



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

May 2014

Published for anyone interested in our history

Volume 123, Number 5

## Annual Meeting - Put Luck and Lecture

### Wednesday, May 28

At the Congregational Church on 25 Great Road - at 6:30

Speaker: Dave Downs

*"Downsizing Your Historical STUFF"*

Everyone has "STUFF!" Why do we acquire and save more possessions of historical value than we need?

According to statistics from the Massachusetts Municipal Association's publication, *The Beacon*, an estimated 3-5 % of the U.S. population suffers from hoarding. This rate translates to a minimum of 420 people in Bedford!



Annual Meeting guest speaker Dave Downs explores six common reasons why our shelves, closets, basements, attics, garages and sheds get filled with STUFF – items we feel have

historical value. Mr. Downs will offer helpful hints for how we can manage the difficult problem of organizing our valuables and avoiding the "hoarder" syndrome in this humorous, final presentation of the Society's 2013-14 program series.

***Mr. Downs' presentation will follow the yearly Potluck Supper and Annual Meeting of the Bedford Historical Society on Wednesday, May 28th. (see page 3)***

Mr. Downs is a retired school teacher with a Master's degree in Creative Arts in Education. A member of the Living History Association and the Rehoboth Minuteman, he received the "Best Exhibitor Award" at the 2009 New England History Festival. He has spoken to historical societies, bringing his brand of "funformation" to wide audiences. Believing that "people rarely succeed at anything unless they have fun doing it," Mr. Downs has entertained audiences in numerous communities.

## Thank you!

*The importance of learning about history was taught to me by my parents from a very young age. So when Barbara and I moved to Bedford some 25 years ago, we walked around town to see sites that illustrated its historic past. Our first impressive discovery was the Old Burying Grounds on Springs Road and the second was the Bedford Flag. Later, of course, we added many other items to our growing list.*

*By far, the Bedford Flag attracted most of our attention. It was an old relic, crafted around 1700, with a Revolutionary War story, yet this precious piece of town memorabilia was housed in a vault in the Library's basement. It was not the best place to keep a treasure, so we founded the "Friends of the Bedford Flag" in order to preserve, protect and safeguard that old piece of silk. Today, the flag is conserved and well protected for all to see in a state-of-the-art display at the Library, and the Friends with its treasury is merged with the BHS.*

*This work with the flag sparked my interest in the BHS. I became an active member and soon joined its Board of Directors. Regularly offering suggestions and ideas, I was elected vice-president and then president, the office I have served for the last five years. Do I have memorable moments? Yes. Remember our successful and fun fundraising event at the Fitch Tavern? And our work with the Kimball family to transform and secure Mina and Larry's generous gift into funds for a museum for the Society?*

***Now it is time to move on. This month my good friend and mentor, Don Corey, will take over the reins. I cannot think of a better person for this job.***

*It will be up to others to determine what my legacy is, but I feel comfortable in saying that I worked on behalf of the Society and that "I have done my best."*

*I thank all of you for your encouragement and aid for the more than 19 years that you let me serve this important organization. Now, please join me in supporting Don as we continue to serve our community and work to create a museum space to display our many artifacts that tell the story of Bedford's yesterday, today and tomorrow.*

*Jan van Steenwijk*

## Wild Flowers of Bedford by Brian Oulighan

With Spring's late arrival this year, it's finally time to think about Bedford's flowers. Charles W. Jenks, who lived at Fitch Tavern until his death in 1929, was described by A.E. Brown as a "careful student of the soil and productions of his ancestral territory." One of Mr. Jenks' publications, "Some of the Wild Flowers of Bedford", appeared in condensed form in Brown's History of Bedford. I have not been able to find the book, but I would like to expand on some of the more interesting flowers and medicinal usages described and determine if these plants are still growing in the area. I have seen some of the more common plants, but many I have not seen.

*continues on pg. 2*



*“Help!” Cried The Boy. “Over Here! Help!”  
He went under the ice to save a boy’s life*

Telephone Lineman Braves Icy Water Three Times. Other Members of the Construction Crew Help in Rescue and Resuscitation

It was a cold winter afternoon and a telephone construction crew was working along South Road in Bedford, Massachusetts. Suddenly, they heard a boy's voice from a nearby creek. "Help!...over here...help!"

Robert B. Foley was the first telephone man to reach the bank. A frantic boy told him that his buddy, Donald King, had fallen into a hole and was under the ice.

Foley crawled over the surface flat on his stomach to distribute his weight and keep the ice from breaking. He got to the hole and without hesitating let himself down in the water, clear out of sight.

He went down twice without finding Donald. Then the boy on the bank yelled... "No, not that hole. The one over there."

Down went Foley for the third time, pushing himself along under the ice towards a smaller hole, five or six feet away.

The next few seconds seemed like years, for he was out of sight. Then suddenly there was a splashing in the open water. It was Foley, and he had the boy in his arms.

Immediately John F. Fitzgerald, the foreman of the construction crew - trained for first aid in emergencies - started to resuscitate the boy and had him breathing by the time the police and firemen arrived with an inhalator.

There's a postscript to the story that you might like to hear.

In recognition of their deed, Robert Foley and John Fitzgerald were given Vail Medals, the traditional awards to telephone people for meritorious acts performed in the public service. Robert Foley also was awarded a bronze medal by the Carnegie Hero Fund. Malcolm S. Cate, Jr., Howard C. Roche and James H. Lucas, the other members of the construction crew, received Company Citations.

*1951 Bell Telephone Systems Ad-Life Magazine: April 23, 1951*

Flowers *continued fr. pg. 1*

These are listed, more or less in the order that the flowers bloom in the spring.

"The earliest perhaps, of all our flowers, is one rarely noticed, the Skunk Cabbage, which may be found in March ... in some damp or swampy place." [Editor's Note - How about mid-April this year?]

Cassandra or Leatherleaf - Urn shaped Bells - Flowers look like Lily of the Valley, but this is a shrub that grows to about 3 feet tall in marshes, bogs and near streams. The leaves are thick and oval shaped, and it is a member of the Heath family.

"Sweet Gale, a low shrub with small and insignificant catkins." This plant is also called "Bog Myrtle". The catkins are the flowers. It grows near peat bogs, 1-2 ft. The foliage has a sweet resinous scent and is a traditional insect repellent, used by campers to keep biting insects out of tents. It is also a traditional component of Royal Wedding bouquets and is used variously in perfumery and as a condiment.

Violets, Wood and Rue Anemone, Columbine and Honeysuckle to mention a few more. Then Houstonia, also known as "Bluet", with small and delicate flowers that may be blue, purple, lavender, white or rose.

False Solomons Seal - called wild lily of the valley. This plant's roots have numerous medicinal values such as an anti-inflammatory. The root can be chewed and swallowed for upset stomachs and ulcers.

Then, "that little marvel of beauty and color, the Fringed Polygala, the Marsh Marigold, under the false name of 'cowslip'." It also called Mayflower and has many other names. The common name marigold is a case in point, as the flower looks more like a buttercup and is in fact a member of the buttercup family.

Early Saxifrage: The Latin word saxifraga means literally "stone-breaker", from Latin saxum "rock or stone" and "frangere" "to break" It is usually thought to indicate a medicinal use for treatment of kidney stones, rather than breaking rocks apart.

"Bell-Bower, with its pale-yellow lily-like flower." I cannot find this plant anywhere. Has anyone heard of the Bell-Bower?

Trillium, also known as Wake-Robin. The plant grows to about 16 inches high and 12 inches wide. The white trillium serves as the emblem and official flower of Ontario, Canada and is the State wildflower of Ohio. There is a Trillium Brewing Co. in Boston. They make a Wake-Robin beer too.

"Deep in some pine grove the moccasin flower or lady's slipper, one of the most curious of the remarkable family of orchids."

I am just going to quote what Charles Jenks says about the following plants. He was amazing with his observations and description of them.

## New Officers, Board Members to be Elected at May 28 Annual Meeting

The Society's Annual Meeting this year, scheduled for Wednesday, May 28th in Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational, will elect Society Officers for the coming year and Directors for one- and four-year terms. In addition, retiring President Jan van Steenwijk, who has served the Society admirably as President for five years, will give his annual report.

The Nominating Committee, comprised of Carol Amick, Wilma Johnson and Julie Turner, will offer the following slate of Society Officers for the coming year:

President: Don Corey  
Vice President: Phyllis Cooke  
Secretary: Brown Pulliam

In addition, the Nominating Committee will offer the following candidates for four-year terms on the Board of Directors:

Lea Ann Knight  
Richard LeSchack  
Sharon McDonald

The Nominating Committee will offer the following candidate to fill a one-year vacancy on the Board of Directors:

Paul Purchia

In addition to the election of new Society Officers and Directors, Past President and Board member Marian Bryan will be introduced as a new member of the Nominating Committee, replacing Wilma Johnson.

These individuals will be voted upon by the Society members in attendance.

The Annual Meeting will follow a Potluck Dinner starting at 6:30 pm with punch and appetizers. Society members are requested to bring a salad, main dish, or dessert that can serve about eight people. Reminder phone calls will be made and emails sent to get a sumptuous array of foods for this final event of the Society's 2013-2014 season. If you are willing to help with phone calls, but have not yet volunteered, please contact Carol Amick at 781-275-5278 or [carol.amick@verizon.net](mailto:carol.amick@verizon.net).

Following the Annual Meeting, guest speaker Dave Downs will present "Downsizing Your Historical STUFF" (see related article, page 1)

### Officers

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

### Directors

Frank Gicca - ('17) *Chairman* - Judie Toti - ('15) *Board Clerk* - Carol Amick ('16) - Lee Vorderer ('16) - Julie McCay Turner ('16) - Bea Brown ('17) - Joan Gicca - ('17) - Marion Bryan ('14) - Sharon McDonald ('17) - Richard LeSchack ('17) - 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

	Dues
Name: _____	_ Student: \$ 15.00
Address: _____	_ Single: \$ 25.00
	_ Couple or Family: \$ 45.00
	_ Life - Single: \$250.00
	_ Life - Couple: \$450.00
City/Town: _____ Zip: _____	Supporting or Business:
Phone: _____	_ Contributing: \$100.00
Email: _____	_ 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.

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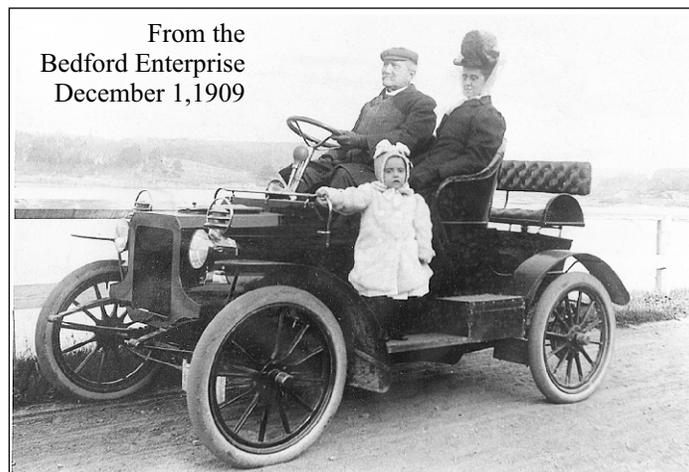


## Another donation for our growing collection

This 17 inch long horn, made of copper, brass and wood was donated by Vern Rivet at our last lecture meeting. According to Mr.

Rivet, it belonged to his father and was used in the 4th July celebration of 1910. He told us that his father later tried to sell it at a yard sale for \$2.00, but no one wanted it. Lucky us and THANK you!

PS: We tried it and it still works!



From the Bedford Enterprise  
December 1, 1909

Samuel D. Prince has bought a five seated Chalmers-Detroit touring car.

Flowers *continued fr. pg. 2*

“About the middle of June, in the meadows, will be found the side-saddle flower, more commonly known as huntsman’s cup or pitcher-plant; about the same time of the year, and generally with the side-saddle flower, are found two of our early orchids, the arethusa and pogonia or adder’s-tongue, resembling each other in shape, -- the former of a deep magenta color and the latter much paler, but with a delicious fragrance. A little later, in these same meadows will be found the yellow lily, the tall meadow-rue, the trumpet-weed with its large heads of dull purple and the Button-bush with its globular head of flowers, while hidden in the grass, but making itself know by its odor, is the meadow mint.”

“The plants found in and along the river seem worthy of special mention. Among the earliest is the yellow water-crowfoot, which is found in May, and resembles a large buttercup. Later in the season the shores are lined with the blue pickerel-weed and the white arrow-head, while farther out are the white and yellow pond lilies, - the latter in two species, one much larger than the other; the bladder-worts are also found.”

“There are a few parasitic plants found in Bedford, the dodder being one of the commonest; the Indian-pipe is found in some of our woods and in many pine woods, the pine sap or false beechdrops, and rarely the one-flowered cancer-root. Rushes, sedges and ferns are also found here and furnish interesting study to any one enjoying the science of botany.”

Did you know the answer to the quiz from our April issue:

“In 1900, Bedford had 3 “Bargemen”?”

*Long before we had the yellow school busses to transport students safely to and from home to school, it was the “Bargemen” who drove horse-drawn barges transporting children to school in the mornings and then home.*

[www.bedfordmahistory.org](http://www.bedfordmahistory.org)

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*The Preservationist.*

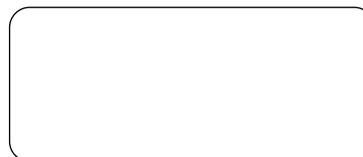
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We Keep It Alive..!”*



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