



DAN RAYMOND HOUSE

Sheffield Historical Society
Sheffield, MA 01257

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As you all know by now, the Historical Society purchased the little house just to the north of the Dan Raymond House last June. We are now in the midst of a debate about the fate of this building and I felt it was important as a Society that you be apprised of the situation and have an opportunity to participate in this important discussion. To give you some background on the house, it was built in 1816 by Mark Dewey who purchased the Dan Raymond House in the same year. It served as his hat shop until he sold the property to Robert Rogers who also used it as a hatter's shop until the 1860's. At some point, an addition was added to the rear of the building and the front porch was added. We have been trying to buy the property for several years and were finally able to do so this past summer for the sum of \$50,000. At the present, the original part of the house is in need of extensive repairs. It is the task of the Executive Committee to make a recommendation as to the disposition of the house to the Society as a whole and we welcome your input before we make a final recommendation. To complicate matters, Sheffield's first public high school is lying idle next to the Town Hall and many people think we should be focusing our attention on this building rather than the Hat Shop.

Here are the major points of the discussion:

PRO-

- 1) The little house is historically related to the Dan Raymond House. It was built by the second owner of the DRH, Mark Dewey, and owned by the third occupant of the DRH, Robert Rogers. For both it served as a place of business.
- 2) There is an early 19th century feel to this part of Main St. which cannot be found elsewhere. The people didn't mind having their houses close together.
- 3) In the near future the center of Sheffield may become an Historic District. We should be trying to maintain the historical integrity of this part of town, not tearing it down.
- 4) If restored, the house could serve as an income producing property for the Historical Society or it could serve as a residence for a future Executive Director. It could also provide badly needed exhibit space.
- 5) We spent a lot of money to obtain the house. We could protect our investment by restoring the house rather than turning it into a lawn.

CON-

- 1) The schoolhouse has greater historical significance to the town and should be preserved first.
- 2) The schoolhouse would give us more space for the money we would spend.
- 3) As we add more buildings, we add to the financial responsibilities of the Society. Are we ready to maintain more buildings?
- 4) We could tear down the Hat Shop and erect a plaque on the site noting its former presence.
- 5) Are we becoming property bound or should we be looking at increasing the number of programs that we offer instead.

There is also the possibility of a third option for the Hat Shop. That would be to move the house to a site next to the Parker Hall Law Office and restore it in its new location. This would open up the space next to the DRH and, if we eventually move the old schoolhouse, this would make a nice little historical enclave.

Obviously, one of our major concerns has got to be the financial stability of the society. After the last Financial Committee meeting, Chairman Jim Miller issued the following statement. "After extended discussion the consensus of the Finance Committee was; that any renovations (on either building) should be accomplished over a period of time long enough to avoid any erosion of the Society's finances; that any major project be reviewed and evaluated annually to see that our financial situation remains sound; that a combination of fund raising, mortgage and capital expenditure be considered; that \$200,000 over a period of ten years would be a sum that would not impare our financial standing if some creative combination of the above financing ideas were put in place."

It seems, unless our financial picture changes drastically, that we can afford to fund both projects as long as we move in stages over the next ten years. Most of this money comes from interest earned on the investments from the Scanlon bequest plus the Annual Antiques Show.

The Executive Committee will reach its decision in late January. We will then make a recommendation to those present at the February Meeting for a vote of approval. However, before that time we would like as much input as we can get. Please feel free to contact me or any of the Committee members (Mason Dutcher, Jim Miller, Marion Whitman, Penny Browne, Catherine Miller, Bob Dean, Marion Barnum, Ed Warren) and voice your opinion. This is your Society and we welcome your participation.

Chris Coenen

NOTES FROM THE GOBBLER

To all you lucky friends who had such a good time at our recent Turkey Dinner and came away stuffed, thank you. To those who missed the fun, we'll catch you next year. Who would think we could have that much enjoyment out of feeding 300 dinners and still make \$1268.75? Many, many thanks for a fine job well done by all of you. I'll not try to mention all who helped for fear of missing someone. I'm sure the scholarship Committee will be grateful, as well as the students. By the way, did you realize the sweet cider was pressed with our own press?

Wish all of you the very best Holiday season and a healthy New Year.

How about the refreshments for the December meeting? Can you imagine eating nothing but the best desserts people can make? WOW!

Thank you,
Right Drumstick

DAN RAYMOND HOUSE NEWS

The date of our Holiday Open house has been set for Sunday, December 14 from 3 to 6 PM. This timing coincides with the town Christmas tree lighting.

As usual, we at the DRH are looking forward to the Holiday festivities. The house will be full of Christmas and candlelight and our table spread with goodies including hot swilled cider.

The Society's latest acquisitions will be on display in each Holiday decorated room. One of the treasures you will see is the recently restored portrait of Rev. James Bradford, minister of Old Parish Church in the mid-1800's.

Come one, come all! We look forward to seeing each of you, your family and your friends.

MANY THANKS

Dorothy Dinan, the first and only historian of our Society, has submitted her resignation after fourteen years of faithful service. She has been collecting newspaper publicity and Society newsletters since our founding in 1972.

In recognition of her many contributions, including membership in the original quilting group as well as other committees, Dorothy has been presented a certificate of appreciation from us all.

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY

HOLIDAY HAPPENING!! Come to Dewey Hall at 7:30 PM on Friday, December 12 and enjoy the tidings of the season. The evening will feature an elegant array of desserts, coffee and tea along with a program bound to touch your heart. It

will be a festive evening full of fun and holiday spirit. Do join us!

TRAVELING TOYS

Four of the cast iron toys that the Historical Society received from the Smithsonian were recently borrowed by Chesterwood for their Christmas Open House. Director Paul Ivory was very much impressed by the job we have done in Sheffield when he came to pick up the toys. He feels we are a good role model for small historical societies everywhere. It's nice to be recognized for a job well done by someone in the field.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

- DEC. 12- Annual Christmas Festivities- at Dewey Hall at 7:30 for a delectable dessert buffet and holiday extravaganza.
- DEC. 14- Holiday Open House at the DRH from 3 to 6 PM.
- JAN. 9- What's-it Show and Tell: emcee Milt Barnum has been combing the countryside and has left no barn unexplored in an effort to stump us all. Bring your oddities or just tell a story.
- FEB. 13- A special slide presentation on Shay's Rebellion by Michael Paulin. This is the 200th anniversary of the event.
- MAR. 13- Theodore Atkinson will speak on New England Churches.
- APR. 10- Louise Stevens will give a delightful talk on old dolls.
- MAY 8- Our own Milton and Marion Barnum are cooking up a program that will be entertaining for all who come.
- JUN. 12- Annual meeting and election of new officers.
- JUNE 19,20,21- Sheffield Historical Society Antiques Show at Berkshire School. We need your help!

***** MEMBERSHIP *****

If you are not a member of the Historical Society or know someone who would like to join, the dues are \$3 for a single or \$5 for a family.

TO: Sheffield Historical Society
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NAME _____

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