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Shutesbury (Mass.) 250th Anniversary Collection

1961-2014

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The town of Shutesbury was founded as "Roadtown" in 1735 and incorporated in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1761. For its 250th anniversary in 2011, the town planned a year's worth of events, lectures, and celebrations.

This collection comprises the flyers and notes for several of these 250th anniversary events along with commemorative albums and town histories. The product of a quintessential small New England town, these materials are a snapshot of the history of Shutesbury and a celebration of the town's legacy.

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Background on Shutesbury (Mass.)

Portion of the background note below is taken from a 1911 commemorative album.

The grant to the original proprietors of the town was made by the General Court, April 17, 1735, to Thomas Wells and Thomas Richardson and others. The proprietors held their first meeting at the house of William Richardson, in Lancaster, on the thirteenth of May, in the same year. The town as laid out included portions of the present towns of Wendell and New Salem.

Under the terms of the grant the territory was first named Roadtown, but upon the incorporation of the town on June 30, 1761, the name was changed to Shutesbury, in honor of Samuel Shute, Governor of Massachusetts from 1716-1723. An elegant Bible, presented to the town at this time by Governor Bernhard's wife, a niece of Governor Shute, is still in possession of the town.

The first meeting of the proprietors in Roadtown was held June 6, 1739, at the house of Jonathan Burt. The first town meeting after incorporation was held October 5, 1761. Jonas Locke was appointed town clerk, and Ebenezer Childs, Jonathan Dickinson, Jonas Locke and Joseph Locke, selectmen. It was voted to raise money for the support of a school.

The first meeting-house was built on a portion of the Governor's farm, about 1740, and stood about eighty years. Another church was built in 1825, the present Baptist church. The old Congregational church, now used as a hall, was built in 1836, by the Congregationalists.

John Hamilton was sent as a delegate to the first Provincial Congress in Watertown in 1775.

The remainder of the background note on the history of Shutesbury was prepared in 2011 for 250th anniversary.

After the Battle of Lexington and Concord in 1775, a number of men from Shutesbury enlisted in the patriot cause, including one who had moved the year before to a farm in the center this town: Daniel Shays.

When these farmers returned from the American Revolution, life in rocky hill towns like Shutesbury was even harder than it had been before. Many veterans had never been paid for their service, their land was heavily taxed to pay the state's war debt, and families now deep in their own debt sold off grain, livestock and furnishings for less than they were worth to survive.

In the fall of 1786, Shays, now living in Pelham, visited Shutesbury and other towns in central and western Massachusetts to recruit farmers to join him in shutting down the debtors' courts. Before it ended in 1787 (following an unsuccessful attempt to seize the federal arsenal in Springfield), the armed uprising that came to be known as Shays's Rebellion included about 40 insurgents from Shutesbury.

The rebellion had alarmed many delegates attending the constitutional convention in Philadelphia. They had gathered simply to revise the Articles of Confederation between the states. Now, fears that the young country could fall apart led them to create a strong, centralized government with three branches: legislative (a Senate and House of Representatives), executive (led by the President), and judicial (the Supreme Court).

In the early 1800s, many Shutesbury farmers, like their counterparts in hill towns throughout New England, were attracted away from their marginal land by both the impact of the Erie Canal on westward expansion, and the development of industrial mills in surrounding Massachusetts cities and towns. Shutesbury's population would drop dramatically from a high of 1,029 in 1820 to less than 200 in 1940.

In 1811 the first library, called the "Social Library," was established by 40 proprietors and was housed in a jelly jar cupboard that traveled from the home of one member to another. The last record of a meeting of the proprietors was in 1832, and by 1860, the library was little used. In 1894 the Free Public Library was established in the 1829 Town Hall, and in 1902 the M. N. Spear Memorial Library was built for \$1547.61. The need for a new library building was identified in the long range plan in 1995. In 2001 and in 2011-2012, attempts to build a larger library did not come to fruition.

By 1871 there were 10 one-room school buildings in town, serving a population scattered over an area of about 27 square miles. (Not all schools may have been open at any one time in this period.) By 1928 the Center School had become a two-room school. In 1950 a new Center School (today's Town Hall) opened to serve children from 1st through 8th grades. In 1955, Shutesbury joined the Amherst Regional School District, and pupils traveled to Amherst to attend school after 6th grade. In 1974, a new elementary school opened on West Pelham Road with just over 100 pupils. By 1988 plans were under way to expand the school to meet the needs of the children of a town that had tripled in population in two decades. In 1994 the renovated school opened to 251 pupils.

Shutesbury was not just a farming community. In 1740, its first sawmill was built on Roaring Brook, and by the 1860s 10 sawmills dotted the town. The lumber they produced was shipped out to be used for everything from matchsticks to clapboards to railroad ties. Other industries in the 1800s included those that manufactured palm leaf hats, baskets, boots and shoes, rakes and brooms, and gold pens. Taverns and hotels served visitors drawn to the "curative waters" of the town's mineral springs. Tourists

also enjoyed the town's scenic beauty and opportunities for recreation at Lake Wyola.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, Shutesbury land was extensively cleared for farming and for timber, only to return to being 93% forested by the year 2000.

The major regional development in the early 20th century was the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir to supply water primarily to Boston. In 1927, citizens at Shutesbury's Annual Town Meeting voted to express their sympathies to the Swift River Valley towns of Dana, Enfield, Greenwich and Prescott, and to the residents who were compelled to abandon their homes, and extended an invitation to them to establish new lives here. Construction of the reservoir began that same year; by 1946, it was filled to capacity. Shutesbury lost a relatively small amount of land and population compared to its neighbors, but it was some of the most fertile land in town, and the change marked the end of the rural society and culture of the Swift River Valley in which Shutesbury had participated during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Telephone service was brought to various parts of town from 1893 on, and electricity came in 1930. In 1951, Shutesbury established a Volunteer Fire Department. The 1940 population of 200 grew to 489 in 1970, and then to 975 in 1980. By 1990, after 20 years of great expansion at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the population had tripled to 1561. In recent years, Shutesbury has reached a stable population of about 1800. In addition to farmers, commuters and retirees, adult residents include many with home-based businesses and consulting services, reflecting the new economic and technological developments that have characterized the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In 1998, the privately owned former Lake House, picnic site and swimming beach of 1911 became Lake Wyola State Park, a popular destination for residents and non-residents alike. Shutesbury remains a non-commercial hill town with a high quality of life.

The 1829 Town Hall was used for town offices and renovated at various times until the offices moved in 1976 into the current Town Hall (formerly the Center School). The first full-time town administrator was hired in 1999. In 2010, photovoltaic panels were installed behind Town Hall, and they currently generate 40% of the building's electric power. Work to bring broadband Internet service over the phone lines to all customers in town has proved challenging, but it is available in some parts of the community.

At the beginning of the 21st century, people who cared about Shutesbury's heritage repaired, restored or updated its heirlooms: the 1837 guide post on the town common; the 1829 Town Hall; M. N. Spear Memorial Library; the Community Church (formerly the Baptist Church); the old Town Pound; and West School. The World War II Honor Roll on the common was replaced with a larger Honor Roll to include the names of heroes from more recent conflicts.

And, of course, 2011 marked the 250th anniversary of Shutesbury's incorporation—a year in which residents celebrated its past and present, and looked to the future of their town.

Scope of collection

A commemorative collection from the 250th Anniversary of the town of Shutesbury, Massachusetts, this collection is a snapshot of small-town New England pride. The majority of the collection consists of flyers and pamphlets associated with a year's worth of celebratory events, along with programs, books, a play on the history of Shutesbury, a musical revue and an anniversary song. The final contents are Committee Annual Reports for the Town of Shutesbury for the years of the early 2010s.

Inventory

Shutesbury 1761-1961: Commemorative Booklet

1961

Box 1: 1

"Our Town" Newsletters

Fall 2009-Winter 2012

Box 1: 2

"Celebrate Shutesbury: A History of Shutesbury Massachusetts, 1735-2000"

2000

Box 1: 3

Correspondence: M. Little on 1911 Commemorative Album

2010 Nov

Box 1: 4

"People of the Past" an Essay by Susan Millinger

Undated

Box 1: 5

"Roadtown Review" an Elementary School Musical

2011 Dec 20

Box 1: 6

Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition (U.S.)
2011 June
Box 1: 7
1761-2011 Commemorative Album
2012
Box 1: 8
Town Meeting Proclamations and Resolutions: "Shutesbury Day" and 1761 Petition for the renaming of the Town
2011 May
Box 1: 9
Daniel Shays Lecture Flyers, Leo Richards
2010 May 10
Box 1: 10
Tavern of Time: Play Narrating Town History
2011 Sept 24
Box 1: 11
Celebrate Shutesbury Flyer
2011 Sept
Box 1: 12
Cemetery Walk
2011 Oct 23
Box 1: 13
Commemorative Postmark Only Available Sept 24, 2011
2011 Sept 24
Box 1: 14
Town of Shutesbury's 250th Anniversary Song
2011 Jan
Box 1: 15
Lost Towns of the Quabbin Lecture Flyer, J.R. Greene
2011 Nov 9
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"Native people in West-Central Massachusetts" Marge Bruchac Lecture Flyers
2011 March
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Amherst Club Presentation on 250th
2011 May
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Farm and Garden Tours Pamphlet
2011 June
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250th Anniversary Parade Flyers and DVD
2011 June 11
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Tree Tour Notes
2011 Oct 8
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Lake Wyola Boat Tour
2011 July 16
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Kick Off Bonfire
2011 Jan 8
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Children's Colonial Picnic Flyer
2011 Sept 3
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Full Moon Coffeehouse Benefit Flyer
2011 April 23
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Correspondence with Logo Collector
2011 March 7

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Saturday Market Outreach
Undated
Box 1: 27
Chain Saw Seminars
2011 April-Oct
Box 1: 28
Town of Shutesbury Committee Reports FY 2009, 2013, 2014
2009-2014
Box 1: 29
Annual Reports: FY2010, 2011, 2012
2011-2012
Box 1: 30
Moonlight Ball
2011 Sept 10
Box 1: 31

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Town of Shutesbury 250th Anniversary Steering Committee, 2016.

Processing Information

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Subjects

Shutesbury (Mass.)--History.
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Contributors

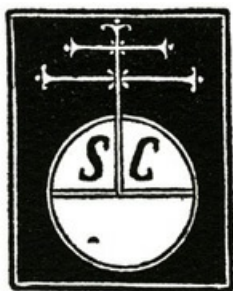
Shutesbury (Mass.) [main entry]

Genres and formats

Correspondence.
Flyers.

Link to similar SCUA collections

Massachusetts (West)



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