



*Sheldon Historical Society
200 Bridge Street
Sheldon, Vermont*

*mailing address:
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APRIL 2026 Newsletter

A Word From Our President – Don McFeeters

Snow has left. Warmer winds are with us along with blue skies. The Sheldon Historical Society will be opening May 2nd for the summer. We are open Thursdays and Saturdays from 10:00 to 2:00PM. Interested in learning about the many hotels that stood in Sheldon in the late 1800s and the mineral water that supported many travelers? Check out one of the bottles from that era.

The HH Mower Building that houses the Museum was named as a Historic Place by the U.S Department of the Interior in 2025. The building is being restored, which houses a general store and the post office of the past. You will want to stop in and see the post office boxes and the counter from Art Lafley's general store in Sheldon Springs. Ever hear of the burglar in Sheldon Village that was killed when he was burglarizing one of the stores in town? Name of the burglar has never been known.

Saturday, July 25th will be "Sheldon's Old Home Day". Mark your calendar and plan to attend. Meet up with your neighbors and friends and celebrate the 250th Anniversary of America and appreciate the town of Sheldon. A parade and BBQ will be held on the morning of the 25th in the village of Sheldon. Why not join the parade with a float, antique car or truck, horse, antique tracker, decorated ATV or golf cart or just be a walker enjoying the day's festivities. Participate in an old fashion BBQ at the end of the parade and listen to good music.

We are always looking for gifts of artifacts, photos of the past, or stories that will give us a better insight into and an understanding of the history of Sheldon and the people that have been associated with Sheldon. If you have any of these items and are willing to give to the Sheldon Historical Society, we would like to be in touch with you.

Celebrating The History Of Our Schools & Teachers

Remaining committed to the values acquired through their experiences in Europe as well as in southern New England, the early settlers of Sheldon placed a high value on the education of their offspring. The township of Sheldon divided itself into Districts or more specifically school districts. Prior to that, most education efforts involved "home" schooling by parents or groups of parents and an occasionally "Nanny" for the children of the more affluent.

An Early School Wagon with Children



As of 1872 there were eleven school districts with active one room school houses. By 1880 that number had grown to thirteen districts as well as two Creek schools for those living in Sheldon Creek. By 1891 fourteen school districts furnished the needs of Sheldon children.

Some question arises regarding the first school with most credit given to S B Sheldon who built the school for District 5 on Main Street. Even though it was likely the first school it still received the name "School 5" as designated by the district. Dorothy Hemenway Aston contends in her book *Sheldon, Vermont that the first school was built on the east side of the Creek and that Miss Betsey Jennison occupied the position of teacher.*



In 1935 four rural schools and two village schools serviced the needs of children. In addition to the Central School in the Creek and the Springs School the other schools remaining open were in the Webster district, at Rice Hill, North Sheldon, and East Sheldon.



The Webster District School closed during WWII with 6 students being transferred to the Springs. In 1948 the school at North Sheldon Closed and in 1950 the Rice Hill School closed.

Photo of Rice Hill School

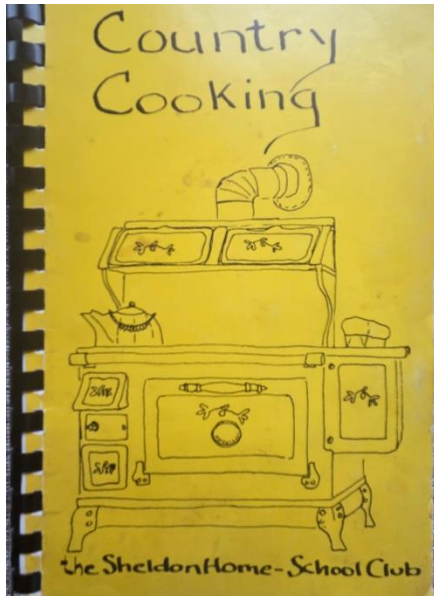


The last remaining original one room school house was in East Sheldon which closed in 1957.

Photo of East Sheldon School with teacher Thelma Stebbins, taken in 1952 or 53.

During the 1930s a two year high school was built in the Springs. It was abandoned during WWII due to a lack of funding. In 1974 the town voted to build a new central school on a lot donated by the Missisquoi Pulp and Paper Company located in Sheldon Springs. The school opened for the classes in September 1975 and continues to serve the needs of students in grades Kindergarten to 8th grade.

Educational Offering From The Past



The Sheldon Home - School Club, a parent - teacher association comprised of parents, teachers and staff, was intended to facilitate parental participation, fundraising, and support for the school. In 1983 officers were President - Marvin Bicknell, Vice President - John Ismail, Secretary – Joanne Magnan, Treasurer – Doris Archambault and Program Coordinator – John Ismail.

As a fundraiser the club solicited favorite recipes from Sheldon School staff, parents and community members to publish "Country Cooking". Committee members were Mary Irish, Cindy Maker-Moore, Joanne Magnan, Pat Reed and Fern Mercure with cover design by Bob Moore. To this day Country Cooking continues to be one of this author's favorite cookbooks.

A Recipe From "Country Cooking"

Chicken "Exotique"

4-6 chicken breasts

1 can mushroom soup (or fresh) ½ cup sherry

1 cup sour cream

Brown chicken breasts slightly. Mix soup, sour cream, mushrooms and sherry until blended. Place chicken in a casserole dish and pour sauce over. Sprinkle generously with paprika. Bake 1 ¼ hours at 350 degrees or until chicken pokes tender.

Delicious with broccoli and brown rice.

Submitted by Susan Ruprecht (3rd grade teacher)

The NEW School is now 50

In 1976, our Elementary school was brand new, with a crop of bright new teachers giving their best to Sheldon's aspiring scholars.

Average teachers' salary:	\$6,530.
Your Brand new Rambler Matador	\$3,300
Minimum wage	\$2.30/hr
UVM tuition	\$2,642
Average VT home	\$40,200
Super Bowl Ticket	\$10.
McDonald's cheeseburger	48¢
Gasoline/gal	59¢
Cellphone/month	What's a cellphone?

Checking the Inflation calculator, you should add 469.63% to these costs to get a sense of what those dollars would buy today. Spoiler alert: you won't be going to the super bowl again!

As A Matter of Artifact

I doubt I ever gave a single thought to the groundbreaking contributions of Vermonter Rev'd Samuel Read Hall to the education of every scholar who entered a public school in the past 150 years. A true luminary, Hall shaped the direction of public education, and framed the philosophy of instruction of both the scholars and their teachers. His master stroke? The blackboard and eraser. As important and imaginative as any current classroom technology, the blackboard gave teachers in that candle-lit era a way to communicate complex ideas visually, allowing a diverse classroom of learners to absorb information individually. Given the cost and scarcity of books, this efficient, inexpensive and renewable technology allowed teachers to reach every student simultaneously; to leave important material accessible, for copying or for repetition; and to demonstrate necessary skills and techniques. The chalkboard eraser was the "delete" function, allowing system updates as needed...

Paper and pencils, in the early days of public education, were far too expensive for the repetitive exercises needed to master math and writing skills. Small slates such as these in our collection, gave individual students an opportunity to struggle, repeat, and share their progress.

Hall established the first "Normal School" dedicated to training teachers, creating a standard against which teachers' competence could be measured. He established a basic toolkit: defining essential elements which are still found in classrooms everywhere (appearing now in different forms, perhaps): a clock, a globe, a thermometer, a wall map, and a dictionary. "A teacher without them is like a mechanic with an incomplete set of tools: we do not expect his work to be perfect or complete"

By the Numbers by Andy Crane

Leafing through the 1910 Federal Census, we discover that Sheldon was virtually self-contained. Not much of a surprise really since town-to-town transportation was slow, difficult, uncomfortable, and somewhat irregular.

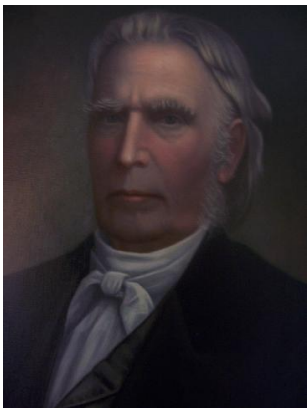
Sheldon was well served by:

1 cattle dealer, 1 harness maker, 1 horse trainer, 1 milliner, 1 cobbler, 1 photographer, 1 singer (!), 1 house painter, and 1 judge; 2 barbers, 2 ministers, 2 stone masons, 2 laundresses, 2 postmasters, 2 mail carriers, 2 stagecoach drivers, 2 doctors, 2 cooks, 2 wheelwrights, and 2 paperhangers; 3 tinsmiths, 3 commercial travelers, and 3 sawyers; 4 blacksmiths, 4 teachers, 4 handymen; 5 dressmakers; 6 teamsters, 6 nurses; 7 butter makers; 8 hotel workers; 9 carpenters ; 12 railroad workers; 16 store clerks (or owners); 23 servants (in private service); and 49 pulp mill workers. 259 men and boys employed as “ Farmer or farm laborer”.

Ask your historian

A questioner, Tom inquires: *“Fairfield has President Arthur; St Albans has Governor Smith; Bakersfield has Peter Bent Brigham: who does Sheldon point to as a shining star?”*

Thanks for asking, Tom! We think **Stephen Royce** is a pretty good example of the high quality of Sheldon’s citizenry.



Vermont Governor Stephen Royce (1787-1868) taught school in Sheldon to pay for his Middlebury College education. Admitted to the bar in 1809, he practiced law here, serving as Sheldon’s youthful representative to the legislature in 1815-16. In 1816, he was a signer of the charter establishing Grace Episcopal Church, which remains an active congregation today.

Royce never left public service, serving as State’s Attorney for Franklin County; he then became a justice of the Vermont Supreme Court, serving for 29 years- 8 of them as Chief Justice. Royce’s public service began in the mold of Jefferson’s Democratic - Republican Party; along the way he became disenchanted with Andrew Jackson’s expansionist politics and joined the Whigs (which morphed into the emerging Republican Party, the “Party of Lincoln”).

In 1854 Royce was elected Vermont’s 23rd Governor: beginning the 107 year stretch of Republican Party dominance in Vermont. Retiring, he practiced law in a quiet East Berkshire office until his death in 1868.

Coming Events:



Quilts of Valor

Stephen Rivers, a member and longtime friend of the Sheldon Historical Society, was recently presented a Quilt of Valor for his naval service during the Vietnam War. In 1966 Stephen served on a mine sweeper in the South China Sea whose mission was to support ground fire for the marines and soldiers off Da Nang. On March 11, 2026 Lynn Carrier, state coordinator, presented the Quilt of Valor at the St. Albans Quilt Festival. **In July your historical society will host a “Quilts of Valor” exhibit at the museum.** Patriotic themed quilts, made and donated by local quilters, show appreciation for the service and sacrifice of those who are serving or who have served in the Armed Forces to protect our freedom.

Do you know a living veteran who served in the U.S. Armed Forces and was touched by war? Pick up a nomination form at the museum or request one by email. Quilts of Valor will be awarded at Old Home Day on July 25.

Our Museum is opening in May and remains available by appointment for special events or research. Call 802 933-2479 for information.

Five Hundred Card Parties

Beginning Friday May 29

One flight up in the Community Center

500 Card Parties



Sheldon Old Home Days July 25, 2026

“Let Freedom Ring” is the title for Sheldon Old Home Day’s Parade and BBQ - Saturday, July 25. The next planning meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 29 at 5:00 p.m. at the museum. The public is invited to attend. Register your participation in the parade by using our registration form attached to this newsletter.

Join us in the spring for another popular
“Barn Quilt Therapy Workshop”
by Kimberly Hess
Dates To Be Announced



**Mark your calendar for our next
Calcutta and Silent Auction on Friday,
September 25th 2026
At The Abbey Restaurant.**

"QUILTING IN COMMUNITY"



Saturday June 13 1:00 p.m. Hope Johnson will present "Quilting in Community". Quilts that focus on Vermont community connections and stories, including "The Judges", Michelle's Randalls" and honeybee quilts like "Waggle Dance" and more.

Note from editor: The sheer volume of material and artifacts point towards two additional publications that you may wish to be involved in. One – a more comprehensive picture gallery of school photos. Two – a special page titled “A tribute to my teacher” You contribute the tributes and we will post to the web. Send either to sheldonhistorical@gmail.com or to smithvt1@gmail.com. Thank You