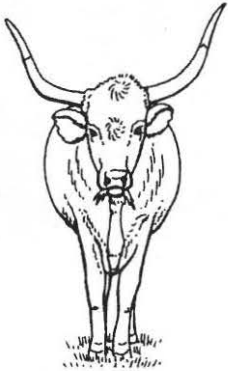




SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPRING NEWSLETTER 2001

SPRING EVENTS



Monthly Meetings:
7:30 pm
Dewey Memorial Hall
Free and open to the public

"Vengeance Trail," will be shown on Friday, April 13, 2001. In the mid 1950s, the late Donald Worthington of Great Barrington and a sizable cast of area

residents made a movie entitled "Vengeance Trail." The film features melodramatic scenes of shoot-outs, barroom brawls, and damsels in distress, with extensive footage shot in Sheffield's Goodale Quarry, off South Egremont Road. Famed characters such as Deadeye, Sapphire Sal, Horsehide, Stud, and the Can-Can Girls will bring new meaning to the good olde days of Sheffield. The requisite popcorn will be provided.

The campy 2-reel Western was stored away years ago and virtually forgotten. Gary Leveille, a local historian, recently rediscovered and then restored the film. "Vengeance Trail" was filmed in color, with occasional subtitles but no sound. Area residents who starred in or helped produce the film include Don Worthington Sr., Don Worthington Jr., George Membrino, Steve Collins, Skip Hall, Frank Rioux, Bill Latshaw, Zan Tidball, Jim Saunders, Henrietta Feldblum, Bev Latshaw, Alida Tidball, Marsh Giddings, Alan Macy, George Hayden, Louise Worthington, Harriet Collins, Corey Michaelyan, Jeanne DuVall, Nancy Dinan, and James Worthington.

"Restoration of the Gardens at the Mount" will be presented by Stephanie Copeland on Friday, May 11, 2001. Historic research has been underway for several years, and recent archaeological digs have unearthed the original design of Edith Wharton's Italianate gardens. Using the information from the site work and historic photographs, pathways, border stones, and even the original planting holes for an allee of linden trees have been discovered. This spring, the re-creation will begin with the planting of a large number of heirloom and contemporary plants. Copeland is the President and Executive Director of the Mount.

Spring Berkshire Cottages Tour:

In addition to her presentation on May 11, **Copeland will lead a tour of the Mount on Wednesday May 23.** Members will meet at the Society and carpool to the Mount, where the tour will begin at 10 am. This is a special preview tour being offered just for the Society. **Space is limited and registration is required;** call the Office at 229-2694. Fee: \$18 non-members, \$15 members.

Participants will dine a la carte at a local restaurant before traveling on to their second destination, Ventfort Hall. A 1:30 pm tour will showcase the recent restoration work at the Hall. Both these mansions of the "Gilded Age" present life from a bygone era. Travel back in time to the days of stately homes, servants, and the relaxed atmosphere found by many in their summer Berkshire homes.

Please note:
The March Meeting on Berkshire Snakes with Tom Tynning, cancelled due to inclement weather, will be rescheduled for the fall.

SMOKEHOUSE CELEBRATION

Restoration of the Smokehouse is almost complete. Before the snows set in, the majority of needed work was completed by Ernest Sattler; the final touches will be put on this spring. Join the members as they celebrate the rebuilding of this structure with an open house on Saturday, May 12 (rain date--Sunday, May 13), from 2 to 4 pm.

House tours will focus on food preparation and will conclude at the Smokehouse, which will be operational that day. The demonstration will include a sampling of foods preserved through smoking. Dennis Picard will be on hand to lead in the preservation process. Space is limited and reservations are strongly suggested. Fee \$10 non-members, \$8 members.

A special thank-you goes out to all who have donated time, services, and financial resources to this project. The contributions have fully funded the restoration! Those who have contributed funds since the November newsletter listing include:

Mr. & Mrs. F. James Dallett
Peter & Patricia Ruth Elsbach
William Grief
Sallee Hardy

in memory of Neal J. Hardy

Caroline Y. Lindemann

in memory of H. Stephen Casey, Jr.

Ronald & Judith Timm

Alice M. Warren

in memory of J. Wesley Warren

NEW JOINT PROGRAMS WITH THE TRUSTEES OF THE RESERVATIONS:

The Society will join with the Trustees to present two special family programs during the month of July: an "18th-Century Day" on Saturday the 7th and a special presentation focusing on Mumbet on

Wednesday the 18th. Look for more details in the June newsletter.



Memories from last year's Annual Meeting.
Photograph by Kathy Orlando.

June 8th is the date of this year's Annual Meeting. Mark your calendars!

Dan Raymond House Activities:

- ❖ A number of grant applications were completed during recent months, including the first Federal applications. Look for good news on this front in the June newsletter.
- ❖ Spring cleaning chores at the site will soon be underway. The Society is seeking volunteers to help with this year's intensive site cleaning. Would you volunteer for half a day? If yes, please call the Office at 229-2694.
- ❖ The House saw a number of visitors/groups by appointment during the winter months.
- ❖ May 26 is the start of the summer season and the Thursday through Saturday, 11am to 4pm hours resume.

OLD STONE STORE RESTORATION PROJECT UNDERWAY



The Old Stone Store, the oldest existing mercantile building in Sheffield, was constructed around 1830 by Major Eli Ensign with material from a local quarry. It is the oldest and most significant 19th-century stone structure in town, where historic stone buildings are exceedingly rare.

Sitting as it does in the center of Sheffield, directly in front of the Town Hall (which dates from the same era) and adjacent to Old Parish Church, it holds a prominent place historically and geographically in the community.

The Society purchased The Old Stone Store in the fall of 1999 and intends to restore the original stone portion. We plan to convert it to a space for permanent and rotating exhibits about Sheffield and the surrounding area, where the Society's extensive collection of artifacts and documents can be displayed, interpreted, and shared with the public to further understanding and appreciation of the historic and cultural heritage of Sheffield. In addition, the Society would like to establish a visitor information center that would feature, in particular, the many aspects of the southern Berkshires, which are important to the area's tourism industry.

A work plan, which divides the restoration project into two phases, has been established. It is expected that the exterior will be addressed between May and September of this year. Those efforts will include stabilizing the structure, installing a septic system and

handicapped-accessible entrance, stripping the roof shingles and applying cedar shingles, replacing the windows and storefront, and repairing and repointing the stonework.

Finances permitting, the interior work will begin in the fall. That will involve clearing the basement floor of silt and pouring a concrete slab; insulating and sheetrocking all walls and ceilings; installing an interior stairway; installing electrical, heating, air-conditioning, and plumbing systems; painting; finishing the floors and adding interior trim.

The Society has applied to the Special Projects Fund of MassDevelopment for a loan in the amount of \$180,000 to finance this endeavor. The income from our investment portfolio does not provide a sufficient revenue stream to meet both the annual operating budget of the Society and finance the Old Stone Store renovations. Hence the need for the loan, which will be amortized over twenty-five years. It is expected that between contributions and fund-raising efforts, the loan will be repaid in advance of that time, and with no prepayment penalty.

A committee of local citizens, some of whom are Society members, has been established to (1) create an awareness of and support for the Old Stone Store, (2) identify individuals and businesses willing to support the restoration project, financially or otherwise, (3) identify components of a visitor information center to recommend to the Society's Trustees, and (4) consider participation in a community-wide endeavor to promote the attributes of Sheffield and Ashley Falls, and to garner support for the project.

Suggestions as to how to further the restoration effort are welcome and may be directed to Catherine Miller, Project Coordinator, Dorothy Marosy, Society President, or Joanne Hurlbut, Director.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The Society has a number of programs scheduled for the spring of 2001. Do you enjoy working with people, children through seniors? If so, please consider joining the Society's educational staff, who give tours, work with students, and share Sheffield's history with the public at large. The audiences are all around us. Now we need to ensure that there are enough volunteers to greet our visitors.

In May, elementary students will be educated through the "Place in Time" program. The Society will host the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce's May "Business After Hours." June will see the Dan Raymond House open for "Discovering the Berkshires Week." All of these events will require several staff to guide visitors through the buildings. In addition to the Dan Raymond House's regularly scheduled Thursday-through-Saturday hours, the May 12 Smokehouse Celebration and the July 7 "18th-Century Day" include site tours.

Training for guides in 2001 will take place over three sessions and will include reading materials and hands-on experiences. The sessions will be held at the end of April and the beginning of May, and will be scheduled to allow participation by all interested parties. For those with the gift of gab or the desire to share history with new audiences--this is your opportunity. The Society will ask for a minimum time commitment, which can be easily fitted into your schedule.

Please call the Office to register for training or to learn more about the joys of guiding! Present guides will be happy to talk with you about the job.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS at the CENTER

The Mark Dewey Research Center has received an important gift from Oliver and Evelyn Willcox: alumni reunion programs for Sheffield High School from the turn of the 20th century. Much of their value lies in the student class lists they contain, which span many years of the high school's operation. The value of the programs is compounded by the fact that the names on the list are annotated with the graduates' most recent town of residence. This is a tremendous help to researchers trying to document when residents lived here and when they moved away. The years from the late 1800s to the present are the most difficult for researchers at the Center to document because so many sources for that period are closed for privacy reasons. Oliver and Evelyn have now made the work a bit easier.

If you have an interest in Sheffield marble, especially as it relates to the Sheffield marble in the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., you owe a hearty thanks to Natalie Funk, who recently made a significant gift of relevant material to the Center. It consists of copies of correspondence Natalie had with the superintendent of the recent renovations to the Monument and a book on the subject, which includes recognition of the Sheffield marble it contains. There are also some rare insights into local quarries, the Briggs Quarry in particular, which supplied the stone. Interesting reading it is. Like all of our collection it is non-circulating, but drop by some Monday or Friday afternoon, 1:30 to 4:00 when we are open and browse through it. Very interesting, indeed.

THE SHORT-LIVED MASSACHUSETTS LIME COMPANY

For history buffs who would enjoy an industrial archeology excursion in an exquisite setting of nature, a trip to the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Mount Everett Wildlife Sanctuary, sandwiched between Barnum Street and Silver Street, would be worthwhile. The 215-acre preserve, home to an abandoned lime kiln, was a gift in 1990 from Edna Sheinhart (1923-1995), whose ashes are interred there. For many years Miss Sheinhart, a retired mathematics teacher, had a home in a converted barn on Silver Street.

Adjacent to the industrial site is an open hillside meadow of several acres where you can enjoy a lunch while taking in some prize Berkshire views from the shaded bench that was placed there for that purpose. The distant, classic, Berkshire Mountain views are 180 degrees to the west, north, and east. It is a fine spot for enjoying nature or contemplating the history of the nearby kiln or whatever is on your mind.

The ruins are of the Massachusetts Lime Company and they appear on a hillside, seemingly out of nowhere, along the trail that leads to the meadow. The monolith structure rises perhaps 30 feet into the air and is made of poured concrete, somewhat resembling an agricultural silo. From the top of this chimney wood fuel and chunks of local marble were loaded, and at the structure's base the finished product was extracted after the heating process. It is a curious thing to see in the middle of the woods, so overgrown by nature and yet still such an intrusion, even in the quietude of its abandoned and dilapidated condition. Its sudden appearance on the trail arouses questions of its origins and the story it has to tell.

Records at the Mark Dewey Research Center provided some information. The kiln was operated by the Massachusetts Lime Company, which in 1909 purchased 90 acres of land where the structure was built, secured by a mortgage for \$1,200 held by Alfred W. Minor of New Haven, who acted as conservator for one William C. Minor. The company's president was Edward E. Minor, who resided at 493 Edgewood Avenue in New Haven, Connecticut. Although there is likely a family connection among the three, their exact

relationships are unknown. Nor is it known why this remote spot was chosen for the kiln. By 1912 the company was out of business.

During its operation, stone quarried nearby was hauled to the kiln, heated, and converted to lime. The finished product was transported on a company-built road that went east through the Barnum Street Swamp to the Housatonic Railroad line near Route 7, a little over one mile distant. The raised roadway is not only clearly visible today, it is also still usable and provides a convenient and dry access through the swamp to the site. To pull the wagon loads of lime along the roadway, the company had two oxen and seven horses. Other than the president and Albert M. Turner, the treasurer, who lived in nearby Canaan, Connecticut, the small operation employed few others. James H. Bailey, Sr., his son James H. Jr., Henry Parsons, who boarded at the Bailey residence, and Harry P. Tripp, all residents of Silver Street, are the only employees whose names show up in a check of both Canaan and Sheffield records. Bailey, Sr. was clerk and manager and Tripp was employed as the operation's carpenter. In a 1910 ad the company advertised "High Grade Common and Finishing Limes." The days of the enterprise were few, however, and by August of 1912 the company had sold its 90 acres and a Barnum Street property they owned and were out of business. On a happy note, the record indicates that two mortgage holders, both the conservator of William C. Minor and Seth F. Dusenbury of Sheffield, were paid off on September 3 and 6 respectively of that year.

The site is equally accessible summer and winter by cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or on foot, and takes from as little as 40 or 45 minutes, round-trip, to as long as you wish. Visitors have a choice of beginning at Barnum Street, Silver Street, or Root Lane, although Silver Street is the closest starting point to the venue. So, whether your interest is nature or history, a trip to the kiln and a visit to the meadow are well worth the time. The two attractions are, unfortunately, well-kept secrets even though they truly are two of Sheffield's treasures. For those who know of them, however, the infrequent visitors make them even more special.

James Miller

Spring Workshop--June 9

CREATE YOUR OWN TAPED STOOL

Learn the art of Shaker chair taping while you complete a small stool for your home or office. All materials included. 10 am, \$50 (\$48 members).

**Held in the Society's Education Center--
Registration Required by May 23rd.**

Are you looking for that special something to do this fall? Do you have suggestions for workshops that the Society could offer? Call the Office at 229-2694 with your ideas.

Festival of Country Arts & Artisans:

Due to a number of factors, the Board decided to move the Festival date forward in August. Unfortunately, many artisans had conflicts with the new date. In order to preserve the quality of the event, the decision was reached to ***cancel the event for 2001***. Look for it again in 2002.

Sheffield Historical Society
P.O. Box 747
Sheffield, MA

Wish List

If you have any of the following objects in good condition, but you no longer need the item, consider donating it to SHS. Monetary contributions to be used in purchasing the items are also welcome.

Television and VCR, floor lights, screw gun, glue & staple guns, WWI & WWII info, old scrapbooks

Spring Arrivals for the Shop!

A number of new items will be arriving at the Society Shop in the next few weeks. Stop in and check things out!

During the month of May, members in good standing will receive a 10% discount on their shop purchases.

Membership renewal reminder:

A mailer is enclosed for those whose membership is past due.

Don't Miss These!
Don't Miss These!

SMOKEHOUSE CELEBRATION--MAY 26

ANNUAL MEETING--JUNE 8