



SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SHEFFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

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NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

This has been an eventful and exciting year. Our celebration of the "Sheffield Declaration" last summer has had far-reaching repercussions:

Several people from other towns have joined the society as a result of attending the three-day event.

Fred Bellinger of Stamford, producer of a Bicentennial film, came to Sheffield to photograph the Declaration and was given a transcribed copy of the text. In his letter of appreciation for the help received, he wrote: "In preparing our Bicentennial motion picture we occasionally 'discover' fascinating things as we go along. The Sheffield Declaration is perhaps the most fascinating item we have come upon as yet."

Art Chase's well-researched, well-written, and well-acted play, "All This Freedom Talk," has come to the attention of William Miles, executive director of the Berkshire County Bicentennial Committee, who is very interested in the prospect of producing it for a wider audience.

The parade, the piano concert by Arthur Greene, the historical exhibits, and the crafts demonstrations gave a great deal of pleasure to thousands of people.

During the past year, Muriel Rokos, program chairman, organized a series of diverse programs—interesting, informative, and entertaining. Speakers included Ellen Kenney Glennon of the Hitchcock Chair Company; Harold Travis and Roy Dickson of the Weston Historical Society, who were largely responsible for the restoration of the Isaac Fiske law office; Polly Pierce, who spoke on the Sedgwick family; Wes Warren giving us a history of the postal service in general and Sheffield postoffices in particular; and Miss Elizabeth Ryder and Mrs. Marian Finke, who spoke on little-known aspects of well-known gems and precious metals.

Other programs attracting enthusiastic audiences were the Christmas party at the Little House; the historical "show and tell," which may well become an annual event; and the dramatic "This Is Your Life" program, in which Milton Barnum, the protagonist, demonstrated his mettle by recovering rapidly from the surprise and responding to the plaudits with a well-turned quip. Vera Conklin and her refreshment committee provided a pleasant finale for each program.

Donations to the society this past year included a munificent gift of about eighty old books for the law office, given by Mrs. Randolph Brown of Minneapolis; a letter opener belonging to President McKinley, who used it while he was in the White House, and two books on early blue laws, Mrs. Barbara Brooks of Hartford; a beaded cape, beaded bag, and an 1860-61 School Committee Report, Martin Leafgreen; old pictures, Jane Warner, Alice Warren, Helen Straleau, and Mrs. Charles Cuccio; copies of the Pine Knoll Register, Wes Warren, Jay Clarke, and Holger Oleen; an 1864 letter from Orville Dewey to Lucy Smith, Howard Mott; old history books and gazetteers, Lillian Preiss; and other memorabilia given by friends of Sheffield.

A committee consisting of Marion Barnum, Agnes Boardman, Winnie Clark, Vera Conklin, Irene Cranmer, Betty Dinan, Dorothy Dinan, Alice Warren, Frances Warren, Phyllis Whalen, and Rachel Willcox made a beautiful patchwork quilt for a raffle, which was won by Charles Kaspar of Great Barrington. The winning ticket for the miniature piecrust table made by Russell Willcox belonged to Milton Barnum. A quilted pillow made by Rachel Willcox went to E. Mankus of Enfield. Heartfelt appreciation is due to all of those who created the works of art and to those who contributed by buying tickets.

1974 got off to a fine start with a decision by the Internal Revenue Service to grant tax-exempt status to the society. This decision not only allows prospective donors to deduct their contributions from their federal income tax returns but paved the way for applying for an American Revolution Bicentennial Commission grant.

A progressive step, which was extremely gratifying to those who worked on the grant application, was the announcement on April 18 that the society had received a grant of \$2,700 for the restoration of the Parker L. Hall law office. On June 20 the Board of Appeals granted a variance for moving the law office to a location near the historic buildings in the center of town. Ed Warren is in charge of restoration, and if you would like to volunteer labor, materials, or moral support, please let him know. The first step is to take down the chimney, brick by brick. Work of this kind can be done by amateurs; other tasks must be left to professionals. Let's make this a labor of love, a project that we can enjoy working on and take pride in when it is complete.

Simultaneously, our drive for funds for the acquisition of the Will and Clara Little House is getting under way. A descriptive brochure, prepared by Carl Cranmer, has been sent to all members. We are very grateful to Paul Greene, who made the drawing of the property for the brochure. Under the chairmanship of Carl Cranmer and Winnie Clark, a committee is planning a covered dish supper on the lawn of the Little House, July 14 at 5 p.m. This event, reminiscent of the days when community picnics were more common, is a "must;" come and bring your friends.

AUCTION, AUGUST 3

Our auction on Saturday, August 3, promises to be a good one. Henry Hoffman will be the auctioneer, and Marion Barnum has been collecting articles for the sale for months. It would be a great help if everyone would search his home and yard for white elephants to contribute. It would also help greatly if you would spread the word of the auction. Come yourself and encourage others to attend. Last year's auction was pleasurable and profitable; with a larger attendance this year, it will be more pleasurable and more profitable.

that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way