The Bedford Flag, the oldest existing flag in the United States. On view at the Bedford Library.

The Preservationist

Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - Bedford - Massachusetts

Founded in 1893

April 2014 *Published for anyone interested in our history* Volume 123, Number 4

Join Us For Another Great Free Lecture

Wednesday, April 23, 7:00 pm

Congregational Church, 25 Great Road

"The Kennedy Assassination: 50 Years Later"

by Christopher Daley

The Bedford Historical Society's Wednesday evening, April 23 program will feature a fascinating talk on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Christopher Daley, the guest speaker, will begin his presentation at 7:30 pm – 15 minutes earlier than usual, because his 90-minute talk will cover the assassination, the Warren Report, and numerous conspiracy theories.

Bring a friend to enjoy this interesting talk entitled: "The Kennedy Assassination: 50 Years Later."

Mr. Daley is no stranger to the Historical Society's speaker series. In past seasons, he has delighted audiences with talks, including many interesting slides, on President Lincoln's assassination and the Lizzie Borden murders. His "Mass Murder" lecture – which the Society may sign up to hear in the future, is the basis of Mr. Daley's current research for a book he is writing.

Mr. Daley holds Bachelor's and Masters' degrees from Bridgewater State University. A history teacher at the Silver Lake Regional School System in Kingston, he has written several articles on local history and has lectured on historical topics throughout New England for close to 20 years.

He is a former member of the Board of Executives and former Chairman of the Educational Outreach Program at the John Alden Historic Site in Duxbury. He also served as Chairman of the Pembroke Historical Commission and President of the Pembroke Historical Society.

! The event will begin with refreshments at 7:00 pm and guest speaker Christopher Daley will start his presentation at 7:30 pm.

Other free upcoming lectures see page 4

Bedford in 1900

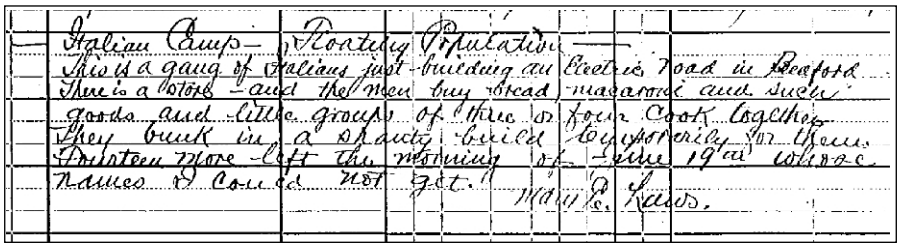
by Brian Oulighan & Don Corey

Bedford observed many changes as it entered the 20th century. The population increased from 1092 to 1208 between 1890 and 1900. During that period 158 new people arrived in Bedford from other countries, so that about 30% of the population was now foreign born. As was the case in previous decades, they were mostly from Canada and Ireland but 17 people arrived from Denmark, 11 from Poland, and 4 from Sweden They became housekeepers, RR workers or farm laborers. There was plenty of work to do. There were 11 Boarding Houses operating in 1900 and 38 RR Workers living in town.

Mary Laws was the Census taker in 1900, and was quite diligent about her job. I am not sure where she found them, but she ran across 20 men in a camp, all from Italy, which she called "Floating Population". They included a Blacksmith, a Stableman, five (5) Teamsters and the rest were Laborers.

Here is what Mary wrote:

" ITALIAN CAMP – FLOATING POPULATION." "This is a gang of Italians just building an Electric Road in Bedford. There is a store – and the men buy bread, macaroni and such goods and little groups of three or four cook together. They bunk in a Shanty build (sic) temporarily for them. 14 more left the morning of June 19th whose names I could not get." Mary E. Laws.



Italian Camp – Floating Population
This is a gang of Italians just building an Electric Road in Bedford
There is a store – and the men buy bread macaroni and such
goods and little groups of three or four cook together
They bunk in a Shanty build (sic) temporarily for them. 14 more
Fourteen more left the morning of June 19th whose
names I could not get.
Mary E. Laws.

The 20 men plus the 14 that left earlier were working on the "Electric Road", the Lexington and Boston Street Railway Co. that opened April 8, 1900. It provided direct service into Boston and out as far as Lowell and Maynard. With the opening of the street railway, Lexington Park with its many amusements also opened and became extremely popular.

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Bedford Schools in the 1890s

by Don Corey

Brian Oulighan's recent Preservationist articles on recreating the lost 1890 Federal Census and on life in Bedford during the 1890s triggered Don Corey's attention while reviewing other Society documents.

The following is excerpted from the 1890 Town Report.

"At the Town Meeting that was held on Nov. 4, 1890, the following bylaw was adopted:

'That two Truant Officers be appointed annually whose duty it shall be to inquire into all violations of the laws relating to compulsory education.

'All children between the ages of 7 and 15 years, who may be found wandering about in the streets and public places in said town, having no lawful occupation or business, not attending school, and growing up in ignorance, shall be committed to the Lowell Reform School for confinement, instruction, and discipline.

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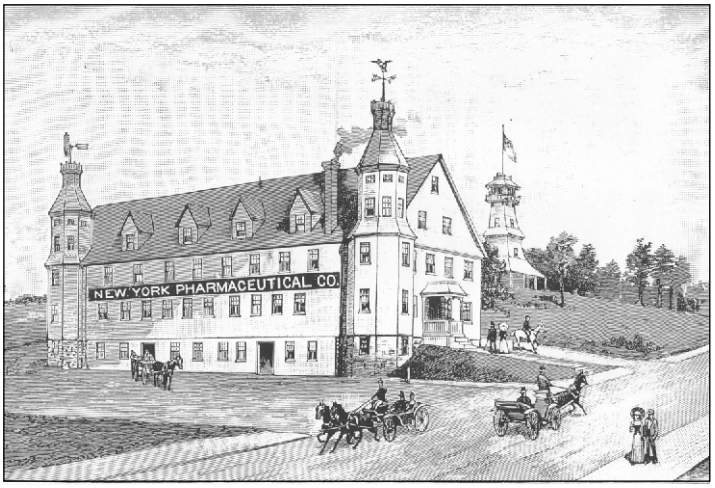

In 1898, the greatly enlarged "Hotel Sweetwater" had replaced the Bedford Springs Hotel. Around 1900 was the peak of William Hayden's Hotel Sweetwater and N.Y. Pharmaceutical Co. laboratory operations. There were 30 workers listed in the 1900 Census: Cook, Laundress, Second Girl, Nurse Girl, Rail Road Laborer, Nurse, Bookkeeper, Compounder, Farm Foreman, Laborer, House Keeper, Laboratory Girl, Second Girl, Packer, Coachmen, Head Waiter, Cook, (3) Waitresses, Storekeeper, Bellboy, (2) more Waitresses, Chamber Work, Pantry Girl, Space Work, Coachman. Alice Tilden was the Clerk for the Bedford Springs Post Office. William R. Hayden died in 1903 at age 82.

Along Old Billerica Road the Parker family – Frederic, Arthur, Francis and Eleanor – had acquired hundreds of acres extending from Llewsac Lodge (now Carleton-Willard) up to where Route 3 now crosses under. In 1904, Arthur Parker bought the race horse, Bingen, for $32,000.00 and her fillies, Albia for $3,300.00 and Leona for $2,800.00. Arthur was a well-known breeder of fine horses and had a race track for training near the sharp bends in the road. His brother, Francis Parker, bought Margaret Bathgate for $4,500.00 and Susie J. for $2,300.00. There must have been some local chatter about this.

During the same period Dudley Pickman expanded his large estate along Dudley Road, and Charles Jenks, then owner of Fitch Tavern, acquired more property that was added to the Fitch farm in the center of town.

In 1904, Bedford purchased its first 2 telephones, as noted in the Town Report: “Without expense to the Town other than the cost of two telephone instruments and installation, this Board has established an independent telephonic connection between the Congregational church and the fire engine house, an improvement which should prove of great value to the fire department in quickly locating fires after an alarm. Chandler & Farquhar, two telephones, 6.50.”

And one last piece of very sad news, Abram English Brown died on February 20, 1909, at age 60. “Born in Bedford, January 21, 1849 to Moses and Elizabeth (Smith) Brown. As a youngster, Abram worked for his father as a butcher with his brother John. He became a school teacher and a writer and has written at least 13 books. He was very active in many Town offices. He will be missed by all.”

There were many other events locally and around the world from 1900 to 1910, which will give us an idea what the talk of the day could have been.

- The first state-issued license plates are issued in Massachusetts, beginning in 1903.
- On October 13, 1903, The Boston Americans (later became the Red Sox) won the World Series, beating the heavily favored Pittsburgh Pirates at the Huntington Ave. Grounds in Boston.
- President McKinley was assassinated in Sept. 1901, and Vice- President Theodore Roosevelt became President.
- At 10:35 a.m. on December 17, 1903, Orville Wright flew the “Flyer” for 12 seconds over 120 feet of ground. This flight, was conducted on Kill Devil Hill outside of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.
- Henry Ford introduced the first Model-T in 1908 and sold 10,000 automobiles.
- In 1909 the books Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer were banned from the Brooklyn Public Library, for setting a “bad example”.

■

QUIZ: In 1900, Bedford has 3 “Bargemen”, that worked for the Town, Hodgdon, Davis and Spreadby.
What did they do in the Morning on weekdays?

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'It shall be the duty of every truant officer, previous to carrying out the above, to notify the truant, also his parent or guardian, of the offense committed, and the penalty therefor, and if the officer can obtain satisfactory pledges for the restraint and reformation of the child, he may at his discretion forbear to prosecute, so long as such pledges are faithfully kept."

The following is excerpted from the 1899 report of the Superintendent of Schools to the School Committee.

"Although our High School is now doing well it is conducted under some serious hindrances. There is no suitable recitation room in the Town Hall and the teachers there are obliged to conduct their recitations in the same room at the same time. If this is not strictly in accordance with the Chinese method of all talking at once it is certainly confusing, and results in loss of time and energy.

The schools have outgrown their quarters. We are operating a business too large for the plant. Larger accommodations are essential ..."

As this overcrowding situation has occurred repeatedly over the years in Bedford, the solution at that time was rather unique. Bedford simply abandoned and shut down its High School! In order for its children not to "grow up in ignorance", students were sent to Concord and Lexington for over 50 years until the current High School was finally built in the 1950s.

■

Hanscom Airport was not the first airport in Bedford!

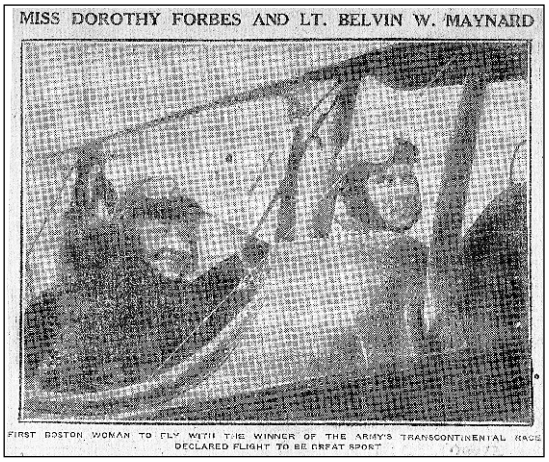
In an attempt to build on the success of the airplane after its use in WWI, in 1919 the Curtiss Airplane Company leased a field from farmer Ernest Yates. This field, off South Road, and named Lee Field by the Curtiss Company, was to be part of a network of small airdromes or landing stations placed strategically around the country. The purpose of this facility was to provide not only a relay point for aircraft that lacked the ability to travel great distances without landing, but it also provided the Curtiss Company with a regional base to promote the sale of it's aircraft.

The airdrome opened in July with much fanfare and excitement. Local teen, Mabel Kirkegaard, made the following entries in her diary:

- Monday, July 19, 1919: *"An aviation field is started on Yates farm in Bedford, Tow machines arrived today, one from Worcester. Some town!!"*
- Wednesday, July 23, 1919: *"Mr. & Mrs. Dunlop came down & they & I went over to Yates farm to see the air plane."*
- Thursday, July 31, 1919: *"Airplane over at Yates Farm met with a slight mishap - ran into a stone wall."*
- Tuesday, November 11, 1919: *"Took 6 pictures of the 'Flying Parson' and his aeroplane this morning. He made several flights from Bedford field."*

Curtiss staged many promotional events, which made their way into not only the local paper, but the Boston Globe. One such event, mentioned above by Mabel, was the arrival of the "Flying Parson," Lt. Belvin Maynard, seen in the photo below. Lt. Maynard, representing the Red Cross, visited Bedford to offer airplane rides to those who had made generous donations to the Red Cross during the war.

The airdrome closed for the season in early December, 1919, opening again when the weather improved the following spring. It was still operating in the summer of 1920; however it did not seem to generate the same level of excitement, based on minimal entries in the Bedford Enterprise that summer. The Curtiss Airplane Company, unable to sustain the level of interest in aviation that they had enjoyed during the war, struggled financially. The 1921 edition of the *Flying Guide and Log Book* by Bruce Eytinge still lists a commercial airfield in Bedford, operated by the Curtiss Airplane Company, but operations seem to have tapered off dramatically. In the book, *Curtiss-Wright Airports: A Nation-wide Chain of Strategically Located Ports*, published in 1929 by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation (Curtiss merged with Wright Aeronautical in 1929), there is no mention of a Bedford, MA airfield.



MISS DOROTHY FORBES AND LT. BELVIN W. MAYNARD

FIRST BOSTON WOMAN TO FLY WITH THE WINNER OF THE ARMY'S TRANSCONTINENTAL RACE DECLARED FLIGHT TO BE GREAT SPORT

BEDFORD SITE OF BIG AIRDROME

Dun 27

Curtiss Company Plans Landing Station for Aircraft

LIKE AIR BASES ON FRENCH FRONT

An airdrome, to serve as a centre of airplane operations in this part of the state and as a terminal for cross-country flights to Boston, will be established at Bedford by the Curtiss Airplane Company of New England, according to announcement made at the Boston office, 80 Boylston street, yesterday.

Paton MacGilvary, general manager of the company, said that the new field would serve as a service station for all aircraft operating in this vicinity and that aviators would be invited to make use of its facilities. Mechanics will be maintained and oil, gasoline and spare parts, not only for Curtiss planes, but for other types of machines in general use, will be available.

Advantages of the Site

The field is on the Ernest S. Yates farm, a mile southeast of Bedford centre, within easy access of Boston, but far enough removed from the public highways to eliminate the danger of accidents due to crowds of spectators. The field is naturally level and the surrounding territory is flat and smooth, affording a large area for forced landings.

The field, on which the company has obtained a lease, contains 97 acres, 60 of which have already been cleared and made level enough for the landing of a plane. When the field is fully developed it will resemble the air bases used by the American aviators on the French front. Portable canvas hangar tents will become the home of the Curtiss planes in commercial use as well as the growing number of pleasure craft.

The airdrome will be named Lee Field in honor of Lt. Zanna P. Lee, a former army officer, now with the Curtiss company. Lt. Lee made the first successful cross-country flight from Texas to Washington, D. C., and return in October, 1918. He served at various flying fields as acrobatic instructor, instructor in cross-country flying and in testing government planes. His home is in Aledo, Ill.

Lee Field is the sixth air station established by the Curtiss company and its affiliated concerns for the development of airplane travel in New England. Three of these aviation sites are now in use in Massachusetts.

Officers

Jan van Steenwijk, *President* - Brown Pulliam, *Vice President* - Phyllis Cooke, *Secretary* - Patricia Leiby, *Treasurer*

Directors

Frank Gicca - ('17) *Chairman* - Judie Toti - ('15) *Board Clerk* - Carol Amick ('16) - Lee Vorderer ('16 - Julie McCay Turner ('16) - Bea Brown ('17) - Joan Gicca - ('17) - Marion Bryan ('14) - Sharon McDonald ('17) - Richard LeSchack ('17) - Don Corey ('15) - Atty. Paul Dick ('15)

Finance Committee

Frank Gicca - *Chairman* - Patricia Leiby - *Treasurer* - Don Corey - Donald Jenkins - Paul Dick - Jan van Steenwijk - *Pres.* - Brown Pulliam - Vice Pres.

Membership Application

Name:_____

Address:_____

City/Town:_____Zip:____

Phone:_____

Email:_____

Dues

_ Student:	$ 15.00
_ Single:	$ 25.00
_ Couple or Family:	$ 45.00
_ Life - Single:	$250.00
_ Life - Couple:	$450.00
Supporting or Business:	
_Contributing:	$100.00
_ Patron:	$175.00
_ Benefactor:	$300.00
_ Donation:	$

Amount enclosed: $_____

Please send check to:

Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - 2 Mudge Way - Bedford, MA 01730-2138

The Bedford Flag, the oldest existing flag in the United States. On view at the Bedford Library.

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Please mark you calendar

Wednesday, May 28

The evening will be held at the Congregational Church on 25 Great Road - **at 6:30**

Annual Meeting - Put Luck and Lecture

Speaker: Dave Downs
"Downsizing Your Historical STUFF"

Mr. Downs will explore six common reasons why we acquire "stuff" of historical value and save in our basements, closets, attics, garages, and sheds - and will provide some helpful hints for managing this "problem."

Please save the date for the Annual Meeting, Potluck Supper and guest speaker at the Society's Wednesday, May 28th meeting, starting at 6:30 pm (because of the potluck) at the First Church of Christ Congregational Church.

As in past years, Society members will be phoning all members who live in or near Bedford, to remind them about bringing a salad, main dish or dessert for the annual fun event. If you are willing to help make phone calls (takes about 15-30 minutes), please contact the Society office (781-275-7276 or info@bedfordmahistory.org) or Carol Amick (781-275-5278 or carol.amick@verizon.net) to volunteer.

After dinner, the Annual Meeting will be held to elect new Society officers and members of the Board of Directors. Recommendations from the Nominating Committee will appear in the May edition of the Preservationist.

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

www.bedfordmahistory.org

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Kara Kerwin
781-275-7276

The Preservationist.

Design, production & photography: Jan van Steenwijk
Contributing writers ; Carol Amick, Don Corey, Kara Kerwin, Brian Oulighan & Sharon McDonald

"Late Tuesday night or early Wednesday morning "hen thieves" raided the premises of Dexter Wilson, Fletcher ave., John Henry and Anthony Zvengilas, Springs road and got clean away with about 100 choice fowl and full grown chickens. When the victims of the thieves looked over their flocks they discovered that in each instance only the patricians of flock had been taken, indicating that the thieves were connoisseurs in their profession."

Reprinted from the Bedford Enterprise, October 20 1909

From our Rich Collection

The Preservationist
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"We Don't Make History...
We Keep It Alive..!"

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