The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
Bedford - Massachusetts

Founded in 1893

The Michael Beacon House
Built approx. 1670

February 2011 Volume 119, Number 1

A lecture not to be missed!

Wednesday, February 23
at the First Church of Christ,
25 Great Road

A Thought-Provoking Program
Using photographs gathered in her research on colonial family histories, attorney and historian Diane Rapaport will present an illustrated lecture about
"The Many Faces of Early Colonial Slavery"
for the Society's February, 2011 program.

About Diane Rapaport
Diane Rapaport, a former trial lawyer, has made a new career as a historical consultant, genealogist, award-winning author and popular speaker. She offers an unusual combination of expertise and experience—in law, history and genealogy—and she enjoys discovering and telling the stories of our past. She specializes in court records and other historical resources of New England, and her current research focuses on African Americans and Native Americans in the colonial period.

Using photographs she has collected in conducting genealogical research, Ms. Rapaport will use numerous interesting and true stories to bring to life the history of slavery during the early colonial days.

Mark your calendar for this interesting, ***free lecture***, scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2011 in Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational, 25 The Great Road. Refreshments will be available starting at 7:30 p.m., with the lecture to follow around 8 p.m.

Carol Amick

Other Fabulous Lectures.

Wednesday, March 23, 2011. 7:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall, First Congregational Church:
"Moving the Fitch Homestead from Bedford to Harvard."

Sunday, April 17, 2011. 2 p.m., Fellowship Hall, First Congregational Church:
"The Finest Hours: U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue."

Wednesday, May 25, 2011. 6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall, First Congregational Church:
Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper and "The Career of Rufus Porter, Artisan-Entrepreneur."

Read about the March lecture on page 7

Just a Thought...

Now that the Friends of the Bedford Flag have merged with the BHS, it might be a good idea to look beyond the horizon. Bedford is, after all, a small town, but we have several non-profit organizations that all work to promote our town's past.

The Bedford Minuteman Company, re-commissioned in 1964 by Bedford's Selectmen, creates cinematic re-enactments memorializing the events of April 1775. They also bring pomp and circumstance to each opening of Town Meeting. Every year we can watch them "verbally battling" the British at Wilson Park, supported by Bedford's spectators, dignitaries and other towns' Minutemen, cheering them on and booing the Redcoats.

The Friends of the Depot Park make us dream about the good old days when a railroad stopped in town, thus connecting us to the rest of the world. They, too, do a tremendous job of keeping the past alive.

Another group, The Friends of the Job Lane House, connects us to another era, showing this authentic Colonial home--now a museum--located on North Road. Its knowledgeable members bring us back to a time when there was no central heating, electricity, running water or a town-wide sewer system. On their open house tours, they remind us to think about the tremendous progress we have made since the house was built in 1713.

A common thread runs through all our organizations – finding enough volunteers to explain to the public who we are, and why it is important that these organizations exist. Each of us competes for the same volunteers, making it difficult sometimes to recruit enough manpower to fulfill our obligations. Therefore, it is my hope that one day we can get together, merging our goals under one umbrella. Each organization should, of course, keep its own identity, but if we can just all meet together, it is my belief that we can promote the rich history of our town in a more compelling and efficient way.

Jan van Steenwijk

A major merger to the Bedford Historical Society.

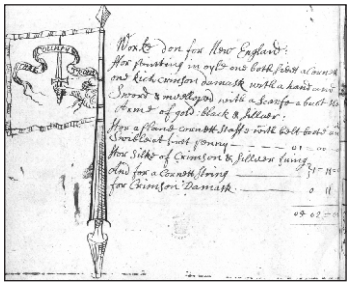
In January 1998, a small group of Bedfordians founded a new organization and called it the Friends of the Bedford Flag. Why? They maintained that the oldest existing flag in the US was kept in less than optimum conditions in the basement of the Bedford Library, and that it was time to start a movement to give the flag a more appropriate storage and display place to insure that it would be protected for many years to come.

A bit of background: In 1986, when Barbara and I moved to Bedford, it was widely believed that the flag was created in 1665. There was a document in the British Library in London with a drawing of a flag with a notation, "Worke don for New England," that closely resembled ours. The Bedford Minutemen Company and many others in town always believed that this was, indeed, a sketch of the Bedford Flag. Who had ordered the flag, how it came to Bedford, how old it really was – no one seemed to have a definitive answer.

There were plenty of stories circulating, especially "of course it was ordered by the Bedford Minutemen…." At the time, the only organized group was the Militia, who had been armed by the English to defend themselves from Indian attacks and who had served numerous campaigns during the French and Indian Wars long before the Revolution. The Bedford Minutemen received their official stamp of approval in 1775 from Bedford's Selectmen, but did they have the flag by then? Nowhere in the town's documents from that time is there any mention of the flag's existence. Interesting stories appeared in the early 1800s, among them: the flag's "fringe" was reportedly cut by Ruhama Page for a ball gown; the Bedford Minutemen carried the flag on April 19, 1775 to the Concord Bridge and young boys played soldier with it; and later we read Emerson's famous line; "Their flag to April's breeze unfurled…."

Surprisingly, there was no sure proof that the flag existed before the 1800s.

Thus numerous unanswered questions lingered: how old was it really, where was it made, who ordered it, and when did it arrive in Bedford? Members of the Friends of the Bedford Flag began a journey to see if we could discover new, revealing information and to raise funds to create a more suitable environment for the famous flag.



Could this document have been the order for the Bedford Flag?

The group asked Barbara Hitchcock to research and write a book. Her voyage brought her to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London were she met with experts in old textiles. After studying close-ups photographs of the original flag, they concluded that the silk fabric, based on its size and pattern, was woven in China between 1704 and 1709. She also got access to the 1665 document at the British Library where the sketch is kept, but that showed only a faint similarity to the flag.

A visit to the British Flag Loft in Leeds, where most of the military banners were made during that period, was a dead end, because the factory had lost all its documents from that period in a fire.

The next visit was to the Legermuseum in Delft, the Netherlands, which had a banner from the same period, showing the "Armored Arm of God," holding a sword to protect the owners of the banner. This, too, was from the early 1700s.

The famous fringe? In Bedford, the flag had always been shown in publications as having fringe on three sides. But the museum's curator told Barbara that all military banners for ceremonial uses, would have had a fringe on four sides, not just the three as was believed to have been on the Bedford Flag.

In the meantime, the members of the FBF continued to raise funds by recruiting memberships, holding an enormous yard sale, and selling flag related merchandise.

Deirdre Windsor, head of the Conservation Department, Lowell Textile Museum, working on our flag.

When all possible information was collected, Barbara's book was published and sold, adding to the FBF's bank account. Concurrently, the Bedford Library was to undergo renovation and expansion, thus providing a significant incentive to raise as much money as possible toward the preservation of the "Oldest Existing Flag in the United States." Here was the opportunity to build a special room for the flag that offered all the necessary security and environmental protection.

The flag was brought to the Lowell Textile Museum for a two-year process of cleaning and stabilization. Finally, in October 2001, with Bedford police escort, the flag was brought from the museum to its brand new space in the library. The FBF had fulfilled

Continued on pg. 3

its major goals – discovering as much as possible about the story of the flag and, financially supporting, the creation of a secure place for this unique icon. It also provided funds for the Patriot Statue and a bench in Memorial Park. The founders still had a dream of creating a video to tell the story of our national treasure, but the energy they had put into the projects started to fade. The FBF was a non-profit organization, and its bylaws allowed for transferring all its assets to the Bedford Historical Society.

With invaluable help from Don Corey who filed numerous forms, statements and yearly reports with the Attorney General's offices, we finally succeeded in early January 2011 to receive the approval to merge the two organizations. The FBF brings more than $12,000 plus merchandise, including t-shirts, sweat shirts, watches, books, posters, etc. to the BHS. All this is now added to the wonderful products the Society already offers.

The four founders of the Friends of the Bedford Flag: Mardy Grothy, myself, Jeanette Pothier and Barbara Hitchcock.

Personally, I am grateful to the enthusiastic group of people who made it all possible, who worked tirelessly to help protect and preserve the Bedford Flag, to have it moved out of a dark, mildew-fragranced basement, to its location today. In addition to the four founders, Richard Manley, Margot Holtzman, and Laura Larsson joined the board to help. Many FBF members and local businesses also helped make all this possible.

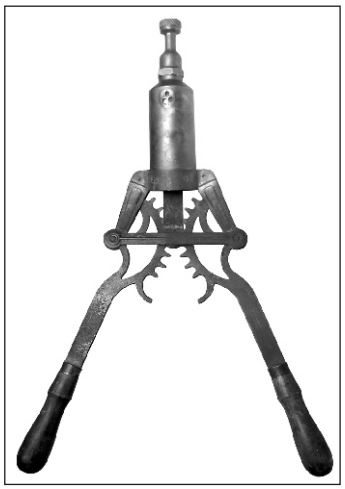
Today, this truly unique artifact is displayed in a great environment. A special exhibition showing the meticulous process of conservation graces the library walls, ushering visitors into the display area.

There are still unanswered questions about our flag, so it is my hope that the Bedford Historical Society will continue the process of researching and promoting the Bedford Flag, not only in our town, but to the whole world.

Concord may have its Bridge, Boston its Bunker Hill and Paul Revere, but Bedford has its flag, a relic that deserves to be held in similar regard. We Bedfordians should continue to muster under our banner, an historic icon of Bedford's past.

Jan van Steenwijk

What's it?



Steel - brass and wooden handles.

I found this wonderfully designed tool at JRM Antiques, the store at the Depot Park. A person from Bedford brought it in for sale, but no one seems to know what it is? If any of our readers know what it was used for, and if it has any relation to Bedford, we might acquire it for the BHS. When moving the handles sidewards, a piston moves up and down inside the brass cylinder on the top.

Answer to "What's it?" from our November issue.

Several people correctly guessed that one of the objects shown in the November 2010 Preservationist was a kitchen clothesline. Mounted on the wall, the clothesline would be pulled out of the cylinder and attached across the room; after use the line would simply be rolled back up by the crank handle.

The other object that no one guessed was a potato masher. Don Corey used one of those regularly in the "good old days." *How did the rest of you fix your potatoes?*

The Quincy Cole Cane - Less Mysterious

In the November 2010 Preservationist we reported on a new addition to the Society's collections - a cane that had belonged to long-time resident Quincy Cole. A Sterling silver band on the cane is inscribed "This handle made from tree planted by - GENL GRANT - April 19, 1875 - at Lexington Mass," and the polished metal plate on the head of the cane is inscribed "Louis Joseph Sandys 1907." We now know much more about Mr. Sandys, thanks to Lee Yates (an exceptional history sleuth!), who tracked the following information down in the archives of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill!

The owner of the cane, Louis J. Sandys or Sands, not only served in the Civil War but also served with some distinction as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy. Before the war, he served on the steam frigate USS Susquehanna and the USS Congress, the vessel that attempted, but failed to lay the first transcontinental telegram cable across the Atlantic. During the war he served on the sloop of war USS Seminole and tin-clad ram USS Shamrock and participated in the capture of Norfolk, VA, and Plymouth and Murfreesboro, NC. He was commanding the tug USS Bazely when it was sunk by a Confederate torpedo on Dec. 9, 1864.

The fact that the cane came from the tree planted in Lexington by General Grant on the 100th Anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord suggests that this was a presentation cane and a token of great esteem. However, how Quincy Cole became owner of the cane remains a matter of speculation.

Don Corey

FY 2010 FINANCIAL REPORT

The Bedford Historical Society's fiscal year for filing information tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service and Massachusetts Attorney General's Public Charities Division coincides with the calendar year rather that its program year. The financial statement for 2010 is shown below.

INCOME	
Dues	$5,628
Donations	3,710
Grants	850
Sales, net	1,987
Special Projects	
Townwide Newsletter (March 2010), net	1,929
Fitch Tavern Gala, net	7,234
Investment Income	13,150
TOTAL INCOME	34,489
EXPENSES	
Salaries	14,207
Grant Expenses	1,000
Prof. Fees (Accounting/Legal)-general	2,722
- Kimball Estate	23,056
Admin, Archival & Museum Expenses	2,898
Postage	610
Telephone	345
Insurance	741
Printing (Newsletter, Annual Report & Yearbook)	1,051
Programs, History Awards, Rent & Hospitality	1,255
TOTAL EXPENSES	47,855
CAPITAL GAINS	9,698
FRIENDS OF BEDFORD FLAG - Merged Assets	12,233
INCREASE IN NET ASSETS	8,536
BEGINNING FUND BALANCES, 12/31/2009	
Operating Funds	6,171
Endowment Account (Fidelity)	224,671
	230,842
ENDING FUND BALANCES, 12/31/2010	
Operating Funds	1,626
Friends of Bedford Flag Acct.	12,233
Endowment Account (Fidelity)	225,519
	239,378

Some of the highlights of the year include the following:

* The successful Fitch Tavern Gala, hosted by the Knights, celebrating the tavern's 300th anniversary
* The merger of the Friends of the Bedford Flag with the Historical Society
* Substantial progress on legal negotiations regarding the Kimball's estate, which will benefit the Society greatly.

Submitted by: Don Corey, Treasurer

Thank you!

The response to our year-end fundraiser was overwhelming, and we thank everyone for their generous donations.

Private Donations

Val and Nancy Asbedian
Therese Bluhm
Joan and Richard Bowen
Nat and Judy Brown
Thomas and Geri Bruha
Carol and John Carlson
Angelo and Gabriele Colao
Donald L. Corey
Stephen and Elizabeth Ellen
Arthur and Marietta Ellis
Dana and John Fine
Jack Fisher
Lora Goldenberg
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Donald and Lois Jenkins
Aldie and Wilma Johnson
Roy and Shirley Kring
Patricia Leiby
Edward Lowry
Cindy Rider
Robert and Jean Segal
Robert and Betty Slechta
Ed and Evelyn Stickney
Barbara Hitchcock and Jan van Steenwijk
Kimberlie Sweet
Doris Webber
Julia Whiteneck

Business Donations

Bedford Funeral Home, William McDonald
Bedford Motel, Barry Patel
Dalya's Restaurant, Frans van Berkhout
Gilmore, Rees & Carlson, P.C., Robert J. Morrill
The Higgins Group Realtors
Mary Kay Cosmetics, Tricia Edris

New Members and Renewals

Axtell, Richard and June
Blake, Donald and Janet
Bloomfield, Holly
Carlton, Ellen and Lawrence
Couvee, Paul and Andrea
Debbie, Maggie
Harrison, Susanne
Hills, Louis
Moll, Sheldon and Gloria
Harold F. Nichols Insurance Agency
Powers, Janet and Christopher
Yannoni
Pullen, Heather and David
Purchia, Paul and Barbara
Schweppe, Cynthia and Charles

The key to any non-profit organization is to have satisfied members.
We believe that our society has many good things to offer its members, including:

- Seven issues of our newsletter, "The Preservationist," a year.
- Free lectures by renowned speakers.
- High-quality merchandise.
- Tours and demos for 3rd graders.
- Exhibitions throughout Bedford.
- Promoting the Bedford Flag.
- A Holiday Party for members.
- Participation on Bedford Day.
- Old Bedford photos: Copies are for sale.
- Help with research.
- A professional website.
- Reach us on our website or FaceBook.
- Ongoing research about our past.

We take care of Bedford's past - for future generations.

Web site: www.bedfordmahistory.org
email: info@bedfordmahistory.org
781-275-7276

The Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Did you know...
If you are interested in Bedford images, maps or photographs from our vast archive, please contact us, and for a small fee,

New Displays

The Society recently installed a new display in the High School lobby display case. It features the Fitch Tavern and farm. After the last issue of the Preservationist included an article about the history of the property and several of its owners, a teacher contacted the Society and suggested that such a display would be of considerable interest at the school. The High School, Library, Town Hall, Police Station, Town Center-West Wing and many playing fields are now located on what was the Fitch farm until the 1950s. If you happen to be at the High School or if you attend Annual Town Meeting in March, be sure to check it out.

High School Display

Display at the Society's office

"Displays of some of the Society's Civil War artifacts have also recently been assembled in the case outside of the Society's office in the Stearns Building (Police Station) and in the Library (cases inside the Mudge Way entrance). These tie in with the lecture series that is going this winter at the Library, based on Ken Burns' Civil War programs. The Society's collection includes a variety of fascinating items - weapons, photographs, draft notices, orders and proclamations, Confederate money, etc. Stop by and visit sometime.

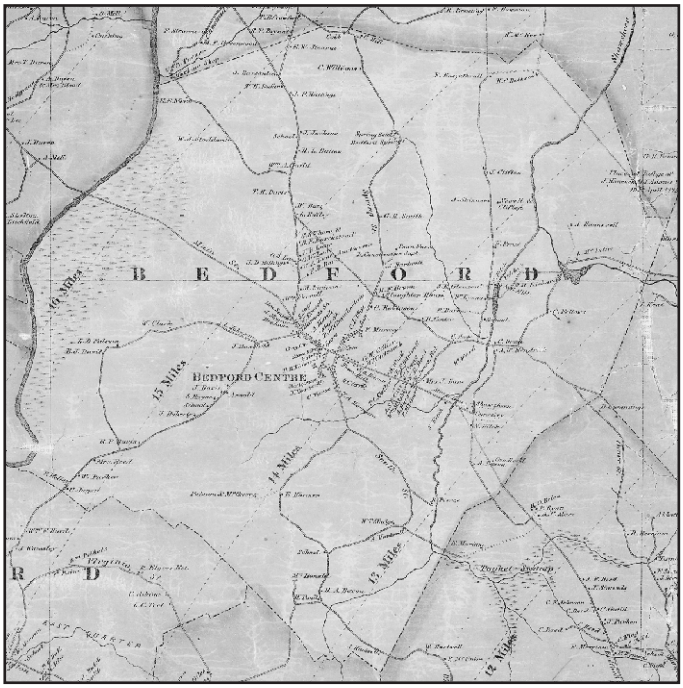
Historic display at the Bedford Library

A new display is also in the works for the Old Town Hall. These displays all help to achieve the Society's mission of enabling present and future generations to learn about and appreciate the culture and values of Bedford's past."

New Addition to Society's Old Map Collection

We are pleased to announce that the Society has been able to make an excellent addition to its collection of Bedford maps spanning centuries. It is a copy of an 1866 map, directed by H.F. Walling and published by Baker and Tilden, which was obtained from the State Library of Massachusetts - Special Collections.

Bedford's late Town Historian, Ina Mansur, had seen the map and mentioned it in her works, but until now it had not been accessible. Showing buildings and owners, the map provides some insight into Bedford immediately following the Civil War, when its population had shrunk from 986 in 1855 to 820 in 1865.



The 1866 Bedford map, now on display at the Society's office

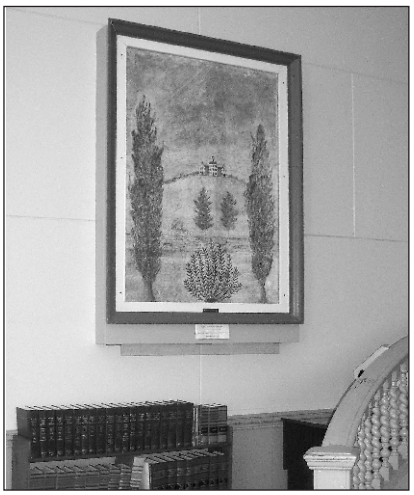
Writers needed...

If you want to contribute an article relevant to our history, please send it to us. If you would like to read about a specific issue - please let us know. this is,after all, your newsletter!

Society Awarded Grant by Bedford Cultural Council

We are grateful that the Bedford Cultural Council recently approved a grant of $300 to the Society to help fully fund our May program speaker on the career of Rufus Porter. As well as being an itinerant mural painter and artist, Rufus Porter was also founder of Scientific American. His murals still decorate the walls of the Job Lane House, and one that was saved from the Jonas Munroe house before it was demolished is displayed in the Town Hall Multi-Purpose Room/Auditorium.

The talk will be given by Professor David Jaffee PhD, of Bard College at the Society's meeting on May 25, 2011. More information will be announced at a later date.



A Rufus Porter mural displayed at the Town Hall

Our March 23 lecture: Moving an historic home, piece by piece.

The Society's March lecture will feature a fascinating -- and daunting -- story by Ned and Susan Leeming about moving the old Fitch Homestead from Carlisle Road in Bedford to its new home in Harvard, 20 miles away!

The antique wood-framed house, which is believed to have been built between 1690 and 1720, attracted the attention of history-buff Ned Leeming, who encountered the home in its decaying, boarded-up condition set back off Carlisle Road, behind the gas station at the corner of Carlisle and North roads. Purchasing it, and carefully dismantling it so that it could be put back together, is the "daunting" part of their story. The Leemings will recount all the intricate details of this project, like carefully removing the old nails from each board in the house, and straightening them to be reused.

Discovering aspects of the house they did not know existed, as well as finding hidden treasures – many which the Lemmings have given to the Society -- are the "fascinating" parts of their story. One of those treasures is a very old pair of leather shoes that the couple found inside the chimney's "ashtray" – the space next to the open hearth.

The Leemings program on March 23 (First Church of Christ, Congregational at 7:30 p.m.) is certain to educate and mesmerize the audience.

Carol Amick

Our lectures are on the local TV Channel

Arthur Ellis has graciously offered to video tape our lectures. He received a crash course from Madeleine Altman, in using a HD video camera from Bedford TV. You can watch the lectures on your local TV station.

We still have some 2011 calendars for sale. They have 12 beautiful images of Bedford's past. We will bring them to our next meeting, price - only $10.00.

In addition we have a b/w copier for sale at the office, any offer will be accepted.

Officers

Jan van Steenwijk, *President*
Julia Whiteneck, *Vice President*
Phyllis Cooke, *Secretary*

Please feel free to contact any of our board members if you have a question or suggestion; we

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JRM ANTIQUES

Bedford Depot Park

An eclectic mix of antiques & collectibles

617-590-0172
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Hours: Thursday thru Tuesday 11AM-6PM

The Preservationist

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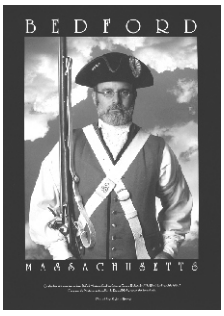
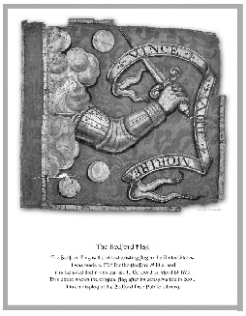
We look forward to seeing you in 2011 when we are 118 years young!

The Bedford Historical Society was founded in 1893 - Our Website: www.bedfordmahistory.org





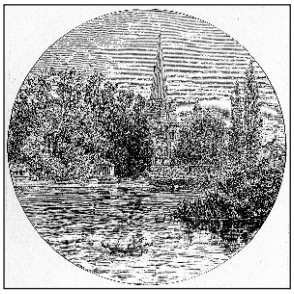
These Minutemen (20"x28") and Bedford Flag (12"x16" posters are just two of the many new products now for sale at the Society.

From our neighbors...

"No visitor to Bedford should neglect the rapidly accumulating Bunyan Museum, comprising not only some simple relics of his lifetime.., all this is stored with reverent care..."

"Likewise, a pair of massive bronze gates have been contributed by the Duke of Bedford, with panels illustrative of scenes from the allegory..."

No, this not about our town, but our 'sister' town in Bedfordshire, England. The excerpts are from a book published in the late 1800s about the town and mentions the famous and controversial preacher and writer John Bunyan, who lived from 1628-1688.



Bedford, England

Membership Application/Renewal

Please join us - and support our heritage!

Name:_____

Address:_____

City/Town:_____

State:_____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

Amount enclosed: $_____

Please send check to:
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2 Mudge Way, Bedford, MA 01730-2138