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Brimfield Historical Commission

HAPPY 4TH OF JULY.

A Message From the BHC

This month's newsletter will talk about the Brimfield Town Flag and the annual Old Home Days event. It also will look back 57 years to the completion and dedication of the Sherman Memorial Room in the Brimfield Library.

Members

Sue DeBruin, Chairperson

Adrienne Bachand

Roseann Bergdoll

Robert Corry

John Curtis

Michael DeFalco

Sue Overbey

Mark Conners, Associate Member

Old Home Days

Old Home Days in Brimfield will be held on July 29, 2023 at Brimfield Auction Acres, 35 Main Street. Thanks to Commission member, Roseann Bergdoll for providing the following information.

The Brimfield Historical Commission encourages everyone to visit our booth. It's an opportunity for all town residents to interact with Commission members in an informal setting and become aware of our resources and activities. We look forward to questions and creative ideas.

We will have copies of *101 Things to Know About Brimfield* for sale, along with free giveaways!

Old Home Days was started in 1899 by Frank Rollins, the Governor of New Hampshire. He started Old Home Days because of the declining population as younger folks headed west. He felt a special day would call them all back and they would once again fall in love with their hometowns.

“Do you not hear the call? What has become of the old home where you were born?... Do you not remember it --- the old farm back among the hills, with its rambling buildings, it’s well-sweep casting its long shadows, the row of stiff poplar trees, the lilacs, and the willows?”

The day became so popular that other states, Canada and Australia joined in. Old Home Days is the event that brings friends, neighbors, family, and visitors together to share a true community spirit.

Brimfield Town Flag

At the June 26th meeting of the Brimfield Select Board, it was voted to purchase a Town Flag. In 2002, local resident and 2001 Tantasqua graduate, Nicholas Niemero, designed an official flag for the Town. Two flags were produced. One was intended for the Town to keep and display. The other was hung in the Massachusetts Statehouse Hall of Flags, where all of the Commonwealth’s communities are represented. Unfortunately, the location of the town’s copy is not known. However, in the very near future, the town will once again be able to proudly fly the Town Flag.

Sherman Room Dedication

The Sherman Memorial Room was dedicated on July 30, 1966. The following documents provide background information as well as an indication of the enthusiasm and excitement of those personally involved.

From a newspaper article (paper unknown).

Brimfield Will Dedicate Woman’s Gift

BRIMFIELD – An addition to Brimfield Library building, a gift from Miss Margaret E. Sherman of Northboro, will be presented to the town at a dedication ceremony at 3 p.m. July 30.

Lester W. Parker, chairman of library trustees, yesterday announced completion of the addition. It will be known as the Sherman Memorial Room and it will house historical records and documents. The room will also serve as headquarters for Brimfield Historical Society. Miss Sherman’s gift is in memory of her father, George Sherman, and his brothers, Lewis, John, and Roger

Sherman, all of whom were born and brought up in Brimfield. All were descendants of Capt. John Sherman, one of Brimfields [sic] pioneers.

George Sherman was graduated from Hitchcock Free Academy in Brimfield in 1875 and from Amherst College in 1879, and spent his life teaching.

His affiliations included Wheaton Seminary in Norton, now Wheaton College, and the superintendency of Northboro Schools. Sherman spent his retirement years in Northboro where his daughter, also a teacher, has lived many years.

John Sherman was the founder of the former Sherman Envelope Co. of Worcester, and his late son, John Edward of West Boylston, was associated with him.

Marcus A. McCorison, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, will speak at the dedication. Miss Sherman will present the building and the acceptance will be by a member of the selectmen.

Voters at the 1965 and 1966 annual town meetings accepted the gifts amounting to \$20,000 from Miss Sherman for construction of the addition.

Welcoming address delivered at the dedication.

DEDICATION OF SHERMAN ROOM – July 30, 1966

Welcome by Lester W. Parker, President

Brimfield Historical Society

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 Room 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 the 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 Streeter for seven years (and we hope many more). Mrs. Streeter'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. Streeter.

Although we don't have Mrs. Streeter's comments, we do have a letter from Miss Sherman to her thanking everyone for the event.

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

My hearty thanks to you and all.

Very sincerely yours,
Margaret Sherman

August 2, 1966



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 and speaker at the dedication; Miss Margaret Sherman; Richard C. Allen, chairman of the Board of Selectmen; Mary Streeter, librarian; and Robert Bruce, library trustee.

*Oral History Project –
Interview with Kay Gondek*

The Brimfield Oral History Program is about preserving stories about Brimfield's past through interviews with community members that bring to life what Brimfield was like in years gone by. These audio interviews are designed to highlight the many ways Brimfield has grown and the many contributions that have been made by our citizens.

Listening to these stories, you will learn about our history which helps in understanding how events in the past made things the way they are today. With lessons from the past, we not only learn about ourselves and how we came to be but also develop the ability to avoid mistakes and create better paths for our future.

You can find copies of the oral histories (on CD and cassette) at the Brimfield Public Library in the Sherman Room. ***Past Fun Fact: The Brimfield Public Library is actually called the Danielson-Lincoln Memorial Library.***

This interview with Kay Gondek was held on December 8, 1992 with Larry Lowenthal serving as the interviewer. Kathryn, shortened to Kay, was a member of Brimfield's First Congregational Church for many years. The time

span she speaks about is between late 1942 and the early 1980s. She talks about the various ministers that tended to the congregation between these dates, their personalities, their family lives, their sermons and the sometimes controversial relationships some of them had with the congregation. Along with some of the issues they faced, you also hear about the many wonderful contributions they made to the town and the help and guidance they offered.

Kay describes Sunday school, the children and teaching them. She speaks about the development of the youth group, along with various projects that helped many of the teenagers in town.

Fund raising was important in the Church and having suppers for the whole town to raise money with homemade dinners was one such success as well as the development of breakfast and dinners for the Brimfield Antique Market Vendors. There is a lot of discussion about how the Church developed from offering breakfast and dinner to parking cars and the divide it sometimes caused with the congregation.

Andrew and Kay Gondek purchased a farm on Haynes Hill in 1941, which is now known as Cook's Orchard. Andrew was key in planting many of the trees which are still there today.

History of East Brimfield and the Lost Valley

If you are interested in learning more about East Brimfield, please check out this book at [History of East Brimfield and the Lost Village: Mahitka Jr., John, Lucier, Kenneth: 9781684712083: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781684712083). A brief synopsis – *“The Quinebaug River, which sources near East Brimfield MA is the focal point of the story. It begins in the 1700’s and includes historical information on indigenous people. The book takes you on a fascinating fact laden trip through time of the people of East Brimfield and what is now its Lost Village. The book integrates the general history of the region with the local flavor of the life span of a quaint community of New Englanders. The interesting narrative incorporates how it prospers through the Industrial Revolution, the stage and trolley days on into the 20th century and survived the Great Depression. The authors document the village’s eventual demise at the hands of mother nature and public policy. They describe life as it was and explain how the sinking of the Titanic was a pivotal part of East Brimfield’s history. The authors describe the beautiful environment the land held for those who lived there. The book includes accounts of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and other unusual events.”*