Bedford people in World War II. (Left) Dedication ceremonies for the World War II Honor Roll on the Common. Left to right, Louis Pfeiffer and Rev. and Mrs. Frank Thompson. (Right) Lawrence A. Webber, age about nine, making his rounds to sell Defense Savings Stamps. (Photos donated by John R. Comley III.)

**Prince Estabrook**

This month the Bedford Historical Society is pleased to welcome as guest speaker Charles H. Price Jr. Mr. Price will share his knowledge of the history of Prince Estabrook during and after his service in the Revolutionary War. Prince Estabrook, then a slave, answered the call to Lexington’s Battle Green on April 19, 1775, with his master Benjamin Estabrook and the other Lexington militia. He thus became the first black soldier in the American Revolution and was among the first patriots whose blood was shed that day. Prince Estabrook continued to serve in the Continental Army until the end of the war.

Mr. Price is a member and past Commander of the Lexington Minutemen, as well as a reenactor of Prince Estabrook. He worked with the late Alice Hinkle, a freelance journalist and Boston Globe correspondent from Lexington, who did extensive research and a book on the life of this black patriot and for which she received an award shortly before her death. This evening Mr. Price will share what is known about Prince Estabrook’s life.

**Wednesday, February 28, 7:30 p.m.**

Congregational Church, 25 The Great Road

Free and open to the public. Bring a friend!

**Bedford in World War II**

The WWII photographs in this newsletter are among the very few in our Archives. Considering Bedford’s substantial contributions to the war effort, both military and civilian, the small size of our WWII collection is very surprising. Can you help by donating photos, letters, newspaper clippings, or other memorabilia? (We can copy and return photos that you want to keep.) Please contact the Archives at 781-275-1212, ext. 140. Thank you!

Please visit our web site: www.bedfordmahistory.org
More new members

Our Annual Giving Campaign brought more than just donations – it also brought us some new members. Welcome!

Barbara and Paul Purchia
Bedford Motel

BHS financial statement

On page 6 of this newsletter you’ll find a 12-month financial statement for the Society. There are two sets of figures, one for the program year that ended in April, 2006, and one for the calendar year 2006. Either way you’ll see that 2006 was a very good year for us, thanks to the generosity of our friends and the prudent counsel of our Finance Committee. We are very grateful to all who helped us reach those fine figures on the bottom line.

What’s odder than a three-dollar bill? A third-of-a-dollar bill, of course. This one, printed in Philadelphia in 1776, is from the Society’s collections.

Archives hours

Our room in the Stearns building (the Police Station) at 2 Mudge Way, where we maintain our Archives and business office, 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.
Annual Giving campaign draws strong response

The Bedford Historical Society’s annual giving drive is well underway. The response has been gratifying as always, with a bonus in that we have also had some new members join as a result of the campaign. Over $3,000 has been raised to date by the drive. Contributions are gratefully acknowledged from the following:

- Bedford Funeral Home
- Bedford Motel
- Cambridge Savings Bank
- Sovereign Bank
- Design Photo
- Julie McCay Turner
- Frank & Joan Gicca
- Tom & Susan Crowther
- Sheldon & Gloria Moll
- Helen Nowers
- Jack Fisher
- John & Bonnie Croteau
- Eugene & Carroll Eagles
- Roger & Caro Little
- Miriam Chrisman
- Don Corey
- Bob & Betty Slechta
- Don & Lois Jenkins
- Lora Goldenberg
- Mike & Dawn Rosenberg
- Pat Leiby
- Aldie & Wilma Johnson
- John & Connie Dodge
- Neil & Margaret Leary
- Chuck French
- John & Bea Brown
- Larry & Ellen Carlton
- Doris Webber
- Harley & Nancy Haynes
- Jeptha & Paddy Wade
- Anonymous

An Awesome Century once again

In the first decade of the 20th century, young Williston Farrington moved to Bedford with his family. In the last decade of the 20th century, he was still living in Bedford – and had many tales to tell about the changes he had seen the town undergo during what he called “An Awesome Century.” In 1999, with the assistance of Judith McConnell, he published a book by that name.

The scent of new mown hay; the Farrington Radio, made in Bedford in the early days of broadcasting; the intelligent dog that fetched the Duntons’ newspaper from the railroad station each day; and a Flexible Flyer sled received on Christmas Day, 1907, are just a few of Mr. Farrington’s memories of “Ninety-Four Years of Spectacular Change.”

Out of print for several years, An Awesome Century is now available again. With the kind consent of Mrs. McConnell and the late Mr. Farrington’s family, the Bedford Historical Society has printed a second edition. Copies will be available at the Society’s February 28 meeting and also at the Society’s office. Call 781-275-1212 ext. 140 for information.

Bedford Act of Incorporation available soon

Beautiful reproduction copies of the Act of Incorporation of Bedford, the actual parchment document that created Bedford in 1729, will soon be available for purchase through the Bedford Historical Society. The original document, which resides permanently in the State Archives, was removed for restoration during Bedford’s 275th anniversary year and high-quality master photographs taken.

The reproductions are suitable for framing and will be available in two sizes, with and without a transcription of the document. For pricing and availability please call the Society’s office at 781-275-1212 ext. 140.
Bedford Depot Park: Possible future home for BHS museum?

Bedford Depot Park on South Road, at the nexus of Bedford’s railroad history, was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. A gradual development of the park has taken place over the last few years and will continue for several more. Traffic improvements, parking, landscaping and benches, placement of utilities underground are complete, while other projects – renovation of the Budd car and the Freight House – are in progress.

The focus of activity is now on preservation of the passenger depot, the gray two-story building that stands back from South Road behind the Freight House and the VFW building. With the assistance of a grant from the Mass. Historical Commission, the town has hired a preservation consultant to prepare a Preservation Plan for the Depot building (similar to what was done for Old Town Hall before renovations began). The consultant has completed a survey of existing conditions and recommended replacing the Depot’s roof as soon as possible. Restoration of the exterior appearance of the Depot and possible restoration of some of the interior finishes are also being considered. A grant application was submitted to the Mass. Historical Commission this month in order to obtain supplemental State funding, to be matched with Community Preservation funds, to perform the work.

What will the town do with the building when it is renovated? The second phase of the Preservation Plan for the Depot is to examine options for its re-use. One of the options is to use it as a museum for the Bedford Historical Society. However, that is not the only option. Other possible uses are retail, commercial, restaurant, or residential. The town will have to weigh several considerations:

1. Income to the town. The tenant would, at a minimum, have to cover routine operating costs.
2. Providing a destination for the crowds who come to Bedford along the Minuteman Bikeway, giving them something interesting to do when they arrive.
3. Making as much of the property accessible to the public as possible.

The Society considers the Depot to be an ideal location for a museum. As a museum, the Depot building would meet the three criteria listed above. Finding a site for a museum is a very high priority with us, and we hope the town will agree to let us use the Depot. Time and the Town will tell.

Once the town has decided what to do with the building, the consultant will then prepare plans and specifications to rehabilitate the building for that particular use. We will keep our membership advised as work progresses.

Bedford Depot Timeline

1872 – Middlesex Central Railroad, a subsidiary of the Boston & Lowell Railroad, is created to build a line from Lexington to Bedford and Concord Center.
1873 – Line to Bedford and Concord opens for business. A temporary passenger depot is used.
1874 – Passenger Depot constructed on the west side of South Road (at the site later occupied by the Middlesex Coal and Grain Company), to replace the temporary depot building. South Road widened.
1877 – Bedford and Billerica Railroad is established and a narrow-gauge line built. Passenger Depot is moved to its current location to be close to the junction of the lines to Concord and Bedford, south of Loomis Street and east of South Road.
1885 – Defunct narrow-gauge line to Billerica is replaced by standard-gauge line.
1887 – Boston and Maine Railroad takes over both rail lines, along with the passenger depot and freight house.
1902 – The Concord & Boston Street Railway builds a streetcar line through Bedford, passing along Loomis Street and South Road with a stop at the Bedford Depot.
1925 – Streetcar service replaced by busses.
1931 – Passenger service between Bedford and North Billerica ends.
1953 – Boston & Maine ceases operations at the Freight House and sells the building.

Continued on next page
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1962 – Boston & Maine abandons lines north and west of Bedford.
1963 – Town of Bedford acquires the rights-of-way to the two abandoned lines up to the town line.
1965 – Budd Rail Diesel Cars introduced to Bedford.
1965 – Passenger Depot converted for office and business use. Second story added. Windows and doors replaced. (The deck that formerly surrounded the building may have been removed at this time.)
1977 – Passenger service to Bedford discontinued.
1981 – Freight service to Bedford ends.
1991 – Minuteman Bikeway constructed.
1995 – Friends of Bedford Depot Park, Inc. is formed.
1997 – Town receives a grant from the state to develop Depot Park.

1998 – Budd car #6211 acquired for display at Depot Park.
1999 – Passenger Depot and Freight House properties acquired by the Town of Bedford.
2003 – The Bedford Depot Historic District accepted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

References


Bedford Depot in its heyday. The front side of the building, with its landscaped front yard, faces away from South Road. The railroad line to Concord can be seen to the left while the line to Billerica is just out of sight to the right. The signal at either end of the building controls the line nearest to it. Three entrances can be seen. The one to the right leads to the gentlemen’s waiting room, the middle to the ladies’ waiting room, and the left to the baggage and express rooms. Conversion to an office building in 1965, including the addition of a second story, greatly changed the appearance of the Depot.
### Bedford Historical Society

#### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

**May 2005-April 2006**

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**Jan-Dec 2006**

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**NET INCOME**

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**INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS**

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Respectfully submitted,

Donald Corey, Treasurer
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

Benefits of membership in the Bedford Historical Society

• Annual series of lectures on Bedford and local history
• 10% discount on BHS merchandise purchased through us or at the Freight House on South Road
• Seven issues per year of our informative newsletter
• Christmas party and potluck dinner at Annual Meeting in May
• Opportunities to meet the foremost experts on Bedford history
• The satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to preserve Bedford’s history

Remember, Bedford Historical Society memberships make wonderful gifts!

Annual Meeting
THE MIDDLESEX NORTH-WEST TEMPERANCE UNION
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
CONCORD, THURSDAY, JULY 12, 1894

ORDER OF EXERCISES.
9.30 A. M. Devotional Exercises.
10.00 A. M. Reports from Towns.
10.30 A. M. Choosing Committees for Annual Election.
11.30 A. M. Discussion.
12:00 N. Adjourn.
2:00 P. M. Election of Officers.
3:00 P. M. Discussion.

Handbill for the Middlesex North-west Temperance Union, 1894. Abram E. Brown was its president. From the Society’s collections.
Young folks assist at a World War II scrap drive at the site now occupied by the fire station. Left to right: Basil McLeod, Jack Kelly, Vincent Rogers, unknown, Lois Comley, Madeline Fitch, unknown, unknown, Jean Thompson, Dolly McKenna. (Photo donated by John R. Comley III.)