The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Bedford (Mass.) Historical Society
Founded in 1893

March 2008 Volume 115, Number 5

Then and Now: "old" Old Oak and the "new" Old Oak in Wilson Park. The tree on the left, said to have been a gathering place for the town's militia, was toppled by the Hurricane of 1938. Its replacement (right) has grown to a respectable size.

Our March meeting

We have two timely topics for our March meeting. John Filios will recount the epic tale of Knox's capture of the cannons at Fort Ticonderoga – the cannons that drove the British forces from Boston in an event now known as Evacuation Day, still observed in Suffolk County each year on the 17th of March.

Don Corey will present the history of the Two Brothers Rocks/Dudley Road area, currently under consideration for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Selected as a landmark in 1738, the Rocks are one of the earliest monuments in New England, and Dudley Road had some of the earliest settlements in Bedford and Billerica.

Wednesday, March 26, 7:30 PM
First Church of Christ, Congregational
25 The Great Road, Bedford
Free and open to all
Please bring your friends!

Coming in April: History Weekend

In April we'll be holding two very special events. Immediately after the Pole Capping in Wilson Park on Saturday, April 12, we're having an Open House in the Stearns Building (the police station). We hope that many of the folks who enjoy the Pole Capping ceremony will stop by and see some of our treasures and learn more about us. Free and open to all.

On the next day, on SUNDAY AFTERNOON instead of a Wednesday evening, we'll have our April meeting with a very special guest, Prof. Robert Thorson, speaking on the history of New England stone walls. This is sure to be a crowd-pleaser so please help us spread the word!

Mark your calendar now for History Weekend.

SUNDAY, April 13, 2 PM
First Church of Christ, Congregational
25 The Great Road, Bedford
Free and open to all
Please bring your friends!

The Preservationist is published seven times yearly for the purpose of sharing topics of interest for the education and enjoyment of the Society's members and the community in general. Comments, suggestions and contributions of relevant articles are welcome and should be addressed to: Editor, ***The Preservationist,*** 2 Mudge Way, Bedford MA 01730.

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Bedford Historical Society, 2007-2008

Officers

Alethea Yates, President
Jan van Steenwijk, Vice President
Phyllis Cooke, Secretary
Don Corey, Treasurer

Directors

Carol Amick ('08)
Norman Toti ('08)
Julie Turner ('08) - Board Secretary
Don Corey ('09) - Board Chair
Miriam Brown ('09)
Jan van Steenwijk ('09)
Marion Bryan ('10)
Marietta Ellis ('10)
Donald Jenkins ('10)
Doris Crowell ('11)
Neil Leary ('11)

Committees

Activities: Jeannette Pothier
BOD Liaison to Executive Board: Don Corey
Hospitality: Phyllis Cooke and Marietta Ellis
Membership Secretary: TBD
Merchandise/Ways & Means: TBD
Newsletter Editor: Alethea Yates
Nominating:
Wilma Johnson (appointed by Executive Board, '08)
Carol Amick (appointed by Membership, '09)
Julie Turner (appointed by President, '07)
Program: Cecile Walker
Sunshine: Sharon McDonald
Welcoming: Lois Jenkins
Finance Committee:
Don Corey (Board Chairman, Treasurer)
Mike Seibert ('08)
Neil Leary ('09)
Frank Gicca ('10)
Alethea Yates (BHS President)

Our very own phone number

The Bedford Historical Society now has a direct-dial phone number:

781-275-7276

If you don't happen to remember it, you can get it from directory assistance. We'll be in the next phone book, too, in the white pages and in the yellow pages under Books. Now you can reach us without going through our "roommates," the Bedford Police.

Let the sun shine on our friends

Do you know of a Historical Society member who is bereaved, or unwell, or just in need of a little cheering up? Please write or call our Sunshine person, Sharon McDonald: s_mcd_bos@yahoo.com, 781-275-5643. Sharon will send a card or note on behalf of the Society along with some bright rays of her own special caring and kindness.

To our new readers

If this is the first time you've read *The Preservationist*, welcome! We are glad to have you with us. If you aren't sure why you've received our newsletter, check the mailing label for your status. The word "Complimentary" indicates that we've added you to our mailing list because we know you're interested in local history and think you might enjoy our newsletter. It might be that you've made a donation to our fund drive, or have donated something to our collections, or have purchased some of our merchandise, or contacted us with a research request… or perhaps because a little birdie put your name into our ear. Whatever it was, enjoy!

Extended Archives hours

Our office hours have been extended as of the first of the year. Our room in the Stearns building (a.k.a. the Police Station building) at 2 Mudge Way is *usually* open at the following times:

Monday, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5
Tuesday, 9 to 1
Wednesday, 9 to 1

Other times by appointment.

It's best to phone ahead before you stop by because we do step out for errands now and then. Please call our NEW PHONE NUMBER, 781-275-7276.

Annual Giving

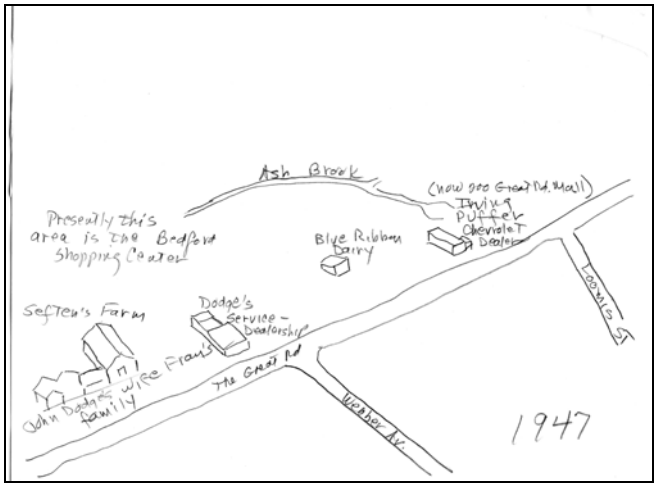
We are very grateful to the many members and friends who responded to our Annual Giving fund drive letter. Your generous donations are essential for maintaining our collections and for helping us go on collecting and sharing the stories of Bedford.

Neil Leary
Julie McCay Turner
Jan van Steenwijk and Barbara Hitchcock
Gloria and Sheldon Moll

Haven't had a chance to make your contribution? Not to worry! Donations are always welcome and are gratefully received at any time of year. Please send yours to us at

Bedford Historical Society
2 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730-2138

Thank you very much!



Then and Now: a sketch of The Great Road as it appeared in 1947. The buildings of the Senften Farm on the lower left have been demolished to make way for the Bedford Shopping Center, now the home of Whole Foods and several other stores. The Blue Ribbon Dairy has been replaced by the new Blue Ribbon Plaza. Upper right, the Irving Puffer Chevrolet dealership stood on what is now the site a strip mall with the recently opened Asiana Restaurant in the end of the building nearest the street.

The John F. Brown Memorial Fund

As a result of the thoughtfulness and generosity of so many of John Brown's friends, the Memorial Fund that was created in John's memory for the Old Burying Ground has grown to over $3,500. As trustee, the Society has set this sum aside in an interest-bearing cash reserve fund while working out the details of how best to use it to help fulfill John's long-held dream of seeing the Old Burying Ground fully restored.

Last year the town completed a major project, paid in part by a grant from the Mass. Historical Commission (MHC), to repair all of the gravestones that were broken into pieces, reset those that were lying down completely out of the ground, and repair the south tombs. The town has just applied for another MHC grant for a second round of work to repair the north tombs and as many damaged gravestones as possible – for example, a number of slate stones that are delaminating or badly cracked. We will not know if the grant request is approved until June 2008.

Even if this second grant is awarded, the town will not have the resources to do all the work that is needed. In particular, there are a number of stones that are not broken but are badly tilted. These should be taken out of the ground and reset more firmly so that they will remain upright for many years to come. This will greatly enhance the appearance of this historic site to visitors and passersby.

Following discussions with the Director of Public Works, who oversees the Old Burying Ground, the Society's Board of Directors agreed that the Memorial Fund should be used to straighten as many of the gravestones as possible among those that will not require other repairs in the future. This decision was confirmed by a vote of the members at our March general meeting. It appears that 50 to 60 such stones may be included in this project.

We anticipate working out details of this gift to the town of Bedford with town officials over the next few weeks and would be delighted if work could be underway by Memorial Day.

Donations are still being accepted and may be sent to the Bedford Historical Society, 2 Mudge Way, Bedford MA 01730-2138.

Bedford then and now

We are proud of our collection of vintage photographs. As we look through them we see that much has changed in Bedford, but we are stuck by how much of the past still remains.

137 North Road, the David Lane House, from the early days of photography (left) and in modern times. This house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places

The Bedford House hotel on the corner of the Great Road and Elm Street (left), later used as the Grange Hall, was demolished to make room for the current fire station.

The house at 110 The Great Road, built in 1730 by the town's first minister and long known as Domine Manse, was a restaurant at the time of the postcard on the left. Today it is used for professional offices.

119 The Great Road in the horse and buggy days…

…and today. A porch and a few finishing touches have been added but largely the same. This house is now a commercial property.

It was Main Street then but it's The Great Road now. The Fletcher Block on the left is still standing and is now called the Blake Block.

Membership Application and Renewal Form

This is (please check one):

____ A new membership

____ A renewal

____ **A gift subscription**

Name:_____

Address:_____

_____

City: _____

State:_____ Zip:_____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Dues (please check one):

__ Student:	$3.00
__ Individual:	$10.00
__ Couple or Family:	$15.00
__ Supporting or Business:	$50.00
__ Patron:	$250.00
__ Life – Individual:	$150.00
__ Life – Couple:	$200.00

Donation

I would like to contribute the following amount to aid the Society: $ _____

I would like to contribute the following amount to the John F. Brown Memorial Fund for the Old Burying Ground: $ _____

Total enclosed: $_____

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781-275-7276
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Bedford MA 01730

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Are your dues up to date? Please check the mailing label for your membership status

Bedford Then and Now. These two views of the house at 48-52 The Great Road. On the left, two children stare in amazement at a huge tree that fell and crushed the roof during the Hurricane of 1938. Below, the same house today. Storefronts have been added to the front. For more Then and Now pictures, see page 4.