The Stearns Building on Great Road houses the Bedford Historical Society's archives.

The Preservationist

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

Founded in 1893

January 2014 Volume 123, Number 1

Welcome to our first-of-the-year lecture

Wednesday, Jan. 22 at the Bedford Library

The history of Emerson Hospital – the Concord hospital used by so many Bedford residents and affectionately called the "Mass General of the Suburbs" -- will be the topic of the Society's January program meeting.

The program will be held in the Bedford Library Meeting Room on Wednesday, Jan. 22. Refreshments will be available starting at 7:15 pm, and the guest speaker will begin around 7:45 pm. Because of the Library's 9 pm closing, the talk will end at 8:45 pm.

Emerson Hospital employee and volunteer Kenton Blagbrough conducted extensive research on the hospital and authored "The Centennial of Emerson Hospital in Concord" when the hospital reached its 100 year birthday in 2011. His work provides details about the family of Charles Emerson, who donated 80 acres of land along the Sudbury River and $20,000 to establish a 14-bed "cottage" hospital.

Formerly known as Deaconess Hospital, in 1924 the facility was deeded to the community and was renamed after Charles Emerson, a nephew of Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. Today, Emerson Hospital is a 179-bed acute care medical center providing advanced medical services to over 300,000 individuals in 25 communities.

Please feel free to bring a guest to this interesting and informative program!

Carol Amick

Old, But Young at Heart

Our Society was established before any of us were born and it continues to educate us about the history of Bedford. This year the Society celebrates its 121st anniversary. We don't know if the founders in 1893 were thinking that their new organization would still be vibrant and relevant more than one hundred years later. Could they have imagined that the archives they had established would now be filled with information and objects that helped define their contemporary society and the culture of the years that followed?

Now it is the beginning of 2014 and we welcome our members and anyone who supports our efforts to keep Bedford's history alive. This is the BHS's mission and we appreciate and welcome those who help sustain this important objective for years to come. As always, we are looking for suggestions, great ideas, inspiration and input from our membership—from you! We welcome any thoughts that you have that might awaken others' curiosity or stimulate new programs. This is your opportunity to be heard.

Just look at the wonderful story on page 3; not only is it full of fun and love for storytelling, but it certainly also reflects on a time that does not exist anymore. How many of us write letters by hand anymore? (Of course, the original letter on page 3 is handwritten!!!)

The bottom line: Please advise us how we can bring exciting offerings to the membership as a whole by bringing lectures and programs that are of great interest to you.

Jan van Steenwijk

Rebuilding of the 1890 Bedford Census *by Brian Oulighan*

1890 was a banner year for Bedford, for it finally passed the population mark of 1,000 for the first time. It had nearly reached that mark 35 years earlier in 1855, when the State census showed the population at 986. However, the 3rd quarter of the 19th century was a hard time for Bedford. The Wilson mill burned, putting much of the population out of work. The cottage shoe industry that had provided income to hundreds of families was wiped out by the emergence of large shoe factories. Farmers from all over New England left the rocky fields for richer soil in the upper Midwest that the Federal government had opened to homesteaders. And the Civil War had taken a tremendous toll on the town. By 1865 the population dropped by 17% to 820 hardy souls.

The railroad brought new growth to the town in the last quarter of the 19th century, and in 1890 Bedford's population reached 1092. Who were the newcomers? This information normally would come from the Federal Censuses, which were done every ten years and which still go on to this day. However, the 1890 Federal Census was damaged by a fire in Washington D.C. in 1921. Surviving fragments from the original 1890 census included veterans' schedules, the Native American census, state censuses, and city and county directories. Census Director Sam Rogers reported the extensive damage to the 1890 schedules, estimating 25 percent destroyed and 50 percent of the remainder damaged by water, smoke, and fire. Congress authorized destruction in February 1933, and at least one report states the 1890 census papers were finally destroyed in 1935. A small scribbled note later found in a Census Bureau file states "remaining schedules destroyed by Department of Commerce in 1934 (not approved by the Geographer)."

An 1890 Bedford Census that was subsequently assembled from a Town Directory and complied by the Mormons in Salt Lake City had only 444 names. I took other directories from earlier and later and found more people and family members that were in Bedford in 1890. I used the 1900 census and included the people that were in Bedford in 1880 and did the same with the directories. They were certainly in Bedford in 1890. I used Marriage records that showed the places of residence of the couples. I also used Birth and Death records which showed the parents of the new and older residents. I used the 1890 Civil War Veterans list that had not been damaged; there were still 31 veterans in Bedford in 1890. Nine widows were listed with the veterans, whose husbands had died during the

continued pg. 2

continued from pg.1

the war or sometime before 1890. After about a year of work, we now have a complete list of the 1890 Bedford Census and know something about the newcomers.

In 1890, Bedford had a population of 1092. There were 95 farms, 15 industries, 230 dwellings and 239 families. Thirty-three people were working for the Railroad, 4 times as many as in 1880. There were only 6 Shoemakers left, one that worked in Lynn and three from other towns, working in Bedford. Six people worked as Blacksmiths, almost the same as in 1880. At least 35 people were working in Boston at various trades, presumably commuting by rail. Eight people were connected to the Coal business, and six were in the Grain business. There were 5 Door Makers, 5 Grocers, 24 Carpenters (only 5 in 1880), 12 Painters, 4 Butchers, 24 Laborers and 7 Salesmen. Many of these people had farms to work on as well as their other occupations. Ten people were retired from their trade, but other than those everyone else was working. There were 86 people that had been born in Ireland living in Bedford in 1890, down from 107 from Ireland in 1880. There was an influx of Canadians to Bedford, with at least 38 born in Canada (compared to just 18 in 1880). The first 5 Danish immigrants to Bedford had arrived, as well as 9 Scottish immigrants (compared to just 2 ten years earlier). Bedford was a Town that was growing in many ways.

Brian Oulighan

A Generous Bequest

A recent bequest to the Historical Society of $1,000 from the estate of Anne Abbott, in memory of her husband, John Tucker Abbott, prompted a search for information about the family from which it originated.

Anne Elisabeth Skelly was a native of Dover, N.H. She graduated from Dover schools and the Elliot Hospital School of Nursing in Manchester, N.H. She married John Abbott and moved to Bedford.

Anne and John had two children, John and Melisande. They lived at 118 Wilson Road in Bedford. Anne passed away in August, 2013. Her husband John died in March, 2001. And unfortunately their son, John Cope, passed away in March, 2007.

The Abbotts were lifetime members of the Bedford Historical Society. Mr. Abbott became very involved in the Society. Society records indicate that in 1969 he gave a "10-minute talk" on "Early Industries of Bedford Prior to the 1830s" to a joint meeting of the Historical Societies of Acton, Bedford, Chelmsford, Littleton and Stow. He was a member of the Society's Nominating Committee in 1971 and served as Society President in 1972.

In 1973, John Tucker Abbott worked to get the Society officially incorporated as a non-profit organization in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, that gave the Society its important "501(c)(3)" status ever since.

John continued his volunteer efforts on behalf of the Society. In 1976, he took on the responsibility for organizing the Society's program series. When the Society voted at its May, 1977 meeting to establish a Board of Directors, John agreed to serve. As part of an effort to revise the Society's Bylaws, minutes of a 1978 Board of Directors' meeting stated: "John Abbott felt we (the Board) should act as consultants, reviewing long-range projects before they are undertaken."

The Society is very grateful for the generous bequest in John Tucker Abbott's memory.

Carol Amick

A BIG THANK YOU!

Last year, the Society received a wonderful response to our yearly fund-raising request. We thank all of you for your generosity and support. Your dollars will help the society sustain its many activities.

Anonymous
Amick, Carol & Bill Moonan
Bass, Bob
Button, Jane
Carlton, Ellen and Lawrence
Chip-in Farm
Colao, Angelo and Gabriele
Corey, Donald L.
DeLuca, Richard
Dodge, Constance and John
Duffy, Maureen
Gicca, Frank and Joan
Goldenberg, Lora
Hafer, Mary and Fred
Hennessey, David and Francine
Johnson, Wilma
Kring, Roy and Shirley
Leiby, Patricia
Little, Roger and Carol
Patel, Barry,
Pullen, Heather and David
Reynolds, Kate
Slechta, Betty
Spencer, David
Stickney, Ed and Evelyn
Van Steenwijk, Barbara and Jan

In addition, we also thank the many people who have donated historical items throughout the year, thus helping to enliven so many diverse components of our town's past.

Thank you on behalf of the BHS for your generosity, Jan van Steenwijk

Our Merchandise Keeps Moving

Thanks to Jim Shea for his great support in selling the BHS's merchandise at the Bedford Freight House.

Not only do we have an excellent outlet, but it is also a welcome, growing revenue for the Society.

If you want some great Bedford related items for yourself or a friend – think T-shirts, Bedford flags or books – please visit the Freight House. During the winter months, the opening hours are limited, so please call before you leave your house – 781-275-6180.

You can, of course, always call our office at 781-275-7276 for information.

JvS

Remembering

We will miss a good friend and colleage. Frank O'Hara was a long time member of the Society and became a board member in 2006. When asked if he would fill the position of treasurer, he replied modestly, "I don't know if I can fill those shoes…." Of course he could….and with great expertise. His professional advice and helpful ideas at our finance meetings exhibited his comfort and great insight in the financial world. Frank and his wife Emily moved to Bedford in 1965; he was a long time member of the Parish of St.Michael where he served as lector, a Eucharistic minister and was also a member of the choir.

Frank passed away on November 25, 2013. We miss this kind man and wish Emily much strength now and in the future.

We also remember Paul Little, who was born and raised on the Little farm on Old Billerica Road. As well as operating his own farm, he kept the fields mowed at Llewsac Lodge. When other family farms were being swallowed up for housing after World War II, Paul reinvented his farm as the Bedford Country Club in summer and the Little Ski Tow in winter, thus preserving that open space for decades. Upon his retirement, Bedfordshire Condominiums were built on the former Little farm.

Sharon McDonald found in our archives this charming letter written in about 1865 by Sarah Bacon to her in-laws, Albert and Susan Bacon of Bedford. Kara Kerwin did the transcription.

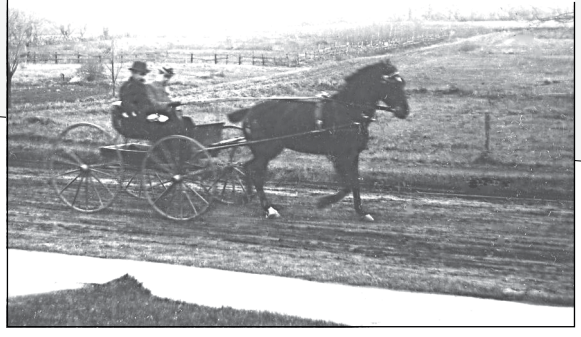
Dear Father and Mother,

Waltham, Monday A.M.

I must write you a few lines to let you know of our wonderful escape from death last night as we were coming home. When within three miles of home the horse took fright at some bushes by the side of the road and whirled half round then ran over a pile of rocks that were by the road side then over the wall down into the meadow and over one ditch before Albert could stop him, we all the while in the buggy with no bones broken but frightened almost to death. You can imagine how I felt. I expected that the next moment that we should be launched into eternity and could I know now that I was to die the next moment my feelings could be no worse/ for you know my dread of death/ than they were at that moment when the horse went over the wall. I certainly thought the next instant we should be torn in pieces. Oh dear such a fright as it gave me. I will never again ride home from Bedford so late for if I cannot some earlier I will stay at home. Well after the horse stopped which was after he jumped the ditch I jumped out over the wheel and away went my muff under the horse but I picked it up and then where was my bag with the eggs and bonds you may laugh as much as you want to for I cannot help it myself now to think what a time we had.

I went back and half way between the house and the road lay my bag with egg and bonds all mixed up and ready for cake. I took it and started upon the run up the hill for you know that house that stand at the top of the hill very near the road on the right hand side of the road as you come down we were very near that and away I went making a terrible noise and the man of the house hearing me came out and I sent him to help Albert and I went into the house and the wife of the man helped me to clean the bonds for they were pretty well daubed with egg and then we took out the egg from the bag, there were only six broken but such a mess. I gave the whole ones to the woman for I did not dare bring them home for fear of another accident but we got home nicely the rest of the way. The good old milk can kept on its feet through the whole. When the man got to Albert he had turned the horse around and led him to a pair of bars. There was not a thing broken about the horse or carriage only a hard rub on the side where the wheel rubbed when the horse turned so short around. Now don't you think that was a very narrow escape from death? Oh dear how I do shudder when I think of it, Will you tell Helen that Albert did not think to take out the five dollars for Mother so she must. You tell Helen why the full amount of money was not there, she expected the whole. Let her read this letter if you see her.

Yours aff. Sarah



This photo of a horse & buggy is similar to the one described in the letter

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Bedford, MA 01730-1238

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"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.

Next Lecture: Wednesday, February, 26 - 2014
7:15 pm at the Bedford Library
"National Treasures"

7:15 pm in the Congregational Church, 25 Great Road Stephen Kenny, Director of the Commonwealth Museum will speak about the rare and national treasures on display at the Commonwealth Museum in Boston.

Our lecture series are always free, and one is welcome to bring guests.

Officers
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Please feel free to visit our archives to browse though the many volumes of genealogical resources.

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

www.bedfordmahistory.org

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Brian Oulighan & Sharon McDonald

Strengthening The Society's Collections

After consideration at several Board meetings, the Board of Directors voted to adopt a Targeted Accession Plan to strengthen the Society's collections. Until now, the Society has been entirely dependent on the generosity of individuals for donations of archival or museum items. Meanwhile, others acquire many objects of historic relevance to Bedford that are regularly offered on EBay and other internet sites. An annual budget of $1,000 was voted for the Society to acquire items with specific importance to Bedford.

The first acquisition under this plan was a collection of papers that originally belonged to Charles W. Jenks, owner of Fitch Tavern until his death in 1929. The papers include considerable genealogical information on the Jenks and Fitch families, extensive deed research on the assembly of the Fitch farm starting in the early 1700s before Bedford's establishment, a copy of Charles Jenks will, and other interesting documents.

The will is of particular importance to the Society, as the original that was on file at the Middlesex Registry of Probate has been lost. His farm included the land where Town Hall, the Police Station, High School, Library and most of the playing fields are located.

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