



Sheffield Historical Society

November 2001 Newsletter

Holiday Happenings at the Sheffield Historical Society



The Sheffield Historical Society will be hosting many holiday events this December.

The season kicks off with the **3rd Annual Festival of Trees on Saturday, December 1** at Old Parish Church on the village green.

The event, which runs from **10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**, features a silent auction of custom decorated holiday trees and holiday raffles (drawings at three p.m.). The trees make great presents and hostess gifts! Lunch available, \$5.00. Last year over 40 one-of-a-kind trees were purchased by delighted shoppers. Proceeds will go toward the Stone Store restoration. No admission charge – so come and do some holiday shopping and enjoy a hearty homemade lunch. The event also includes:

Ø **Holiday Ties: a Bow Making Workshop** taught by Dorothy Marosy. Never been able to make that holiday bow look right? This workshop's for you! Bows of

all shapes, materials and sizes will be demonstrated. Once you've gotten the basics, you'll make three beautiful bows to take home – two of wired ribbon suitable for holiday wreaths or swags and a third bow suitable for a package. All materials included, 1 p.m. Fee: \$20. Space limited, registration required. Call: 229-2694.

Ø **Customize your Holiday Wreath: a Demonstration** by Judy Schnurr. Judy will show you how to take the basic wreath being sold by the Sheffield Historical Society and add special touches to make it uniquely yours. Judy's ideas are always creative and do-able with stunning results. This demonstration is free.

Ø **Holiday Tapestry raffle** tickets will be sold for the custom made, one of a kind tapestry. This beautiful, hand made 49" x 62", all cotton tapestry features 9-patch squares in holiday fabrics alternating with solid red squares decorated with gold poinsettias.



The **Holiday Stroll** will be held on **Saturday, December 15** from 2 to 4 p.m.

The program begins at the Dan Raymond House on Main Street in Sheffield, where there will be a members' holiday exhibition. After viewing this 1774 home, participants will visit four other historic houses decorated for the season. Christ Church Episcopal will serve as the gathering place at the end of the journey, where holiday music and refreshments will be available.

The drawing for the Regi Klein painting of Sheffield "The Town Common" will take place at 4 p.m. Proceeds from this drawing go to benefit the Stone Store. Members free, non-members \$8.

Holiday Wreaths

In addition, this year the **Society will be selling three different models of wreaths** for your holiday decorating. All wreaths feature fresh evergreens, are custom decorated and ready to hang on your door, mantel, or wall. With Judy Schnurr as our wreath consultant,

these wreaths will be fabulous! Wreath models will be available in early November for your viewing (in the Stone Store windows). Please consider these wreaths for your home, office or gift giving needs. Prepaid orders may be placed by calling the Society at 229-2694 or Rene Wood at

229-2875. Wreaths will be available for pickup in early to mid December to ensure their freshness. Proceeds benefit the Stone Store restoration.

See page 7 for an order form.



Mark Dewey Research Center Archives

Sheffield was the home from 1899 to about 1922 to a set of identical twins whose individual identity was a puzzle to everyone in town except for their immediate family. Jesse R. and George M. Davis were the sons of Nathaniel E. and Alice A. Davis and brothers of Alice and Mabel. The family farmed on Boardman Street. News of the Davis brothers' ability to mystify their associates about their identity spread far and wide through national newspapers and, as a result, they received a letter from twin sisters living in the Chicago area who wanted to make their acquaintance.

According to a series of articles in the *Berkshire Courier*, the young men took great pleasure in their ability to puzzle and for that reason wore identical clothing. When one brother bought some clothes for himself, he always purchased the same thing for his brother. They shaved the same time of day, cut their hair the same way and did nothing differently that could be used to set them apart. The two boys weighed about the same, used the same words in conversation, had similar voices and their smiles were so alike that it was almost impossible to see a difference in them.

In school they were always in the same class and did well in their studies. But they never had a problem in deceiving the teachers as to who was George and who was Jesse. If one knew his lesson better than the other they changed seats after mingling during recess or around the teacher's desk and the one who had the better knowledge would get in a position where he

would be next to recite. Grading them was often guess work on the part of the teacher but the boys never claimed to take tests for each other.

In sports they worked their disguise on the baseball and football fields. They played both games but it was in baseball that they were able to profit from their appearance. It was possible for one brother to bat in place of the other. They told of games where their names were far enough apart on the batting list so that one would not have to come to bat while the other was on base. Thus, if they wished, either could do all the batting. When only one position was filled by a Davis twin, provided the other was on the field, (and they nearly always were together) the better fielder did all the fielding and the better batter did all the batting.

The family belonged to the Friendly Union and they also deceived people in performances held there on the stage. If one had a difficult part in a play, the other would learn a portion of it and come out during some acts, nobody being the wiser.

In social situations when one of the brothers received an introduction and the other was not present, the introduction worked for both. One simply told the other about the introduction and when the previously absent brother finally met the person, he took up as if already introduced.

During one winter both even kept the company of the same lady. Jesse would call one night, and fill George, who might very well make the next visit, in on the proceedings.

Apparently the young lady was not able to tell the difference.

Even visitors to their home were as puzzled as anybody else. Jennie P. Lockwood boarded at the Davis home all one winter and was unable to tell them apart. She hoped to distinguish them by where they sat at table but, of course, they changed seats.

Jesse was eventually hired as a substitute mail carrier. As you have already guessed, nobody really knew who was carrying the mail.

About 1922 they left Sheffield. Their destination is not known, but if I had to find them, I would start looking in the Chicago area.

Sheffield Fatal Disease is Anthrax

"Dr. Austin Peters, chief of the cattle bureau, was in Sheffield recently with Dr. F. D. Landon of Great Barrington investigating the cause of death of several cattle. The latest case was about two weeks ago, when a cow belonging to Willis Clark died suddenly. Several others had died earlier in the summer. Dr. Peters is confident that the disease is anthrax, which generally proves fatal with cattle. He had previously made an examination of blood sent to him by Dr. Landon and from that secured positive proof. ... Dr. Peters will soon decide what is the best method to prevent any further spreading of the fatal malady, for it means a great loss to the farmers in this section." *Berkshire Courier*, 21 October 1909.

The Old Stone Store Rescue



Restoration work began in earnest in early May on the Old Stone Store and, as is the case with old buildings, many problems were not evident until it was opened up for a closer look. The advanced deterioration we found has added to the cost of its rescue and extended the length of time necessary to complete the project.

The entire wooden interior has been gutted and rebuilt, effectively creating a new wooden building within the existing stone work. It includes floor joists, partitions, stairs, cedar roof and new, rot resistant store front, doors, and windows. The rough wiring and plumbing have been completed and work on the climate control is well under way. As a result, the first floor is nearly ready for insulation. In the space behind the Store where the wooden addition once stood, the septic system and underground fuel tanks are in place. In the spring that area will be landscaped with the help of a grant from the Lenox Gar-

den Club. Architect John James has donated his professional expertise for the project and Reiner White, the contractor, has worked to ensure a restoration appropriate to the period.

The Society secured a loan in the amount of \$180,000 from the MassDevelopment Corporation and nearly that entire amount has been expended. Work on the project will cease until the loan is paid off and additional money is raised.

The Old Stone Store Restoration Committee, a group of Society members and citizens from the community has been working on fundraising since July. The response from individuals and groups has been gratifying in that slightly over \$100,000 has been raised. However, there is some distance to go to meet the \$180,000 obligation and the estimated balance of \$50,000 beyond that figure that is estimated to bring the project to its final conclusion. With persistence the challenge will be met so that one day the community will be able to enjoy the use of the Old Stone Store for its intended use as a museum of town history, exhibit space

and information center. Pledges or other gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent under the law and the Society is a 501(c)(3) corporation. If you would like to support this project or wish additional information, please contact Catherine B. Miller at (413) 229-8668.



Contributors to the Old Stone Store July 1 – October 31

\$5,000+

Anonymous
Anonymous
Berkshire Bank
Lois Bradford & Joan Brooks
Paul & Carol Collins
Jean Curtiss
James & Catherine Miller

\$1,500 – 4,999

Philip & Susan Detjens
Virginia Drury
Lenox Garden Club
Carl Schumann

\$100 – 1,499

Doreen Atwood
Grace Arzt
Neil & Kathleen Chrisman
Mark Consolini
Friends of CBM
Dorothy Marosy
Henry & Dawn Massini
Katherine Ness
Sheffield Tourism
Rene Wood

Another successful stroll through the cemetery

The decision to move the cemetery stroll forward in date and time proved a pleasant one. Warm temperatures and sufficient light for strolling made this year's walk in Ashley Falls the best attended stroll to date. Over 80 people joined us in Sackett Cemetery. This event boasted our largest cast as well.

Ricky Bernstein is pictured here portraying Roscoe Taft.

Thanks to all those who assisted with this event and all those who came out to join in the walk.

Call the office if you would like to be a spirit in next year's cemetery stroll at 229-2694.



Hats off to the Civil War Concert Performers



Sunday, October 21st witnessed one of the best musical performances to have ever taken place in Sheffield. Over 160 people turned out to hear the words and songs of Sheffield residents from the Civil

War. A host of local talent, both professional and amateur, provided the community an entertaining and in many ways very moving experience. For those of you who missed the event, the local access television channel CTSB-11 filmed the concert. The Society will have tapes of the event which can be

viewed or purchased. Let the Society know if you are interested in purchasing a copy of this program at 229-2694. The program will also run on CTSB. Check the station's listings for time and date. Hopefully the program will air on Veterans Day.

Thanks go out to every one involved in the concert from ticket sales and ushers, to those who prepared the reception, and to all who purchased tickets, which helped support the restoration of the Stone Store.

Special thanks go out to all the

performers and to James and Catherine Miller for all their efforts in making this concert such a success.

A very special thanks goes out to John-Arthur Miller, who originated the idea for the concert and who carried the process through. His many hours of research, rehearsing, and organization were evident in all aspects of the performance.

A job well done indeed!

Please note correction from the Fall Newsletter: donations in Root's memory made to the Old Parish Church for the Clock were by the G.A.R. and the W.R.C.

Collaborative Programming

The Society will again be working with the Trustees of Reservations for programming in 2002.

The joint 18th-Century Day is tentatively set for July 6th. A series of joint tours with a focus on Sheffield's natural and cultural history is being developed for the summer months. Watch for details in the March newsletter.

In conjunction with the Bushnell-Sage Library, the Society will offer its first school vacation workshop, "History through Quilting," on Wednesday, February 20, 2002 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is designed for 8 to 12 year olds.

The program will include readings, viewing historical materials,

and the completion of an individual quilt square. Participants are asked to bring their own bag lunch to this textile workshop.

Fee—\$8 members, \$10 non-members.

Registration is required. Please register at 229-2694.

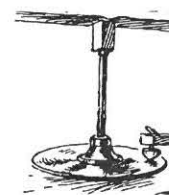
Calendar of Events 2002

Friday—January 11 *What's It with Milton Barnum & Chris Coenen, 7:30 p.m., Dewey Memorial Hall*

One of the Society's favorite annual

events is back again. Get out your thinking caps in order to identify objects that mystify the mind, and bring along that gizmo or gadget to

stump the experts.



Monday—January 21—Sheffield's Heroes and Helpers, 1 to 3 p.m. at the Bushnell-Sage Library

A jointly sponsored event focusing on

firefighters and other community members who are always ready to assist in times of need. There will be readings for children and lec-

tures and exhibits for adults. The event is free and open to the public.

Friday—February 8—The Massachusetts Quilt Documentation Project with Society and Quilt Guild members, 7:30 p.m.—Dewey Memorial Hall

An ongoing project to document quilts made in Massachusetts prior to 1950. Experts from this project visited Sheffield this past year. The Berkshire Quilt Guild sponsored the team's visit to our

area and paid for quilts in South County museums to be documented. Quilts from the Mission House, Bidwell House, Sheffield Historical Society, and private owners were involved. The team photographed, evaluated, and produced a written report on each quilt. Five Society quilts were included in this

project. Amongst the privately owned quilts were some from an early farmhouse in Ashley Falls.

SHS members will explain the procedures used and show the documented quilts. Some surprising information will be revealed!

Friday—March 8—"The Taking of East Sheffield" with John Sisson, 7:30 p.m., Dewey Memorial Hall

A presentation of this dramatic chapter in Sheffield's 1870's history where politics, mills, railroads, and territory

put in play a series of events that resulted in Sheffield losing a large portion of its eastern territory.

John Sisson is the President of the New Marlboro Historical Society, a member of the Historical Commis-

sion, and the Project Manager of the New Marlboro Cemetery Restoration Project. He is the great grandson of a pivotal figure in this drama.

Friday—April 12—To be announced

Friday—May 10—"Under the Quabbin: The Lost Towns" with Ed and Libby Klekowski—7:30 p.m., Dewey Memorial Hall

This huge reservoir in Central Massachusetts covered over small towns and settlements during the construction and flooding of the Quabbin Reservoir. Ed

and Libby Klekowski from the University of Massachusetts researched and produced a WGBY program on the project.

The Klekowskis with the assistance of University of Massachusetts students found fascinating stories during their botany research. These discoveries led to the creation of a

television program for the Springfield PBS channel. The program is to be aired during the December fund drive. Check TV listings to get an overview. We'll get the real inside "scoop" when this personable couple appear at our May meetings.

Friday—June 14—Annual Meeting, 7:30 , p.m., Dewey Memorial Hall

In addition to those long awaited annual reports, the Society will be celebrating its 30th year! Join in

the festivities. There will be many surprises!



A community of museums in the United States has joined together to launch **Shopformuseums.com**. This is a fundraising secure portal site, designed to benefit museums by generating revenue through on-line consumer sales. The Sheffield Historical Society is one of the organizations able to benefit

from this collaboration.

The process is simple: Go to Shopformuseums.com and select the Sheffield Historical Society from the database. You select a merchant and make an order. There are over 125 merchants to select from including upscale toys, gifts, apparel, and computer

providers. Each merchant will donate a portion of your purchase to the Sheffield Historical Society.

This is an easy way to get the quality products you want and to financially benefit the Sheffield Historical Society at the same time.

Check out their website or call the office for more details

New Publication

James Miller, Archivist at the Mark Dewey Research Center, has spent innumerable hours delving into the history of Sheffield. His labors have born fruit and will be shared with the community in the Spring of 2002 by way of a new publication on Sheffield in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Historical Society is taking advanced orders for this work.

The focus is on material culture and the publication will shed new light on the daily life of the founding generations of Sheffield residents.

Watch for further details on the book in the Spring newsletter.

To reserve your copy, call the office at 229-2694.

SHS Updated Web Site

Visit www.sheffieldhistory.org and see our new and expanded web site. All information has been updated and new pages added on Special Events, Directions, Volunteering, and Links to other sites. A Collections page has also been added for future display of Society holdings.

Special thanks to Betty Chapin,
Joanne Hurlbut, Dorothy Marsoy,

Catherine Miller, James Miller and Rene Wood, the website committee that made it happen, Aidan Cassidy for his drawings, Gregg Siter, the designer of the original website, who graciously volunteered the many hours required to make all the changes and give our site its new appearance and Marianne Swan, who will be doing future updates.

New Exhibit

The holiday exhibition for the Dan Raymond House will be composed of members collections, with a special concentration on Santa Claus and festive textiles. Several members are contributing items from their personal collections which you may never have seen before! *The exhibit will be open to the public from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays, November 30, December 7 and 14; and Saturdays, December 1 from 12 to 3 p.m. and on the 15th for the Holiday Stroll from 2 to 4 p.m.*

★ ★ *Wish List*

★ If you have any of the following ob-
★ jects in good condition, consider
★ donating the item to SHS. Mone-
★ tary contributions to be used in pur-
★ chasing the items are also welcome.

- ★ *A slide projector and laser pointer;*
- ★ *cotton sheets; screw gun, glue &*
- ★ *staple guns, WWI & WWII info, old*
- ★ *scrapbooks*



Sheffield Historical Society Holiday Wreath Order Form



Wreath #1: \$ 27.50. 12" wreath, Red & Gold or Burgundy & Gold bow and golden decorations. Bow Preference: Red & Gold _____ Burgundy & Gold _____

Wreath #2: \$37.50 14" wreath, Burgundy/Gold Multi-colored bow, large tear shaped ornament and additional golden decorations.

Ornament Color Preference: _____ Gold _____ Red _____ White/Silver

Wreath #3: \$60.00 22" wreath, re-usable 13" Gold Reindeer Ornament and diaphanous ribbon of golden stars.

All wreaths will be made of balsam/evergreens. SHS reserves the flexibility to substitute another bow of comparable quality. Quantities are limited – please order early.

To order: please complete the form below and send it, along with your check made payable to Sheffield Historical Society, PO Box 747, Sheffield, MA 01257

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Wreath # _____ Quantity _____ Single Price: \$ _____ Total Amount: \$ _____
Preference Information, if any: _____

Wreath # _____ Quantity _____ Single Price: \$ _____ Total Amount: \$ _____
Preference Information, if any: _____

Wreath # _____ Quantity _____ Single Price: \$ _____ Total Amount: \$ _____
Preference Information, if any: _____

Grand Total and Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Wreaths may be picked up at Sheffield Historical Society, 159 Main Street, Sheffield on the following dates or by special arrangement. We will phone or email you to confirm your pickup date. If special arrangements are needed, please call Rene Wood, 229-2875.

Wreath Pick Up Preference: Please note your 1st and 2nd choices.

Sunday, Dec. 2nd, Noon – 2PM _____

Tues, Dec. 4th, Noon – 2PM _____

Saturday, Dec. 8th, 10AM – 4PM _____

Sunday, Dec. 9th, Noon – 2PM _____

Thank you for your support. Proceeds go to the Stone Store Restoration fund.





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 by appointment during the winter months, fee.

Mark Dewey Research Center open Monday and Friday afternoons, 1:30 to 4 pm.

WE'RE ON THE WEB
SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG

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Society Happenings

The month of October saw a number of school groups participating in SHS programming, including two groups for the 5th grade cemetery program and the first home-school class. The One-Room School program of the 18th-Century met the 21st-Century in the Education Center and proved that learning truly is multi-generational!

The Sheffield Historical Society is the recipient of a \$200 grant from the Technical Assistance Fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Inc. The funds assisted in the purchase of a new computer software program, Past Perfect, for the Society's collection. If data entry is your delight, please call

the Office and become involved in collections record-keeping. It makes for a great winter project.

On October 7, the Society sent intrepid souls into the inclement weather to the Lee Visitors Center to introduce travelers to the Society and received \$500 for this venture from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism via the Berkshire Visitors Bureau.

Save these dates:

December 1st for the Festival of Trees

December 15th for the Holiday Stroll and drawing of the Regi Klein painting

February 20th for History through Quilting, a workshop for youth