**Annual Meeting and Lecture**

**Tuesday, May 24 at 6:45 pm**

Congregational Church, 23 Great Road

*Meet Paul Revere’s Mother-in Law...*

Paul Revere’s mother-in-law, innkeeper Rachel Walker -- as interpreted by actress Kate Carney, will take us back to Boston in 1789 and describe the chaos of pre- and post-Revolutionary War Boston as the entertainment for the Bedford Historical Society's Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner.

The evening will begin at 6 pm with appetizers and Marion Bryan’s famous punch. A buffet potluck supper, provided by the Society members, will start around 6:45 pm.

Following dinner, the Society's Annual Meeting will be held at 7:30 pm to elect Officers and members of the Board of Directors, and to hear a report on the year's activities from President Don Corey. Kate Carney's living history performance will begin around 7:45 pm.

All Society members are encouraged to attend this last program of the Society's 2015-16 season, and to bring a salad, main dish or dessert for about eight people to share at the potluck. Coffee, tea and soft drinks will be provided by the BHS.

Innkeeper Rachel Walker’s eye-witness accounts of the Destruction of the Tea (Boston Tea Party), her son-in-law’s famous ride to warn that the British were coming, and a ladies’ riot over high food prices (Boston Coffee Party). Interacting with the audience as if they are guests at her North Star Tavern in Boston in 1789, Carney will describe how Massachusetts convinced the other colonies to enter the War for Independence and tell other rousing tales of everyday colonialists in the turmoil of pre-Revolutionary War Boston.

An actor, storyteller and workshop leader, Kate Carney has been performing her living history "Heroic Women You can Talk To" characters for historical societies, colleges, libraries and museums throughout the Northeast since 1993.

Her performance is being supported by a grant from the Bedford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

**Presidents Message**

**Museum Update** – Earlier this month the Selectmen considered the status of the museum feasibility study project. This followed the Mass. Historical Commission's (MHC's) decision to withhold funding of Bedford's grant application due to concerns with several of the potential options. After a discussion, the Board voted to narrow the study to the three following options:
- Historic portion of Police Station (Stearns Building) with probable addition
- Old Town Hall
- Historic portion of Town Center (former Union School).

A revised grant application has been submitted to the MHC for their consideration. Stay tuned!

**Richard Wheeler House** (ca.1695) – An application to demolish this important historic property has been submitted to the town, and a public hearing will be held to consider the application. More information on this historic house and the proposal is provided elsewhere in this newsletter. Very few houses of its age still survive in Bedford, and its loss would be extremely unfortunate.

**Annual Meeting** – Our Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 24, marks the end of this spring's programs. Following dinner and the election of officers, we will have a very interesting and entertaining program that is supported by a grant from the Bedford Cultural Council. More details are provided on the left of this page.

Don Corey

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**Richard Wheeler House 445 Concord Road**

An application has been submitted to the town to demolish the Richard Wheeler house, for which the Historic Preservation Commission will hold a public hearing in Town Hall on June 7. This article looks at some of the house's history.

The Richard Wheeler house is one of only 2 remaining homes in Bedford built in the 1600s and one of only 6 houses in Bedford that are over 300 years old. Those buildings are:

- Michael Bacon House 229 Old Billerica Road ca. 1671
- Richard Wheeler House 445 Concord Road ca. 1695
- Farley-Hutchinson-Kimball House 461-A North Road ca. 1700
- Nathaniel Page House 89 Page Road ca. 1702
- Eleazer Davis House 255 Davis Road ca. 1705
- Job Lane House 295 North Road ca. 1713

Carol Amick

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There are only 7 other buildings remaining from around the time (1725-1735) of Bedford's incorporation in 1729.

**History**

There are discrepancies as to the precise construction date for the Wheeler house dating from 1682 to before the year 1700. The house has been inspected by Orville Carroll, former preservation architect for the Minuteman National Historic Park. He determined that the front 2 rooms up and down along with the chimney base were constructed in the 1600s.

One scenario dates the house to Richard's parents' marriage. George Wheeler was an early settler in Concord, having arrived in 1639 with his young family including a son William (ca.1630-1683) born in England. William married Hannah Buss in 1659, and they had 8 children including their youngest son George (ca.1674-1737) born in Concord. George married Abigail Hosmer in 1695, and the assumed house construction date of 1695 coincides with their marriage. Their oldest son Richard (born ca.1696) inherited the house that now bears his name. He married Jemima French in 1720.

An alternate scenario is that Robert Merriam in his 1682 will gave Joseph French “20 acres of land and all the housing which stands on it”. In 1719 Jemima French received a deed from her father, Lt. Joseph French, and in 1724 Richard Wheeler bought some property from his father-in-law. Either one of those deeds possibly conveyed this house to the young couple.

Both Richard Wheeler and his father-in-law, Lt. Joseph French, were among the petitioners for establishment of the Town of Bedford. Richard's name is mentioned as a land owner in the charter description of the new town's boundaries in 1729. He was also a foundation member of the church in 1730. Sometime shortly after his 3rd marriage in December 1760 (to Anne Bateman) Richard and his new wife relocated elsewhere.

William Page (1737-1812) married his wife Patte Hill in 1763 and purchased the property that year. As a member of Capt. John Moore's militia he marched from this house to the Concord fight in April 1775. He served as Town Treasurer in 1777. Their only child, Lucy, married Mather Hayward, and they inherited the property. The 1852 atlas shows M. Hayward as owner.

After a century and one half of ownership by the Wheeler and Page families, the farm and homestead were sold in 1855. They changed hands half a dozen times during the next century. After WW2, farming became uneconomical and Bedford's population grew rapidly, so the farm was subdivided into house lots. The house was acquired with 1.9 acres of land in 1948 by Daniel and Regina Donahue, who referred to their home as the “Old Garrison House”. Owners of the house since that time include:

- 1973 John & Charlene Pappas
- 1978 Harry & Elizabeth Morehead
- 2000 Florence Rossi, as Concord Trust trustee
- 2010 David & Florence Rossi

In 2000 the new owners subdivided the property into 2 lots, so the house now sits on about 0.9 acres.

**Architecture**

The Richard Wheeler house is the oldest dwelling on Concord Road. Oriented facing south on its lot, the house has a fieldstone and granite foundation, wood clapboard siding, a side-gabled roof, and a large brick center chimney. There is an overhang of the second story on the facade as well as an overhang of the end visible on the sidewall. Large stone stoops remain at the entrances to the house.

The following description of the interior was provided to the Bedford Historical Society in 2000 by the owners at that time, Harry and Elizabeth Morehead, who did extensive preservation work on the house.

“In the interior, the post and beam construction is evident in the exposed beams in the kitchen and the boxed beams (ceiling and corners) in the more “modernized” rooms. The kitchen has all its original wood with the addition of one modern beam that replaces a wall that was taken out in the 1920s. This wall would have marked off a “borning room” near the kitchen fireplace. This “room” has a date carved in one of the ceiling beams: “1748 XII”. The doors are maple in the kitchen and dining room and date also from the 1920s. The kitchen fireplace … has an opening for a wood burning stove and a large stone hearth.

In the parlor the paneling dates from 1710 and matches similar paneling in the Concord Antiquarian Museum with raised panels. Here and in the kitchen the paneling is the horizontal placement of wide boards. The floors are wide pine boards with a honey colored finish. This large fireplace has a damper, and the kettle holder inserted in the brick is original to the house. In a small panel over the door leading from the parlor to the front hall, there is a heart cut out, just large enough for a hand to go through. One of the legends is that couples married by holding hands through this panel but not able to see each other.

The paneling in the dining room has more narrow boards placed vertically and dates from the 1850s. The front hallway, opening to the front door, and its stairway goes down to the cellar and up to the attic, forming a 3rd floor. The bannisters and design of the stairs imitate the Buckman Tavern front stairs on Lexington Green.

In the attic it is easy to see the original roof line when the house was a salt box and how the beams were “pieced” and reused when the roof was raised in the 1700s. All the boards were pried up to blow in fiberglass insulation but are sturdy. The widest one is 22”, wider than the King of England allowed at the time. The center beam or ridgepole of the roof is turned at 45 degrees and was moved...
from the front side of the chimney to the back or north side when the roof was raised. Wood pegs were still in use when this was accomplished ...

The master bedroom on the second floor has a Victorian era fireplace which is shallow and panels which date from the same time surrounding the opening. This fireplace also has a damper to conserve heat. The front bedroom has ornate floor to ceiling fluted columns on both sides of the fireplace ... The back wall of the house is sagging, 6” off to be exact. This was due to the sill on the north side of the house having rotted years before. This was repaired shortly after the present owners moved in. This condition had existed for many years, as an added wall had doorways in which the slant was corrected.

The floors on the second floor are the widest in the main house but are all painted. Doors and hardware throughout the house are antique with a few reproduction pieces. The front half of the house received modern windows 15 years ago and the back half and attic were replaced in 1999.

While cleaning the stairwell about ten years ago, the lady of the house happened upon an arrowhead that had fallen with some plaster from above the stairs, a direct arrow shot if you will, past the front door.”

Don Corey

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**May 24 Annual Meeting to elect Officers and Board members**

This year's Annual Meeting, to be held on Tuesday, May 24, will include the election of Society Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer) to serve one-year terms, as well as three members of the Board of Directors to serve four-year terms.

The slate of Officers and Directors, recommended by the Nominating Committee (Carol Amick, Marion Bryan and Julie Turner) are all incumbents:

- **President:** Don Corey
- **Vice President:** Merri Lee Johnson
- **Secretary:** Brown Pulliam
- **Treasurer:** Pat Leiby

**Board members:** Carol Amick, Julie McKay Turner and Lee Vorderer

The meeting will be preceded by a potluck dinner at 6 pm in Upper Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational. The election of officers will be held around 7:30 pm.

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**The Lusitania's Last Voyage** by Brian Oulihan

Charles E. Lauriat, Jr., was a grandson of Bedford Flag donor Cyrus Page and son of the well-known bookseller, Charles E. Lauriat. He married Marian Bullard, and their son was named Nathaniel Page Lauriat. Charles Lauriat, Jr's., sister Susanne married Alfred Church Lane, another prominent Bedford citizen, so the family has many Bedford connections.

Charles E. Lauriat, Jr., boarded the RMS Lusitania in First Class on May 1, 1915. He would survive the sinking of the ship and later publish the story of his survival called “The Lusitania's Last Voyage”, which followed his entire experience while on board the ship.

On May 7, 1915, she was torpedoed by a German U-boat, causing the deaths of 1,198 passengers and crew. There were 761 survivors of the total on board. She had made a total of 202 trans-Atlantic crossings. This event turned international opinion against Germany.

The German Embassy in Washington had issued a warning on April 22, 1915:

"Notice:

Travelers intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or any of...

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THANK YOU!  
For your continuing support 
Renewals: Brandon Avery, Bobbi Ennis, Richard and Meg LeSchack, The Bedford Motel, Peter and Isabel Meyer  
Donations: Doris Webber, James Shea
her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travelers sailing in the war zone on the ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

_Imperial German Embassy_

This warning was printed adjacent to an advertisement for Lusitania's return voyage. The warning led to some agitation in the press and worried the ship's passengers and crew.

On May 7 about 2:00 PM, Charles felt a muffled impact, and “the good ship trembled for a moment under the force of the blow.” He turned to see where the sound was coming from and saw “smoke and cinders flying up in the air on the starboard side.” A second explosion soon followed, but to him it seemed to come from an exploding boiler, not a second torpedo.

Hurrying to his own “most forward” B Deck cabin on the starboard side, Charles Lauriat grabbed his leather business case, tied on his lifebelt and grabbed two more to give them to other passengers that might need them. He saw that several people had their lifebelts on incorrectly and sought to assist them; however, some thinking that he was trying to take their belts ran away in terror.

Charles ended up in one of the lifeboats with Samuel Knox, a former state senator from Delaware. The coast of Ireland was in sight and they continued to pick up more people in the water until the boat had “sunk flush with the water.” The boatload of survivors rowed for the lighthouse on the Old Head of Kinsale, Ireland, continuing to pull people in. As they rowed, Lauriat thought, “At least we have a good crew.”

Upon Lauriat's return to Boston, he became President of the largest book importing firm in New England. He was also paid $1,000 for lost luggage. He died in 1937 and is buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery.