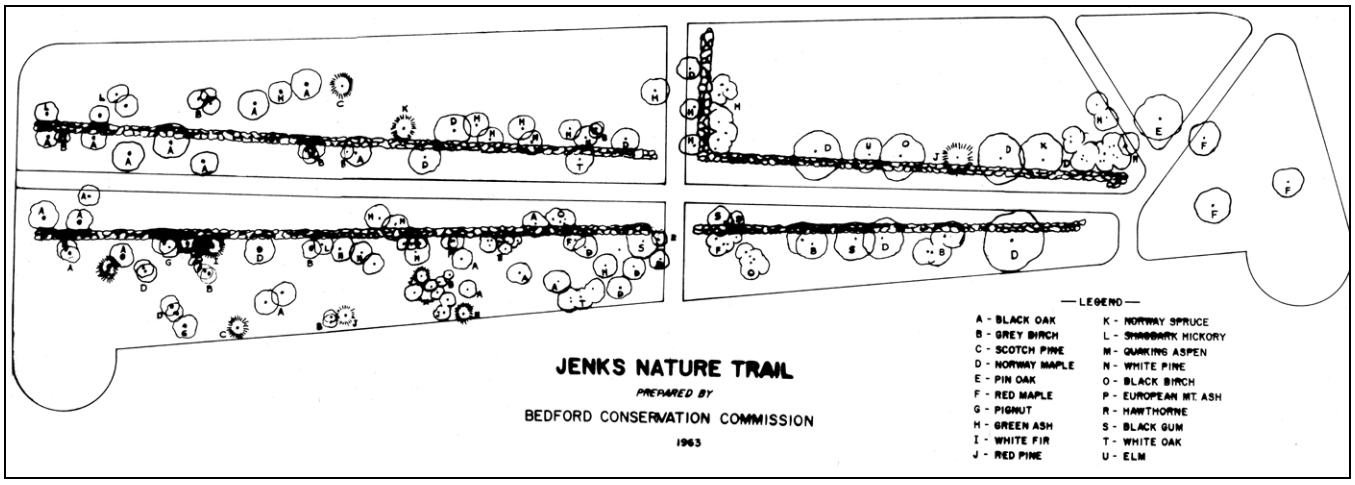
The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Bedford (Mass.) Historical Society
Founded in 1893

April 2007 Volume 114, Number 6



The Jenks Nature Trail, the pathway between the stone walls that run in front of the Bedford library and high school, honors Charles Jenks' service and generosity to the Town of Bedford. See page 3. The walls flank a track that ran through pasture belonging to the Jenks farm. The 1963 plan shown here calls for a small arboretum with 20 species of birch, pine, maple, oak, and other trees to be planted.

Nearby Native American Archeological Sites

The 10,000-year-old spear point in the Historical Society's collection is just one piece of the rich Native American history of our area. At this month's meeting will learn more about some of the local Native American archeological sites. Our guest speaker is Dr. Curtiss Hoffman, Chairman of the Anthropology Department at Bridgewater State College, and author of *The SUASCO Watershed archaeological inventory project: Exploring the cultural resources of a suburban area*, a study of pre-Colonial architectural sites in the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord River watershed.

As always, our meeting will begin with coffee hour. Please bring a friend!

Wednesday, April 25, 7:30 p.m.
Congregational Church, 25 The Great Road
Free and open to the public

A picnic in the grove behind Stone Croft Farm (now known as the Fitch Tavern), circa 1908. See page 3

The Preservationist is published seven times each year by the Bedford Historical Society for the purpose of sharing topics of interest for the education and enjoyment of the Society's members and the community in general. Comments, suggestions and contributions of relevant articles are welcome and should be addressed to: Editor, ***The Preservationist,*** 2 Mudge Way, Bedford MA 01730.

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Email: bedford-history@usa.net

Bedford Historical Society, 2005-2006

Officers

Alethea Yates, President
Robert Slechta, Vice President
Phyllis Cooke, Secretary
Don Corey, Treasurer

Directors

John Brown ('07)
John Dodge ('07)
Neil Leary ('07)
Carol Amick ('08)
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Julie Turner ('08) - Board Secretary
Don Corey ('09) - Board Chair
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Jan van Steenwijk ('09)
Marion Bryan ('10)
Marietta Ellis ('10)
Donald Jenkins ('10)

Committees

Activities: Jeannette Pothier
BOD Liaison to Executive Board: Don Corey
Hospitality: Cecile Walker and Phyllis Cooke
Membership Secretary: TBD
Merchandise/Ways & Means: John Carlson
Newsletter Editor: Alethea Yates
Nominating:
Betty Slechta (appointed by President, '07)
TBD (appointed by Executive Board, '08)
TBD (appointed by Membership, '09)
Program: Cecile Walker
Sunshine: Miriam Brown
Welcoming: Lois Jenkins
Finance Committee:
Don Corey (Board Chairman, Treasurer)
Frank Gicca ('07)
Mike Seibert ('08)
Neil Leary ('09)
Alethea Yates (BHS President)

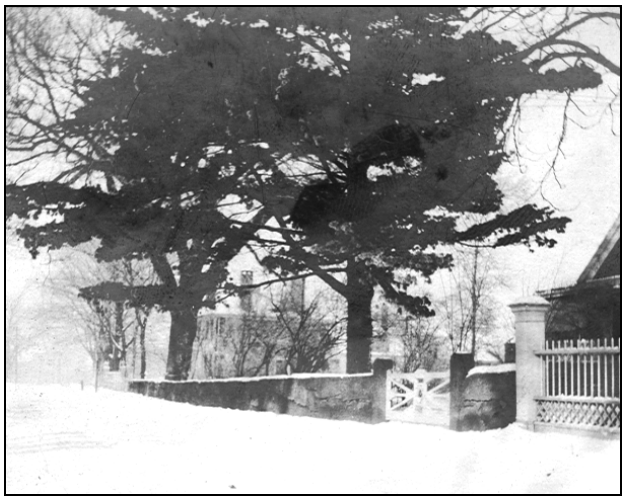
Bylaw change proposed

The Historical Society's Directors have proposed a change of the Society's bylaws in order to create an Executive Director position. Full details will be given in next month's newsletter and a vote of the membership will be taken at our Annual Meeting in May.

Books for sale at April meeting

At February's meeting, Charles Price gave an excellent presentation on Prince Estabrook, a slave who became the first black soldier in the American Revolution. The Society is offering for sale several copies of the book, *Prince Estabrook – slave and soldier*, that have been autographed by Mr. Price. The price is $19.95.

Copies of the following books will also be available: *An Awesome Century* by Williston Farrington, $12.00 ($10.80 with member discount), and *Remembered in Bedford, Mass.* by John Brown, $12.00 ($10.80 with member discount). Both titles are selling briskly. Don't miss out!



Archives hours

Our room in the Stearns building (the Police Station) at 2 Mudge Way is *usually* open at the following times:

Mondays, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5 - Tuesdays, 9 to 12

Other times by appointment. Please call 781-275-1212 x 140. Note: Our phone is answered by our "roommates," the Bedford police; just ask for our extension. Please don't hesitate to call.

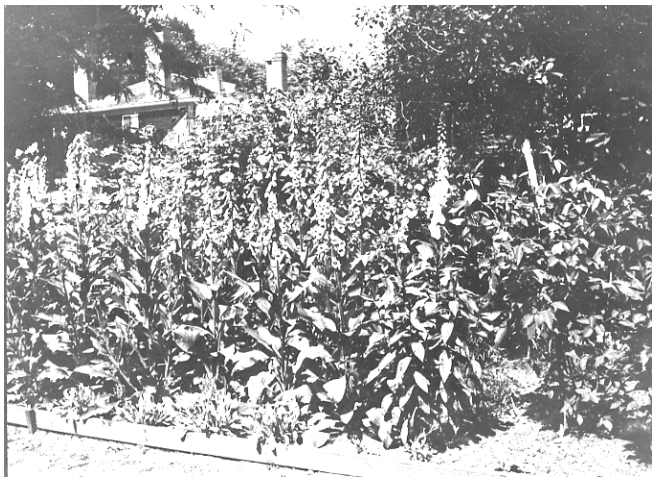
The country life

The story sounds familiar: a businessman, tired of the hurly-burly of the city, retires to the country and becomes a gentleman farmer. The year was 1884, the businessman-turned-farmer was Charles William Jenks, and his version of "Green Acres" was Stone Croft Farm, now known as Fitch Tavern, Bedford.

It all made sense. Charles Jenks was the great-grandson of Jeremiah Fitch, who provided breakfast for the town's fighting men on April 19, 1775. Charles no doubt had visited the family farm many times in his childhood when it was owned by his aunt Caroline Fitch. It was still a working farm. Across from the house was a large barn (it stood approximately at the head of Mudge Way where it meets the Great Road) with plenty of acreage for farmyard and pasture.

Charles Jenks was born in Boston in 1848, the son of Mary Rand Fitch and John Henry Jenks. He attended Boston Latin School and graduated from Harvard College in 1871, then went on to work as a paper manufacturer in Boston. But in spite of his city birth, upbringing, and career, he seems to have been born to study and enjoy nature. He joined the Mass. Horticultural Society in 1865, and before settling down to business life he did a year of postgraduate work at the Bussey Institute, a biological school of Harvard University.

Thus he was ready to begin a new life in the country. In addition to running the farm, he planted extensive gardens around his house and roamed the woods and fields. A keen botanist, he helped to compile a comprehensive description of the plant life of Middlesex County. For many years he used his love of nature to serve the government by making daily notations as a volunteer weather observer.



Foxgloves, with 4 The Great Road in the background

Charles Jenks on snowshoes with Mops the dog

Like many a "retired" person in Bedford, he led an active civic life. Among other things, he served for 20 years as the Town Moderator; was the town's first Tree Warden; was a library trustee; advised the Winifred Thorndike Simonds Nature Club; and helped to charter the Bedford Grange #238. He further demonstrated his commitment to the town by donating two acres of land for the Junior High building (the current Town Hall) as well 16 acres adjoining the Shawsheen Cemetery.

Another lasting contribution is now housed in the Archives of the Bedford Historical Society. From 1910 to 1925 he filled six scrapbooks with every available newspaper clipping about Bedford, supplemented with a wide array of Bedford memorabilia such as photographs of Old Home Day in 1912 and many Bedford Grange programs. The scrapbooks are such a valuable source of information about Bedford life in that era that they have been microfilmed and a copy placed at the Bedford library.

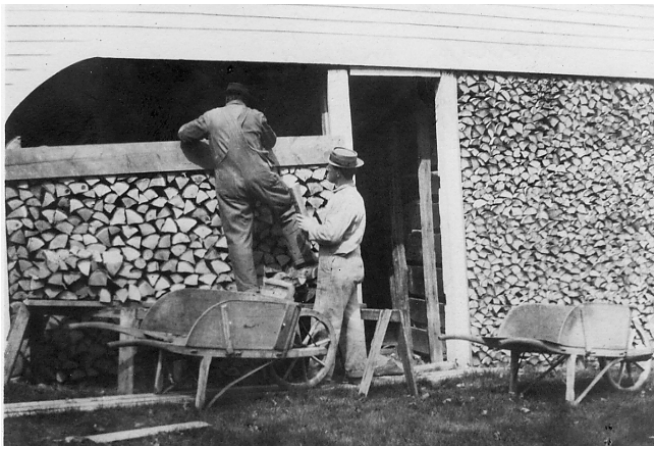
For many years Charles shared his home at Stone Croft Farm with his two sisters, Mary F. and Caroline E. Jenks. He died on Christmas Day, 1929, survived by his nephews Henry A., Charles F., and Frederic A. Jenks, the sons of his brother, the Rev. Henry Fitch Jenks. After services at the First Parish Church in Bedford he was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery. As his obituary states, "No project of benefit to the town was too small for him to lend his aid, and his thoughtfulness to others was one of his most lovable traits." Though not a native son, he was a true son of Bedford.

Mary F. Jenks as Martha Washington

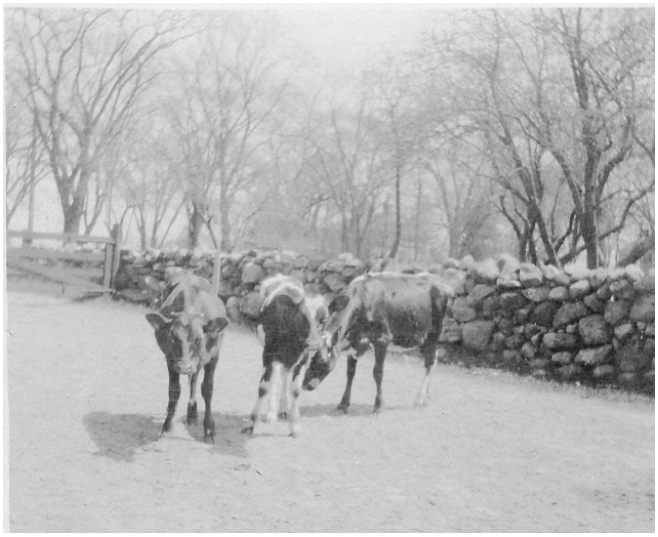
"Richard on horseback" at the barn

A crabapple tree in bloom, with barn in background

Stone Croft Barn in winter, as seen from the house



Stacking the woodshed



Cows on the farm

Job Lane House news

For information about doings at the Job Lane House, contact Jeannette Pothier at 781-275-8794 or email her at j.pothier@verizon.net.

The Bedford Historical Society is the proud sponsor of the Job Lane House parlor, the room with the Rufus Porter murals. It's time to do our annual chores to prepare "our" room (and help with the other rooms, too) for Open House days that begin on Mother's Day, May 13. Two cleanup days are planned: **Saturday, April 28**, 8:30 am to 2 pm, Cleaning Day 1, with lunch provided. **Saturday, May 4**, Day 2, Cleaning and Gift Shop setup, 8:30 to noon. Please lend a hand if you can.

Barn Yard Sale

Saturday, May 19, 9 to 3 PM. Job Lane Farm Museum, 295 North Road.

The Friends of the Job Lane House are having a Yard Sale inside the barn. Proceeds will be used to bring back the Jolly Rogues to play at the Craft Faire on September 8. The Friends need donations of items to sell, as well as volunteers to price the goods, set up for the sale, and clean up afterward.

DROP OFF TIME: Wednesday, May 16 and Thursday May 17, 6 – 7 pm, and by appointment. Please DO NOT LEAVE DONATIONS OUTSIDE THE BARN.

PRICING: Friday May 18, noon to 7 pm.

Join the staff!

The Friends of the Job Lane House do a noble job of presenting the town-owned historic house to visitors from near and far. Open House is held on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, 2 to 4 PM, May to October.

To make it all happen they need volunteers to serve as tour guides, greeters, shop attendants, cleaners, and people ready to lend a hand generally. **TOUR GUIDES** in period costume show guests through the house. Training is provided. It's an excellent way to learn more about our colonial heritage and meet others who share your interest. **GREETERS** sit inside or out, depending on the weather, take the donation, present the guest book, and hand out brochures. **GIFT SHOP WORKERS** remove dust cloths, accept money for purchases, and close up by replacing dust cloths. Simple as that!

Membership Application and Renewal Form

This is (please check one):

____ A new membership

____ A renewal

____ **A gift subscription**

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Dues (please check one):

__ Student:	$3.00
__ Individual:	$10.00
__ Couple or Family:	$15.00
__ Supporting or Business:	$50.00
__ Life – Individual:	$150.00
__ Life – Couple:	$200.00

Donation

I would like to contribute the following amount to aid the Society: $ _____

Total enclosed: $ _____

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730
781-275-1212, extension 140

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Bedford MA 01730

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Bedford Garden Club members hard at work in the herb garden at the Job Lane House in July, 1989. Listed as the workers for that year were Jo Champney, Doris Fitzgerald, Ann Mikkala, Betty Hammond, Betty Morse, Betty French, Penny Leslie, and Vera Dolimont. ***From the Bedford Garden Club Collection.***