The Bedford Flag, the oldest existing flag in the United States. On view at the Bedford Library.

The Preservationist

Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - Bedford - Massachusetts

Founded in 1893

February 2014 *Published for anyone interested in our history* Volume 123, Number 2

Join Us For Another Great Free Lecture

Wednesday, February 26, 7:15 pm

Congregational Church, 25 Great Road

"Natural Treasures"

by Stephen Kenney

Did you know that Massachusetts was the first Colony in New England to have residents who owned slaves but became the first State to abolish slavery in 1783?

Did you know that Massachusetts was a center of slave trade throughout New England during the 17th and 18th centuries, but became a center for the abolition movement in the 19th century?

These are some of the interesting facts that the Historical Society's guest speaker will recount in his presentation.

Director Stephen Kenney will describe exhibits at the Commonwealth Museum, a wonderful resource about Massachusetts' history. The museum is located in South Boston in the Massachusetts Archives Building on Columbia Point, next to the Kennedy Library. Admission and parking is free, and is open Monday through Friday from 9 am – 5 pm.

Dr. Kenney will take us on a tour of the museum, describing the rare and national treasures on display in the "Treasures Gallery," including the "foundation documents" -- the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights, the 1780 Massachusetts Constitution authored by John Adams (which effectively abolished slavery), and unique royal charters. Also on display in this gallery is the copper plate used by Paul Revere to engrave his Boston Massacre image.

The Massachusetts Constitution is the oldest written constitution in the world still functioning as a structural foundation of government.

Using historical analysis and "facts that entertain," Dr. Kenney also will lead the audience through the exhibit, "Our Commonwealth – The Massachusetts Experiment in Democracy, from 1620 – Today." This exhibit traces the State's experience through the colonial, revolutionary, federal and nineteenth century reform periods.

Dr. Kenney, has served as Director of the Commonwealth Museum since 2002.

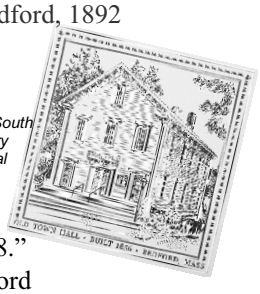
Other free upcoming lectures see page 3

This article is continued from our previous Preservationist by: Brian Oulighan

Bedford in the 1890s

In past Preservation newsletters, we looked at how life was in Bedford in the 1860's, 1870's and 1880's. We will take a look at the 1890's, some changes that had occurred and a glipse of what life was like in Bedford. By the end of the decade in 1900, the population had grown to 1208, with 116 new people either born here or moving to Bedford. The 1890's had 220 births recorded and 195 deaths. A few of the highlights in town included:

- The Union School (now Town Center) was dedicated on Dec 31, 1891, and opened in1892, with 4 schoolrooms and 8 teachers. In 1890, teachers' salaries ranged from $7.50 to $ 10.00 a week.
- The Bedford High School graduating class of 1891 was: Frederick A Laws, M. Alice Piper, Jennie N. Murray, M. Lenore Flint.
- In 1890, Bedford had 3 college graduates: Francis Warren Bacon from Harvard; Annie M. Smith from Wellesley; and Bessie S. Sampson from Mount Holyoke.
- Bedford Lumber and Manufacturing was chartered in May 1891 and was the largest employer ever in town to that date.
- History of the Town of Bedford was published in 1891 by Abram English Brown.
- Bedford Historical Society was founded in 1893 by A.E. Brown and others.
- Other Books by A.E. Brown:
  - Glimpses of old New England life: Legends of old Bedford, 1892
  - Bedford Old Families, 1892
  - Flag of the Minute Men, April 19, 1775, Its Origin and History, 1894
  - Beneath Old Roof Trees, 1896
  - Beside Old Hearthstones, 1897
  - John Hancock – His Book, 1898



The "Old Town Hall" on South Road, home of the Library and the Bedford Historical Society until 1951

- Two Brothers Rocks inscribed in 1894 with names of "Winthrop" and "Dudley" and date of their land grants "1638."
- During the 1890s George R. Blinn was President of the Bedford Library and Lottie May Corey was the Librarian.
- In the late 1890s the Parker Brothers moved from Boston to Mill St. (Old Billerica Road) and purchased 350 acres of land and 8 houses.

Things going on elsewhere in the 1890s included:

1890 - Idaho and Wyoming were admitted to the Union.
1893 - Grover Cleveland became President for the second time.
1894 - John and Will Kellogg invented Corn Flakes.
1896 - Henry Ford built his first car.
Gold was discovered in the Yukon.
Utah was admitted to the Union.
1897 - William McKinley was elected president.
1898 - Spanish-American War. ■

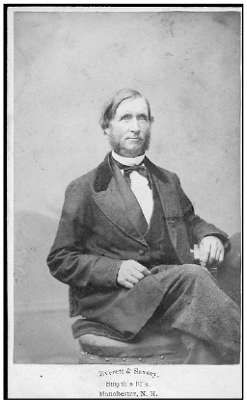
Bacon Letters *by Sharon McDonald*

Recently, I've been getting to know Albert Bacon. Perhaps you know of Bedford's Bacon family? They go right back to Michael Bacon, who built a house here in 1671. But let's not go that far back right now… It's Albert I am talking about. Albert was a prominent Bedford resident of the 1800s who lived and operated a store right on Main Street near the Common. Although he's been dead for a hundred and thirty years, the Bedford Historical Society Archives holds two boxes of letters that were written to him by family and friends. Over the past month, I have been sorting through them and reading each with great interest.

continues on pg. 2

Bacon Letters; continued from pg.1

The first batch that I separated was a thick stack written to Albert by his son, Albert Thompson Bacon. Three early letters that Albert T. wrote as a teenager while he was studying at the Lawrence Academy in Groton are mostly requests for new collars, new trousers, new shirts, and – please, Father? – some money! There is, however, a description of a nighttime forage through the landlady's kitchen for pancakes. In the darkness, Albert T. was not aware that the door he opened was to a stairway, not to a closet. He was only saved from a bad tumble by his cousin and fellow conspirator, Jerome Bacon, who grabbed his arm as he toppled. He boasted to his father that the two bandits did return to their bedrooms with three fat pancakes each, despite the near catastrophe. The cold pancakes were so tasty that they returned to the kitchen the next night for more.



Albert Thompson Bacon (photo donated by his son, Albert Reed Bacon)

Then there is a gap of about fifteen years when Albert's letters have not survived. When they are taken up again, Albert T. has married a Bedford woman, Sarah Gragg, and is a superintendant in the American Watch Factory in Waltham, Mass. His letters to his parents are affectionate, and almost always plead that they come up to visit on Sunday. ("Come early!" Albert T. invariably adds.)

There was much to write about. Often, Bedford neighbors had watches they wanted repaired, and there were the details of price and transporting the watch to and from Albert T. in Waltham. Everyone's health was discussed – particularly Sarah's, who was prone to colds and coughs. The weather was of great interest, for a stormy or frigid day would preclude taking out the horse and hitching up the buggy or sleigh and plans for a visit – even on an important occasion such as Thanksgiving or Christmas - would have to be abandoned.

At one point, when Albert had a horse, but Albert T did not, the son explained why he was asking his father to do the traveling:

"…abominable price for a horse & carriage that it really frightens me. They actually have the cheek to ask from $4.50 to $5.00 for a team. What do you think of that. Now you know you can harness up and ride down without its costing you anything only what little manure you loose on the road and that ain't much, is it? So come along."

I have mentioned Albert T.'s wife Sarah's health. Besides her many serious colds, he writes that she is fatigued and her joints ache. She begins to cough up blood. Reading his letters, I realize long before Albert T. does that she is suffering from consumption. He takes her to Florida on the train and rents a room for the winter near his cousin Jerome, who is also vacationing in the South. She seems to improve a little.

The next year, they return to Florida, but by now Sarah is vomiting and unable to eat, very weak and in extreme pain. In one letter Albert T. reports to his parents that Sarah had not left her bedroom for weeks, and that day had tried to move from under her bedcovers to lie on top of them, and tired herself out entirely. How to return home? The train would be just too difficult, so they book passage on a ship. Alas, Albert T. becomes dreadfully seasick and cannot tend to Sarah. They must ride the train after all, a few stations at a time and then spending a night or two in a hotel.

Carrie Bacon, Albert T. Bacon's 2nd wife after Sarah's death

The letters then cease. Caught up in the story, I quickly consult A. E. Brown's "History of Bedford." Sarah died in November of 1877, four months after returning home.

There are more letters in Albert Bacon's boxes – his niece, Ann Eliza, writes often of her life on a tobacco farm in Wisconsin, including the story of the terrible hailstorm that took 70 of her turkeys. (Might she and her husband borrow $500?) His nephew, Orlando, writes that he has received a commission in the Army (and if Albert can't send the $100 Orlando requested, could he at least space $40?). And his elder sister, Eliza, writes many long letters from Washington full of news and humorous asides and funny little sketches of herself (and she doesn't ask to borrow any money!)

Albert must have been a wealthy (!) loved and respected patriarch of the Bacon family. How I wish the Archives contained his answers to all of these letters! Would you mind checking your attic for a dusty box or two of letters from the 1800s?

Believed to be Sarah Bacon (photo donated by Albert Reed Bacon)

The Bedford Historical Society continues to offer a wide range of free lectures. Please mark your calendar for these upcoming exciting programs.

Wednesday, March 26

The lecture will be at the Congregational Church on 25 Great Road - **at 7:15**

"Introducing Our Neighbor, Job Lane"
Speaker: Sharon McDonald

Sharon will talk about the daily life of the man who lived in the now 300-year old house on North Road. She is the curator of the Job Lane Farm Museum and President of the Job Lane House.

Wednesday, April 23

The lecture will be at the Congregational Church on 25 Great Road - **at 7:00**

"The Kennedy Assassination: 50 Years Later"
Speaker: Christopher Daley

Note: This talk is about 90 minutes long, so the evening will begin at 7:00!

Mr. Daley, who has delighted our audiences in past seasons with presentations on Lincoln' assassination and Lizzie Burden, will, again enlighten the evening about this so tragic event 50 years ago.

Wednesday, May 28

The evening will be held at the Congregational Church on 25 Great Road - **at 6:30**

Annual Meeting - Put Luck and Lecture

Speaker: Dave Downs
"Downsizing Your Historical STUFF"

Mr. Downs will explore six common reasons why we acquire "stuff" of historical value and save in our basements, closets, attics, garages, and sheds - and will provide some helpful hints for managing this "problem."

NOTE: If for any reason, we have to cancel an event, we will send an email and leave a message on the Society's answering machine - call 781-275-7276

Gifts from Bedford

It is always a good idea to check out our merchandise, we have something for everyone: books about the rich past of our town, replicas of old Bedford Maps, T-shirts, sweatshirts, small and large Bedford Flags, Trivits with Bedford images, watches with the Bedford Flag, and one can also buy copies of any of the thousands of photographs from our archives.

BARBER IS TO BE POSTMASTER

Bedford Appointee hopes to Change Mail Office

BEDFORD, May 16. – After shaving the male population of this town and cutting their hair for the past 22 years, Michael F. Manning of South street, will within a week become one of Uncle Sam's postmasters and take charge of the local office.

One of the first things Postmaster Manning hopes to do is to change the location of the postoffice. It is now in a dry goods store. Whether or not he intends to annex it to his barber shop, so he can dispense shaves with one hand and postage stamps with the other, he has not indicated.

Mr. Manning has been appointed by President Wilson, the appointment subject to future Senate confirmation, to succeed Miss Harriet Mudge, who died after 15 years of service as postmistress. His appointment is for six years, instead of the usual four.

This was in our local paper on May 16, 1915

Historical Museum Update

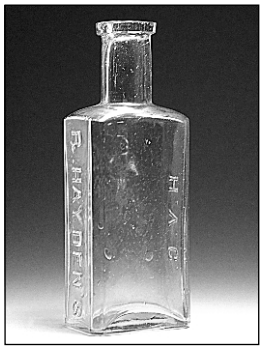
The Board of Selectmen has acted on the Historical Society's request to form a committee to evaluate options for a museum in which to display Bedford's rich heritage. Plans for a Historical Museum Study Committee are moving ahead, as reported in the Bedford Minuteman on February 6, 2014.

"The ad hoc Historical Museum Study Committee, which selectmen established in December, began to take shape at Monday's meeting [Feb. 3]. Selectmen voted unanimously to ask the Volunteer Coordinating Committee to begin a search for candidates for three resident-at-large slots on the committee.

Four additional members will be selected from specific town boards to total seven, including one selectman, one member of the Bedford Historical Society, one member of the Historic District Commission, and another member, possibly from the Planning Board.

'The selectmen seek a broad representation of people to serve on this committee, and especially residents interested in the town's historical character that are capable of collecting and analyzing data and making recommendations from such analysis,' said Selectmen Chairman William Moonan.

The group will be tasked with investigating potential museum locations and other issues."



Hayden's Viburnum Compound

The Society recently acquired this compact rectangular bottle (4½" heigh) that original held Hayden's Viburnum Compound. Recommended for curing many woman's ailments, it fit nicely in a woman's purse.

Officers

Jan van Steenwijk, *President* - Brown Pulliam, *Vice President* - Phyllis Cooke, *Secretary* Patricia Leiby, *Treasurer*

Directors

Frank Gicca - ('13) *Chairman* - Judie Toti - ('15) *Board Clerk* - Carol Amick ('16) - Lee Vorderer ('16 - Julie McCay Turner ('16) -Bea Brown ('13) - Joan Gicca - ('13) Marion Bryan ('14) - Donald Jenkins ('14) - Don Corey ('15) - Atty. Paul Dick ('15)

Finance Committee

Frank Gicca - *Chairman* - Patricia Leiby - *Treasurer* - Don Corey - Donald Jenkins -Paul Dick - Jan van Steenwijk - *Pres*. - Brown Pulliam - Vice Pres.

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:

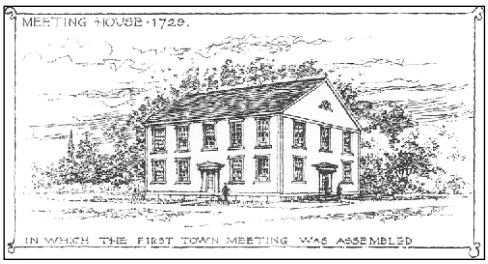
Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - 2 Mudge Way - Bedford, MA 01730-2138

The Bedford Flag, the oldest existing flag in the United States. On view at the Bedford Library.

The Preservationist

Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - Bedford - Massachusetts
Founded in 1893

February 2014 *Published for anyone interested in our history* Volume 123, Number 2



Where it all began...

The Native Indian tribes (Nipmucks and others), were here first. The Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts in 1620. In 1642 an Indian Trading Post was built in Bedford on the Shaweshin Ryver (near the corner of Page Rd and Shawsheen Rd) and was called the "Shawshin House." The town of Bedford was derived from a part of Billerica and Concord and incorporated on August 28, 1729.

The new town was vested with all the "powers, privileges and immunities that the inhabitants of any of the towns of this province are or ought by law to be vested with: provided that the said town of Bedford do, within the space of three years from the publication of this act, erect, build and finish, a suitable house for the public worship of God, and procure and settle a learned orthodox minister of God conversation; and make provision for his comfortable and honorable support, and likewise provide a school to instruct their youth in writing and reading." (From the book: History of the Town of Bedford by Abram English Brown)

The meeting house was later replaced with the second meeting house (now First Parish) on the Common. Very few items are left from the old meeting house, but the Society still has the original door latch in its archives.

This is the oldest existing image of the first meeting house. Note the tree stumps. It is the original Town Seal.

Free lectures see page 2

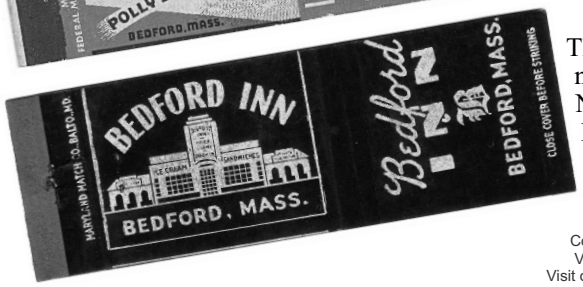
For additional reading about Bedford's history, see the list of the books we offer on page 3.

Photos from left:

1 - One of the hidden treasures in Bedford in a private home in Bedford. Tens of colorful murals are spread throughout 2 floors. They were painted as "wallpaper" by Rufus Porter in ca. 1830s.
2 - From the days that Bedford had a booming industry. Bedford Lumber & Mfg, ca. 1890s
3 - How else to light the living room or kitchen than with a candle lantern like this from ca. 1700s

Do You Remember...?

These 2 matchbook covers were recently acquired by the Society. Polly's Restaurant with the airplane on the roof, was on the Great Road near Shawsheen Avenue.



This Bedford Inn (there were a number!) was at the corner of North and Chelmsford Roads. It is now Renzo's.

www.bedfordmahistory.org

Come and see us.
Visit our website.
Visit our FaceBook page.

Admistrative Assistant:
Kara Kerwin
781-275-7276

The Preservationist.
Design, production & photography: Jan van Steenwijk
Contributing writers ; Carol Amick, Don Corey, Kara Kerwin, Brian Oulighan & Sharon McDonald

The Preservationist

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford, MA 01730-1238

US Postage Paid
Bedford, MA 01730
Non-Profit Org.
Permit No. 30

"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.