

Treasures from the Sherman Room

An Introduction to Brimfield History from the Library's Historical Collections

Issue No. 1

The Sherman Room

The Sherman Room of the Danielson-Lincoln Memorial Library was added to the rear of the library in 1965. It was the gift of Miss Margaret Sherman to honor the memory of her father and brothers, and houses the library's extensive historical collection. This collection includes items in many formats, among them, photographs, reports, post cards, glass plate negatives, newspaper clippings, oral and video histories and genealogies and serves as a tremendous resource for documenting Brimfield's storied history.

One of the more unique sub-collections is the several hundred glass plate negatives that were made around the turn of the 19th century by photographers C. Edgar Brown and W. E. Corbin. Image content includes historic houses, early families and town residents, landscape views, and local celebrations. The variety and volume of plates provide great insight into Brimfield life from the late 1800s to early 1900s

While newspaper clippings would normally not be an important part of an historical collection, the Sherman Room has two groups of clippings that have great value. First, the obituary collection consists of approximately 1600 items, dating back to the 1880s. It includes not only former residents but also students from Hitchcock Academy and individuals with ties to the community. The second set of clippings is those pertaining to the Brimfield Flea Market. There are over 1200, covering the flea market from the late 1970s to the present. The clippings trace the event's evolution and serve as an invaluable resource to people interested in the history of the town's most significant cultural contribution.

The Sherman Room has been and continues to be a tremendous repository of local and regional information, serving at various times, town residents, students, local organizations, historians, authors and individuals throughout the country with familial or geographic ties to Brimfield.

Since early 2013, an effort has been underway to digitize the full collection housed in the Sherman Room. This effort was initiated to meet 4 important objectives. (1) create an electronic backup to protect against any damage, theft or loss of the original documents, (2) provide a complete inventory of the existing content, (3) preserve all materials in archival-safe sleeves and boxes and (4) provide the information in a user-friendly format for public use while restricting access to often fragile originals. As of November, 2019, over 22000 scans resulting in approximately 12000 individual items have been completed and are available for public access on a computer in the Sherman Room, along with a number of video and oral histories.

This pamphlet and future ones are intended to draw attention to some of these resources in the Sherman Room in hope of entertaining and educating the public on Brimfield and the people and

buildings that have shaped her history. Each pamphlet will highlight a specific subject by presenting the actual photos and documents housed in the collection. In some cases, rather than displaying the original document, the content has been typed for formatting purposes and ease of reading. The source document, however, will always be cited.

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An article in the Worcester Sunday telegram, dated February 21, 1965 announces Miss Margaret Sherman's offer.

Library Room Offered Brimfield

The town has been offered a gift of \$15,000 by Miss Margaret Sherman of Northboro for the purpose of building an addition to Brimfield Public Library.

Voter [sic] will have an opportunity to accept or reject the offer when it appears as an article in the annual town meeting warrant March 1.

If accepted, the funds will be used to construct The Sherman Memorial Room which will be used to house historical records and documents, to provide facilities for their use and to serve other purposes as designated by library trustees.

Preliminary plans for the room have been prepared by John Herron of Worcester, an architect who has designed the addition to keep with the unique style of the present building. The new room will open out of a large reading room.

Lester W. Parker, chairman of trustees, said Mrs. Robert Streeter and trustees have been working on a program to improve the facilities of the library to meet the demands of its constantly increasing use.

He said, "The Sherman room will make an important contribution to the project and it will also provide a place where all historical materials in the possession of the library and the Brimfield Historical Society can be brought together for reference use and display. It will serve as headquarters for all historical activities."

The Brimfield Library was given to the town in 1902 by James Danielson Lincoln as a memorial to the Danielson and Lincoln families and stands on a site which was part of the family homestead.

Miss Sherman's gift will be in memory of George Sherman, her father, and by Sherman brothers, Lewis, John and Roger.

George graduated from Hitchcock Free Academy here in 1874 and from Amherst College in 1879. He later became a teacher, and he taught at Wheaton Seminary in Norton, now Wheaton College. John was the founder of the Sherman Envelope Co., of Worcester, and his son, John Edward, was associated with him.

Miss Sherman is a seventh generation descendent of Capt. John Sherman, one of the original "proprietors" of Brimfield who served as town clerk from 1731, the year of its incorporation. To 1761.

A stone monument marks the site of the original Sherman Homestead near the present Brimfield Nursing Home and overlooks what has long been known as Lake Sherman.

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On July 30, 1966 a ceremony was held to dedicate The Sherman Room. The dedication committee

included Robert E. Bruce, Raymond F. DiGregorio, Vernon H. Heipler, Joan Howlett, Gretchen Loux Bertha Osterheld, Lester W. Parker, Freda Stegner and Mary Eleanor Streeter. Lester W. Parker, also President of the Brimfield Historical Society shared the following comments.



Sherman Room Dedication. From left to right, Lester W. Parker, library trustee and president of the Brimfield Historical Society; Marcus A. McCorison, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society; Miss Margaret E. Sherman; Richard C. Allen, chairman of the Board of Selectmen; Mary Streeter, librarian and Robert Bruce, library trustee

We are happy to share with the Library Trustees the honor of celebrating the dedication of the Sherman Memorial Room. This addition to the Library building, originally called the Danielson Lincoln Memorial, is a joint project of the Library and the Historical Society. Officially and forever the Sherman room is a part of the Library and the property of the Town of Brimfield. Its dual purpose is to serve as headquarters of the Historical Society and to share with the Library activities concerning the history of Brimfield. This occasion marks the accomplishment of a community project which we trust will set the pattern for many years to come.

Time does not permit mention of all the good people who have helped in the preparation for this occasion with decorations, refreshments, etc. Others have loaned articles which suggest a combination of small artifacts, glass, china, etc., with books, pictures, and other documentary items. We give special thanks to our librarian, Mrs. Streeter, for loaning us a part of her splendid collection of early American glass.

The Sherman Memorial is intended to be mainly a documentary museum, and we shall never be able to accept such typical museum items as great grandma's spinning wheel or great

Uncle Silas' ox yoke. The present arrangements suggest possible future gifts of small objects associated with Brimfield families or of special historic or artistic interest.

I hope you will enjoy looking at things on display and especially the volumes of pictures from the collections of F. Edgar Brown and Walter Corbin which are lying on the tables and other photographs on the multiple display cabinet mounted on the north wall. These display panels, by the way, are the first gift we have received toward our permanent equipment, and we are happy to acknowledge the generosity of the Womens Business Club in providing it.

And now to the real business of this occasion, in presenting the person who has made the Sherman Memorial Room possible – Miss Margaret Sherman. I have asked someone to introduce her whom we are happy to honor in this way. Our Library has had since its beginning three librarians – Miss M. Anna Tarbell for thirty-five years, Miss Margaret Dunsmore for twenty-five years, and now Mrs. Robert Streater for seven years (and we hope many more). Mrs. Streater's late husband was a native of Brimfield but his wife, Mary Eleanor, adopted Brimfield with enthusiasm and has become one of our most devoted and honored citizens.

Our guest of honor, Miss Sherman, will be introduced by Mrs. Streater.



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Several days after the dedication, Miss Sherman sent the following letter to Mrs. Streater.

LIBRARY

Dear Mrs. Streeter -

What a lot of good things you all did in the arranging for the dedication! Your lovely glass and other beautiful and interesting objects, the exquisite flower arrangements, and - just everything - are still in my memory of the day. And I appreciated your introduction and the hospitality and all - most sincerely and happily - I suspect you were weary indeed, but it was a perfect arrangement and very much enjoyed. I am so glad to have been able to ^{make} this memorial gift, and I am proud I have the connection with Brimfield people.

Thank you for doing so much for me as well as the memorial room. It was a delightful and gracious occasion. I hope I can convey my gratitude and thanks to the

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proper parties and organizations for what they
did. My lovely orchid was a joy - and it is
still beautiful. Everything was perfect -

The design on this note was drawn by Ann Adams,
a polio patient, who prior to her illness was an
artist. Through perseverance, she trained herself to
draw by holding a pencil between her teeth. Each
original drawing takes up to two months to complete.

My hearty thanks to you and all.

Very sincerely yours,

Margaret Sherman

August 2, 1966.

