

## **On the Establishment of The J. Robert Maguire Research Fund**

The J. Robert Maguire Fund recognizes the significance of the Stewart-Swift archival collection. Bob left corporate law in NYC in 1963, and he and his family settled at Hand's Cove in Shoreham overlooking Lake Champlain. Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys had spent the night on that property before crossing over to take Fort Ticonderoga in May 1775. Bob became a historian of Lake Champlain and acquired one of the finest libraries on the 17-18th Lake. I'm sorry that Polly is not with us this evening.

He soon became friends with Jessica Swift and Paris Fletcher (Sheldon Trustee 1956-73), and there is a photo of Bob with Jessica Swift at the dedication fifty years ago. Arthur Healey, a classmate of Fletcher's at Middlebury College who married Fletcher's sister, served for many years as the Museum's President. He played an instrumental role in the building of the Research Center. Bob Maguire became a Trustee and then, an Honorary Trustee of the Sheldon Museum.

In the mid-1980's the Vermont Council on the Humanities and Middlebury College supported a study of the Stewart-Swift collections, and it recommended an archivist. I turned to Bob for advice and assistance to help match a very nice grant for an archivist for two years. We raised the funds and hired Wiz Dow. Her work led to the publication of that wonderful guide, "Treasure's Gathered Here." That publication brought badly needed attention to the Research Center's holdings. In the following years some of the best research on Vermont history by college students in the State of Vermont was produced by Middlebury College students using the Research Center.

Without that successful campaign, there would not have been a major capital campaign by the Sheldon Museum. Once again, I turned to Bob for advice and then, to Paris Fletcher, and they played a crucial role in the campaign. Unfortunately, Mr. Fletcher died on the eve of the campaign; the Community Center is named after him.

Bob, unassuming and ever the historian, on the eve of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, published an important book on the famous Dreyfus Affair in France. He continued, moreover, to offer his full support for the Sheldon's archival collection. Glenn Andres has emphasized that no other community in New England has such extensive documentation. This, he has added, distinguishes the Sheldon from hundreds of small-town historic museums. I hope that the J. Robert Maguire fund will support research projects by students and scholars from near and far.

Bob Maguire was at the dedication of the Stewart-Swift Research Center, and throughout his life he advocated for the preservation of the integrity of its collections. The Maguire Research

Fund, fifty years later and in his honor, will facilitate the use of this wonderful, valuable collection.

Travis Beal Jacobs, Honorary Trustee  
Fletcher D. Proctor Professor Emeritus  
of American History