

Henry Sheldon Museum (HSM) – 2023 Annual Meeting held at  
Little Seed Coffee Roasters, 24 Merchants Row, Middlebury, VT on  
Wednesday, 13 December 2023 at 5.00p.m.

### Treasurer's Report

2023 has been a time of transition for the Sheldon Museum with significant personnel changes throughout the year. Upon the departure of the previous Executive Director (ED) in January 2023, and mindful of a challenging fundraising environment to attract and fully fund new ED candidates to the position, a new shared management staffing model was implemented. To provide much needed support for Museum operations and programming, in lieu of an ED, new Business Operations Manager and Visitor Services Coordinator positions were created and filled over the summer. Unfortunately, due to family considerations, the Bus Ops Mgr resigned and at that point it made sense to revert back to the ED model. After an exhaustive search this fall, we were delighted to welcome Coco Mosely to the position only a few weeks ago, and she hit the ground running on day one!

The HSM's beloved Associate Director, Mary Manley, retired in May after 25 years, and her encyclopedic knowledge of the Museum and warm, welcoming presence are sorely missed. In her honor, the Mary Manley Fund was set up and has been instrumental in inspiring gifts to the Annual Fund this year. For the third year in a row, the Trustees committed a \$25K 2:1 matching fund, which we hope with continued community support for the Mary Manley Fund, will enable the Museum to exceed its Annual Fund budget of \$50K in 2023.

The staff did an amazing job with very interesting and integrated programming and events, despite being short staffed for most of the year. At the Annual Meeting, Eva Garcelon-Hart (Archives), Allison LaCroix (Collections) and Barbara Rathburn (Visitor Services) will provide a short overview of their areas of responsibility and exciting fruits of their labor this season.

With extremely generous gifts from individuals, private institutions and state and federal grants, the HSM was able to complete the Windows Restoration Project on the Judd-Harris House with the final installation of the windows and the painting of the exterior of the house this year. We are still awaiting the \$85K Appropriations monies to reimburse the HSM for a portion of this project and the new energy-efficient boiler installed in 2022, and are hopeful we will finally see this payment in 2023.

With the creative initiatives and hard work of the staff, trustees and friends of the Museum, many exciting programs, exhibits, concerts, and events have been presented to engage our members and the community and establish the HSM as an integral part of Middlebury, Addison County, and greater Vermont. We have been able to broaden our scope and breadth by virtue of our community partnerships, local business relationships, and the engagement of residents and visitors to our area. There are many more upcoming fun events, and information regarding the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the holiday trains running down the track, and other programming, may be found [here](#).

Fundraising through gifts and grants has been a high priority in 2023, and the HSM has continued a number of motivating fundraising vehicles to appeal to donors with a variety of interests, such as a trustee 'double your impact' challenge match, enhanced membership levels, tiered business memberships, engraved bricks in the garden, the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Armchair Auction, and picnic basket and holiday raffles.

In October, the garden path from the Park Street sidewalk was laid with engraved bricks purchased to date, and many thanks to staff and trustees for their efforts getting this fun and important visual in place this fall. It looks fabulous and is a great start to this program, which we hope with exciting promotions will continue to engage the community.

It has been a challenging fundraising year with the vagaries of the market and high interest rates. While the breadth of our innovative fundraisers this year has attracted and engaged some new audiences and donors, the Museum has struggled to raise generic operating income in 2023. We are now most in need of budget-relieving monies to support the operating expenses of the Museum, therefore, the Annual Fund push through the end of the year is extremely important for the financial health of the institution.

Financial services RFP update: Coco conducted a thorough and thoughtful assessment of the three RFPs received for the HSM's financial services partner (Morgan Stanley, Williams Jones & Community Financial Services Group) and the Finance Committee unanimously approved her recommendation. Coco was also successful in negotiating a reduction in the service fee for the recommended provider: Community Financial Services Group (CFSG). Coco, Lucinda and I had a very productive meeting with Paul Valente of CFSG on Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, and the transition to the new financial services provider is now underway. Coco has advised Morgan Stanley and Williams Jones of the Museum's decision to go forward with CFSG.

The value of the Museum's endowment fund has been up and down in 2023, and although November resulted in a gain of ~\$128K, the overall value is still ~\$200K below its high at the end of 2021. As noted last year, given the high value of the investment funds at the start of 2022, we made the decision to fund the much-needed Collections Manager position from the 'gift for current use' Collections Fund held in this account. Funding this position from the investment fund decreases the value of the account, further reducing the potential income generated from the principal and increasing the importance of generating budget-relieving income.

The economic downturn and high inflation experienced in 2022, and continued in 2023, also resulted in the decision to push plans for a capital campaign into the future. The ED and trustees will continue to assess how and when to proceed with this important component of the HSM's strategic plan and long-term financial health.

Diane Palmeri  
Treasurer  
9 December 2023