



DAN RAYMOND HOUSE

SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
SHEFFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

01257

Volume X, No. 2  
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Dear Members:

REGULAR MEETINGS, 7:30, Dewey Hall unless otherwise noted.

January 14. Annual What'sit and Show 'n' Tell with Milton Barnum as host. Some thirty-six items arrived on the scene for members to examine and determine origin. The great turnout for this meeting included many new faces and attested to the increasing popularity of what has become a January staple for the Society. Another delight of the January meeting was the opportunity the Society had to honor Viola Bagnaschi who has served the past eight years as treasurer of the Development Fund. Her years of devoted service and attention to the many details necessary to such an important job have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated by us. She was awarded a certificate of appreciation by President Miller at the end of her term of office. Thank you, Viola!

February 11. Ernest "Bev" Bevilacqua of Wilton, CT, an industrial designer by trade, will present a program on spinning and weaving. There are 75 pieces of equipment associated with that craft and Mr. Bevilacqua who serves as a consultant to museums, historical societies and private individuals will share particulars of the spinning and weaving trade. Members are invited to bring items of their own for Mr. Bevilacqua to analyze.

March 11. James Parrish of the Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission will present a program entitled "Berkshire County Archeology and Public Planning". The slide program will survey American archeology and review the interface of local archeology and archeological site protection with public law in Massachusetts.

April 8. We have planned a local specialist speaking on an interesting subject of local interest. Interested? Bring a friend.

May 13. Robert Kerker, Director of Executive Development of the New York State Division of the Budget and The Reverend Richard Thomas, a Methodist minister will share with the members a program on the Housatonic Line of the New York-New Haven-Hartford Railroad. Slides and dialogue between these individuals will illustrate scenes from Danbury to Pittsfield.

June 10. Annual Meeting at Dewey Hall at 6:30 p.m. Covered Dish Supper with Society providing dessert and beverage. Bring a casserole or salad and your own place setting.

## OF THINGS PAST

## Christmas Activities, 1982

Since the DRH is in the midst of restoration it was not certain if we should (or could) hold our annual Christmas Open House. But the Committee decided it would not be right to skip this popular annual event, and so the demanding preparations began with a thorough cleaning required by 200 years of dust and debris raised by masons, electricians, and carpenters. Furniture was temporarily taken out of storage, new acquisitions pressed into temporary service, lots of evergreens placed everywhere and the tree decorated with old fashioned ornaments. Candles, of course, abounded and the traditional pineapple and apple centerpiece covered the trestle table along with goodies supplied by members. A crackling fire and hostess period costumes added to the holiday mood.

Pleasant comments were overheard about the "feel" of our keeping room. Thanks to all who made our Christmas 1982 Open House a success.

Members and their guests also enjoyed a repeat of our annual Christmas dinner, again under the management of the very capable Virginia Drury and committee. As usual, the event was a sellout with the ever popular roast beef menu serving as the main attraction. Guests, however, upon arrival expressed astonishment at the decorations put together by Penny Browne, who, along with Virginia, contributed to making this feast one of the great traditions of the Society for the year.

Following the dinner, the Society viewed the premier presentation of the plate designed by Margaret Phelbrick to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Sheffield. The plate, sponsored by the Society, is available in limited edition. Contact President Miller if you are interested in acquiring one.

## Covered Bridge Restoration

The restoration project sponsored by the Sheffield Historical Commission of the Upper Covered Bridge was the subject of an article in the December issue of "Americana" magazine. Society members active in 1979 will remember the turkey dinner we sponsored in order to assist the Commission in its restoration efforts. The bridge is one of only two historic covered bridges along the entire length of the Housatonic River, and the Commission was fortunate to have Milton Graton who had restored over twenty covered bridges to supervise the work.

When Graton first inspected the bridge in April, 1979, it was bowed in the center and listed to one side. In the 1920's new timbers had been incorrectly grafted to its trusses, unbalancing the bridge. As a result, joints... had come loose, allowing water to seep in and rot the wood.... When Graton began work at Sheffield in January, 1980, western Massachusetts was locked in the grip of one of the severest winters in a decade. On some days the temperature barely rose above zero, and the cold incapacitated many of the hydraulic jacks, which were inserted beneath the bridge to relieve tension on the trusses. The cold was a boon in one respect, though: It froze the Housatonic to a depth of two and a half feet, giving Graton just the platform he required for the cribwork... which would support the bridge as it was moved off the river for restoration.

Work on the bridge and abutments began in the spring and ran through October, when the bridge was rolled back across the Housatonic.

## OF THINGS PRESENT

## DRH Restoration

The restoration work at the DRH is fully under way.

On the main floor the corner fireplaces that once heated the original eighteenth century farm house are being rebuilt in the north and south parlors. Research was done and the masonry and panel work will be appropriate to the period. Remnants of the original fireplaces were exposed during preparation work. When the walls were opened, Flemish bricks from the initial construction were exposed. Hand made and hand fired, these bricks are a lovely example of colonial craftsmanship. Foot prints of a dog, a cat and a goat or lamb which lived in the eighteenth century were found and will be part of a future exhibit. As the restoration program proceeds, small areas of eighteenth century construction will be left exposed so people will be able to view the old methods.

Also on the main floor, the south parlor has been divided by a wall built on the site of the original outside wall, with the small room partitioned off being accessible from the keeping room. It will be a burning room.

Less noticeable to the visitor but no less impressive in its transformation is the DRH cellar. It sports the new heating system, seemingly miles of new electrical wiring, new supports for the emerging treasures above, cleaned walls, and painted oil tanks. Perhaps we should have a meeting in the cellar.

## Scholarship Fund Established

A scholarship fund has been established by the Society for the benefit of a range of students and activities.

Proceeds of the fund, which are to be raised by our group through the annual turkey dinner held in October, will finance a local history field trip, provide an annual scholarship of \$500 to a Mount Everett graduate and support other activities related to history as funds may be available.

An important feature of this effort is that it will help to perpetuate our annual October fund raising dinner which was first instituted to raise money for the restoration of the Upper Covered Bridge.

The scholarship, recommended by an ad hoc committee of the Society, will be administered by a permanent committee which, for the coming year, will consist of Muriel Rokos, Irene Cranmer and James Miller. This group will establish criteria for the implementation of the program within guidelines established by the membership.

## Development Fund Treasurer Appointed

William A. Browne, was appointed treasurer of the Development Fund following the resignation of Viola Bagnaschi.

The appointment was made by a vote of the executive committee, effective December 1, 1982. Bill will be responsible for a range of functions connected with the investment of Society money. He will report to the executive committee and will work with it to see that the capital funds are properly managed to achieve long term growth.

#### Quilting Committee's Continuing Efforts

The members of the Quilting Committee are busy making draperies for the DRH. Their plan is to provide suitable period furnishings for all the windows.

The Committee was formed in 1974 and presently has thirteen members. Since that time it has made thirteen quilts, and tied six for money making projects. Approximately \$2500.00 has been turned over to the Historical Society as a result of the group's efforts. Still another quilt is being made this winter to be raffled in the summer.

A special surprise of 1983 will be an embroidery, drawn by Margaret Philbrick, of the Sheffield town seal that is being worked by the members. It, too, is to be art of the summer activities of the busy group.