Ancestral home of the Lane family in Rickmansworth, England, home town of Job Lane of England and New England. The Lane Family Papers in our Archives have been newly transcribed and are now available on our web site. See page 4.

Thoreau’s Cape Cod

This month we meet on a Sunday afternoon to hear from photographer Dan Tobyne.

Henry David Thoreau rambled over the great sandy peninsula of Massachusetts in the 1840s and 1850s and then wrote *Cape Cod*, which has been called his “sunniest, happiest book.” A few years ago professional photographer Dan Tobyne asked himself, “What would Thoreau see today if he walked the same routes?” The result of his questioning is a new edition of Thoreau’s book, beautifully illustrated with Tobyne’s photographs. At this meeting he will share some of his insights and his photos.

At 2:00 we have coffee, goodies, and a nice chat, then we start the meeting at 2:30.

**SUNDAY, April 25, 2010, 2:00 PM**
(nt not Wednesday evening as usual)

**Congregational Church**

**25 The Great Road, Bedford**

Free and open to all. Please bring a friend or three. All are welcome!
**The Preservationist** is published seven times yearly 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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(781) 275-3294 (home)
(781) 275-7276 (BHS office)
Email: info@bedfordmahistory.org

**Bedford Historical Society, 2009-2010**

**Officers**
Jan van Steenwijk, President
(vacant) Vice President
Phyllis Cooke, Secretary
Don Corey, Treasurer

**Directors**
Marion Bryan (‘10)  
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Donald Jenkins (‘10)  
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Carol Amick (‘12)  
Norman Toti (‘12)  
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Bea Brown (‘13)  
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**Finance Committee**
Julie McCay Turner (Board Chair)  
Don Corey (BHS Treasurer)  
Neil Leary (‘09)  
Frank Gicca (‘10)  
Donald Jenkins (‘11)  
Jan van Steenwijk (BHS President)

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**In memoriam**

We note with sorrow the passing of Dorothy Fox. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family.

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**Annual Giving**

We are still receiving donations for our Annual Giving fund drive:

Henry Paap  
John Stewart

We are grateful for their contributions.

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**Bedford Flags for sale**

Show your Bedford pride to all the world! Because of popular demand, we now offer FULL SIZE 3’x3’ Bedford Flags, made for outdoor use and ready to fly, $76 each. These flags are made from durable nylon set with grommets for use with your flagpole.

Like all of our Bedford history merchandise, these flags are available at our office all year long. To order your own Bedford Flag, other Bedford memorabilia or traditional toys, call our office at 781-275-7276 or email us at info@bedfordmahistory.org. To see a catalog of all our merchandise, visit our web site at www.bedfordmahistory.org and click the Store button.

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**Green and growing**

Our roll of members just grows and grows! We’ve gained 9 memberships in just the last month:

William and Phyllis Laorenza Linnehan  
Paul Hill  
Colleen Haggerty  
Mark and Valerie Jacobs  
Beatrice Corcoran  
Roger and Susan Shamel  
Steven Hagan  
James and Mary Hurley  
Vernon Rivet, Jr.

Welcome, all! What a pleasure to know that you, like so many others, truly cherish Bedford’s history.

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**Archives hours**

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

*Monday, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5*  
*Tuesday, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5*  
*Wednesday, 9 to 1*

Other times by appointment. It’s best to phone ahead before you stop by because we do step out for errands now and then. Please call 781-275-7276.
A party full of surprises

As we are getting closer to our biggest fundraiser ever, we invite your participation. On June 19 we will help the Knight family to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the famous Fitch Tavern at 12 The Great Road.

In a wonderful tradition, the Knights have kept the house as much as possible in the style of the original architecture. While many of this country’s historic treasures have disappeared in the name of progress, we find some of the features inside the house the way they were some 300 years ago. We, the modern Bedfordians, can be proud of having such dedicated individuals in town, protecting and keeping parts of our rich history alive. Of course, the Fitches were to pass the house today, they might not recognize it immediately. The house is bigger than when it was built, has electric lighting, and stands on an asphalt road.

But there is one thing that would bring back memories: the Tavern’s kitchen. Even though the house has been owned by many families the kitchen has remained almost untouched. It was here that the Bedford Minutemen met on that famous morning of April 19, 1775, before marching to Concord to defend their rights.

Many years later, the Bedford Minutemen still meet in April at the Tavern before re-enacting the events that released us from the British Crown.

As a tribute to the Fitch Tavern and our history, Michael and Lea Ann Knight have given the Society a generous opportunity to have a peek into the original room where nervous men gathered for some bread and hot coffee. Unlike those visitors, we will be treated with an elaborate multi-course dinner, music, entertainment and a few surprises. Because of space limitations, only 65 guests will have the opportunity to participate. The Society has made this event a fundraiser which will be remembered for many years to come.

At this moment, you can still be a part of this unique adventure, and have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see the wide pine boards used for the floor and walls, and see the blackened ceiling beams, which are bending (but safe!) just above your head. It will be easy to envision how people gathered here so many years ago in front of the large fire place, smoking their pipes, drinking a beer or coffee, and enjoying town gossip.

Please join us; we will greet you with the dignity deserved for this old place. If you cannot make it, I would encourage you to make a donation -- of any amount -- to the Society. Your money will be wisely spent on the many programs we have offered ever since the Society was founded 117 years ago. If we don’t meet at the Fitch Tavern Party, I hope to see you at our regular lecture series or at other events we hold throughout the year.

Jan van Steenwijk, President

Don’t miss this fabulous party! Price per person, $125. Early birds (before May 19), $110. The absolute limit of guests is 65. Tickets will be reserved on a first come, first served basis. The Bedford Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization. At least $90 per ticket will be tax deductible; please confirm with your financial advisor.

Please reserve ___ tickets @ $125 per person (or $110 per person BEFORE MAY 19)

Additional donation: $_______

Name:__________________________________________________________________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip: __________________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ____________________________________ Email: _______________________________________________

I enclose a check (payable to Bedford Historical Society) for $________

Please send to Bedford Historical Society, 2 Mudge Way, Bedford MA 01730-2138. Thank you!
Job Lane of England and New England, part 1

The Lane Family Papers, some 230 documents dated from the 1650s to the 1790s, are the crown jewel of the Bedford Historical Society’s collections. They are an exceptional set of documents about an exceptional family, who were among the first and most important landholders of what is now Bedford.

Until recently, though, the Lane Papers were of limited use. Not only are they old and fragile, but they can be extremely difficult to read. In the 1700s and 1800s there was no standard way of spelling words so each writer spelled words just as they sounded to him. There was no standard style of handwriting. Also, many of the papers are stained or damaged. For all these reasons, many documents be understood only by deciphering them one word at a time, a laborious and challenging task.

These difficulties have now been overcome. Thanks to grants from the Bedford Cultural Council and the Greater Lowell Community Foundation, we have transcribed the Papers and posted them onto our web site (www.bedfordmahistory.org). We are grateful to Archives assistant Kara Kerwin for her outstanding work in transcribing the Lane Papers.

In this and future issues of the Preservationist we plan share with you some of the insights gained from these new transcriptions, starting with Job Lane of England and New England.

Who was Job Lane 1?

First, some biographical background. According to the official Lane genealogy1, Job Lane 1 (he is given the number 1 to signify the first generation in America), son of James Lane, “was born in England about 1620… He first appears [in America] at Sekonk, Mass., in 1643… He was at Rehoboth, Mass, [in] 1645… He was at Dorchester, Mass., and returned to England and was married [to his first wife, Sarah Boys/Boyse/Boyce] in 1647… [He] settled in Malden, Mass., near the time of its incorporation, May 2, 1649.” He was a housewright – that is, a master carpenter who specialized in building houses. Among the structures known to have built by him was the first meetinghouse in Malden in 1659.

1 Lane Genealogies, Volume III, compiled by James Hill Fitts. Exeter, N.H.: The News-Letter Press, 1902. (We are grateful to Brandon Avery for donating a copy of this important book to our collections.)

Job Lane became the owner of various properties in England and America, as illustrated by a number of the Lane Papers. He had inherited land in England from his father’s family; he bought various pieces of land in Massachusetts; and by making an heiress his second wife, he came into rental property in Yorkshire, England. Documents concerning land transactions comprise an important part of the collection.

Bedford comes into the picture in 1637, when the General Court (legislature) of the Massachusetts Bay Colony awarded 1,000 acres of land in what is now Bedford to Governor John Winthrop in gratitude for his services in helping to establish the colony. The Court later added to this grant. In 1664 his grandson FitzJohn Winthrop, who had inherited the property, traded it to Job Lane in exchange for building him a house in Connecticut. The contract is one of the oldest of the Lane Family Papers.

Job Lane was widowed in 1659 and in the following year married Hannah/Anna Reyner. The Reyner family were heirs to property in “the townships of Edgeton and Wellburne, Yorkshire, England, and occupied by Thomas Boyse” [Lane Genealogies]. Job Lane thus became co-owner of this property. Interestingly, the rent collected from tenants on the property by Job Lane’s agents was sent to him not in cash but in the form of luxury goods, mostly fabric. Many of the documents among the Lane Family Papers are letters and business records concerning these transactions.

This brief document, dated 1674, gives an idea of some of the challenges of working with the Lane Family Papers – difficult penmanship, irregular spelling, damaged paper. Can you read it? Written on the back of an IOU to Francis Wolfe, on this side Wolfe assigns the IOU to Job Lane. The witnesses, William and Elizabeth Greaner, were unable to sign their names so each made a “mark” instead.

Little tidbits emerge from the Papers. In a 1678 letter to Job, his cousin in England asks “whether the heathen be subdued or not”; he is apparently asking about the outcome of King Philip’s War. In a 1696
letter, Job’s agent in London gives a list of items he has shipped and then remarks “I have had great loss by pirates from London to Hull.” The luxury goods shipped to Job include fabrics described as “carcey,” “broadcloath,” “alamode,” and “fine holland,” and “a Bible of good large print in quarto.”

History books report that New England suffered from a chronic shortage of cash. This is perhaps the reason why so many of Job’s financial dealings in America are done in mostly in merchandise rather than cash. For example, in 1667 Job is hired to build a bridge over the Concord River in exchange for £145, of which he is to be paid “ten pound in cash, ten pound in wheat, ten pound in malt, and ye remainder of the whole in corn and cattle, not exceeding ye one half in cattle, & [the cattle] to be under seaven years old…”

The Papers also prove that Job had a variety of indentured servants and slaves. In a 1651 document, former slave agrees to become Job Lane’s servant for nine years in exchange for food, clothing, and shelter. In 1661 an Irishman gets a better deal – seven years in exchange for food, clothing, shelter, and instruction in the trades of carpenter and farmer. On the back of this document, it is noted that in 1669 the servant runs away and gets caught; he then agrees to reimburse Job for the expense of catching him. In 1675 Job acquires an indentured servant from Wales. In 1676 he buys the rights to a boy named Thomas Carr, possibly a slave. In 1691 he buys a “Negro servant Tony.” In Job’s will he remembers another indentured servant: “If my servant William Matthews continues a faithful servant during his terme according to his Indentury I give him a good Cow.”

To be continued…

Basketball, Bedford and a lifetime of sports

Basketball was created at Springfield College in the 1890s, but amazingly didn’t arrive in Bedford until about fifty years later. I know this to be true because in the mid-1940s I was among the first youngsters in town to play the game. The story goes something like this.

I started school in Bedford in 1937. Like most boys at the time I loved sports. I played baseball all summer, football in the fall, hockey on a number of ponds and streams in the winter and in every season an assortment of games and activities in the many fields and woods of the town.

Except for a few kids who had hoops on their garages, there was literally no place in town to play basketball until 1945/1946 when suddenly there were three terrific venues. My memory is hazy as to which came first, but I think it was the “conversion” of the auditorium in the junior high building, now the town hall. A group of people convinced the selectmen to put screens on the windows and erect a fixed backboard and hoop at one end and a retractable set-up at the other. Suddenly the old parquet floor (which often buckled in wet weather!) was transformed into basketball court reasonably suitable for elementary and junior high games.

At about the same time (or possibly just before!) some enterprising ninth graders, led by Don and Jack Eunson, converted a room in a barn on North Road into a basketball court. For several years “the barn” was a popular hangout for teenage boys. The style of basketball we learned was unique. The baskets were literally on the end walls of the “gym” and the ball was always in play; thus it was a rough game, played in very close quarters with a fair amount of bumping and checking, almost hockey style.

The third venue was simply two baskets and a marked court in the parking lot on the westerly side of the junior high building. This was adequate in good weather and a lot more convenient than the barn, which was a mile or two from the center of town. (In those days, very few kids had parents who drove them anywhere.)

In the winter of 1946-47, as a ninth grader, I was a member of probably the first organized basketball team in Bedford. (Bedford schools ended in the ninth grade, high school was in Lexington. In 1950 Bedford students switched to Concord High until Bedford High School was built a few years later.) I remember
little of the season, except that we played a half dozen or so games against teams from Lexington, Concord, Lincoln and other towns. At about the same time the town created a recreation program for boys and girls and we played basketball in the evening, occasionally traveling to other towns for games.

The undefeated Bedford Junior High baseball team of 1945. The author is the little kid (7th grade) between the principal, Mr. Dodge, and Don Eunson, a 9th grader and later Bedford police chief

None of the boys on my Bedford Junior High team made the varsity at Lexington High. We simply had not been playing long enough. But Joe Sweeney, one of the kids to learn the game at the barn, went on to become the first basketball superstar from Bedford. Joe was three years younger than me and took the game very seriously, working diligently on his shooting and refining his skills on the parking lot court. It helped a lot that he was well over six feet and endowed with great natural abilities.

In 1949 when he was in the ninth grade Joe led the “junior hoopmen” (according to the Minuteman) to stunning victories over Acton (29-14) and Belmont (32-28). He then went on to Concord High, where he captained the basketball team, earned varsity letters as a tight end in football and a pitcher on the baseball team, and was voted the “outstanding athlete” of his 1953 graduating class.

I left Bedford in 1959 and continued to play sports throughout my adult life. I played a lot of tennis in my 30s, became a runner in my 40s, played some hockey in my 50s and in my 60s and 70s played a lot of softball, which continues, and basketball, which ended with a new hip a year ago.

The little kid from Bedford still plays sports. Front and center with his softball team

Basketball has obviously changed a lot since it was first played in Bedford in 1945 at the barn on North Road, the school parking lot and the converted auditorium. But the lessons of my first hoop experiences, like lots of things I did in sports (and in life generally!) growing up in Bedford in the 1930s and 1940s, have stuck with me all these years, and for that I am extremely grateful.

John Stewart, johnstewart@alum.bu.edu

It’s spring! Dues are due

If you are an Annual member, your dues are due by the end of May. You may clip the form on page 7 and send it to us with your check, or bring a check to our meeting on April 25 or to our Annual Meeting on May 26.

Not sure how you stand with your dues? Check the mailing label on the back of this newsletter. It will tell you when your current dues expire. Several of our members have paid more than a year in advance, so check the expiration date carefully. You might not owe any dues for another year.

Questions? Please don’t hesitate to phone our office. We will gladly look up your account for you.

Thank you for your payment! Our members’ dues help us keep the wheels turning.
FREE FAMILY FUN during April vacation

Looking for something to do with the kids or grandkids during vacation week? Then come join us for a Colonial Crafts afternoon. Make your own pomander ball, pewter plate, silhouette, and more! Color a picture of the Bedford Flag, try old-time toys, hear some Bedford stories, see colonial muskets and the “Cape of the Witch of the Shawsheen.” Drop by any time between 1 and 5 p.m., Tuesday, April 20 (the day after Patriots’ Day), Bedford Police Station building, 2 Mudge Way. Free and open to all. For details call 781-275-7276.

Job Lane House prepares for reopening

The Bedford Historical Society is proud to be the sponsor of a room at the Job Lane House at 295 North Road. We officially support the 1825 parlor and its very special Rufus Porter murals.

One way that we fulfill our duties is to help prepare the house for reopening in the spring. All of our members and friends are invited to help on Spring Cleaning day, Saturday, May 1, any time from 9 to 3. No need to be there the whole time; if you can spare just an hour or two to help, that will be grand. All varieties of housework, plus a few handyman chores, need doing. Call Jeannette Pothier at 781-275-8794 for information or just drop by on Cleanup Day.

The clean and sparkling Job Lane House will be open to visitors from 2 to 4 PM on the second and fourth Sunday of the month, May through October.

Community Calendar now on Bedford TV web site

We are pleased to be contributors to the new Community Calendar on the Bedford TV web site. Whether you’re looking for entertainment, sports, lectures, meetings of Town committees, or any other sort of gathering in Bedford, be sure to visit this wonderful new resource:

http://bedford.tv/calendar

Membership Application and Renewal Form

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Donation

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

Total enclosed: $ __________________

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way, Bedford MA 01730-2138
781-275-7276
info@bedfordmahistory.org
Are your dues up to date? Please check the mailing label for your membership status.