

SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. X, No. 4.

May 1976

BICENTENNIAL GRANT

"We are very pleased to announce the selection of your community for a matching Bicentennial grant of \$2,700 under our Community Grants Program." So begins an April 18 letter from Edward McColgan, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Bicentennial Commission. "You are among fifteen Massachusetts communities receiving final Commission approval.

"Your proposal for the Parker L. Hull Law Office is a well-conceived and well-planned project, expressive of community interest in and excitement about the Bicentennial. It also should contribute a good deal toward permanent improvement of life in your community."

Many individuals and organizations had a part in securing this award, and we are most grateful to all who helped. We hope to get the project under way before long; then, when the work begins, the more the merrier. It should be a real community undertaking--exciting and fun as well as tedious. Watch for activity at the site and be ready to offer what assistance you can.

CEMETERY TOUR

On a beautiful, blustery Saturday afternoon early in May, eight hardy history buffs tramped over terrain, partly freshly plowed, partly covered with brush and brambles, to explore some of Sheffield's little-known cemeteries. With Milton Barnum as guide, we visited the following cemeteries: Candee, Ward, Churchill, Old Methodist, Ashley Falls, Center, Huggins, and Clark.

Hoping to find some trace of Ethan Allen's two-year residence in Sheffield (1767-1777), we searched the tombstone inscriptions, sometimes illegible, looking for one that might read "Joseph Allen." Ethan's son Joseph died of smallpox in Sheffield at the age of eleven, but so far his burial place has eluded all searches. Milton has expressed willingness to lead another such expedition if others are interested. There are fourteen public cemeteries in Sheffield and at least two private ones.

ACQUISITION OF DR. DEWEY LETTER

Howard Mott has donated to the society a note written in 1864 by Dr. Orville Dewey to a lady he calls, "My Dear Lucy Smith." He concludes the letter, "Mary is just opening her Winter Term prosperously, and is very well."

Mary Dewey was an early Women's Libber. It was an unusually large crowd that turned out at town meeting in Sheffield in 1880. Women were allowed to vote for the first time, even though the privilege extended only so far as expressing a choice for school committee. When the voting reached that point, the moderator announced that the ladies were ready to enter the hall for the purpose of voting. The connection died down, and the male voters took seats on the benches to watch the unprecedented event. Led by Mary Dewey, the women entered the hall, escorted by Deputy Sheriff John C. Smith. Although her right to vote was challenged on the ground that she had not paid a poll tax, Judge Bradford allowed Miss Dewey to cast her ballot, followed

by Miss Eliza Sage, Mrs. Charles G. Dewey, Mrs. Gerie Griffith, Mrs. Willie Raysholtz, Miss Elizabeth Sage, Mrs. Harvey Boys, Mrs. D. E. Turner, Mrs. Masha Kobia, Jr., and Mrs. Sarah H. Boardman. Miss Dewey was also the first woman to hold public office in Sheffield, when she was elected in 1876 to the school committee.

THE SPIRIT OF 1776

In contrasting the spirit of 1776 with that of today, Eric Sloane writes that it is rare today to find "someone who enjoys his work and takes pride in what he does. It wasn't rare two centuries ago. People then created beautiful gardens, built their own homes, made their own furniture, sewed their own clothes." He goes on to say that "One of the charms of early American objects is that the maker nearly always signed his name or initials...Men were conscious of their position in the new nation, and they did not want to be anonymous. When you create for posterity, you are most apt to be excellent."

Eric Sloane should see what is going on in Sheffield right now. People are creating beautiful things, and they are excellent. Russell Willcox has signed his name to the exquisitely fashioned miniature piecrust table which he has donated to the society for a raffle. At the Chestnut Hill Studio where these tables are sold, the price is \$39.50. Signed, they would be fourteen dollars more. Tickets for the raffle are fifty cents and may be purchased at the Mount Everett Lumber Company.

The pillow made in the cathedral quilt pattern by Rachel Willcox earned \$60 for the society. A patchwork quilt made by the committee headed by Wixie Clark is on view now at the Ashley Falls Postoffice. Tickets are \$1.00. Drawing for table and quilt will take place at the annual meeting on June 14.

MEMBERSHIP 1974-75

At the present time we have 111 paid-up members, a very robust number for a youngster not yet two years old. Since our fiscal year runs from June 1 to May 31, dues for 1974-75 will soon be due. If you wish to join by mail, you may send your check to the treasurer, Mrs. E. Walter Harlburt, Ashley Falls, Massachusetts 01222.

Name _____

Address _____

Junior Member (under 18 years of age)	\$.50
Individual Adult Member	3.00
Joint Membership	5.00
Sustaining Members	10.00
Business Firms	25.00
Life Members (except from annual dues)	50.00
Benefactors (except from annual dues)	100.00

Benefactors will be listed in the next issue of the newsletter.