

Orville Dewey on Valuing History

In 1876 the residents of Sheffield celebrated the town's vote approving the actions of the continental congress, affirming in that vote that they saw it wise and prudent and, "for interest and safety of the American Colonies to declare said colonies independent of the kingdom of Great Britton, they the inhabitants of said Sheffield will solemnly engage with their lives and fortunes to support them in their measures." Months of planning went into the centennial celebration and several prominent Sheffield residents spoke at the festivities. Rev. Dr. Orville Dewey gave a rousing, yet reflective, speech extolling the importance of remembering the history of the people of Sheffield who had endured the revolutionary war. His words, excerpted below, ring just as true today as they had in 1876:

"But why, on the whole, and briefly to sum up the matter, — why should we commemorate that action of the town, which we think it right to signalize with religious services and discourses, and which we propose, more especially in secular fashion, to celebrate tomorrow? Why shall we meet together and call upon our townsmen, residing in different places, to join us in this Centennial celebration? Because it is fit and becoming thus to remember our fathers—fit toward them, and becoming for us. They who do not remember and revere their ancestors who have done worthy deeds, are not likely to leave posterity that will be worthy of being remembered. It is, therefore only fit, but it concerns our own character, and the character of our children, that we should do it; that we should thus take, and leave to our children, an impression which is good for us and for them. It is an advantage in aristocratic countries, that noble families, who have acted a distinguished part, should, in their permanence, carry down the recollection and incitement of high, historic virtues. We have



no aristocracy. All the more reason is there that we, the whole people, should take care of these treasures of the olden time; that we should take upon our hearts, and keep alive within them, the memory of our fathers' virtues.

Not that we have anything extravagant to say of their merits. They were good men and true, who stood in their lot, and did the duty of the hour. And such a duty was it that I do not believe there was one low, mean, base person who said "Ay" to that manly resolve of a century ago. That "Ay," I have no doubt, was stoutly said. . . . And if the thing then done, was done a century ago; if nobody now living remembers the men who did it; if only some of their names are known—and they pass away like shadows into the dimness of antiquity —let us do what we can to rescue them from oblivion. Let us say to one another,

that we have had some good men and true in Sheffield; good men, ay, and good citizens, who have left us the heritage of their example—a heritage which it is our part not only to hold in sacred remembrance, but to cultivate and to improve; to carry forward and to make better, every day, from this Centennial year, through the century to come.

And for this special and final reason, let us do what we are doing iu these anniversary days, that we may take it upon our hearts as a hereditary pledge, faithfully, each one of us, to help build up in this land a society and government that shall be worthy to be called a great and example republic. All good men desire to see that—some happier condition of society, at least—a better world, justice, truth, purity, in rulers and people, all good men desire to see. The world is sighing for it. Sages, poets, philosophers, have dreamed of it. We, ourselves, alas ! are lamenting that it is yet so far from being realized here."

Happy Holidays!

On Decmeber 3rd the society joined with the Sheff-
 field Police Department to collect gifts for Toys-for-
 Tots. Those that donated
 got to have a family picture
 with Santa in an antique
 sleigh and carriage. While
 waiting for their turn, the
 families enjoyed hot choco-
 late and candy canes.
 Not one, but two San-
 tas were on hand for
 photos. More than
 thrity gifts, plus food
 for the food pantry,
 were collected that day.



Last minute holiday shopping? The Festival of
 Holidays at the Old Stone Store is the perfect
 place to find a gift for those on your list—open on
 Christmas Eve 11am to 4 pm. The second floor
 "tag sale" has many items deeply discounted.
 And after the holidays the shop will be open
 weekends 11am to 4 pm. We're open New
 Year's Eve, but closed on New Year's Day.

**Whimsical &
 Sophisticated Gifts**
 LOCAL ARTISANS
**Festival of
 Holidays**
 Nov. 5 – Dec. 31
 AT THE **STONE STORE** Sat. & Sun. 11-4
 SHEFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Message from the President

Holiday Greetings,

It is with great pleasure that I bring you these tidings of joy. I don't know where to begin other than to say thank you all for your relationship and support for the society. We have so many great members and volunteers that I would need a little pamphlet to tell the story. I will briefly summarize the situation by starting with our WORLD CLASS Old Stone Store. There is still time for some great Christmas and Holiday shopping with some fabulous items to be found. I certainly scored there. The staff gives their time each and every weekend to make this possible. As you read in the previous newsletter we have garnered many feathers in our ever increasing head dress. This is due also to our never tiring and supportive board and related volunteers. No mention would be complete without kudos to our administrator Jen Owens who creates this newsletter and our "facilities manager," my predecessor Paul O'Brien. This newsletter gets out along with many other duties and the heat is on, driveway plowed, walkways shoveled and so many other details due to these two integral saints.



We are capping our year off by treating a group of exchange students from China to an historical lunch followed up with an equally historic holiday party on the 18th from 4-6. Your fat little buddy the president will make sure none go hungry with the smoke house fired to the hilt. A special surprise will be in store. Please come and enjoy yourselves. It would be a great pleasure to wish you the best face -to-face. I won't remind you until the next newsletter that the best nation after the USA is DONATION! Who wouldn't like a little extra in their account? We look forward to another active year of presentations, programs and the like. Come mingle with what some think as old farts. Let me set the record straight, we are old farts young at heart!

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Peace on Earth and Blessings, Most Sincerely,
Your FLB,
Tony

Events



Park of Honor

When Alan Romeo and Paul O'Brien of the Sheffield Historical Society saw the Pittsfield Park of Honor last year, they knew it was something they would like to bring to Sheffield. They contacted the Pittsfield Kiwanis club who guided them as they signed up people in Sheffield to sponsor a flag in the name of a veteran or group of veterans. On November 6, at the opening ceremony for Sheffield's Park of Honor at Barnard Park, 94 flags fluttered in the wind. Veterans and their friends and family came out to the ceremony that day. State Representative William "Smitty" Pignatelli, and Sheffield Selectmen Chairwoman Nadine Hawver each spoke about what it meant to them to honor and remember veterans in this way. Rev. Kenneth Phesay gave a benediction and Alan explained the significance of the missing man table that had been set up for the ceremony. Jeannie Romeo sang the national anthem and members of the Mt. Everett band played taps on the trumpet to commence a colorguard procession across the park. The flags stood for the month of November, a powerful reminder to those who drove by on Route 7 of the courage and sacrifice our country's veterans made for us all.



Alan Romeo addresses crowd

Next November the society hopes to exceed 200 flags in the Sheffield Park of Honor. For those interested in sponsoring a flag next year, please contact the Sheffield Historical Society in September or October. Sponsors have the option to keep the flag after it stands in the Park of Honor for the month of November, along with a gold ribbon with the names of the veteran they honor. The money raised by the sponsorship this year will go to a scholarship for the child or grandchild of a Berkshire veteran, as will money raised next year. Combined, the 2016 Sheffield and Pittsfield Parks of Honor raised over \$23,000 for scholarships.

Upcoming Exhibits & Programs

Sheffield Historical Society

Remarkable Women of New England: The War Years 1754-1787

Remarkable Women of New England

*Strength, Honor, and Sacrifice
The War Years 1754-1787*



Carole Owens

Presentation by

**Carole
Owens**

Friday, January 13

7:30 pm

at

Dewey Hall
91 Main St.

Free and open to the public

www.sheffieldhistory.org • sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com • 413-229-2694

Sheffield Historical Society

Voting for the Right to Vote: Women's Suffrage Movement in Massachusetts 1840-1920

Old Stone
Store

January 21 to
February 12

Weekends
11 am to 4 pm

Free and open to the public



www.sheffieldhistory.org • sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com • 413-229-2694

MOUNT EVERETT MIDDLE SCHOOL

EXPO

Projects on display at the
Old Stone Store



Free and open to the public

3 weekends!
February 18 thru
March 5
11am-4pm

Old Stone Store
137 Main St.

Exhibit reception
Saturday, February 25
4pm-6pm

www.sheffieldhistory.org • sheffieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com • 413-229-2694

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from our collection...

Seymour Robins Art

A recent addition to our collection are several pieces of artwork done by Seymour Robins. While the society already has a good representation of his work—mostly the paper sculptures he crafted in the 1980's & 90's—these new pieces round out our collection. For almost 40 years, Seymour "Rob" Robins created his highly-regarded works of art in his studio on Boardman Street—a renovated barn that he also called home. For much of the mid-twentieth century he designed paper sculptures for museums, companies and even organizations such as UNICEF. Each year he'd send delightful 3-d paper sculptures to friends and family as a holiday card. The new



Robins' paper sculptures can be purchased at the Old Stone Store



pieces were given to us by Dr. Gary Hutton, a friend of Robbins, who saved the cards he received over the years.

For 35 years Robbins contributed to the field of perception studies at Princeton University. Robbins continued to work as he was losing his vision to macular degeneration. To



help others also suffering vision loss, he arranged lectures on the topic for his neighbors at the assisted living facility he lived at in his later years and wrote the book, *Vision Junkie: Essays and Other Writings from the Parallel World of the Legally Blind*. Robbins passed away in 2001 at the age of 97.

virtual museum

Seymour Robins' work has hung in several prestigious museums. To see some of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum's collection



THE OLD STONE STORE STORY

The walls of the Old Stone Store have seen 180 years of Sheffield history. If they could talk, they would tell you of the first proprietors, the Ensign brothers who opened a grocery and dry goods store where prices were very low and all manner of produce was taken in payment (1836). They might give you a peek into Miss Rood's Millinery and Dressmaking establishment (1837) where ladies came to shop for dresses with cinched waists, wide sleeves, and flounced and ruffled skirts to the floor. Perhaps they'd let you hear the echoing clicks as William Little sent messages from his telegraph office on the second floor (1865) or smell the scent of the fresh fish brought in by Pratt & Hotchkiss, fishmongers (1873). You may see someone make a purchase from Putnam Bradford's drugstore (1892) and might even hear rumors of illegal alcohol sales and court dates (1893). Possibly you'd hear the smack of a cue at Samuel Fox's Billiard Hall (1895) or the jingle of harness at W.W. Meri-field's Harness Shop. You could catch a glimpse of a newly tonsured fellow emerge from John Piper's barbershop (1900) or listen in on a meat order being placed at butcher Peter Cassidy's meat counter (1901).



Decoration Day, 1900. Civil War veterans marching by the Old Stone Store.

The wood addition in the rear burned down in 1901

You'd certainly hear of the fire in 1901 that destroyed shoemaker George Pfahl's stock as well as milliner Esther Cassidy's and dressmaker Mrs. N. E. Scott's inventory and of the rebuilding by Peter Cassidy. And no doubt you'd learn that in 1945 Peter Cassidy transferred the property to his brother Edward who promptly sold it to Richard Combes. These walls could tell you about Francis Kersey's market, which remained in operation until the late 60s and the Bauman's Package Store, which opened in 1972. Perhaps they'd remember lunches at Mary's Place, a restaurant in the rear wooden structure that's since been demolished, or the tea and mystery books available at Jo Grossman's Mystery Café (1995). Surely they'd share the months of renovation and repair that brought it to its present status, that of Exhibit Space and gift shop run by The Sheffield Historical Society (1999). These walls, built from stone quarried on Hewins Street, form the oldest existing mercantile building in town. For almost two hundred years they've watched the comings and goings of townfolk. Perhaps in the years to come they will even tell of your visit. —Pauline Clarke

*The
Sheffield
Historical Society*



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Tuesday 10:00 am-4:00 pm
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Visit us on Facebook

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mdrc@sheffieldhistory.org
413-229-3682

Office Hours
Monday 1:30 pm-4:00 pm
Friday 1:30pm-4:00 pm
or by appointment

Old Stone Store
On the Green in Sheffield
Weekends 11:00 am-4:00 pm
413-229-2287

The Sheffield Historical Society invites the support of you and your friends through membership.

Name(s) _____ E-Mail _____

Address _____

Please check: New Renew

Individual (\$15 - \$50) Family(\$51 - \$100) Patron (\$101 - \$500) Sponsor (\$501 - \$1,000)

Please make checks payable to: The Sheffield Historical Society. Send to : P.O. Box 747, Sheffield , MA 01257