

FAQs

The mission of the Sherborn Historical Society is to collect, display, store, and preserve artifacts, information, and documents concerning our local history and to use our resources to provide education services to our community and the public at large.

The Sherborn Historical Society, founded in 1911, incorporated 1913
See the attached Timeline 1911-2025 for details and significant milestones

1. What is the difference between the Sherborn Historical Society (SHS) and the Sherborn History Center & Museum (SHCM)? What about the Historical Commission and the Historic District Commission?

The Sherborn Historical Society is a private, non-profit organization. The Sherborn History Center and Museum refers to the location. The Historical Commission and the Historic District Commission are Town-appointed commissions whose goal is the preservation of the community's historic places, education of the public on issues of preservation, and to advise the Selectmen and other town bodies on preservation matters.

2. Where is the SHS now?

COVID-mandated plans for the renovation of Town Hall in 2020 no longer included space for the SHS archives or work area. Most of the archives and artifacts are in storage, while the remaining working archives are temporarily housed at 20 North Main Street in a donated space. Some artifacts are also on display in Town Hall.

3. What is the Town's responsibility for providing a space for us?

The Town accepted the gift of a public library from William Bradford Homer Dowse, in 1914, which included the condition that space be provided there for the Sherborn Historical Society's collection and meetings. That bequest and the conditions attached have been honored since then and verified by Town Meeting vote. The intent of the original donor was that the Town would pay for the costs of housing the SHS. This has been recognized, regularly acknowledged and covered for over one hundred years. Nevertheless, to assist the town with this new and exciting history center project, the SHS has agreed to raise \$200,000 toward the costs to offset the Town's costs. We already have raised over \$50,000.

4. If the SHS is a private organization why doesn't it pay for the project itself?

The SHS is an independent nonprofit organization whose collection of historical artifacts and the archives have been donated to the SHS over the years for the benefit of the townspeople. The SHS maintains and preserves the collection in compliance with established standards. The SHS has followed all guidelines to proceed in good faith with planning and budgeting with the Town and has a campaign planned for private fundraising to fulfill the vision we have of our new home.

5. What contributions has the SHS Board made?

Every SHS board member has contributed to the building fund, raising \$24,000. Board Member Kevin Delaney donated three hand-made benches which realized \$11,500 in a fundraising auction.

6. You say the collection has great treasures. Can't we just sell an item or two to raise the money to pay for this?

Fiduciary responsibility mandates that we as stewards of the Town's history and legacy preserve the objects entrusted to us. This is part of our commitment to our past and future donors.

7. Why can't we just keep everything in storage and bring them out a few times a year in showcases? Wouldn't that be far more cost-effective for the town?

Our collection contains thousands of objects, artworks, documents, textiles and books. SHS will continue to display items in Town Hall, and with this limited space we will showcase what can be accommodated there. Our archive is used for research, and items need ongoing care. Storage is a perpetual cost that doesn't benefit the collection and adds additional risk of loss or damage to the artifacts. The planned History Center will allow us to bring alive all of Sherborn's incredibly rich history, by making it more accessible to Sherborn's citizens of all ages.

8. The prior minutes from the town in the 1980s talks about 700sf of space. Why is it now 2000sf?

This statement is inaccurate and has been corrected. The motion that mentioned the 700sf was amended to include language for "a room of approximately 700sf of space in a Town building be provided for use by the Historical Society along with additional space for Society meetings as available." The proposed plan of 1900sf accommodates our current collection, which has naturally grown since 1914, and includes space for research and processing.

9. Why does it have to cost so much? Is there a way we could do this more efficiently?

This is a commercial project that is in a town building. As such, it must meet certain standards that are not at issue in private projects. This naturally adds to the cost, and includes things like public procurement laws that require that all contractors and subcontractors are paid prevailing wages; requirements for a full sprinkling system and a fire alarm system; requirements for a performance bond, a payment bond, and insurance coverage, which adds to the cost but ultimately gives protection to the town. There are also structural features (like existing columns to work around) when designing space within an existing building. Moreover, it is important to note that we are working with a highly experienced, professional architect who has done dozens of projects just like this, and who has scrutinized every detail with us, providing great assurance that the cost is reasonable for what we are building. We have worked aggressively with the architect to make design changes to squeeze out as much costs as possible from the project, without jeopardizing its integrity. It should also be remembered that the town is paying less than 60% of the total costs, because we will be relying on private fundraising and other sources to make up the remaining 40%. Finally, we want to say a word about the cost to each resident and each household because we think that is an important measure to keep in mind. This project will be financed over 30 years, so that those who move to town in the future will have a chance to participate in financially supporting it. We feel that is only appropriate. *The added cost to each resident and household will amount to 40 cents per person per month (or \$4.88 per year) or 1.23 per household per month (or \$14.75 per household per year.* Given what this project will mean to our community, we think it is one of the best investments our town can make.

10. Why was this space not included in the library renovation?

When the library renovation was first planned the SHS was still located on the lower level of Town Hall, where it had been for twenty years with no indication that that situation would change. The SHS wasn't asked to move until 2020 by which time the library, originally expected to be complete in 2017, was under a complete work stoppage. The Library Trustees asked that we put any planning involving potential space in the building on hold until the renovation was completed.

11. Why should the Town commit to this project now?

Costs are not going down. There is a significant risk that if we wait it will only add to the price. It is critically important for both the private fundraising efforts as well as any grant prospects that the Town has approved the project. This commitment guarantees to private donors that the funds will be used for the intended purpose and gives the authority to the town Administration to sign commitments for grants, etc. Knowing the Town's commitment allows the SHS to set fundraising goals.

12. What is the cost of NOT doing this?

The Town has paid approximately \$85,174.68 in storage fees to date for our unhoused collection. Additionally, to continue operating, we have been temporarily using donated office space, equalling a \$104,400 value to date, not including utilities. These costs will continue to accrue.

13. Why are we paying for such an expensive HVAC system? Can't we save a lot of money here and protect the artifacts just as well? If we have rare items, why don't we send them to some specialized museum for safekeeping until we want to bring them out?

HVAC is not a major expense in the proposed project budget. Offsite storage, whether at another museum or a storage facility, would be an ongoing cost.

14. Have you calculated the ongoing operating cost and who is going to pay for that?

Operating costs have been paid by the Town since 1914. The operational costs of the proposed space at the library will continue to be paid by the town. The small HVAC unit and the LED lighting will be far more efficient than the numerous dehumidifiers utilized at the previous space in Town Hall.

15. What is the plan for unexpected project costs?

Contingency amounts are built into the budget already. Risk is substantially mitigated here because it is a smaller project, and the architect has done a very comprehensive design with contingency in mind.

16. Will the space provide opportunities for school-aged children, individually or in groups, (K-12) to work on projects, ask questions, and receive guidance?

We will continue our longstanding practice of working with schools, other organizations, and constituents of Sherborn for research, genealogy and other requests and inquiries.

17. Doesn't this violate the anti-aid amendment? Shouldn't we have a lawyer look at it?

This is the Town's project in Town space. It is open to all residents of the town just like the library is. The SHS is an agent of the Town which ensures proper stewardship of the town's history and provides public access to its records. Town Counsel has already addressed this issue and believes we are in compliance.

18. What documents are required to move forward with a project in the library space?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is required by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. This will be a collaborative effort with the Library Trustees, the Select Board and the SHS.

19. Will the Librarians have to oversee the Museum if SHS staff are not available?

No, SHC&M will have its own personnel and operating hours, which will comply with existing Library hours.

20. Will there be a security system?

Yes, paid for by the SHC&M.