



# Sheffield Historical Society

## Spring 2007 Newsletter

### The Freedom of Baseball



Close to fifty people attended this year's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day collaborative program, an annual event presented by the Society and the Bushnell Sage Library. For those who missed it, it was a great program and one filled with local reminiscences of the game, including how race played a factor even in our national pastime. One of the many stories heard that day was the following account written by Wray Gunn, who could not be at the event. It is such a poignant story that it bears retelling.

#### WHAT IF ?????

*Life works in mysterious ways. Have you stopped and wondered to yourself, "What if I had done this instead of that?" I have on many occasions. The one that really sticks in my mind is related in the following story.*

*In the late summer of 1948, my two brothers and I were very much interested in attending a baseball tryout training camp. This was my senior year of high school at Williams High School in Stockbridge, Mass., and my two brothers, David and Saint Clair, had already graduated from school—David from Lee*

*High in 1944 and St. Clair from Williams in 1946. As I look back, David and Saint (as we called him) were very good athletes and I was always the baby playing in their shadows. They were both very aggressive and did not give in to opponents, no matter who or what the situation was. This was not my style.*

*In June of that year, David found out that the Saint Louis Browns major league team was to hold a tryout in Port Henry, New York, the week-end of Aug. 3rd through the 6th. We were excited and decided we would go to the tryouts. There were some problems with making this decision, such as how much money would we need, where would we stay, and how would we get there, all minor problems. We did not have much money and we didn't know anyone in that area, but we did have Saint's old Buick convertible. So let's do it, we decided!*

*Of course Ma and Dad thought we were out of our minds, but they realized what it meant to David and Saint. I was just going along for the ride. We had enough money for gas (around .25¢ per gal.) and we had about \$40.00 among the three of us. For*

*some unknown reason, I had the most money. I was working as an apprentice at GE in Pittsfield as a spot welder. This was a job where I welded the glass bushings onto the capacity tanks. I was paid by the piece and I did very well.*

*We got our equipment together, gloves, bats, and mismatched uniforms and off we went. Ma was thoughtful enough to pack us a very nice basket of food to munch on during off-hours.*

*We arrived at Port Henry on the same day that the camp began. Since we had not pre-registered, we parked our red bomber and did the necessary things to sign up. Thank goodness that we did not have to pay a fee.*

*We were the only Blacks present at this camp. With this in mind, we were now determined to stay on our toes and do the absolute best that we could.*

*The tryouts were carried out in a precise manner. Players lined up in the positions that they were interested in and the instructors would then give you a steady workout at that position by hitting balls to you for about 5 to 10 minutes steadily. I was an infielder and tried out for second base and short-stop. David was an outfielder,*

and Saint was all-around, being a catcher, pitcher, infielder, and outfielder.

On that first day, it was hot and dry. It had not rained in weeks. The field was hard and powdery. The balls really came at you. First to your left, then to your right, over your head and short ones. You did not know where the instructor would hit them next. David hurt his arm on the first day and he had to curtail his activities for the rest of our stay. Saint was the clown and was doing everything well. I thought that he excelled in just throwing the ball, with the strongest arm of the three of us. David was the longest hitter, but Saint and I were able to get on base more and were very good at stealing bases.

The first day went well and we mixed in well with the other candidates, though we spent the night in the car with the top up. By now, the big lunch that Ma had put up for us was gone and we had to figure out how to survive through til Sunday night. Sunday night was the big game in which the most promising players would play. We were happy to learn that Saint and I had survived the first cut of the first day. On the second day, since Saint and I were now

one of the selected few, food was brought in to the remaining candidates. What a relief for all three of us.

Saturday, the second day, was the final cutting day. Saint dropped catching and pitching and stayed with the infield and the outfield. I stayed with the infield. They worked you from fifteen to twenty minutes at a stretch. This was easy for me but tough on Saint, going from the infield to the outfield. He did well in the infield but faltered in the outfield with many of his throws.

I was determined to stay on my game and try not to overdo. I ran in, out, back, to my left, to my right, and dove for short balls, catching them before they hit the ground and then whipping them over to the correct base. This routine was carried out over and over, covering a span of about three hours for our infield group.

But in the early afternoon, just before the end of the sessions came, I began to feel dizzy and nauseous. I saw double; then passed out from dehydration. I woke up in the locker room in a cold sweat with blankets on me to keep me from shivering so much. I felt terrible and dejected for I just knew then that I would be cut from the Sunday line-up, which would be posted in the

morning. My brother Saint and I both had a sleepless night waiting for the morning.

Sunday was again a beautiful day---hot, humid, and cloudless. We heard that the lineups had been posted. Saint and I had a feeling of dread. Would we, the Black kids, be selected to play that night? We were not going to give up hope. Let's go see. And we did.

As we approached the bulletin board, there were all of the candidates milling around trying to look at the board. Some were elated and some were dejected. How would we be? We got to the board and searched to see which list had our names. At first we did not see them, but finally we found both of our names listed to start the game that night.

**WOW! CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT. BOTH OF US FROM THAT SMALL TOWN OF STOCKBRIDGE MADE IT.**

We were excited and elated. We had made it and showed our talent. We had survived the torturous workouts and held our own against a group of talented young baseball players. We felt good.

Practice that day was different as we prepared for the game that night. We

now changed to more hitting and practice at the position you would be playing that night. I was put in at second base and Saint was in at shortstop. It was a night game. We had never played at night before so we were a bit skeptical about how we would fare.

Game time arrived. Uniforms were issued along with new caps. Boy, we were now set.

Just before game time, I was called aside by the chief talent scout. I had no idea what he wanted. So we went into his office. There, he had me sit down and told me that he had an offer to make to me. WOW. To me???? I was speechless. What was the offer? He offered me a contract to play on a Class "D" team in the St. Louis Browns organization. I was flabbergasted. I called my mother and told her, and she and Dad were also excited. But she also said, "I would rather you go to College and get a degree and then think about this." So it was my choice to make a decision.

What should I do? I told David and Saint. I was surprised that Saint had not been extended an offer, as was he. What should I tell him? Saint said, "Let's play the game and then you can give him an answer." We

played the game under lights. It went well. Saint had one assist and one put-out. I had two assists but missed a towering fly ball in the short outfield in the lights. Saint had a single that he stretched into a double and I had a single and a stolen base. We both played well against excellent talent.

After the game, I went over the proposal in my head. I thought about the ordeal that Jackie Robinson had just gone through and I thought about being on a Class "D" team. Then my mother's words came back to me. Which was more important, playing baseball or getting an education? I chose to get the education and my thoughts of being a great baseball player were put on hold, but another chance never came.

And now, almost sixty years later, I go to major league ballgames and wonder---WHAT IF. I look at the stats of major league players and wonder----WHAT IF. ---WHAT IF.----

**WANTED:** half-pint and pint mason or ball jars in good condition. These are to be used by the Society for various preserves, jams, jellies, pickles, pepper jelly, etc. to be sold at the Stone Store. Please call 229-8668 (Catherine) or 229-0375 (Lois) for more information or pickup.

## NEW SERVICE FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS AT THE MARK DEWEY RE-SEARCH CENTER

Advanced genealogy research is now available online through the Mark Dewey Research Center.

The MDRC, the library arm of the Society, has subscribed to extensive nationwide databases that are specifically designed for genealogy. Free to members and friends, trained volunteers are available to assist you in your work.

Conveniently, the timing of this new service parallels the installation of DSL (fast internet service) that is presently underway courtesy of Society member, treasurer, and volunteer, Dennis Sears.

The Center is open both Friday and Monday from 1:30 to 4:00 and is staffed by volunteers Betty Chapin, David Prouty, and Jim Miller. Since we have only one terminal, an appointment is suggested by calling Jim at 229-8668 or by e-mail at [MDRC@Sheffieldhistory.org](mailto:MDRC@Sheffieldhistory.org). Appointments made by e-mail will be confirmed. If you come, bring with you as much family history documentation as possible, most importantly names, dates and places of birth, marriage, and death.



# **THANKS to all those who have given to the 2006 Annual Appeal over the last year.**

*John and Emily Alexander  
Karin and Allen Altman  
Doreen and Walter Atwood  
Mary King Austin  
Mark E. Bachetti  
Betty and Fred Bangs  
Ann-Elizabeth Barnes  
Ann Barrett  
Trumbull Barrett  
Anne Barstow and Tom Driver  
in memory of Ellie Gilligan  
Beth Bartholomew  
Arthur J. and Betty Batacchi  
Paul Benjou and  
P.J. Bradley  
Blanche and Bill Bennett  
Berkshire Choral Festival  
Robin Berthet Construction  
Jean W. Blackmur in memory  
of Roger and Virginia Drury  
Lois E. Bradford in memory of  
William Bradford  
James Brandi  
Lois and Lawrence J. Brandt  
Marcia Brolli in memory of  
Ed Brolli  
Joan Brooks  
Grace Wallace Brown  
Bill Browne  
Thomas and Ann F. Buckley  
Morgan G. Bulkeley IV  
Barbara and Patrick Burns  
Dorothy L. Caul in memory of  
George H. Caul  
Neal B. Chamberlain  
Mildred and Lo Yi Chan  
Elizabeth M. Chapin  
Neal and Kathy Chrisman  
Cathryn Clary and  
Ed Schweizer  
Walter and Ursula Cliff  
Noel L. and Baukje P. Cohen  
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Mr. and Mrs. William Connell  
Anthony and Marjorie  
Consolini  
Sally Cook*

*Holly Coon  
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Norma Edsall and Alice Corbin  
Dorothy Crockett, in memory of  
Howard Crockett  
Eleanore J. Curtiss  
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Dwight and Nancy Dellert  
Barbara E. Delmolino  
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William and Dorothy DeVoti in  
honor of Milton Barnum  
Elaine A. Dibrita  
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L. Robert Duffy  
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Bart and Janet Elsbach  
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Warner Friedman  
Pattison Fulton  
N.H. Funk and A.M. Funk  
Phil and Betsy Garcia  
Frank and Helen Bray Garretson  
Rene Gibson  
Ruth Gillette  
John and Elsie Gilligan  
William A. and Maryanne G.  
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Frederic Gordon  
Joy W. Gottlieb  
Leonard Graziano and  
William Grief  
Ann L. Green  
Paul and Martha Greene  
Richard Greene  
Edmund A. Grossman  
Lovina E. Gulotta, in memory of  
Santi J. Gulotta  
Wray Gunn and Cora Portnoff  
Nancy Wilde Hahn  
Mrs. Jean J. Haines  
Joan and John Hanlon  
Julie Hannum  
Claire K. Height  
Gillian and Norman Hettinger  
Tim Hewins  
James R. and Donna W. Hurley  
Virginia M. Jackson-Howden  
Mary and Charles H. Joch, Jr.  
Phyllis and Melissa Joyce*

*Richard W. and Athena Kimball  
Kevin and Cathleen Kinne  
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Allison G. Lasso  
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John-Arthur and Trudy Miller  
Margaret Mitchell  
Donald S. Mott  
Daniel and Anne Moulton  
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Patrice Mullin  
C. Twiggs Myers in memory of  
Art Chase  
Leslie A. Naughton and  
Jeffrey W. Rubin  
Katherine Ness and John James  
Tessie and Joseph Newmark  
Rich and Laraine Novak  
Mary Ellen O'Brien  
Elizabeth O'Connor  
Kathy Orlando in memory of  
Virginia Drury  
Thomas Orlando  
Ormsbee Gas  
Rena Orner in memory of  
Bill and Ellen Murtagh  
John and Charlotte Owens  
Judith Papachristou  
Gary Penfield and  
Ginny Perelson  
Wesley Petersen  
Fred Pomerantz  
David and Marsha Pottle  
Joan and Ken Powers in memory*

of Freddie Martin  
 Lucy Prashker  
 Carlson Propane in memory of  
 Theresa Brazie  
 Nancy and Bob Rathbun in  
 memory of Laura Percy  
 Joe and Carol Reich  
 Ann M. Riou  
 Muriel Rokos  
 Susan Rothschild and  
 Don Freedman  
 Kate and George W. Rowe  
 Peter and Ellen Rowntree  
 Amy Rudnick and Ben Hillman  
 Mary and Bob Safian  
 Marcia Savage  
 Michael J. Saxton  
 Beala and Stephen J. Schiffman  
 Joanne Schmidlin in memory of  
 John I. Day  
 Charles and Elizabeth Schmidt  
 Bernie and Shellie Schneider  
 Judy and Bill Schnurr  
 Kenneth and Rebecca Schopp  
 Charles and Pauline Schumann  
 Judith and Gary Schumer  
 Joseph Schwartzman in memory  
 of Beverly Schwartzman  
 Andrea Scott and Rob Jenter  
 Dennis Sears and Rene Wood  
 Gillian Shallcross  
 Robert and Ann Shanks  
 Myron and Marion Sheinberg  
 Barbara and Jim Shiminski  
 Susan Silver  
 Evelyn Small in memory of  
 Jim Small  
 Betsy Smith in memory of  
 Mildred R. Smith  
 David A. Smith, Sr.  
 George T. Smith  
 Nik and Sig Spiegel  
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 Dr. Walton Stevens  
 John and Appy Stookey  
 Noreene Storrie and  
 Wesley McCain  
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 Wilkinson Excavating  
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 Elissa Williams  
 Dorothea Zucker-Franklin, M.D.

### VERY SPECIAL THANKS

*Many thanks to Kimball Oil and their suppliers for the donation of a new furnace for the Dan Raymond House. When you visit, see the plaque on the cellar door.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### March Meeting

**William Suriner, talking about his recent publication describing the farm experience in Dalton in the 1940s. Friday, March 9, 7:30 p.m. Dewey Memorial Hall.**

### April meeting

Much has changed in the Sheffield area over the past 125 years. Join local historian Gary Leveille and the members of the Sheffield Historical Society as we take a trip back in time to see how things used to be. With the help of rare old photographs and antique postcards – converted into an entertaining Powerpoint presentation entitled *Sheffield Then and Now* – we will

“travel” by train, horse and buggy, and antique auto into the past to see many incredible sights! Included will be rarely-seen old-time views of Sheffield and the surrounding area. **The event will be held on Friday, April 13. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. at Dewey Memorial Hall**, which is located on Route 7, in the center of Sheffield. The program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Gary Leveille is a local historian and author. His most recent book is the best-selling photo history entitled *Old Route 7 – Along the Berkshire Highway*. His previous book is entitled *Around Great Barrington and Stockbridge*. Leveille is also a columnist for *The Berkshire Record*, where he produces the popular "Berkshire Then & Now" photo history column.

Leveille is vice-president of the Great Barrington Historical Society, principal of Berkshire Creative Communications, and has over 25 years experience as a writer, editor and author. Leveille was formerly a senior editor and editorial project supervisor for Hasbro Games in Springfield, MA. He has worked on numerous editorial projects for Milton Bradley, Hasbro, Parker Brothers, Disney, National Geographic, Antiques Roadshow, and many others.

***BE ON THE LOOKOUT in the local media for details on additional special spring 2007 events, as well as information on the May and June meetings.***

Dear Members and Friends of SHS,

It is with regret that the Board of Trustees accepted the resignation of Dr. Joanne Hurlbut, our Director, effective February 24. Her leadership during her 8-year tenure has seen the Society become reputedly the best in the county. Because of her efforts we have studies of our property and its buildings, much of the collection is properly stored in acid-free boxes, our school and cemetery programs continued, and new programs were developed with the library; two most recent were the baseball-theme program on Martin Luther King Day and a History Mystery program for students on February 6. Last summer's professional symposium, "If They Close the Door on You, Go in the Window," crowned her work with us by bringing in two excellent lecturers and a panel of local citizens, including our president, Wray Gunn.

Temporary plans for running the organization include the separation of Joanne's work among the board members and volunteers while the Board of Trustees considers job descriptions for staffing. The following people have accepted interim responsibilities:

Exhibits: Jim Miller

Grants: Philip Detjens

Newsletter: Lois Levinsohn and Catherine Miller

Annual Appeal: Wray

Gunn and Dennis Sears

Collections: Chris Kelley and Jim Miller

Programs: Joyce Hawkins

The previously-planned Long-Range Planning meeting of February 17, held at the Landmark building and facilitated by Lynne Terrelle, Director of Development at Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, took on additional importance with Joanne's leaving. The 17 participants included most of the present board, many of the past presidents, 2 at-large SHS members, and Joanne Hurlbut. Its goal to look at our future resulted in a revised Mission Statement which did not change the mission of the organization; a plan to study the programs by an ad hoc committee consisting of Kathie Ness, Joyce Hawkins, Brian Levinsohn, and Jim and Catherine Miller; and a determination to preserve the buildings, which is already under way, including an environmental upgrade. A major discussion resulted in the renewal of our wish to be a volunteer organization with strong professional support.

Looking back at 2006, the Festival of Trees and Stone Store sales in November and December were most successful. The net proceeds for the 8 weekends were over \$7,000. Many thanks to all who contributed trees and wreaths and centerpieces, to those who worked the weekends of the event, and to our customers. Special thanks to Jim and Catherine Miller, Lois Levinsohn, René Wood and Dennis Sears, Doreen Atwood, and Dorothy Marosy.

The 2007 Annual Appeal / Membership Drive will take place in March. The 2006 Annual appeal

brought in over \$17,000 for the workings of the Society—maintaining the buildings and grounds, salaries, and programs. By the time you receive this newsletter, the request for 2007-08 will have been mailed.

Cathy and Tom Tetro are working hard to create an outstanding exhibit of their private collection of antique wicker. Plans are coalescing for other events to accompany their exhibit in July.

As we go into the future with renewed energy, we count on your continued support and good will.

See you in Sheffield,

Marcia Brolli

*Join us for our spring and summer programs and events!*

### **Volunteers Needed!**

In addition to the many hardworking volunteers already listed, the Society needs extra hands to help out at its many events. A focus of activity for this year will be the exhibitions in the Old Stone Store. While it is true that many volunteers from last year will again be behind the desk at the Store, not every one will return this year. In the past, the Director did fill in on those days when a volunteer could not be found to sit at the Store. Since that will not be an option for this year, it is even more important that new volunteers step up to greet visitors, talk about the exhibits, and share all the activities the SHS engages in; please call and sign up for some summer fun at the Old Stone Store.





## DIRECTOR'S FAREWELL



*The farewell party for Director Hurlbut was held on Friday, February 16, at the Old Stone Store. Over fifty people turned out to say goodbye. Foodstuffs were plentiful, talk was lively, and a good time was had by all.*

For almost 8 full years, I have left North Adams in the morning and headed south to Sheffield. It has been a drive that is both beautiful and one which has brought me to a place where the people are friendly, helpful, and kind. Besides the community, this area is rich in history, which in turn made for interesting stories to uncover and share with people. I have truly enjoyed sharing those tales, but it is time for me to move on.

I have been holding down three part-time jobs now for many months and all three are demanding jobs. I have given up my long commute to Sheffield (almost 3 hours a day) for the other two jobs, which are only 5 and 10 minutes from my home.

I will now serve full-time as the Education Access Coordinator for the Northern Berkshire Community Television Corporation. I used the equipment from this organization to film the fall Symposium *If They Close the Door on You, Go in the Window*. I will be thinking of Sheffield as I edit that material in the upcoming weeks. Keep an eye out for the listings of when that production will air on CTSB.

My other job is as an Adjunct Faculty for Berkshire Community College. If you need to learn your American or Western Civilization history, check out the Northern Campus for BCC in North Adams.

I cannot begin to list all the wonderful memories that I will take with me from my years at SHS. The opportunity to research so many var-

ied aspects of the local story—from the characters developed in the cemetery programs, to the information behind the exhibits, including the artifacts and especially the photographs of the MDRC collection, to the thematic programs, such as our Native American Heritage Day—made learning about Sheffield and its people a real pleasure.

But it has truly been the people of Sheffield and surrounding communities that I have enjoyed working with the most. I will certainly miss that aspect of my job. THANK YOU so much to all who have assisted me over the years!! I could never list everyone or say thanks enough. Finally—THANK YOU for my wonderful party!! I will keep my eye on Sheffield and be in touch.



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Sheffield, MA 01257

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

The 1774 Dan Raymond House hours: by  
appointment during the winter months.

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

Old Stone Store hours are Saturday, 10 a.m. to  
3 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Closed January  
through April.

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG

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## Exhibitions at the Old Stone Store

### *Board of Directors 2007*

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H. Dennis Sears, *Treasurer*

Harry E. Conklin, *Clerk*

#### *Trustees:*

Philip Detjens

Leonard Graziano

Brian Levinsohn

Sarah Macy

Mark Ziobro

Beginning in May 2007, the Old Stone Store will open its doors to a full slate of exhibitions.

Here's a quick preview. Stop in as often as you like; Shop Managers Dorothy Marosy and Doreen Atwood will have plenty of new materials on hand from their recent travels to a special American craftsman show in Portland, Maine. So, enjoy the exhibits and take home a little something extra to share with family and friends.

First up will be a **collaborative project focusing on the environment, in particular on trees**. The MDRC will work with Tom Ingersoll and the local school community. The exhibit will use photographic re-

cords from the Society and community items.

Opening on Friday, June, 15 will be the return engagement of the **Five Artists**. This exhibition runs through July 1.

Saturday, July 7, will see the opening of **Wicker Furniture by Tom and Kathy Tetro**. They have volunteered their time and materials to create this fascinating show.

Opening August 18 through September 2 will be the **Artist Lori Baker**.

The final exhibition will be curated by **James R. Miller and focus on lighting devices**; this opens September 8.