



## ***BICENTENNIAL BULLETIN No. 20*** ***—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](http://www.sheffieldbicentennial.org) or [sheffieldvillage.com](http://sheffieldvillage.com)**

### ***DOUGLASS SMITH HOUSE*** (built in 1833—the oldest house on North Ridge) 4759 Detroit Road, Sheffield Village, Ohio

This classical Greek Revival-style farmhouse, built in 1833 by Douglass Smith, is the oldest surviving house on North Ridge in Sheffield Village. Typical of homes of this style in the 1830s to 1850s, it consists of a two-story main section and a one-story side wing containing a recessed entrance behind a pillared porch. The excellent proportions of its heavy entablature (horizontal member supported by columns) are a distinguishing feature. In October 1815 Captain Joshua Smith (1771-1817), a War of 1812 veteran, and his eldest son Douglass (1799-1862), left New Marlborough, Massachusetts with a yoke of oxen, a horse, and the necessary tools for clearing and cultivating a new farm in the wilderness that would become Sheffield, Ohio. After starting out, Captain Smith left Douglass to pursue the



tedious journey alone, while he detoured northward about 60 miles to revisit friends at Sackett's Harbor where he had fought the British. After his visit, Captain Smith was able to rejoin his son as he entered Ohio. They reached the farm of Wilber Cahoon in Avon on November 11, where they rested for a day [Sunday], then followed French Creek down to its mouth at the Black River. They reached their tract near the center of the township (Lot 64) on November 13, thus becoming the first permanent settlers of Sheffield.

Soon after, the Smiths were joined by Samuel B. Fitch and Asher Chapman, also from New Marlborough, Massachusetts and they built a rude shanty for the winter. The Captain was a humorous, jovial man, who enjoyed a joke and he was fond of a good story well calculated to amuse himself and his companions in their seclusion during that first long winter.

In the fall of 1816 Captain Smith went back to Massachusetts for his family, returning in March 1817 with his wife, Martha, and his six other children. Captain Smith, the first to settle, was also the first to die, which shocked the infant settlement. He fell victim to the ague and bilious fever, and suddenly died on September 29, 1817, but not before he helped build a dam and sawmill on French

Creek. A burying ground was selected for him on a bluff overlooking French Creek. In 1848 his remains were disinterred and reburied on North Ridge at the graveyard that was to become Garfield Cemetery (Block B, Lot 12, Grave 2).

Douglass Smith went on to be a prominent citizen, serving as Justice of the Peace and Township Constable. He was also a master carpenter. In 1833 he built the house that still bears his name on North Ridge. In 1854, Halsey Garfield [son of Milton Garfield] contracted with him to build the fine Greek Revival-style home with Italianate trim that still stands across from the Sheffield Village Hall. Other Sheffield homes built by Douglass Smith that are still standing include the Bedortha-Traxler House (1831) on Colorado Avenue and the Henry Garfield Root House (1857) on East River Road. Douglass married Sarah Burrell (1802-1854; daughter of Arnold Burrell) in 1824, the first wedding to take place at the Burrell

*Douglass Smith House, spring 2013*



*Large one cent coronet-type U.S. coin (1816) discovered with a metal detector by Anthony Neal at the Douglass Smith House (obverse side, left; reverse side, right)*



*Joshua Smith grave marker, Garfield Cemetery*



Homestead. Douglass' sister Rachel married George Washington Cotton, who made his home on North Ridge at the southwestern corner of the township. Cotton is remembered for his contributions to the agricultural development of Sheffield.

Captain Aaron Root, noted shipbuilder, Great Lakes and ocean captain, and an important link in the Underground Railroad who transported runaway slaves on his ships to freedom in Canada, lived his final years with his wife Esther in the Douglass Smith House. Later, Civil War veteran Lenza Minard and his wife, Cornelia Taft, resided in the house for several decades. The house is listed on the Ohio Inventory of Historic Structures.