

The Sheffield Historical Society

Winter/Spring 2010



There's Something "New" at the Historic 1774 Dan Raymond House

For 28 years since its restoration and preservation, the Sheffield Historical Society's Dan Raymond House has been open to the public with permanent room-setting displays appropriate for the period of the historic structure. For that duration, the exhibits of 18th century home life have remained largely unchanged. The furnishings are appropriate for teaching children history through the artifacts, and accurately displayed for scholars and visitors to view and learn; however, because the theme and composition has remained largely unchanged over the years, there is a resulting lack of interest to attend a guided tour more than a few times.

During the Society's February '09 Planning Retreat an idea was presented to re-open the Dan Raymond House for public tours of the historic museum house with a "new" twist: in an active partnership with local antiques dealers, the museum house could offer a wealth of opportunity for changing exhibitions of period furniture and accessories. This will be mutually beneficial for the antiques dealers and for the Society. The Berkshires have been a long-standing destination in the ongoing hunt for antiques, and while the antiques dealers stand to gain added exposure for their merchandise by being credited in the captions for the objects on loan, the Society will have access to almost unlimited resources for display.

All parties would benefit from the press generated by such collaboration. Additionally, visitors to the DRH museum would be encouraged to frequent the area antiques shops; likewise, the antiques dealers would encourage their clients to view the period furniture displayed in room settings in the DRH. The co-operative effort to bolster renewed interest in the DRH museum will be multi-faceted with involvement from the community, local businesses and SHS members. Time and energy will be involved; however, the endeavor is essentially cost-free.

When each Sheffield antiques dealer was initially polled about



A rarely seen view of the Dan Raymond House during the Little family's residency (1884-1945). In a 1985 historical report completed for the Society by Gregory Farmer, Farmer notes that "the Littles seem[ed] to have appreciated the historic value of the brick house and were careful to preserve its character." While the house was in good condition, the Society elected to restore its original Colonial lines, removing the Victorian sun porch, south-facing bay window, and alcoves over the ell addition. At this time, the roof was also raised over the kitchen and the burning room added inside.

loaning a variety of antique objects for display in the DRH, the response was overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. Many even offered to loan items from their personal collections. Several attended preliminary meetings to view the rooms, to discuss participation, to hear general ideas about working together, and to learn of the theme of the first exhibition which is planned to open in May 2010.

The Society's recent acquisition of nearly two dozen early-19th century letters, written by members of the Little family, will be the focus of the new Dan Raymond House exhibition.

Significance of the Little Family Letters

The collection of handwritten letters, to and from the family of Ralph and Maria Fox Little, is believed to be the earliest extant documentation of early 19th century life in the town of Sheffield. Their worth sheds light on the prevailing topics of the day—health, death, religion, and domestic duties, with an underlying yearning for communication and kinship. Thirty years of family letters offers insight into daily life beginning in 1807.

The letters will be on public view for the first time during the new DRH exhibit. Poignant excerpts with corresponding vignettes on loan from area antiques dealers will be displayed in room settings, along with local artists using their choice of medium to create a contemporary visual context for understanding select passages.

Additionally, a separate special exhibition at the Old Stone Store will dovetail with the new DRH exhibit. During the month of June, *The ABCs of Letter Writing - the History and Art of 19th Century Correspondence* will focus on a retrospective of writing and related items of communication, again on loan from antiques dealers and other members of the community. The Little family letters and other early handwritten letters will be on display along with items related to calligraphy, fountain pens, inkwells, stamp collecting, etc., and a selection of samplers, school desks, and writing tables.

Dan Raymond House History

The Dan Raymond House was built circa 1774 of homemade brick, believed to be fired on the site. It originally consisted of a north and south parlor on the first floor and a garret upstairs. Cooking was likely conducted in an attached structure on the back of the house which was replaced by an ell addition at a later date. At the time of its construction, Mr. Raymond was referred to as a “notorious” and “cunning” character and his home was decried as “extravagant.” In the present day it is considered an unpretentious and classic-styled late-18th century brick colonial. Except for the added ell, the house is nearly the same as it was during the American Revolution.

By mid-1850s the house had been extended with the addition of a large keeping room, buttery and burning room on the first floor, and a second staircase was built, as the garret became a full second story with two bedroom chambers upstairs.

The Dan Raymond House was purchased by two Society members in the 1970s, and they held it until the SHS raised the money to buy the property*. In 1981 The Society undertook

Locally-quarried Marble Traced to New Britain, Connecticut Church



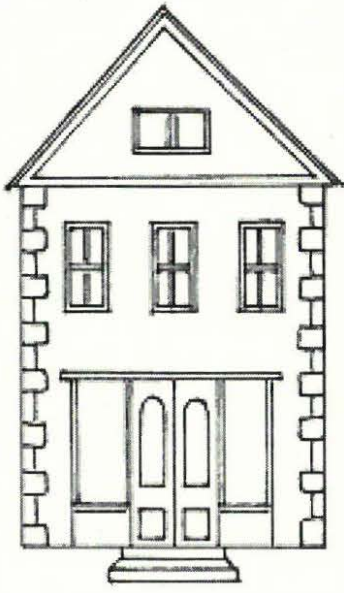
This past summer the Mark Dewey Research Center, the library and reference arm of the Society received an inquiry from the First Lutheran Church of the Reformation in New Britain, CT. Interested in being listed on the Connecticut Register of Historic Places, their researcher wanted to track down undocumented lore that the church was built of marble from the Ashley Falls Marble Company quarry. Were we, they wanted to know, able to find any documentation to substantiate that story?

From our marble quarry archives, greatly enhanced through the generosity of Natalie Funk and Priscilla Rueger, we were able to provide a positive answer. From company correspondence given by Natalie and Priscilla, the Center was able to tell the church, then known as the Svenska Lutherska Maria-Kyrkan, that the marble, indeed, had originated in the Ashley Falls by supplying a company letter that read, in part, “We quarry and finish the marble even to the finest carved work.... Some of the most prominent buildings erected from our product include the ... Swedish Lutheran Church, New Britain, Conn.”

The 1906 structure, on Franklin Square Park in New Britain is iconic Gothic in design. The towers lost their crop-topped spires in the 1938 hurricane but the building is otherwise unchanged.

—Jim Miller, *Society Archivist*

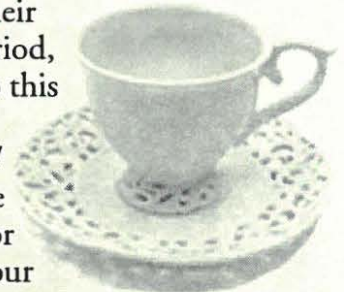
Upcoming Program Events & Exhibitions at the Old Stone Store



Friday, February 12, 7:30 pm. **A Colonial Tea Party & Sampler**

To boycott the heavy tax placed on British import teas, colonists learned to substitute "independence teas" which were herbal infusions derived from plants that they would have had growing in their gardens. Coffee also became popular during this period, and remains the preferred brew among Americans to this day. Gillian Hettinger, of Sheffield and New Jersey, literature teacher, scholar, and frequent *Sheffield Times* contributor, will host this program. Come learn what our ancestors would have been served for tea courtesy of Harney's & Sons Fine Teas. Bring your own tea cup and try a taste of each to see if you would have liked them!

The program will be held in Dewey Memorial Hall.



Remember to participate by bringing your own teacup!

Friday, March 12, 7:30 pm. **Plants that will Thrive in Your Garden, Part II**

Local horticulturist, writer, and lecturer, Ron Kujawski, author of the popular "Gardener's Checklist" *Berkshire Record* column and the *Berkshire Eagle's* "Berkshire Garden Journal," returns to continue his power point presentation on perennials and annuals that will thrive in your Sheffield garden.

The program will be held in Dewey Memorial Hall.

Friday, April 9, 7:30 pm. **Historic Paint Colors**

This illustrated lecture will present an overview of the most popular New England architectural styles and their historical paint colors from colonial times through the 20th century. Jacqueline Connell is an architectural and landscape consultant and museum educator. She has consulted with owners of historic properties throughout New England as well as New York and New Jersey. She has presented lectures on architectural and landscape topics for historical societies, museums, and civic organizations such as Strawberry Banke, Mystic Seaport, Newport Museum of Art, and the High Museum in Atlanta.

The program will be held in Dewey Memorial Hall.

Saturday, April 17, 5-7:30 pm. **Spectacular Pasta Dinner**

Homemade pasta dinner with an "all-you-can-eat" pasta bar featuring all-time favorite meat and vegetarian pasta dishes. Salad, dessert, ice tea, coffee and tea included. Wine, beer and soft drinks available through the American Legion. Adults and takeout: \$10; children ages 3-10: \$5; children under 3: free. Dinner will also feature a Chinese Auction.

The dinner will take place at the American Legion Hall, Rte. 7, Sheffield.

Saturday, May 1—Sunday, June 6. **Voices from the Fields: The Family Farms of Sheffield**

In honor of Sheffield Land Trust's 20th Anniversary, this exhibit will celebrate Sheffield's current and historic farms as a vital part of our community, culture, beauty and economy. The exhibit will showcase highlights from a larger collaborative oral history project undertaken by the Society, the Land Trust, and

This schedule is subject to change. For the latest information, visit www.sheffieldhistory.org

many volunteers who are interviewing families and farmers. Also featured will be many photographs, including from the Society's archives and from family collections. While the exhibit will only be able to display a small portion of the information and photographs gathered, the full extent of the material will become part of the Society's archives on our town's agricultural history.



SAVE THE DATES!

Saturday, May 1—Sunday, October 31, 2010

The Little Family & 19th Century Correspondence

A newly acquired collection of 19th century letters written from Sheffield by members of the Little family will be related to the Dan Raymond House, where a later generation of the family lived. A tableau installation of period furnishings provided by local antiques dealers will complete the scene. Come learn how the letters provide a new window into old times and behold the parlors of the Museum utterly transformed!

The exhibit will be in the Dan Raymond House parlors.

Friday, May 14, 7:30 pm. **The Home Front: Sheffield During WWII**

Society trustee and avocational WWII historian, Greig Siedor, will give a talk on the impact of the War on daily life in Sheffield based on information gathered from the Society archives. Members of the community will also be invited to share their photos, memorabilia, and recollections. For more information about this program, see article on page 5. *The program will be held in Dewey Memorial Hall.*

Saturday, June 12—Sunday, July 11

ABC's of Letter Writing: The History & Art of 19th Century Correspondence

A Retrospective exhibit of writing and related objects of communication, on loan from local antiques dealers and other members of the community which references the exhibit in the Dan Raymond House Museum. The Little family letters and other early handwritten letters will be on display along with items related to calligraphy, fountain pens, inkwells, stamp collecting, etc. and a selection of samplers, school desks, and writing tables. *The exhibit will be on view at the Old Stone Store.*

Friday, July 16—Sunday, August 1. **Five Friends Art Exhibit**

The Five Friends: Walter Bogard, Hans Heuberger, Sean Ryder, Lois Ryder, and Lois Van Clef return for their fifth year to the Old Stone Store with new and recent artwork. The exhibit will correspond with the Sheffield Art League's Annual Juried Art Competition in Dewey Memorial Hall, where more of the friends' work will be featured. *The Gallery at the Old Stone Store will be open Fridays, 11-6 pm, Saturdays & Sundays, 11-4pm. The exhibit will have an opening reception Saturday, July 18, 1-3 pm.*

Saturday, August 7—Sunday, September 5

From Sheffield to Egremont: A House's Journey

Marsha Ginsberg, a photographic artist and stage designer from NYC and Egremont, has documented the rescuing and subsequent moving and restoration of the ca. 1840 Conway House from Bow Wow Rd., Sheffield to Jug End Rd., South Egremont. The house has compelling historic merit because it was once thought to have been a stop on the underground railroad. This multi-media exhibit will integrate a series of photographs and film clips edited by the artist and local history research prepared by the Society.

This schedule is subject to change. For the latest information, visit www.sheffieldhistory.org

Our Summer 2009 Exhibits & Receptions...



At top left, artists Bernie Re Jr. & Joey Sage Jablonski of Canaan, CT at the exhibit reception for Imaging Bartholomew's Cobble. They were joined by friends from Litchfield County, CT (above) who stand in front of the artists' collaborative feature installation, a panel of twelve plates which Joey fired and Bernie painted. At left, Tammi Coffin engages Pauline Clarke of Ashley Falls on the poetry of the Cobble. The artists commented on what inspired their artwork on a walk through the Cobble which the Trustees of Reservations co-led with the artists and the Society.



Autumn Party photos by Joyce Hawkins

The Society held its annual benefit at the Captain Dewey homestead. Once thought to have been a wayside inn, it is now the home of Carl & Darcie Proper. At top right, Greig Siedor played the spirit of Captain Dewey whilst serving alcoholic spirits to the guests in the old cellar tavern. Norman Hettinger entertains Carl Proper with some historical music on his banjo. At bottom right, Marcia Brolli and Kathy Tetro help Darcie Proper greet guests in the front stair hall. Above, Samuel Herrup, Lois Levinsohn, John McClaren, Gillian Hettinger, and Chris Sink enjoy fine food & spirits among the antiques in the dining room.



an enormous project of preservation and professional restoration to the interior and exterior of the DRH. An added sun porch and bay window were removed, the roof and windows repaired and/or replaced, the unusual corner fireplaces in the north and south parlors were re-constructed, wood floors scraped and oiled by hand, and walls plastered and painted in historically accurate colors. Three years later the historic DRH structure was completed and opened to the public in time for Sheffield's 250th Anniversary Celebration in June of 1983. The acquisition of furnishings for the museum home immediately began and The Society's collections of period furniture, accessories, textiles, ceramics, tools, toys, and ephemera has filled all the rooms opened to the public.

The Society's main office is located in the DRH and numerous special events and workshops are held there and on the grounds each year. The campaign to stimulate increased interest in the DRH museum and Sheffield, the oldest town in Berkshire County, is the goal in establishing a formal partnership with local antiques dealers.

** The SHS owns 6 additional historic structures: The Mark Dewey Research Center, circa 1816; the Carriage Barn, c. 1870; Parker Hall Law Office, c. 1820; the Education Center, c. 1876, the Smokehouse, c. 1838; and the Old Stone Store, c. 1834.*

—Kathleen Tetro, *Member of the Board of Directors*

Grant Awards Announcement

The Society is also pleased to announce that it was the recipient of a \$500 grant from Sheffield Cultural Council to fund the exhibit of Little Family Letters in the Dan Raymond House and antiques supplement in the Gallery at the Old Stone Store highlighted above, *ABCs of Letter Writing—the History and Art of 19th Century Correspondence*.

The Society had also received \$500 from Berkshire Bank Foundation in FY 2009. It has deferred the use of this funding until FY 2010 following the postponement of the exhibit, which was originally scheduled for last year.

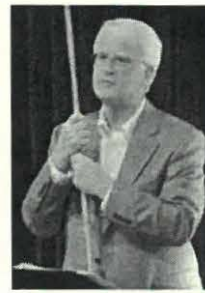
The Society's mission is threefold: to preserve, promote, and transmit our heritage to current and future generations. While this multi-media exhibit will fulfill all three criteria, it will be most interested in the third facet. As we seek to transmit this heritage, we are exploring new ways of relating this information to an expanded audience.



Massachusetts Cultural Council

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Sheffield Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts

What Was Sheffield Like During WWII?



Last year Greig Siedor also spoke on the subject of WWII at the Society's Annual Meeting (above).

Our mother's ration books, fathers and uncles in uniform, gold star symbols in the parlor window...the numbers of us who share these vague childhood memories are dwindling, and what we know of The War is now to be gotten mostly from movies. What was Sheffield like during World War II?

How did we at home support the war effort?

On May 14, Greig Siedor will present "The Home Front: Sheffield during World War II" at our regular monthly

meeting. Mr. Siedor, the Historical Society's newest trustee, was born in Hartford, CT, in 1945, six days after the end of World War II, and grew up in Connecticut and Arizona. His father had been a B-17 pilot in the war and attended college in Arizona on the G.I. bill. A graduate of Trinity College and Yale Law School, Greig has been an environmental lawyer in Illinois and is a relatively new resident of Sheffield.

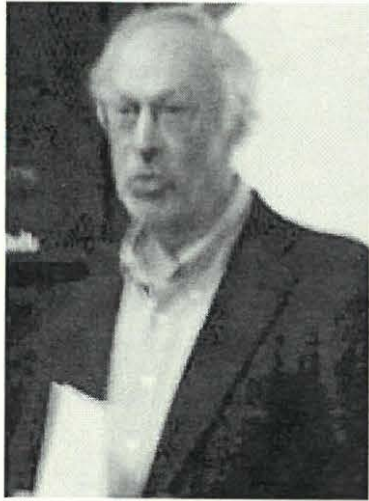
Mr. Siedor has developed a passion for researching and presenting programs about World War II, which he considers one of the most defining moments of human history. Members may remember that last June, Greig gave a gripping presentation about the Battle of Midway, using a large clock to show how the battle literally developed hour by hour. This spring, he will extend his passion through outreach into local schools. In March, Greig will conduct a program at Berkshire School in which he will ask students to design an air defense system for Great Britain and then lead a discussion about what actually happened during the famous Battle of Britain. He will introduce himself to students dressed as Prime Minister Churchill, while giving one of Churchill's inspiring speeches to the home front.

For the Society program, Greig has already begun researching through boxes of materials in the Mark Dewey Research Center, as well as newspaper accounts of daily events stored in the public libraries. Society documents include rationing booklets and also special requests for materials, such as shoes, that would otherwise not be allowed under the rationing system. His talk will focus on the impact of the War on daily life in Sheffield. Members of the community will also be invited to share their photos, memorabilia, and recollections.

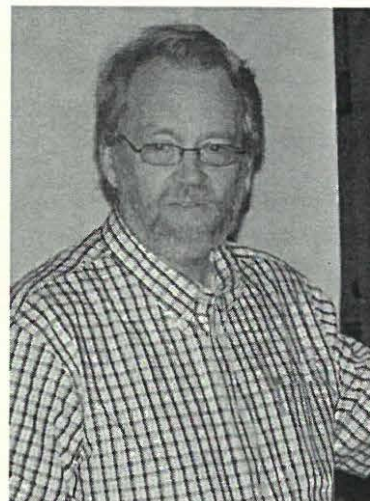
"Sheffield during World War II" will be presented on May 14, at 7:30 p.m. at Dewey Hall in Sheffield. Anyone who has questions, or who wishes to provide materials and/or recollections should call (413) 229-2694.

—Joyce Hawkins, *Program Chair*

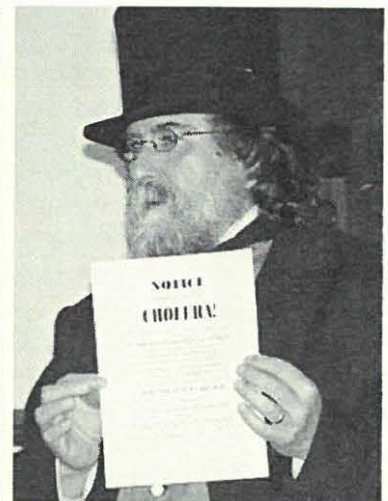
Fall 2009 Program Highlights...



David Levinson and Emilie Piper have co-authored a scholarly publication full of groundbreaking research on Mum Bette which narrates her continuing (his)story. Look for To Stand one Minute a Free Woman; Elizabeth Freeman and the Quest for Freedom in book stores and libraries in 2010. The joint program delivered at the Society's October meeting drew a crowd of African American history buffs and a group of Berkshire School history students.

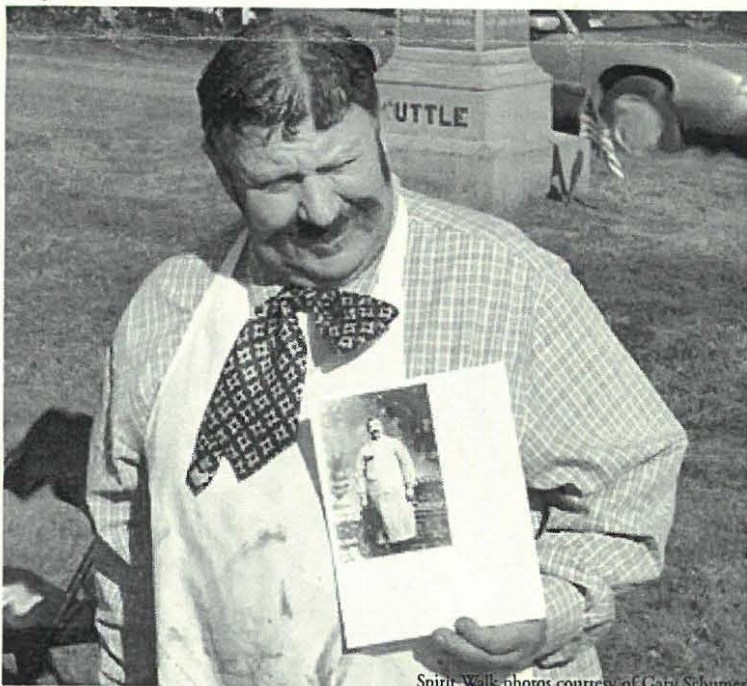


Bernie Drew of Great Barrington Historical Society spoke about the achievements of local inventor William Stanley and his influence in the history of electrical engineering at the Society's September meeting.



Dennis Picard of Storowton Village in Springfield flashes an historical bulletin on cholera preventives at a presentation on early medical care he made at the Society's November meeting.

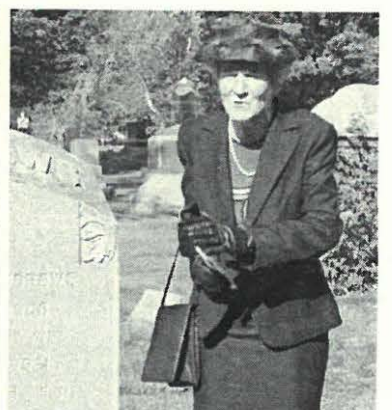
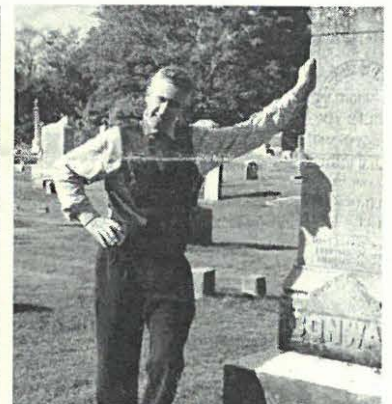
Spirit Walk 2009



Spirit Walk photos courtesy of Gary Schumacher

The 2009 Spirit Walk was held in Center Cemetery on an unseasonably warm day, and the October 4 event was well-attended. Brian Levinsohn played the part of Ralston Little (above) who was a Sheffield butcher. Ralston Little was a member of the same Little family which will be the subject of an upcoming exhibit in the Dan Raymond House Museum.

At top, Ethan Chamberlain starred as Edward Eli Ensign (left) while Neal Chamberlain (right) played the part of Patrick Conway whose house will figure into the From Sheffield to Egremont exhibit in the Old Stone Store. Other participants were (middle row) Susan Pittman as Emily Rood; Dennis Sears as high sheriff, Graham Root; and Rene Wood as poet J. Luella Dowd Smith. At bottom, Pauline Schumann was Prudence A. Smith Brewer (left) and Catherine Miller played Dorothy A. Cabis, past U.S. Treasurer (right).



2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

H.Dennis Sears, *President*
Lois Levinsohn, *Vice President*
Connie Cooper, *Treasurer*
Philip Detjens, *Secretary*

Marcia Brolli
Wray Gunn
Joyce Hawkins
Greig Siedor
Kathy Tetro

SOCIETY STAFF

Joanna Jennings, *Administrator*
Betty Chapin, *Volunteer Archivist*
James Miller, *Volunteer Archivist*



*Exhibit of Little Family Letters
& Nineteenth Century Correspondence*
2010 EXHIBIT SEASON IN THE DAN RAYMOND HOUSE

VOICES FROM THE FIELDS: THE FAMILY FARMS OF SHEFFIELD



Saturday, May 1—Sunday, June 6, 2010
EXHIBIT IN THE GALLERY AT THE OLD STONE STORE

CELEBRATING & DOCUMENTING SHEFFIELD'S
FAMILY FARMS FROM YESTERDAY TO TODAY



Spectacular Pasta Dinner

Saturday, April 17, 5-7:30 pm

All the pasta you can eat!

Adults \$10; Children 3-10 \$5; Children under 3 free
AMERICAN LEGION HALL, RTE. 7, SHEFFIELD

The Sheffield Historical Society



Dan Raymond House Museum • Mark Dewey Research Center
WWW.SHEFFIELDHISTORY.ORG

The Sheffield Historical Society's mission is to promote a wider understanding of the people and events that preceded us in this area, and to preserve and transmit that heritage to current and future generations.

137-161 Main Street
PO Box 747
Sheffield, MA 01257

Phone: 413-229-2694
E-mail: shs@sheffieldhistory.org

1774 Dan Raymond House is open weekdays,
Tuesday-Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Or by appointment.

Mark Dewey Research Center is open weekdays,
Monday & Friday, 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., or by appointment.
Phone: 413-229-3682. Email: mdrc@sheffieldhistory.org

Old Stone Store is open on weekends,
Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Closed January through April. Phone: 413-229-2287



*Save
file & gallery
info*

Natalie & Maree Funk [10]
153 East Main Street
Ashley Falls, MA 01222

*9/15/10
11:20*

0122239711 R001

