

Mt. Massaemet Shadows

A QUARTERLY PUBLISHED BY THE SHELBURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Fall 2025

Annual Meeting

Please join us on Sunday October 26, 2025 at 1:00 PM for the annual meeting of the Society to be held at Fellowship Hall in Shelburne Center. Light refreshments will be available.

We are excited that Dr. Robert Miller will be our speaker this year. His presentation, **"Early Medicine 1790 thru the Late 1800's; Theory, Practice, and the Fabric Thereof"** should be entertaining and informative.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and opening by the President
2. Presentation by Dr. Robert Miller
3. Secretary's Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Discussion and vote on budget for 2026
6. Discussion and vote on annual dues
7. Nomination and vote on officers
8. Other business

Society Officers

President	Jerry Hoyt
Vice-President	Graham Warder
Treasurer	Marcia Tetrault
Secretary	Prudence Wholey
Trustees	Jim Wholey Piper Pichette Pam Kelleher Terry Dun

2025 Dues

Please consider renewing your membership today

Membership	Annual	Lifetime
Individual	\$20.00	\$ 75.00
Family	\$25.00	\$100.00

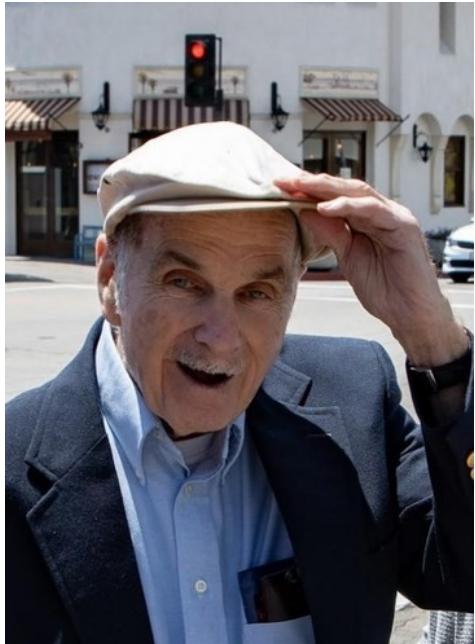
President's Message

The past year has been one of progress and challenging issues. The basic problem has been an inability to attract volunteers and younger members to the historical society. At present 4 of the 8 board members are 80 or over. The number of volunteers is down to two or three. This problem appears to be endemic to most historical societies. As a result, the board of trustees reduced the days that the museum is open from two to one day a week. In part this problem is due to a lack of programs that have a local interest.

Despite these issues, the Shelburne Historical Society is far from inactive. The Society's by-laws have been revised and updated. Our website is one of the most inclusive in the region. A significant number of the museum's artifacts have been entered into the computer. The windows in the classrooms, as well as throughout the building, are being repaired and repainted. The knob and tube wiring is being replaced throughout the building. On the second floor all smoke detectors have been replaced. The sewer pipe from the main toilet has been corrected to prevent blockage. These renovations cost money. Our treasurer reports that many of our annual-paying members have not paid their 2025 dues.

I urge members to pay their dues, to take an active part in our society, and point out how we can improve our programs.

WILLIAM SWEENEY A MEMORIAL



A review of William (Bill) Sweeney's life reveals a caring, resourceful, and civic-minded individual. Born in New York City in 1932, Bill served in the U.S. NAVY in the 1950's. Soon afterwards, he earned a BA and MA in English literature from Columbia University. After marrying Judy Wood, Bill taught at Greenfield Community College for thirty years. He was Shelburne's town moderator for 20 years. He also found time to be a school committee member and to serve on the local zoning board of appeals.

Always willing to help, Bill, along with his wife Judy, were active members of the Shelburne Historical Society. Appreciative of Bill's fairness and leadership skills, the Society elected Bill as vice president in 1988 and president in 1989. Unfortunately, his term of office as president was limited to two years. Ever active, Bill filled in as recording

secretary and when needed presided over the board of trustees and even presided over the Society's annual meeting in 1994. In that year, Bill found a more permanent position on the Society's building committee. In 1995, he became its chairman. In that position, he oversaw an up-grade to the building's wiring and spear-headed work on a parking lot for the Society. He was instrumental in improving the heating system for the Arms building. Cognizant of Bill's contributions, Russell Davenport commended Bill, "for his years of service above all and beyond the call of duty." This tribute best epitomizes Bill's life; for which the Society is much indebted.

MY EXAMINATION PRAYER



Oh inspiration! come to me;
Upon me cast thy light,
And let the glory of thy smile
Induce my pen to write.
Shed full upon my tired brow
The radiance of thine eyes,
And help me to convince the world
That I am truly wise.
Oh! help me with this hard exam;
With knowledge fill my brain,
And from my teachers, all of them.
Let good marks fall like rain.
Oh! send to me the best of luck,
I'll need it, you know well;
But now I must stop praying
For there's the closing bell.

Gertrude Pierce. '27

Editor's Note: Student writings in this edition are from the 1925 Arms Yearbook, 100 years ago.

THE OLD ABBEY

Many towns have mysterious structures shrouded by history. Such a structure existed in Shelburne. Known as "The Old Abbey", it was considered to be one of the oldest structures built in Shelburne Falls. The building appears to have been built by Jonathan Wood and his two sons. Jonathan Wood arrived in Shelburne Falls in the late 1770's. He came from a Shaker settlement in the town of Harvard, Massachusetts. In December 1778, Jonathan purchased 132 acres of land in Buckland. He quickly built the first grist and sawmill on the falls. He also constructed a log bridge over the Deerfield River. Soon afterwards, Jonathan built a saltbox that became known as the "The Old Abbey". The building had three stories in front and two stories in back. Elmer Davenport believed that the building was the first wooden framed structure built in the Falls. It appears to have been located in the present parking lot behind the Keystone store. The building's property extended north from the Deerfield River to present day Church Street and east to what is now High Street.

"The Old Abbey" acquired a checkered past. Between 1782 and 1785, the Shakers held their meetings there. In 1782, Mother Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers, is reputed to have stayed at "The Old Abbey". She also stayed with Asa Bacon, a Shaker, in Ashfield. There, the local "militia" protected her from angry men from Shelburne. Mother Lee quickly departed to Watervliet, New York where she died in 1784. Jonathan Wood soon followed and settled in the Shaker town of New Lebanon. Thereafter, "The Old Abbey" had 5 or more owners. In 1809, Joel

and Clark Fiske purchased the property and built a woolen mill on the falls. Galacius Fiske, a younger brother, acquired the property. At one time 3 or 4 families lived in "The Old Abbey". Also, according to Elmer Davenport, 8 boys who attended Franklin Academy roomed there. Worn from years of neglect and becoming an eyesore, "The Old Abbey" was torn down in 1854.

The history of "The Old Abbey" provides a meaningful insight into the nature of the early settlement of the falls area of Shelburne. A glimpse is given of its industry, its early settlers, and its religious differences.



The Shelburne Hotel



Bridge Street

From The Archives

IN THE APPLE ORCHARD



It stood far down in the corner of the orchard close to the old stone wall, a beautiful old apple tree. Its far-spreading branches were easily supported by the huge trunk. It was a tree that would awaken the admiration of a casual observer and invite hopes of fine fruit in the autumn.

As the fragrant spring days approached, it never failed to shake forth its bounteous supply of leaves, shimmering and lustrous in the warm sunshine. Then came the blossoms, the pink and white emblems of future fruit.

Nevertheless—how exasperating a word—despite its promising appearance, and its plenteous array of blossoms the old tree, to those who knew it, was nothing but a source of mortification. It was referred to as an excellent example of deceitfulness. For although it brought forth beautiful leaves and blossoms it never bore fruit! It merely promised.

Doris Cardwell, '25

Collection Status

	Paper records	In PastPerfect	% Complete
Accessions	2,791	2,791	100%
Records	7,628	11,039*	

Notes:

*We have found items not identified in previous files

PastPerfect catalog records are properly marked and their location recorded

All Arms Academy Yearbooks have been scanned, are searchable, and available on our website:

<https://shelburnehistoricalsocietyma.org/>

HELP-HELP-HELP

Postage and printing costs are approaching \$3.00 per copy of the Mt. Massaemet Shadows.

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