SHELDON FAMILY ASSOCIATION INC.
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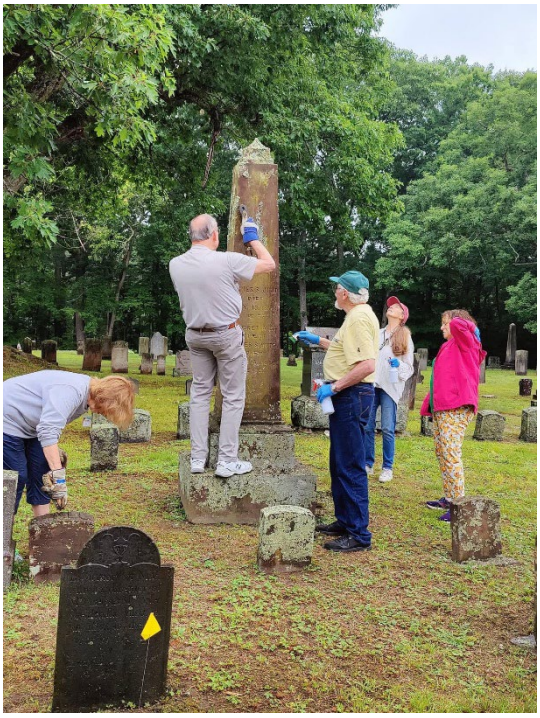
Reunited, and It Felt So Good!

Libby Wilson and Robert Sheldon
Reunion committee

We are happy to report that our Annual Meeting and Reunion gathering in Springfield, Mass., was not only a fun event, but an educational one as well.



Ross Sheldon steps up to the task of cleaning a Sheldon gravestone at Center Cemetery in Southampton, Mass., during the SFA Family Reunion. Photo by Wende Warren

The atmosphere at the hotel literally burst out of the front doors, as a large group of very passionate Scottish World Cup soccer fans cheered on their team late into the night. I'll admit that it was fun to watch the Scots enjoy the games, and it was sad when the team lost a game. But, in true fan fashion, the whole group packed up and flew to Florida to cheer their team on there. "Just happy to be here," they said. "We'll follow the team to the end."

In a way, our Sheldon group has a similar mindset. We meet in different parts of the country and focus on different lines of the family every year. This year in Southampton and Deerfield, Mass., and Suffield, Conn., we learned about what life was like on the frontier in the 17th century, and how the small village of Deerfield, on the edge of the wilderness, survived the raid of February 1704. We saw the "Indian House Door," on display in the Memorial Hall Museum, a vivid reminder of the tension between the English settlers and the native people.

We also learned about the work of George Sheldon of Deerfield to lead one of the first historic

preservation societies in the U.S. Another Sheldon, Sylvester Graham, son of Jonathan Sheldon, made a name for himself with the invention of the Graham cracker.

In Suffield, we visited the home of local doctor Alexander King, a fine example of an upper-class family home of the 18th century.

In Southampton, Charlie Fisher invited us to tour his home, known as the Israel Sheldon home, built in 1768. How wonderful to have a 250-year-old home still in the family!

Above, Charlie Fisher shows his home, built by Israel Sheldon in 1768, to Wende Warren and other SFA visitors. Previous page, the door of the Sheldon homestead in Deerfield bearing the axe marks from the 1704 raid now in the Memorial Hall Museum. Above right, reunion attendees take a break on the porch of the King House in Suffield. Below right, SFA members gather for lunch at Paisano's in Southampton

We are also a group that is not afraid to get dirty. This year we focused on the Center Cemetery in Southampton, where there are many Sheldon family graves. We had a great partnership with the cemetery commissioners in that they provided the D/2 Cleaning solution and we provided the labor. It is a very rewarding experience to clean gravestones, so that is something we will definitely do again.

The final event of the reunion weekend was the annual meeting. Our guest speaker was author and SFA member Lane Dolly. She was very inspirational, and I am moved to write about some of my ancestors as a way to pass on the stories to my children and grandchildren. Thank you, Lane.

We look forward to seeing you in Ohio in 2027!

Watch the website and the SFAQs for more information on 2027 events!

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As a general repository for Sheldon Family lineage, history, and heritage in the U.S.A., SFA serves as a central source of information and study for Sheldon lineage researchers. By means of this publication, members are informed of discoveries in Sheldon lineage research, and dates and locale of the annual reunion and meeting.

Information in this publication is obtained by research in major libraries and repositories of public records, by correspondence with Sheldon descendants and members, and independent researchers' submissions of articles. The editor reserves the right to edit, or excerpt submitted articles to fit space requirements of each issue. Articles should be of general interest to members. Pieces too long for the quarterly may be serialized or considered by the publication sales department to make them available to members. Since it is not possible for SFA to vouch for the accuracy of the content or opinion, the reader should understand that SFA in no way implies blanket verification and certification.

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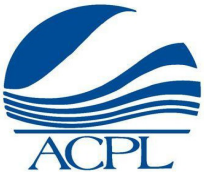
Deadlines for each issue: Spring-March 1, Summer-June 1, Fall-September 1, Winter-December 1. Material sent after these dates will be considered for a subsequent issue. No exceptions. All submissions relevant to Sheldon people, places, genealogies, timelines, etc are welcome.

We encourage any member to submit articles for publication. To submit articles, or information for an article, please submit through our website: https://sheldonfamily.org/submit-an-article/ or email: editor@sheldonfamily.org



Donate to the Allen County Public Library

One of the largest genealogy libraries in the country that is curating much of the Sheldon Family Association's historical documents.

The Allen County Public Library is a trusted partner of the SFA, and houses the SFA paper archives, which is a collection of all our early research done by SFA genealogists and members since 1939. Scanning is in process. Check on SFA scanned archive materials here:
https://www.genealogycenter.info/sheldonfamily/

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Editor's Corner

By Jim Berrie

The 2026 Sheldon Family Reunion has come and gone, and for me it was the most personally rewarding of the five reunions I have attended in person. Every place we visited had a connection to my own Sheldon family history.

The highlight was visiting Center Cemetery in Southampton, Mass., where 25 of my direct ancestors, including four generations of Sheldons, plus numerous aunts, uncles and cousins, are buried. We cleaned the centuries of moss and lichens off several Sheldon graves, including that of my great-great grandparents, Civil War veteran Flavel King Sheldon and his wife, Eunice Clapp. We had great cooperation from the cemetery management, who provided the cleaning solution for our project. The Sheldon names now show more clearly than before.

We then visited the home of my seventh cousin, Charlie Fisher, which was built by my 5th (and sixth, depending on which of his sons' lines you follow) great-grandfather, Israel Sheldon, grandson of progenitor Isaac and an

early settler of the town. The house was the birthplace of my 3rd great-grandfather, Silas Sheldon, father of Flavel. Charlie has done a magnificent job of maintaining this historic house.

Then it was on to Suffield, Conn., birthplace Anna King Sheldon, wife of Silas and mother of Flavel. We toured the beautiful home of Dr. Alexander King, a cousin of Anna.

My wife, Karen, and Wende Warren clean the gravestone of my great-great-grandfather, Flavel King Sheldon, in Center Cemetery as Libby Wilson supervises.

In Deerfield, we visited many of the historic homes there, including the Sheldon home. We toured the Memorial Hall Museum, which contains the door of the "Old Indian House," which was the home of another ancestor, John Sheldon, a son of Isaac. The door bears a hole that was hacked by invaders during the 1704 French and Indian War attack, through which John's wife, Hannah Stebbins Sheldon, was fatally shot.

Then, as a prelude to the SFA annual meeting, we enjoyed a talk by novelist Lane Dolly, a fellow descendant of John Sheldon. Lane took us through the process of writing her two novels about her great-great grandmother, Hattie Sheldon, who journeyed from her home in upstate New York to the frontier Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) to teach Native American children and ran into resistance from numerous sides in the leadup to the Civil War. She told us the third book of her trilogy has been completed and should be published within a year.

My Sheldon heritage is all on my mother's side, but the reunion also contained a reminder of my paternal legacy. My dad's parents were born in Scotland. A large contingent of the "Tartan Army," fans of the Scottish National Team in the World Cup competition, were staying at our hotel while their team was playing in Boston. It was fun to chat with them when we met up in the hotel bar.

I encourage anyone who has never been to an SFA reunion to consider a trip to Ohio for next year's event. Hope to see many of you there!

SFA members can review past SFAQs here. We encourage any member to submit articles for publication.

President's Message

By Kevin Sheldon

I hope everyone is having a great summer.

Recently, I was looking through some old issues of the SFAQ (Sheldon Family Association Quarterly) and came across an interesting article written by the SFA President in 2010 titled "Are We Dying?" The article discussed the decline in genealogical organizations and the difficulty of attracting younger members.

What struck me was that these same questions were being asked 16 years ago — and we're still having the same conversations today! Are organizations such as the Sheldon Family Association still relevant? Genealogy is probably more popular than ever, so why do organizations like ours struggle to attract new members, especially younger ones?

Part of the answer may lie in the ease of finding information on the internet. Why join an organization when you can sit at home and find names, dates, documents, photographs, and family trees with just a few clicks?

I don't pretend to have all the answers. But I have been involved in several organizations similar to ours, and nearly all

of them have struggled with membership and finding people willing to take leadership roles. What once might have been considered an honor — serving on a board or volunteering for an organization — too often has become something people try to avoid.

Yet I believe organizations like the SFA are still very relevant. The internet and AI are incredibly useful tools for genealogical research, but they can't replace getting together with people who share a common interest and connection. Genealogy is about much more than copying names, dates, and documents from an internet source and adding them to a family tree. It is also about understanding the lives of the people who came before us, visiting the places where they lived, and sharing what we discover with others.

Our recent reunion in "Deerfield" reunion is a perfect example. I put Deerfield in quotation marks because, while that was our primary historical destination, our hotel and meeting location were about 40 minutes away in Springfield, Massachusetts. The reunion became a multi-state event when we ventured into Connecticut as well!

In historic Deerfield, Massachusetts, we were able to tour the John Sheldon House. Because of the Sheldon family's long history there, we Sheldons were treated almost like royalty. Well, maybe not royalty — but it certainly felt as though the Sheldon name gave us a little "street cred" in Deerfield.

We spent time cleaning Sheldon gravestones in Southampton, Massachusetts, an activity that is always rewarding and greatly appreciated by cemetery caretakers. It is one thing to read the name of an ancestor in a database. It is quite another to stand at that person's grave, clean the stone, and help preserve it for future generations.

We were also welcomed into the home of SFA member Charlie Fisher, whose ancestor, Israel Sheldon, built the house in the 1700s. Imagine being able to walk through a home built by your ancestor nearly 300 years ago — or, better yet, restoring and living in that very home.

Lane Dolly addresses SFA's annual meeting

From there, we ventured to West Suffield, Connecticut, where we saw the Captain Jonathan Sheldon House, built in 1723 and, appropriately enough, located on Sheldon Street. We also toured the King House, a historic 1764 colonial home now operated as a museum by the West Suffield Historical Society.

The week was capped off with a wonderful presentation by Lane Dolly, a Sheldon descendant and SFA member, who spoke about the book she wrote chronicling the life of her great-great- grandmother, Hattie Sheldon.

These are the kinds of experiences you will never have simply sitting behind a computer. We were also able to spend time with fellow Sheldons, share stories and discoveries, and make connections that can last a lifetime.

So, are organizations like the SFA still relevant? I believe they are — but only if we continue to participate in them. If you have never attended one of our reunions, I hope you will consider joining us in the future. Better yet, encourage other Sheldons in your family to join as well. Talk to your children, grandchildren, cousins, siblings, nieces, and nephews!

The future of the Sheldon Family Association will depend on our ability to share not only the names and dates of our ancestors, but also the excitement of discovering their stories together. That sense of history, connection, and camaraderie is something the internet can help us discover—but only an organization like the SFA can help us experience it together.

I would especially like to thank Libby Wilson and Bob Sheldon for all the work they put into organizing the reunion. Their efforts gave those of us who attended an opportunity to experience Sheldon history in a way that simply cannot

be duplicated from behind a computer screen. We're planning to have the next reunion in Ohio so stay tuned!

Kevin is a **Richard 22** descendant, and his Sheldon Number is S8493x6522.

Legend of Captured 'Deerfield Bell' Survives Centuries

By Charles Sheldon S11201x121

There has been a legend in my direct family line about a church bell allegedly captured in the 1704 Deerfield raid and taken to Canada since, perhaps, as far back as the raid itself, down through the generations.

This legend or oral history first appeared in print in an 1824 book quoting Eunice Williams' grandson Eleazer as saying there was a bell retrieved by the Mohawks. This was then amplified in a magazine article in 1830 by one John Galt, and then it was picked up by American newspapers in the 1830s. Several Canadian steamship and tourist riverboat companies on the St Lawrence, adjacent to the Kahnawake Indians' church and its Deerfield bell (as the tribal members claimed) promoted this story in their brochures and the story began to have "legs" or the appearance of a possibly true oral legend.

The 'Deerfield Bell,' on display at the Saint Francis Xavier Mission in Kahnawake, Quebec.

Meanwhile George Sheldon and others back in Deerfield in the late 1800s were reframing Deerfield as Old Deerfield and celebrating the raid as their own tourist and business draw. Sheldon wrote a detailed history of Deerfield in the 1890s and spent some time debunking the bell story. He said it could not be true because there was no mention of a bell in town records. Eleazer Williams turned out in later life to be a con man. Oral legends were not to be trusted, and if there had been a bell story it would have seeped into Deerfield lore when captives returned to visit relatives later, but it did not.

Others confirmed this story was a myth lacking any hard evidence, but meanwhile the tribe 300 miles to the north strongly believed this story. There is an old bell up there in their church (now on the floor of the chapel) they claim is the very bell they took.

The story is that the Kahnawake people were Christianized by the Jesuits in the mid-1600s as Catholics and late in the 17th century ordered a bell for their church. The said bell was cast in France and shipped, but it was taken by a New England privateer or pirate probably in the 1690s and landed in Boston or Salem. Deerfield claimed the bell for its new meeting house, but the Kahnawake found out about it, and asked for the bell back. Deerfield said "no," so in 1704 the Kahnawake on that raid were there both to capture girls to replace lost tribal members and to retrieve their bell.

This story is mentioned a few times and always discounted by historical scholars as either fabricated or invented, basically stating there is no real (written) proof a bell ever existed. I grew up in Amherst, and I first saw the Indian House door when I was 8 years old in 1955. I knew the bell story by the time I was a teenager, but I honestly cannot say if it was known since birth (a family tale) or if I learned it in the 1950s.

I do know my father's sister Eleanor lived at St Lawrence University in the 1950s for a period while her husband taught there, and she met Ernie Benedict, a Mohawk leader and later chief and elder. Either he told her the story that had been in the tribe for so many years, or he and she discovered they both had ancestors in the raid and shared the story.

When I was 24, I spoke with Ernie Benedict over the phone for two hours about this legend and he swore it was true. I was going to go north to visit him in 1973 but never could break free from my work.

Three years ago, I decided I'd better run this story down, so I spent time with John Demos, author of "The Redeemed Captive" about the Deerfield raid. He told me there is no "scientific" evidence for the story, but if I found some he would be delighted. I went to the Deerfield records and studied them, went to the Phipps Museum as well, and then I drove to Kahnawake and talked with people there and saw and photographed the bell. There really is a bell, they call it the Deerfield bell, and it has been in that riverside church, which was built in 1716, 12 years after the raid, ever since.

Around 1750, the colony and the town granted John's children Ebeneezer and Mary, who were taken hostage in the raid, 300 acres of land and assistance with running a tavern in the old Sheldon house in exchange for their hosting Indians from the north who came to visit Deerfield after the raid. This is well documented, suggesting these Sheldons remained close to some of the raiders in the years since. You would think, if there really were such a bell, this might have been discussed between the visiting Indians and Sheldons (except that Catholics and Puritans did not talk of religion when visiting). So, the bell story in my family might have started then. But then, later, in 1825, Medad Sheldon took his family north to Waddington, N.Y., hard by the St Lawrence to engage in the lumbering business, and his son Charles went to Montreal in 1816 and ran steamboats on the river for a few years before coming back to Rutland, Vt., and the family's marble business. This was in the 1825-1834 period. How did he come to running steamboats at such a young age? His sister Sophorina married a Dickinson in about 1823, and the Dickinsons ran a big stage and boat company near Montreal. They were called "Swamp Yankees," and all were from Hatfield and Deerfield, Mass. The Dickinsons were also raid descendants. If Charles Sheldon was running steamboats, those boats hired river pilots who were Mohawk Indians, descendants of the raiders, too, so in that time frame descendants of both the raiders and raided were working together in Mohawk territory. In fact, they were going right past the church with the bell. Maybe the bell story was discovered then between the Sheldons and Dickinsons and the Caughnawage Indians who were working the river on steamboats and steering log rafts. Maybe the story came into my family then. I am heading to St Lawrence University in early October to look at the Reddington Papers in its collection, which include many Sheldon letters from that period and log raft worker details, in hopes I might find some evidence of this relationship, slim as it may be.

I know this: The bell is real, and of the period, and has been effaced. It is called by the Kahnawake people the "Deerfield Bell," and the legend of this bell has been within the tribe since at least the early 1800s and likely well before. Is it true? I really doubt my research will move the ball far, but I am engaged in a number of other threads and remain hopeful.

I have one more place to visit, but in three years I have examined all the arguments against why this story is true. I think at this point I can and will make a strong argument that the bell story is more likely true than false, and I hope to write an article detailing all this and what I have found with documentation. One of the things I want to chase down is whether there are other Sheldon descendants who carry this story, know it, or some version of it. There must be thousands of John Sheldon descendants by now. Maybe if they do have this story it came in the 1850s with the articles, I am trying to find out.

Along the way I have learned some pretty explosive news about Sheldons in my line who had later contact with the Kahnawake Indians, just fascinating stuff. I'm hoping the SFA could reach other Sheldon descendants who just might be carrying this legend, too.

If you have any other information on the story of the bell, please email sfaresearcher@gmail.com.

SHELDON FAMILY ASSOCIATION MERCHANDISE

The SFA sells HUGE 15 oz. coffee mugs with the Sheldon family Coat of Arms. Don't wait to order them, there is a limited amount available! Order them for $25 through the SFA website, sheldonfamily.org. Log into your profile first to get the discount, otherwise mugs are $30. Shipping is included.

The SFA also sells SFA lapel pins. Show off your Sheldon heritage by wearing one!

Find both items on our website: https://sheldonfamily.org/product-category/sfa-merchandise/ Log in as a member first to receive a discount!

THE FIVE PROGENITOR TREES AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS ONLINE

Don't forget that this valuable resource is available to you online on our website. Instructions on how to search are linked on the tree webpage.

Search tip: Less is more! When searching for one individual name in the full **SFA Database Search** link, put in less information in the search boxes. Too much information may come back with zero names. This is because sometimes a name is spelled a little differently, or we may not have a middle name in the database while you put in a middle name in the search fields. Play around with the search boxes to find the name you are looking for. **Remember… living people will not show up in the tree. This is to protect your personal information.**

Find the trees here: https://sheldonfamily.org/sfa-family-tree-database/ You must be signed into your profile in order to view the trees.

THE FIVE COLONIAL SHELDONS/SFA DATABASE

S0004	**Godfrey Sheldon**	**Scarborough, ME**	**10,067 descendants**
S0005	**Isaac Sheldon**	**Windsor, CT**	**45,106 descendants**
S0008	**John Sheldon**	**Providence, RI**	**35,518 descendants**
S0013	**John Sheldon**	**South Kingstown, RI**	**33,140 descendants**
S0022	**Richard Sheldon**	**NJ & New York City, NY**	**1,475 descendants**
Unconnected Sheldon Trees and Parents of Spouses of Descendants			**24,174 descendants**
Total			**149,483 Total People**

Help Wanted!

The SFA has openings for the following positions:

Webmaster
Social Media Chair
Reunion Committee Chair

Contact Kevin Sheldon at president@sheldonfamily.org if you are interested.

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To Renew Online, click here.

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