



BICENTENNIAL BULLETIN No. 45 **—Sheffield Celebrates 200th Birthday**

The Sheffield Bicentennial Commission will issue a *Bicentennial Bulletin* each Monday throughout 2015 that illustrates the rich heritage of our communities. **View them at — www.sheffieldbicentennial.org or sheffieldvillage.com**

DOMONKAS LIBRARY & ENVIRONS *4125 Lake Road, Sheffield Lake, Ohio*

In 1964, the Domonkas Branch of the Lorain Public Library was built on the lakeshore near the foot of Lake Breeze Road with \$100,000 donated by the Domonkas family. The site, originally owned by Joseph Fitch, was purchased by the City of Sheffield Lake and leased to the Library Board. To accommodate the new library, the Joseph Fitch house was demolished in 1963. The 4,727 square foot library building houses over 6,000 titles and has with a lecture/meeting room that seats 50 people.

Joseph Wellington Fitch is shown to be the owner of the property (Lot 41) on the 1851, 1857, and 1874 tax maps for the Sheffield Township (the oldest surviving maps of the Township). Joseph was the eldest son of Samuel Fitch (1794-1861).

Samuel arrived in Sheffield in November 1815 from New Marlborough, Massachusetts. Samuel, whose father fought in the Revolutionary War, was only the third pioneer to settle in Sheffield. He married Polly J. Smith (1796-1845) in 1818, a daughter of Captain Joshua Smith. Polly died in May 1845 and Samuel married Nancy Willard (1800-1860) later that year. Samuel had five children: Joseph Wellington, Martha, Mary Elizabeth, Henry Martyn, and Phoebe.

Samuel proved to be a prosperous farmer. His house was built on the Black River at the foot of Lake Breeze Road of the same handmade bricks used by other settlers. His homestead was sold to Peter Weaver in 1870 for \$6,345 and the house survived until 1989 when it was destroyed by fire. Samuel erected the first Sheffield distillery in 1825. He was a charter member and deacon of the Sheffield Congregational Church. He was highly regarded in the community. The *Elyria Chronicle Telegram* reported that the Avon Fair was poorly attended in 1861 due to the large number of people who attended Samuel Fitch's funeral. He is buried in Garfield Cemetery, between his two wives, Polly and Nancy.



Domonkas Public Library, built 1964

Joseph Wellington Fitch married Harriet Lewis and they made their home on the lakeshore at the north terminus of Lake Breeze Road. The 1857 map indicates their homestead was adjacent to a township school located on the same lot (41). The next property to the east (still on Lot 41) was owned Theron Moore. The 1857 map shows the Sheffield Lake Post Office as being located in the Moore house. The 1874 map shows the school in the same location, but no mention is made of the Post Office. In the 1890s the Lake Breeze Post Office was located in the home of Postmaster James Austin, on the lakeshore about a mile west of Lake Breeze Road.

Lecture room, Domonkas Library



Bicentennial Lecture at Domonkas Library; Dr. Eddie Herdendorf (presenter) and Annette Corrao and Patsy Hoag (cookie & cider providers)



Home on the former Joseph Fitch property demolished to make way for the library



Aerial view of the Lake Erie shore in the vicinity of Domonkas Library and Shoreway Shopping Center, 2001; library located on the shore at the center of the photograph



In the 1960s, the Shoreway Shopping Center was built on the former Joseph Fitch property at the southeast corner of Lake and Lake Breeze Roads. In 2007, the City of Sheffield Lake constructed a recreational boat ramp and marina on the Lake Erie shore where the Joseph Fitch and Norman Day properties once met. Joseph Fitch's brother, Henry Martyn married Lydia Amelia Day, Norman Day's daughter.

Shoreway Shopping Center, circa 1965



Sheffield Lake Marina under construction, December 2007

