



Sheffield Historical Society

March 2003 Newsletter

Exhibitions at the Old Stone Store!

Celebrate Women's History Month by contemplating the handiwork of local artists on display in the Sheffield Historical Society's Old Stone Store.

The exhibition

Images From the Eye of the Needle and the Tip of the Hook encompasses three forms of textile art: hooked rugs, samplers, and needlepoint.



Members will recognize the names of our special female artists who are all longtime Society members. Dorothy Marosy's hooked rugs have been pictured in both books and magazines. Samplers from the private collection



of Muriel Rokos, many dating from the 1920s,

will be displayed alongside samplers that this expert quilter has herself created over the years. Susan Young's needlepoint has received awards on the international level. Young is creating needlepoint kits of the Stone Store and other Sheffield buildings; they will be on sale in the Stone Store.

The public is invited to the **opening reception to be held on Saturday, March 15, from 2 to 4 p.m.** The exhibition will remain on view through April 26. The Sheffield Historical Society's Old Stone Store, located on

Main Street (Route 7) in Sheffield, is open **Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

A full slate of exhibits has been lined up for this year. Following the textile exhibition will be one on ephemera (paper materials designed for short-term use and associated with a specific person, object, topic, or event). Watch the press for full details.

Our summer exhibit will focus on tourism. **The Society is the recipient of the Scholars in Residence project** in the amount of \$2,500, a grant co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and the Bay State Historical League. The funds provide a stipend for local historian and author Bernard Drew to work within the Society's archives to research a topic chosen by the Society. The project is *Spend a Summer in Sheffield & Environs: The Tourism Trade in the Early Railroad Era*. The grant funds will also allow the Society to create a publication based upon Drew's findings.

The exhibition will be on view in the Stone Store during July and August. Drew will give a

special talk on his findings at the opening. Look to the June newsletter for further details.

Our thanks to the organizations that participated in the creation of ***The Spirit of Sheffield Then and Now***, an exhibition on display in the Old Stone Store through March 8. The Sheffield Land Trust, the Sheffield Tree Project, and Elm Watch have created an exhibition that is both informative and popular. A number of photographs from the Society's collection are among the many items on view. Members from all four organizations have staffed the Stone Store on weekends, presented a reception, and worked with the media to make this exhibition a successful community project.

Would you like to enjoy these exhibitions firsthand? If so, then you are invited to become a Stone Store Shop volunteer. Individuals are needed to staff the Store to keep the gallery open for the public and to raise funds for the Society by selling items in the shop. To find out more about this opportunity, call the Office at 229-2694.

Have you noticed that the renovated Stone Store is lacking a sign? If you are willing to help underwrite the cost of this critical sign, please call the Office.

RESEARCH NEWS

DAN RAYMOND, A SECOND LOOK

by James R. Miller

Dan Raymond, whose pre-Revolutionary residence is the home of the Sheffield Historical Society, has frequently been described in print as a prosperous country merchant. Like much history that is handed down through secondary sources from writer to writer and, hence, generation to generation, this simple description does not hold up under scrutiny. The story of his wealth, while true, was true only "*for a time*"

Dan married Anne Noble and it is in the Noble genealogy that an enticing clue about his finances is found. The book refers to him as being a wealthy merchant "*for a time*," a phraseology that draws one's attention.

The most famous Dan Raymond tale, however, has nothing to do with his finances. It relates, instead, to the Sheffield Liberty tree of 1776 and how he contrived to have an accomplice cut it down. Significantly, however, the author offers an additional allusion to Dan's financial ruin. His final sentence concludes, "In justification of his punishment [for having the Liberty Tree cut down] and in confirmation of his guilt, . . . the rich [Dan] died at least in the poor house." With this second teaser, Dan's finances definitely call for a second look. In fact, as the record shows, Raymond served time in debtors' prison in Lenox and died a poor man.

Some insightful facts found in the Southern Berkshire Registry

helped to round out the story. In 1799, Theodore Sedgwick, Esq., obtained a Supreme Judicial Court judgment against Raymond for a debt of \$405.05. As a result, Raymond's "Goods, Chattles [sic] or Lands" were ordered seized and the "House & Lot of Land with the buildings thereon, lying on the east side of the Hig[wa]y in Sheffield, & a little S[outh] of the Meeting house" were taken to settle the claim. It was already mortgaged to one Willet Seaman but the court-appointed appraisers found enough additional value to cover the Sedgwick debt as well. The property is today the home of John-Arthur and Trudy Weaver Miller at 104 Main Street, a brick structure that Raymond built at about the same time as the Society's headquarters.

The Sedgwick judgment was not the only one to face Raymond. The following year, 1800, Asahel P. Bennett pressed a similar claim for \$188.07. As a consequence, additional Raymond real estate was seized, leaving him with exceedingly modest holdings.

Raymond's efforts to reorganize his finances and pay his debts took time. During the interim he was committed to the county jail in Lenox, where he was held from October 11, 1799, "until he pay the full sums" to Sedgwick. He was not able to do so until January 13, 1800. On that release date, however, he was recommitted, this time for his debt to Bennett, which was not satisfied until May 5. Raymond, who was wealthy "*for a time*,"

spent nearly seven months in debtors' prison as a result of these two debts.

Dan died in 1809. It was only then that the most telling evidence of his financial situation emerged. He died with neither a will nor an estate at a time when men, even of the "middling sort," had their final affairs settled through probate.

This second look at Dan Raymond, who, "*for a time*," was a prosperous frontier trader, is an expanded interpretation of his life and times. But it also illustrates the perils of blithely using other writers' work without verification and the need for researching original sources in order to have a more complete and balanced picture of the past.



Bibliography

Boltwood, Lucis M., *History and Genealogy of the Family of Thomas Noble of Westfield, Massachusetts* . . . , Press of Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, Hartford: 1878, pp. 381-383.

Holland, Josiah Gilbert, *History of Western Massachusetts. The Counties of Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire.*, Samuel Bowles and Company, Springfield: 1855, p. 584.

Raymond family file, Sheffield Historical Society, Mark Dewey Research Center.

Southern Berkshire Registry, book 36, pp. 332-334 and 362-364.

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

Can you picture in your mind's eye Norman Rockwell's "Four Freedoms"? The images are famous locally and nationally. Whether you have seen them lately or not at all, join the Sheffield Historical Society on Friday, **March 14, at 7:30 p.m.**, and explore these images in a new light. **Stuart Murray** will present *FDR's Ideas and Rockwell's Images*, the story of the development of Rockwell's painting of the Four Freedoms and the U.S. government's response to the paintings—from initial disdain to incorporation into the war effort. This discussion of politics and art is as important in our communities today as it was decades ago.

The Sheffield Historical Society invites the public to take another look at America's most divisive conflict.

Twiggs Myers will present *The Civil War in the East* on Friday.

April 11, at 7:30 p.m.

This spring journey will bring participants through the full years of the war, from 1861 to 1865. The points of exploration will include the major campaigns and battlefields of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and the Union Army of the Potomac. Military leaders Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant will figure prominently in the presentation. Myers taught history for over 40 years at Berkshire School.

Springtime brings forth a sense of new beginnings, provides us with

the days of sun and warmth that we have been longing for, and makes us all wax poetic. So join us then in that vein for the **May 9th** meeting, *The Apple Blossom Poets*, with **Bernard Drew, 7:30 p.m.** The poets are the locally known Goodale sisters of Mt. Washington. The program will consist of both readings of their poetry and commentary by Drew.

June then ushers in the summer season and the break from monthly meetings, but let us not forget to come together first, on **June 13**, to celebrate the successes of the past year at the Society's **Annual Meeting, 7:30 p.m.**

The programs are free and open to the public and will take place in the Community Rooms of Old Parish Church, Sheffield.

Special thanks go out to all those volunteers who have recently helped with the Society's collaborative programming.

In particular: to those performers who helped with the Songs Sung in Sheffield program on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, especially vocalist and emcee Robert O'Keefe. Participants found the program moving and enjoyable; there were even a number of strong voices from the audience! This was a joint program with the Bushnell-Sage Library.

February's joint program involved the talents of the Berkshire Quilters' Guild along with the staff of the Bushnell-Sage Library and the Society. This year's school vacation workshop, *Hands-On Quilting*, was

even more popular than last year's! The participants, 8 to 12 years of age, remained dedicated to their task throughout the day. As one of the adult supervisors noted, "You could have heard a pin drop on the carpeted floor; it was that quiet!"

And a round of applause to those dedicated collections volunteers who attended SHS's grant-funded National Endowment for the Humanities' workshops in the fall. The Society was fortunate to be able to offer the workshops to our members, local organizations, and community members. Participants benefited from the hands-on formats and the Society benefited from the participants' labor on our collections. We learned how to properly hang items, such as the Bradford portraits (re-hanging those objects was an experience indeed!). We also worked within the textile collection, learning how to properly fold, store, and care for the textiles in order to prevent gradual deterioration.

The experts were most impressed with the collection and with the Society's recent improvements in collections care. But there is much yet to do! Our members are putting into practice the skills they learned. We work in teams, sharing our knowledge while having a good time. New team players are always welcome. This grant also enabled us to buy an appropriate vacuum and attachments. So cleaning is a breeze!





159 Main Street
PO Box 747
Sheffield, MA 01257

Phone: 413-229-2694
Email: shs@sheffieldhistory.org

Tours of the 1774 Dan Raymond House are available
Monday through Friday by appointment.

Mark Dewey Research Center open Monday and
Friday afternoons, 1:30 to 4 p.m., and by
appointment.

The Office is open Monday through Friday
from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

WE'RE ON THE WEB
SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG

Board of Directors

Dorothy Marosy, *President*

Wray Gunn, *Vice-President*

Catherine Miller, *Treasurer*

Harry Conklin, *Clerk*

Trustees:

Doreen Atwood

James Miller

John-Arthur Miller

Marilyn Wightman

Rene Wood

Joanne Hurlbut, *Director*

Albany Remembered Field Trip

On **Thursday, May 8**, a bus trip to the New York State capital is offered to members and friends. The rich history of this 17th-century Dutch settlement will be included in our guided tour. The Hudson River carried the French trappers, Dutch fur traders, and then the English colonists, who renamed the area after the Duke of York and Albany. Now the seat of state government, Albany is a growing culture center of museums, theaters, and historic buildings, as we will see and learn from a professional guide, who will lead us on a 1½-hour walking tour. (This is not a strenuous hike.)

We plan to tour the Capitol building and the Governor's mansion, and to enjoy views from the Corning Tower. There will be time to rest and refresh at the new café in the State Museum, Dutch treat. Our chartered bus will leave at 8:30 a.m. and return at 4:00 p.m.

The cost for transportation, guided tours, and entrance fees is \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members. A brochure will be available, and reservations will be accepted after March 14th. For further information, call Marion Whitman at (413) 528-6013.

Save these dates:

**March 15—Textile Exhibition
Opening and Reception**

June 13—Annual Meeting