The Preservationist

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

Founded in 1893

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

March 2012 Volume 120, Number 2

The Historical Society is sponsoring two exciting lecture programs in April, the first on April 1, and the second, on Wednesday evening, April 25 at the Bedford Library. The two programs have very different subject matter, but are certain to excite and intrigue all attendees!

Sunday, April 1, 2 pm
at the
Congregational Church, 25 Great Road

Historian Christopher Daley, "Lizzie Borden: The Mystery Continues!"

The scene is Fall River, Massachusetts; the date is August, 1892. The story is the spell-binding tale of Lizzie Borden and the murder of her parents.

Ever since then, armchair sleuths from around the world have fixated on the crime that created such a sensation – for the city and for crime enthusiasts, when unmarried Sunday school teacher Lizzie Borden was accused of hacking to death her father and stepmother. Although she was acquitted by a jury, she was never thought to be innocent by the public, and the crime inspired the well-known, sing-song jump-roping ditty that she "gave her mother 40 whacks, and when she saw what she had done, gave her father 41."

Historian Christopher Daley will paint a vivid image of the woman some say got away with murder, more than a century ago. Mr. Daley will set the scene in 1892 Fall River – a bustling whaling community, and offer several credible murder theories for the audience to ponder, using police evidence and other background gained from extensive research on this unsolved case.

Lizzie Borden of Fall River, MA

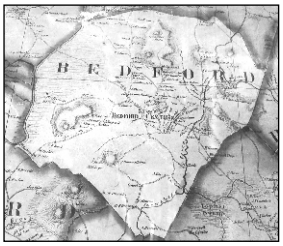
A history teacher in the Silver Lake Regional school system in Kingston, MA, Chris Daley is a former Chairman of the Pembroke Historical Commission and President of the Pembroke Historical Society. He is currently working on a book based on the Lizzie Borden case and other infamous Massachusetts murders.

The program starts with refreshments at 2 pm.

Bedford in 1860

A long-time Bedford resident, Brian Oulighan, has discovered many interesting pieces of the town's history that he has recently been sharing with the Society. Although Brian now lives elsewhere, his knowledge of all things Bedford is remarkable. Combining a timeline done by Brian, one done by late Town Historian John Brown and one published in 1899, we recall some significant National events as well as some insights into Bedford as it was around 1860.

- Bedford's population temporarily peaks in 1855 at 986 (State census)
- Dr. William R. Hayden in 1856 purchases the Bedford Springs Hotel, a 40-acre estate with hotel, stable, bath-house and bowling alley (later the Sweetwater Hotel and N.Y Pharmaceutical Company).
- "Old" Town Hall on South Road is dedicated in 1857.



- An atlas is published in 1857 containing the first detailed map of Bedford to show the locations of homes and names of homeowners (a copy is in the Society's collections).
- Following the 1857 Business Panic, Bedford's population in
- Abraham Lincoln is elected President in November 1860 and inaugurated in March 1861.
- The bombardment of Fort Sumter, SC, by Confederate forces on April 12, 1861, marks the beginning of the Civil War.
- A Liberty Pole is erected on the Common on April 27, 1861, and the first 11 men from Bedford enlist (including Cyrus Page at age 60). By war's end, Bedford is credited with sending over 95 soldiers and sailors to serve in the Union forces.
- The old bell in the Meetinghouse steeple cracks early in 1861 as it is being rung by Henry Hosmer. He later enlists in the Union Army and dies in 1862 in New Orleans following its capture by Admiral Farragut.

Continued on page 2

A museum to come...

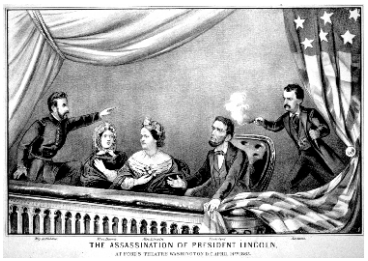
The Society is working to create a museum-like space for displays of some of the thousands of artifacts, letters and pictures it has. Of course, we are not there yet, but we have a museum committee whose members give serious thought to this goal. Where should it be; how much space do we want or need? Can the space be properly rendered to accommodate environmental concerns?

It might still take some time before we can take that important and expensive step. Most of all, the Society needs to raise the needed funds. This is a daunting task. But we keep preparing ourselves and we hope that our members and the community at large will support and encourage us to keep moving along. It will, after all, be to the benefit to all of us, to learn about our rich past. The Society has materials dating back to the sixteen hundreds -- before Bedford was separated from our neighboring town, Billerica.

A relative of my wife recently sent her a DVD with hundreds of documents and photographs he carefully had scanned. Proudly, he explained that he "got rid of all those boxes that took up all that space…." What a shame! His local historical society would have welcomed "all those boxes…." Original material will last for hundreds of years, while copies on any electronic devices will be outdated sooner than we can imagine and will not be viewable within a few years.

Jan van Steenwijk

Bedford 1860, cont. fr. page 1



- The Battle of Gettysburg, PA, is waged on July 1, 2 & 3, 1863. Lincoln delivers his Gettysburg Address on Nov. 19, 1863, at the dedication of the National Cemetery.
- Gen. Lee surrenders to Gen. Grant at Appomattox Court House, VA, on April 9, 1865, ending the Civil War with the loss of 620,000 Union and Confederate lives.
- Bedford's population bottoms out at 820 in 1865 (State census), having lost 16 men in the service of their country.

Brian also extracted some interesting facts from the 1860 Federal census. Large shoe factories in Brockton, Lawrence and elsewhere had replaced the handmade shoe cottage industry that for decades provided extra income to hundreds of residents, but about 40 people were still involved in shoemaking according to the census.

As one would expect, the majority of Bedford residents were in traditional occupations including Farmers, Laborers, Carpenters, Masons, Wheelwrights, Harness Makers, Blacksmiths, Millers, Traders, etc. However, other residents' occupations included a Milliner (one that makes, trims, designs or sells hats); Soap Bakers; a Pedlar (a.k.a. Peddler); an Auctioneer; a Knitter; a Tin Plate Worker; an Expressman (one employed in the Express business or the driver of a job wagon); and a Watch Factory apprentice.

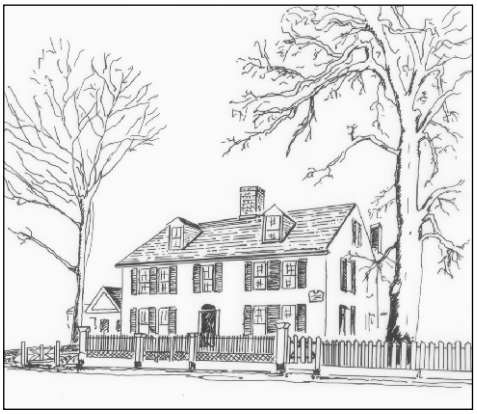
A number of families were recently arrived from other places, with at least a dozen from New Hampshire as well as immigrants from Ireland, England, Germany and Canada. Otho F. Gant, a Farmer from Maryland, was head of the only black family in Bedford at that time.

In future newsletters, we'll look at changes that occurred in later decades.

Don Corey

Jenks Nature Trail

Charles Jenks was a descendant of Jeremiah Fitch, the tavern keeper who provided breakfast to Bedford's men answering the alarm on April 19, 1775, as well as a descendant of Job Lane. He moved into the ancestral Fitch Tavern (then called Stonecroft Farm) around 1886. He led an active civic life here, serving 20 years as Town Moderator, serving as the town's first Tree Warden, serving as a Library trustee, and helping to charter the Bedford Grange. He donated two acres of land to the town for Bedford's first junior high school - now Town Hall. He died on Christmas Day 1929. Subsequently the town acquired from the Jenks estate the land where the Police Station, High School, Library and many of the playing fields are now located.



The Fitch Tavern, called Stonecroft Farm in 1886

Charles Jenks' memory is honored by the Jenks Nature Trail, the corridor of trees, paths and stonewalls that extends along the front of the High School and Library. Saplings from Arnold Arboretum are believed to have been planted by Jenks along that corridor, and in 1963 the Conservation Commission (led by Paddy Wade, Mimi Adler and Murray York) had the area designated as the Jenks Nature Trail. They worked to make it a botanical study area for students by adding new plantings of various native species. The area is now protected under a Memorandum of Understanding between the Selectmen, Library trustees and School Committee.

This spring several activities are planned as part of a re-dedication of this historic area in honor of Charles Jenks.

Jenks Nature Trail in front of the Bedford High School

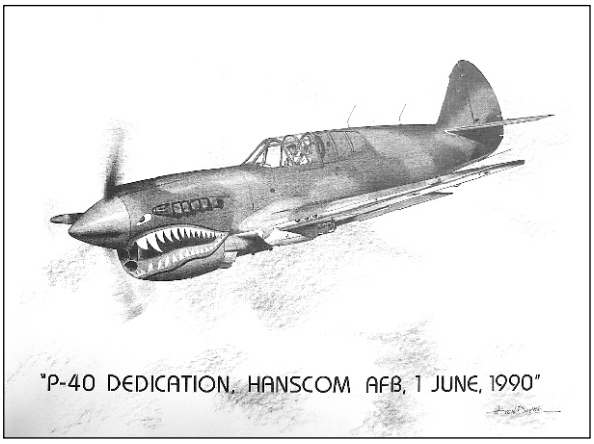
- Immediately following the Pole Capping activities on Saturday, April 7, a brief re-dedication ceremony will occur at the Jenks Nature Trail between the Library and High School. Don Marshall, Bedford's Citizen of the Year, will unveil a new sign being installed to identify the trail for visitors.

- On the morning of Arbor Day, Friday, April 27, there will be a tree planting at the Jenks Nature Trail. Richard Warrington, Bedford's Tree Warden, is expected to officiate. The committee hopes to again have a variety of native species gradually replanted along the trail.

Finally, on Friday, April 27, Bedford's DPW and Arbor Resources Committee are sponsoring an Arbor Day program at 7:30 PM in the Town Hall Multipurpose Room. The program speaker this year will be the Society's Don Corey, telling tales of "Bedford's Shade Tree Legacy: Growing Our Small Town Charm".

Every one is cordially invited to attend these events.

Recent Additions to the Collections



An etching of the P-40 donated to the BHS

The Society is pleased to have received the following recent donations:

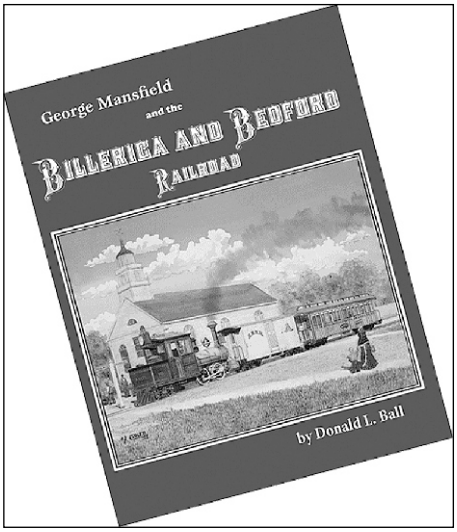
Hanscom AFB - P40 Dedication Program and Etching
Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the entry of the U.S. into World War II, the Boston Auxiliary Airport at Bedford (now Hanscom AFB) became a hub of military activity. The first Army Air Force fighter squadrons arrived in July 1942 and were equipped with Curtis P-40s, the first mass-produced American single-seat fighter aircraft. The P-40 constituted more than half of the fighter strength of the U.S. Army Air Force during the first half of WW II and acquired its American name of Warhawk.

The P-40 Warhawk achieved worldwide fame with Gen. Chennault's "Flying Tigers" in China. Emblazoned with the distinctive "Sharkmouth" paint scheme, the Flying Tigers were officially credited with the destruction of 286 Japanese aircraft, along with 300 probable "kills", against the loss of only 26 aircraft and 8 pilots. The first two P-40 squadrons activated from Bedford - the 85th and 318th Fighter Squadrons - were engaged in combat in the Mediterranean and European Theaters and were credited with shooting down a combined total of over 200 enemy aircraft.

An original P-40 on display at Hanscom AFB

In June 1990 a P-40 was put on permanent display at Hanscom AFB to recognize its important role and to honor the fighter pilots. Former Selectman Angelo Colao attended the Dedication ceremony. He has graciously donated to the Society the Celebration program and a limited edition P-40 etching that was done to mark that event.

On a more domestic level, the Society is also grateful for the donation from Don Corey of a late 19th century carbon steel knife and 3-tine fork. These 3-tine forks were common cutlery in kitchens everywhere for many decades. The donated knife and fork, with wooden handles and inlaid pewter decoration, are an interesting addition to the Society's collection of period kitchen utensils.



New Book on an Old Railroad!

The Society has just received notice of the pending publication of *George Mansfield and the Billerica and Bedford Railroad*. Our beloved B&B Railroad, the first 2-foot narrow gauge commercial railroad in the United States, has continued to arouse interest worldwide over a century after its demise.

In 1875, a railroad promoter named George E. Mansfield arrived here and was instrumental in establishing the Billerica & Bedford Railroad. It was a technical success and was well received, with revenues covered its operating expenses. However, it failed when the investors became impatient and the railroad could not cover its debt service. The equipment was sold and moved to Maine to start the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad.

This book provides the complete story with 212 pages, over 220 images and original documents, 24 drawings and 9 maps. It is offered pre-publication for orders placed before 6/1/12 at $46.95 plus shipping.

Those interested in ordering copies may contact the Society's office for details, or order on line at **www.bb-rr.com**

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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.

Please come and enjoy our FREE 2012 Lectures

Sunday, April 1, 2012 at ***2 pm***, First Church of Christ, Congregational: Christopher Daley, *"Lizzie Borden: The Mystery Continues!"*

Wednesday, April 25, 2012 at ***7:30 pm***, Bedford Library: Gill Solomon, Chief Sachem of the Mass.-Ponkapoag Tribal Council, *"The Time Before Now."*

Wednesday, May 23, **2012** at ***6:30 pm***, First Church of Christ, Congregational (Fellowship Hall): Potluck Dinner and Annual Meeting.

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Visit our FaceBook page.

www.bedfordmahistory.org

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Bedford Historical Society, Inc

We Don't Make History, We Preserve It!
Established 1893

We would like your support!

Your Membership:

- Supports the Society's ongoing effort to *collect artifacts* and ephemera about our town.
- Allows the Society to make sure that all material it acquires will be *protected for the future*.
- Means that anyone will have access to *conduct research* about the town's past.
- Helps the Society fulfill its important goal of having a *museum-like environment*.
- Gives you the opportunity to enjoy *free lectures*.
- Gives you *free newsletters* containing wonderful stories about the past and research results.
- Allows you *discounts on great merchandise*, including books, copies of old maps, t-shirts, Bedford Flags, etc.

Membership Application

Name:_____
Address:_____

City/Town:_____
State:_____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: $_____

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