

**HISTORICAL  
HARTFORD  
SOCIETY**

Hartford, Vermont 05047-0547

Volume 2, Issue 1

Society Newsletter

March/April 1989

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Election of Officers was held at our January meeting, and the results are as follows:

President: Fred Bradley                      Treasurer: Robert Plattner  
VP & Programs: Priscilla Gadzinski      Secretary: Marguerite Hogg  
Director at Large: Esther Bachelder

Thanks, again, to the Nominating Committee for their hard work. They are: Paul Bennett, Sibylle Gilbert, and Irene Brockway.

**MARCH PROGRAM**

The speaker for the March meeting will be John Cone who will talk about the Cone Family and Hartford, VT since 1812. The meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. at the Hartford Church.

**UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

Priscilla has been busy planning the programs for the rest of the year. She has Kate Donahue scheduled for the May 10th meeting. She will be talking about "Center of Town, Hartford, VT". Kate did her PhD thesis partially on Center of Town.

Professor Jere Daniell will be speaking on the "Upper Valley in the American Revolution" on September 13th.

**BOARD REPORTS**

News from our Board include the fact that we are attempting to get an early map of Hartford reproduced; if we can, we will be offering it for sale. Priscilla reported on a workshop of New England Archivists Association. We are talking to a lawyer about a "Deed of Gift" necessary for donations. It was pointed out that 1991 is the Vermont bicentennial, and 1989 is the 200th anniversary of the death of Ethan Allen.

**JANUARY MEETING**

Highlights from the January meeting (following elections) include suggested projects (tour of older buildings in town, tape oral histories), appoint a person responsible for collecting old histories; and several topics for future programs were offered.

## THE SHOOTING OF DR. HOFFMAN

GRANITE STATE FREE PRESS, Lebanon, NH  
Friday May 4, 1900

The funeral of Deputy Sheriff Geo. W. Hoffman, who was shot by the Shaws at Stockbridge, VT, Friday was held Sunday. High Sheriff Romaine Spofford came home for the services and gave a detailed account of the affair up to this time. He said:

"Until the shooting of Dr. Hoffman at an early hour on Friday morning, the Shaws were inconsequential criminals. The charges that were pending against them when they broke jail at Woodstock were no more serious than the killing of deer out of season (admitted by the father, but strongly denied by the son), and the stealing of an old harness. It is true that many thefts were laid at their doors, but general belief is one thing and proof quite another. They would have had to remain in jail until June, perhaps a month and a half longer, and then there might have been sentences of six months or so.

"Early on Tuesday morning, April 24, they left the jail. They might have done so before, for the new jail had hardly got down to running basis. The prisoners were all petty larceny boys and shoestring men generally, and the building was unfinished. Much of the time the inmates roamed about unfettered in a great cage. The Shaws wrenched off three of the four upright bars over a window, and tying bed clothing to the fourth bar, dropped down to liberty."

Sheriff Spofford gives in detail the search of each day up to Friday: "On Friday, the day of the murder, we made an early start, getting off at about 4 in the morning. We were joined by Deputy Sheriff George Cheedel of Rutland county and went towards Stockbridge common at once. There, about three miles out, we split up. We had already been over some of the ground, but patiently and carefully we examined every house and outbuilding in the section until we were almost back at Cathern's.

"Suddenly, off to the right and up South hill, shots were heard. It was only 7 in the morning and we rightly judged that the shooting was worthy of some investigation.

"So we started up the mountain - Hoffman on the outside of the posse, nearest the clearing - I was next, and the rest below. On the way up I occasionally saw Hoffman but saw none of the others. I had almost reached the top when I saw the track of a man in the snow. Further on were a few drops of blood. About a rod away, now, smoke was coming from a clump of spruces. Hoffman was about five rods away and I motioned to him. We couldn't reach the spot where we knew the men must be without skirting some dried-up tree tops, so we went about and came right up in front of the Shaws. They had us covered at once.

"'Hello, boys' said I, and the old man Shaw answered 'Hello.' Young Shaw covered Hoffman, and the father had the bead on me.

"'Hold on,' I said again, 'We don't want any shooting,' and the father said 'that's right,' and he told the young man to drop his gun, at the same time he lowered his own rifle to the earth, but did not let go of it.

"'Drop your gun, Shaw,' said Dr. Hoffman, to the younger one, 'or I'll bore a hole through you.'

"Frank paid no heed to the remark, and Dr. Hoffman repeated it. Then Frank Shaw fired, hitting the doctor. 'My God,' said he, 'he's killed me. Don't leave me to die alone' I fired at Frank Shaw immediately. He had turned about instantly as if to get away, but he turned back and blazed away at me. I know that I was excited and I guess he must have been, for we fired three shots apiece.

"The Shaws ran down the mountain. Wilson of Stockbridge fired at them at thirty rods. This was the last seen or heard of them for twenty-four hours - until 7 o'clock Saturday morning when they turned up on the Brandon road and enquired the way to Brandon.

"Our associates reached the scene of the shooting in about fifteen minutes, and all of us picked poor Hoffman up and carried him a mile and a half to Charles Heff's place, where died at 8:45 o'clock that night. The fatal bullet entered to the left of the breast bone, bore down and came out over the lift hop bone, just above the pocket. Dr. Hoffman wore his revolver in that pocket in a stiff and heavy leather case, and one may see the indentation of the ball, showing its force and fury.

"Dr. Brigham was soon on hand from Pittsfield, and Dr. Allen came from there, Dr. Green from Bethel, Drs. O.W. Dales and Stanley from White River Junction. But the wound was necessarily fatal, and brave, impetuous Hoffman was beyond the aid of mortal skill."

Dr. Hoffman died Friday evening and the body arrived at the Junction late Saturday afternoon. It was accompanied by his widow and her nephew, C.E. Harris of East Burke, together with some of the officers who were engaged with him.

Dr. Hoffman was born in Island Pond, VT in 1854. He had his own way to make in this world, as the family were in very moderate circumstances. He received a common district school education, and shortly afterwards moved West.

Dr Hoffman was in the cavalry branch of the regular army during the war with the Apaches in which Custer's band was massacred. He later returned to Vermont, where he taught school and also tried railroad work for a time during which period one of his hands was injured.

Later he retired from that occupation and studied dentistry, which he had practices with success for the past fifteen years.

In 1880, Dr. Hoffman was married to Miss Harris of Lyndon and they have resided at the Junction since. He occupied a finely situated residence on the road to Wilder. For ten years Dr. Hoffman had been a deputy sheriff.

#### THE SHAWS CAPTURED

The Shaws were captured in a swamp about four miles from Middlebury at noon yesterday. They resisted the officers and 14 or 15 shots were exchanged, when Frank Shaw fell with two bullet wounds in his body, and his father surrendered. Though seriously wounded, it was thought this (Friday) morning that young Shaw would recover.

(Thanks to Priscilla Gadzinski for sending this in)

#### CHARTER MEMBERS:

Esther Bachelder	Irene Brockway	Sibyle Gilbert	Georgia Plattner
Janet Blood	Anita Derosie	Jeannette Gould	Robert Plattner
Alma Bradley	Marjorie Derosie	Marguerite Hogg	
Fred Bradley	Muriel Farrington	Kate Lyon	

Honorary Lifetime Chapter Member - John St. Croix

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