



Dr. William R. Hayden's New York
Pharmaceutical C. Laboratory,
built in 1888 as it appears in 1892

The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
Bedford - Massachusetts

Founded in 1893

November 2011

Volume 119, Number 6

Not to be missed!

Sunday, November 13, at 2 pm

at the

First Church of Christ, Congregational

Veterans from the War for Independence to
the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict:
"A History of Bedford Veterans."

A special tribute to Bedford veterans –
their history and impact on the community –
will be presented by the BHS. Veterans from
the War for Independence to the
Iraq/Afghanistan conflict will tell personal
and poignant stories and relate their service
to events in Bedford's history and the nation.

The first two speakers are well-known to
Bedford residents for their volunteer work
on numerous Town committees and
organizations. Bob Slechta will describe
Bedford's veterans of the War for
Independence and their impact on the Town
at that time. Slechta served as a Staff
Sergeant in the U.S. Army from 1953 –
1955, and was stationed in Denver, Colorado
where he was assigned to the Pathology
Department of the Army Medical Nutrition
Lab at Fitzsimons Army Hospital.

Don Corey will discuss the role of
Bedford's Civil War veterans. Corey entered
the U.S. Navy as an Ensign in 1957 and
served on a Destroyer Escort in the Pacific.
His second tour of duty took him to London,
England, where he completed his service in
1960 as a full Lieutenant.

Representing veterans of World War II
will be Bedford's own Town Historian, John
Brooks Dodge, who was drafted at the age of
19 and served as a Field Linesman in the
infantry for the U.S. Army from 1943
through 1945. He will describe his
experiences serving in the Third Army under
General Patton in Europe, and later as a
member of the occupation forces in Japan.

Presenting stories of the Korean War will
be Raymond "Dewey" Sturgeon, who joined
the U.S. Air Force as a private in 1946 and
became a pilot and Second Lieutenant in
1949. Between 1952 and 1958 he flew F-80s
-- the first Air Force jet to be used in combat,
and F-100s -- the "Super Sabre" supersonic
jet fighter bomber.

Stories of the Vietnam conflict will be
recounted by Gerry Maker, who served as a

continued pg. 2

The Witch of Shawshine

By Bob Slechta

This is an old favorite Bedford legend
often told by many people with just as many
versions and inconsistencies in detail. The
version chosen for presentation here is one
of the shorter ones, that of warmly
remembered Abigail Bacon, 1891-1982,
descendent of Michael Bacon, original
owner of the Bacon-Fitch mill, and one of
the last grandchildren of Jonathan Bacon,
famed founder of Bedford's shoe industry in
the early 1800's, and his wife Ann (March).

Passed down from generation to
generation, it is a well-worn tale of human
strengths and frailties – prejudice,
condemnation, exclusion, perseverance,
atonement and redemption. Ms. Bacon's
version appeared in *The Bedford Sampler*,
published by the Friends of the Bedford
Public library in 1974 and it is offered here
with the inclusion of some editorial
comments. (ed.)

Before 1675, Michael Bacon was operating a
grist mill on the Shawshine River. Remains
of the mill dam may still be found showing
huge boulders that must have been placed
after many hours of labor by strong men,
probably with the help of oxen. By 1730,
the corn mill and a saw mill were operated
by Michael's son, Jonathan, one of the
incorporators of the town of Bedford in
1729. There is a legend about a later owner
of the mill on the Shawshine. (ed., this was
Benjamin Fitch, born in 1703, who bought
the mill

continued pg. 3



*This beautiful painting is on display in the Society's
archive. It was painted by Anne MacRea-MacCleod
in 1985.*

Thank You!

The year 2011 was again filled with great progress for the Bedford Historical Society. We are grateful to the many individuals and families who became new members and to those who continued to support this very important organization. We had many exciting events, like Bedford Day and Farmer's Market, attracting hundreds of people.

The Society offered seven excellent lectures, from catastrophes on the wild seas, to learning about Early Colonial Slavery, from the important career of our own Rufus Porter, to how to make old homes more energy efficient. On November 13, the last lecture of the year, will tell the story of Bedford's Veterans. All BHS lectures are free to everyone, are videotaped, and can be seen on Bedford's local TV station. Then, of course, there is our joyful holiday party in December. Please mark your calendar.

All these activities are made possible with an incredible number of volunteers, from those who set up our displays, to those who bake goodies and serve coffee at our events. THANKS TO ALL!

Now we are getting close to the holidays - again – and many of us are already preparing for next year, with a batch of new, exciting programs.

On behalf of the many people helping to make the Society a great organization, I offer my heartfelt thanks. I look forward to your continuing support and to seeing all of you at our many events scheduled in 2012.

Jan van Steenwijk



Reprinted with permission from Art New England

Bedford residents get around...

Between 1998 and 2004, Jan van Steenwijk photographed a diverse group of 75 Bedford residents, many of them volunteers - people who make the community a better place, but who rarely receive the credit they deserve. At Jan's request, subjects penned their own handwritten life story to complement the images.

The photographs and accompanying text panels have since been widely exhibited, from two venues in Bedford to Waltham and Cambridge, Mass., and from Lausanne, Switzerland to Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Several of the images have been published in books and periodicals. Complete portfolios have been donated to the Bedford Historical Society for future generations to enjoy.



Excersising made easier...

The Town of Bedford has just created a new Minuteman Bikeway map that is available for \$2.00 at the Historical Society or the Freight House. It features a map of the entire bikeway (as shown on the Depot Park kiosk) PLUS an enlarged Old Bedford Center insert showing historic sites of interest and various amenities for visitors (public restrooms, ice cream shops, etc.).

The reverse side of the map shows Bedford town-wide historic properties and conservation areas for more adventurous visitors to explore. Jim Shea, Don Corey and DPW's Rich Warrington and Chris Nelson worked to produce the map. Pick up a copy!

Veterans - continued fr. pg. 1

Sergeant in the U.S. Army's infantry. Maker will describe his experiences "jumping out of helicopters" and fighting an enemy that was indistinguishable from the non-combatants.

The final speaker, still to be arranged, will represent the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict. The Society has invited the community's veterans groups to attend and participate in this thought-provoking program.

Carol Amick

PARTY TIME! Sunday, Dec. 11

This year's Holiday Party is graciously hosted at the home of Carol Amick and Bill Moonan, 18 Crescent Avenue, starting at 3 p.m. The annual event is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the company of other Society members in a relaxed holiday atmosphere.

Every Society member/family is asked to bring an appetizer; two types of punch and coffee will be provided by the Society.

Last year almost 60 Society members enjoyed the party and were entertained by a "guess-the-antique-tool" contest utilizing Bill Moonan's large collection of tools.

We're also looking for volunteers to help telephone members as a reminder about the party and bringing hors d'oeuvres. Please email Carol Amick at carol.amick@verizon.net or call her at 781-275-5278, if you can make phone calls a week or so before this event.



Bedford High School students won awards at the State competition for National History Day.

Winners honored by the Society included (front row, l-r): Sarita Biswas, Allie Capozza, Sonya Rauschenbach and Mike Lee. Back row: Social Studies teacher and advisor James Sunderland, Elizabeth Watson, Robert Doherty, Nick Cebry, Jack Heimann, James Kuo and Jesse Dickinson-Meltz.

continued fr. pg. 1

from the Bacon family in 1730) This miller was kept constantly busy by pioneer settlers who brought their corn to be ground into meal. The young bachelor seldom ceased his work except on Sabbath Day, never seeming to give thought to the possibility that a wife could be a helpmate to him in his home nearby. But there came a time in early spring when he was not always at the mill to set the mill wheel turning for the work of the day. When questioned by an inquiring farmer, his young assistant replied, "The miller has gone downstream. He goes often these days." A few months later at the Sabbath morning church service, announcement was made by the pastor of the approaching marriage of the miller and Miriam Gray, whose father's home was on the banks of the Shawshine in Cochichawick, the early name of Andover. In June, the wedding took place, and after the celebration at her father's home, Miriam and her bridegroom stepped into their canoe at Cochichawick landing, and accompanied by other canoes filled with a gay group of young guests, paddled twenty miles up the river arriving at the miller's landing in the early morning hours. (ed., the date of the marriage is listed in B. Fitch's genealogy (A.E. Brown, History of Bedford, 1891) as Feb. 28, 1732 – one of the inconsistencies which probably enhances the old charm of the story.)

On the following Sabbath the arrival of the bride and groom at the village church created great consternation. The bride appeared in a cloak of scarlet, her bonnet gay with plumes of a matching red which contrasted becomingly with her dark eyes and hair. Her appearance was in grave contrast to the subdued dress of the members of the congregation. Then the people remembered an old tale, that at her birth it was predicted that Miriam Gray would turn out to be a witch. (ed., her mother had testified against one of the accused in the Salem witch trials of the 1690's) her strange appearance seemed to bear out the truth of this prediction.

Poor Miriam came to be called the "Witch of Shawshine" and was shunned by her neighbors. It was said that even the miller's horse shied away from her in her scarlet cloak. The miller started to suffer from a lack of business. This terrible prejudice continued through the years until a scourge of throat distemper (ed., diphtheria.) visited the village. It was then, with no thought of herself, that Miriam went to the aid of her



Is this the Witch of Shawshine's scarlet cloak?

This scarlet cloak, said to have belonged to Miriam Gray Fitch, has been in the BHS archives since 1974 when it was donated by a Mrs. Robert Qudiron (spelling unlikely) of Burlington, who claimed to be a descendant. She was in the process of moving at the time and no further information is known.

Separation

Some separations come easily - others not so. That's the way it was in Bedford in 1833 when church and state were legally separated and Bedford's religious societies chose to separate. After the amendment of the state Constitution that legally severed the church and town, early in 1833 the Town of Bedford and First Religious Society separated. At the same time the Unitarians and Congregationalists parted, with the First Parish (Unitarian) retaining ownership of the meetinghouse and Rev. Samuel Stearns joining the Congregationalists. Article IX of the 03/13/1833 Town Meeting was summarized, "After the transaction of the foregoing town affairs to transact any business that may be necessary in relation to a dissolution of the connection existing between said society and Rev. Samuel Stearns as their pastor, Voted to choose a committee to report next Town Meeting, also report the probable amount of funds now in the hands of the town which is considered as belonging to the First Religious Society."

At the next Town Meeting on 04/22/1833 it was decided that the amount due from the town to the First Parish was \$652.38 (surplus pew money less cost of painting the meetinghouse plus interest). The town voted to raise the said amount, and in what appears to be a particularly charitable act also directed "the Treasurer to pay the same amount to the order of the First Congregational Society in Bedford". Although it was undoubtedly painful, it was done quickly. It took other towns like Concord until 1855 to effect separation of the town and church.

The Congregational Society was given land by Jeremiah Fitch, a lifelong Unitarian, for its church.

Ownership of the Town Common surrounding the meetinghouse was a much thornier question, and it was argued for almost 150 years. A court dismissed the parish's claim to ownership of the entire Common in 1893. The town and church finally agreed to settlement of ownership in 1975.

Selectmen at that time included Louise Maglione, Frank Gicca and Don Corey (all current Society members!).

Don Corey

neighbors and tormentors. (ed., among these neighbors were John and Mary Whitmore who lost three children in the scourge of 1843 and five more in 1850.) She nursed many a child through the illness and administered comfort to the parents. The disease was finally arrested and the grateful people no longer spoke of the "Witch of Shawshine".

As Miriam grew older, the ugly stories were forgotten and she came to be beloved by the villagers.

Bob Slechta

What is It?

This small box was hiding in one of the many archival boxes in the Archives. It's size is 1 3/4" in diameter x 1 3/4" high, made of cardboard and covered with a flowered pattern. It contains eight woven "coasters?" Inside the cover is the date of 1922.

If you know the answer please contact us.



What was it?

We asked this question in our last issue of the Preservationist.

It is a tool that contained very fine sand that was used when quills and ink were still writing tools. Sand was sprinkled on the wet ink to dry it faster.

The Preservationist

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Bedford, MA 01730-1238

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*We Don't Make History...
We Keep It Alive..!*

The Bedford Historical Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Support your Heritage.

Mark your calendar for our:

2012 Lectures

Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2012 at 7:30 pm,
Bedford Library: Dr. Gary Hylander, "Masters
of Enterprise: Henry Ford"

Sunday, April 1, 2012 at 2 pm, First
Church of Christ, Congregational: Christopher
Daley, "Lizzie Borden: The Mystery Continues!"

Wednesday, April 25, 2012 at 7:30 pm,
Bedford Library: Gill Solomon, Chief Sachem of
the Mass.-Ponkapoag Tribal Council, "The Time
Before Now."

Wednesday, May 23, 2012 at 6:30 pm,
First Church of Christ, Congregational
(Fellowship Hall): Potluck Dinner and Annual
Meeting

Officers

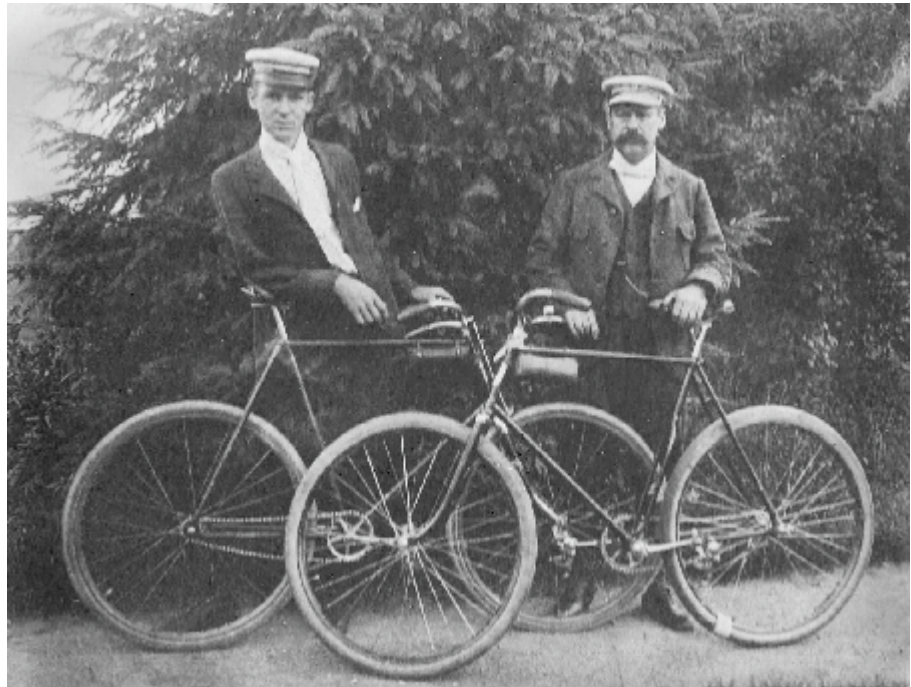
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Transportation or Fitness?

*This picture is from around 1904, long before Bedford had its great Bike Path.
Now all of us can enjoy biking, walking or just strolling from the Bedford Depot to
Concord or to Alewife. Check out page two for the new Bikeway Map.
Does anyone know who the two gentlemen are?*

Come and see us.
Visit our website.
Visit our FaceBook page.

www.bedfordmahistory.org

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Membership Application

Name: _____
Address: _____
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Dues

Student: \$ 15.00
 Single: \$ 25.00
 Couple or Family: \$ 45.00
 Life - Single: \$250.00
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Please send check to:

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