

A Few Words about my Deborah Sampson Sculpture

Lu Stubbs, October 23, 2016

This Deborah Sampson Sculpture was one of the most significant works of my career. It has always had special meaning for me because of my long time love of Sharon.

Before embarking on this piece, I had done several public art pieces in other communities. I had just completed a major project in Charlestown--a large bronze piece in Hayes Square—when my friend Phyllis Brookfield stopped by my studio one day and remarked that I'd been doing work for other places, but it would be nice if I did something for Sharon.

That sure was food for thought. I'd always been interested in Deborah Sampson, a local heroine who had disguised herself as a man in order to fight in the Revolutionary War. I settled on the idea of a statue of her, and when I shared this idea with friends, everyone was enthusiastic.

There were two descendants of Deborah Sampson living in Sharon: Muriel Moody Nelson and Eleanor Moody Connors. I thought I'd start my research by talking with them. It turned out that they owned things that had belonged to Deborah, including a diary of hers. They led me to another relative who lived on the Cape and had a dress belonging to Deborah. I visited and took photos of it. Doris Annis from Sharon, who portrayed Deborah at local events, had a jacket, hat, musket and powder horn. Using photos I had taken of all of these items, I made a half-sized model which I showed to various townspeople. There was a positive response.

A fundraiser was started to cover bronze casting costs for the life-sized figure, and a year later, Deborah was installed here at the Sharon Library. Garden Club members had done plantings around the area.

On November 11, 1989, a festive dedication was held, with Muriel Nelson unveiling the sculpture. The 18th Mass. Regiment fired salutes, there was a militia providing music, and "George and Martha Washington" put in an appearance. A representative of the Gannett Publishing Company came (Deborah had married Benjamin Gannett when she returned from serving in the army).

I'm so honored to be here today to witness the re-dedication of this work of mine, of which I am so proud. Thank you to everyone who supported this project in the past, and to those who made today's wonderful event possible.