The Bedford Historical Society Presents:

Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2012 at 7:30
at the
Bedford Library

Dr. Gary Highlander, “Masters of Enterprise: Henry Ford.”

Imagine a world where there were few cars on the road – because roads suitable for driving on were scarce! Imagine a world where breakdowns were frequent, and gas was hard to obtain. Imagine a world where your car didn't include a spare tire, but instead provided a tire “repair” kit!

And, imagine a world where all the cars were one color: black!

This was the world of Henry Ford, who produced his Model-T car in 1908 as a reliable, efficient, and reasonably-priced vehicle for the masses. Ford Motor Company built 15 million Model Ts between 1908 and 1927.

Born during the Civil War in Dearborn, Michigan, Henry Ford was a natural-born mechanic. He received a watch for his 13th birthday, and immediately took it apart to learn how it operated. At age 16, he left his family's farm and traveled to Detroit to work on boat motors.

“I will build a motor car for the multitudes,” boasted Ford. And he did. By means of mass production, the assembly line, and enormous economies of scale, Ford was able to produce one Model T for every minute of the workday. By 1918, half of all cars in America were Model Ts.

Ford's invention of the Model T and the V-8 engine, which changed the way Americans lived, will be described by historian and adjunct professor Dr. Gary Hylander at the Society's February program meeting will begin at 7:30 pm with refreshments.

Following Dr. Hylander's presentation, Town Historian John Dodge will show photographs and recount stories about his father's Ford dealership in Bedford in the early 1900s.

Great Additions to our Collections

The Society is delighted that individuals think of it when it's time to find a new home for old treasures. Among the most recent additions to the collections are the following.

* Handcrafted Minuteman Drum - This drum was originally owned by late Selectman Warren Lewellen, who gave it to Rich and Pat DeLuca. The drum was made by the Eames Drum Company, founded in 1950, and is the size and style of most Minuteman Company drums. Unless a reader has additional information, we can only speculate on Mr. Lewellen's plans for the drum or whether it was only intended for display.

* Bedford Woman's Community Club - Many of this club's historic records were added to the Society's collection several years ago. The club recently disbanded, and the remaining records have been donated to the Society. The Society has in its archives the records of dozens of local organizations that existed and served Bedford well over the years but are now defunct.

* Bedford Flag Reproduction - The Society been given one of the beautiful large cloth Bedford flags that were produced for the Bicentennial, which are no longer available. The donor was Ed Bensley. The flag will help highlight displays of other artifacts in our collections.

Our Past Continues to Grow

If everything stayed the same, the Society would be a very small entity in our town. It is the constantly changing environment around us that makes us grow. The landscapes, the homes, the roads and, especially, the people are making history. Talking to “old timers,” I always hear how different life was when they were young. Many of our members remember when they suddenly could look at a box in their living room, something called TeleVision, to see moving images of people – here-and-now.

Today we all take having a mobile phone for granted, but I remember when we still walked several miles on a Sunday to make an unannounced visit to friends or family to share a cup of coffee and homemade cake. Coffee beans were, of course, ground on a small grinder with a handle on the top and a small drawer at the bottom. Some of us could afford a Kodak box camera to capture images to live in perpetuity. We keep adding objects like these to our archives, to be able to showcase much of what the past looked like.

For many years, we have been exploring ideas for creating a Bedford Museum; this is not just a lofty future dream. We believe we are getting closer to making this a reality.

Thanks to all of you who donated funds to the BHS during 2011. We are extremely grateful for your generous donations, both money and artifacts that we received during the year. We hope you will continue to support the BHS, as everyone in the community ultimately benefits from this support.

Carol Amick

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Black History Month

In observance of Black History Month, we recall those Black soldiers with Bedford roots who served in the Revolutionary War. Many know the names of the three men laid to rest in the Old Burying Ground, but the service of several soldiers buried elsewhere tends to be overlooked.

Caesar Jones was the Negro servant of Lt. Timothy Jones of Bedford's Minuteman Company, and Cambridge Moore was the Negro servant of Capt. John Moore of Bedford's Militia. Both are believed to have marched to Concord, as freed men and volunteers, on April 19, 1775, but their names are not listed in official military records for that date. Both subsequently enlisted and served in the Continental Army.

Caesar Prescott was from Concord, possibly the servant of Dr. Abel Prescott and his sons Samuel and Abel, Jr. (Samuel Prescott rode with Revere and Dawes to sound the alarm, and both Samuel and Abel, Jr. died in the Revolution.) Caesar Prescott first enlisted and served in the Continental Army in 1777. In 1780 Bedford's Vital Records show that he married Jane Clark of Bedford. He reenlisted from Bedford in the Continental Army in 1780 and again in 1781.

Jeffrey Hartwell was the slave of Joseph Fitch, and at the age of 5 was sold to Joseph Hartwell. (see photo at right) There is no 1775 service record for him, but by family tradition he was in the Battle of Bunker Hill, having gone on the 3-month term as substitute for his master. When his master took the pay allowed him and put it in his own pocket, Jeffrey went off and enlisted until the close of the war. After the war he settled in Dracut and is buried in Lowell.

Peter (Stearns) Freeman was originally a slave of Rev. Josiah Stearns of Epping, NH. He was given his freedom and enlisted and served with John Stearns, one of Rev. Stearns' own sons, in the Continental Army. After the Revolutionary War, he was hired by Rev. Samuel Stearns (another of Josiah Stearns' sons) and came to Bedford, where Samuel Stearns became Bedford's 4th resident minister. He was originally buried in the Old Burying Ground next to Jones, Moore and Prescott and close to the Stearns' tomb, but his remains were moved along with the Stearns family's remains to Shawsheen Cemetery after it was established.

Military records indicate that Peter Freeman, Jeffrey Hartwell, Cambridge Moore and Caesar Prescott all served at the Battle of Saratoga, where British General Burgoyne surrendered to General Horatio Gates, often cited as a turning point for the United States in the Revolutionary War.

Thank You!

We are grateful to the many who have generously donated money to the Society in 2011.

Brown & Brown, PC
Bedford Elementary Schools Together
Carol Amick and William Moonan
Joan and Richard Bowen
Susan Briggs
Bea Brown
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James A. Burton
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Kimberlie Sweet
Julie McCoy Turner
Mary Ellen Verville
Emily (Paddy) Wade
Doris Webber
Stanley and Blanche Wentworth
Frans van Berkhout, Dalyra's Restaurant
Jan van Steenwijk and Barbara Hitchcock
The Scarlet Cloak of the Witch of Shawshine Revisited

An article about the old Bedford legend of the Witch of Shawshine which appeared in our November 2011 issue was accompanied by a picture of the Witch's "scarlet cloak", in possession of the BHS since 1974. However, since the signature of the cloak's donor had been undecipherable, the very authenticity of the cloak - and perhaps even of the legend - has long been in question.

During this past month, Kara Kerwin, our very able Administrative Assistant at the BHS archives, ran across a letter, dated 1980, which had been sent to Ms. Miriam (Bea) Brown, longtime member of the BHS Board. The letter was from Ms. Brita Flemming (Mrs. Hartwell Flemming, Jr.) thanking Ms. Brown for having sent her a book on Bedford's history, but she also made mention of the scarlet cloak. Her husband was descended from the Fitch/Hartwell families as the great grandson of Olive M. (Fitch) and George A. Hartwell whose marriage transferred the cloak from the Fitch to the Hartwell family. She also referred to Barbara (Flemming) Anderson, her husband's sister, as the person who donated the cloak which had been passed down in the Fitch/Hartwell/Flemming families since 1732.

Kara's unexpected discovery set the archives wheels in motion. Using Federal census data and following up with contacts provided by Bea Brown and Donna Dobbins of Bedford to several Flemming family members and spouses (Brita Flemming, Hartwell Flemming, Jr., and Robert Anderson), we were able to obtain more recent genealogical information and to verify the family possession and donation of the cloak to the BHS. We are most grateful to all of these people for assisting us in putting together the following provenance (history of ownership) of the Witch of Shawshine's scarlet cloak.

In 1732 Benjamin Fitch (4), of the fourth Fitch generation, who purchased the Bacon mill and homestead in 1730, married Miriam Gray of Andover, the legendary Witch of Shawshine. Miriam's scarlet cloak was passed down successively through the David (5), David (6) and Nathan (7) families to Nathan's daughter Olive M. Fitch who married George Alfred Hartwell in 1868. Their daughter Louisa F. Hartwell married William Flemming in 1896. The cloak then passed to the family of their son, Hartwell Flemming, Sr., and his wife Gertrude. Their children were Barbara and Hartwell, Jr. Barbara, who married Robert Anderson in 1955, inherited the cloak and ultimately became the donor in 1974. She died in 1981.

The establishment of this direct line of descent of owners of the cloak together with the fact that, over the years, two antique clothing experts have informed us that the style of stitching in the cloak corresponds with that used in the early 18th C. makes it very highly likely that the cloak is authentic and the essentials of the legend probable. A most happy ending!

Bob Slechta

Depot Park Visitor Center

Many of you may be aware of the plight of the Friends of Bedford Depot Park, regarding continued operation of the welcome center and store operated in the former Freight House next the Minuteman Bikeway. A few individuals have volunteered their weekends to man the Freight House since it and rail car RDC 6211 were restored and reopened in 2009, but the burden on those people is no longer sustainable.

Visitors can enjoy the model train that travels through a scale model of various Bedford landmarks and purchase Bedford Flag merchandise, books on Bedford's history, etc. for sale by the Friends, the BHS and others. The rail car contains museum displays by the Friends and by the BHS showing both railroad memorabilia and early commercial and industrial businesses that grew up around the depot.

The cost to employ part-time cashiers during the season is estimated at $5,000, which substantially exceeds the Friends' operating funds. The Friends conducted a fundraising appeal, and Bedford Whole Foods responded by donating 5% of net income from its operations on January 12, 2012. While the results are not yet available, it appears that funds may be sufficient to cover this summer's needs.

Please become a member of the Friends or support this worthy cause by contacting FBDP, Bedford Freight House, 120 South Road, Bedford 01730.

What is It?

Here is one more mysterious item from our archives. We would like to know what it was used for?

It is made of wood and is approximately 5-inches long, and it has the word “TOP” embossed at one end. If you know what it was used for - please send us a note.
We Don’t Make History...
We Keep It Alive..!

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

Image from our archives: Musket, Trumpet & Drum.

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


design, production & photography: Jan van Steenwijk
	Contributing writers: Carol Amick, Don Corey, Kara Kerwin, Bob Slechta