1998

Antiques Show	6,192
Turkey Dinner/Craft Festival	4,893
Donations	990
Transfer from Endowment	<u>19,000</u>
	31,875

Expenses: July 1, 1997 - June 30, 1998

Grounds Care	1,666
Utilities	3,270
Building Upkeep	3,957
Meetings/Speakers	730
Accounting Services	3,080
Insurance	2,421
Supplies, Printing, Postage	4,450
Turkey Dinner/Craft Fair	5,700
Education (Hannah Pixley)	<u>2,000</u>
	29,853

Carl Proper, Treasurer pro tem (outgoing treasurer relocated June 1, 1998)

Elections

President	Catherine B. Miller	2 Years
Vice President	Sandra Preston	2 Years
Treasurer	Carl Proper	3 Years
Trustee	Grace Arzt	3 Years
Trustee	Nancy Elliott	3 Years

Continuing Board Members

Secretary	Eleanor Griffiths	2 Years
Trustee	Harry Conklin	1 Year
Trustee	Dorothy Marosy	2 Years
Trustee	Katherine Ness	2 Years

The End!