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

March 2013 Volume 121, Number 2

The Bedford Historical Society Presents:

March 27, 2013 at 7:30
at the
Congregational Church - Great Rd.

"Joshua Page: Builder of Bedford's Center"

The March 27 program will be presented with a sense of great loss, not due to the subject matter, but because the program was originally planned to be given by recently-deceased Society member Robert Slechta.

The program, "Joshua Page: Builder of Bedford's Center," was a program developed by Bob after conducting a great deal of research about the many buildings constructed in the early 1800s by local builder Joshua Page, who was a prolific builder, and many of his homes still stand today. These include the parsonage for the Congregational church at 27 The Great Road, originally known as the Lewis P. Gleason homestead. The parsonage was built as a duplex, and Joshua Page is thought to have introduced the two-family-home concept to Bedford in the early 1800s.

Don Corey a long-time Bedford resident and Society member, will be replacing Bob for the talk on Joshua Page. He is one of the Society's annual participants in the School Department's Walk of Historic Bedford for 3rd graders and in Memorial Day observances at the Civil War monument in Shawsheen Cemetery. In addition to his appearances at Historical Society meetings, he has given talks on Bedford's rich, historic past at Carleton-Willard Village and Bright View assisted living facilities, at the Council on Aging.

Don currently serves on the town's Historic Preservation Commission and Community Preservation Committee and is a Director of the Friends of the Job Lane House and the Bedford Historical Society. He was previously a Selectman and Planning Board member, and served as the Historical Society's long-time Treasurer. Don Corey was honored as Bedford's Citizen of the Year in 2002.

Carol Amick

Disappearing From View...

I think one of the disturbing issues about keeping our history alive is that much of it won't be preserved for future generations. I am talking about photographs, images of our friends, family, street views. We started to lose our history with the "wonderful" invention of digital photography.

Millions of pictures are taken every day. We easily delete the imperfect ones in the camera. We download the good ones into the computer, just keeping the "perfect" shots. Finally, we proudly distribute the best ones -- with lightning speed -- to whomever is on our favored electronic list. After that, the images are stored as zeros and ones, often never to be seen again.

I have heard it all when I discuss this with picture takers, when bringing to their attention that images will disappear over time, they will say: "Don't worry, I have the latest computer software, and I upgrade it when necessary; my files are safe for the future." *Unfortunately, they are all mistaken.*

No electronic files will survive. Eventually our pictures stored on any contemporary devise will deteriorate. Most files more than five years old cannot be recovered let alone be printed. That's because our ever-changing technologies make the previous ones obsolete. Remember the old Floppy disks? That's only 6-7 years ago that they disappeared.

So, now what? Is all lost for the future? No, the best way to save visual memories is still to make prints, the ones that can be placed on your desk. Write dates and names on the reverse and store them away from sunlight in a cool, dry location.

Do you have old negatives or prints of people or places related to Bedford? Please consider donating them to the Society. We promise that people, who come after us, will be able to look back at the past, thanks to your donations.

Jan van Steenwijk

Genealogical Resources at the Society

In the last Preservationist we noted that the Library has undertaken a project to re-define the scope of the Bedford Room. Genealogical resources in the Library that are specifically related to Bedford and its mother towns have now been moved to the reference and circulation areas, and certain genealogical websites are available online there. As a consequence, the Library discarded some genealogy reference books that were not specific to Bedford. Bob Slechta was alerted to the situation, and he and Don Corey retrieved the books and added them to the Society's collection of related genealogical resources.

Last month the Society was alerted to a large number of additional genealogical references that had been discarded, which were immediately retrieved. Consequently, a large bookcase has been placed in the hall outside of the Society's office that is filled with genealogical reference books that the Library discarded and a few that the Society previously owned. Residents and researchers are welcome to use these resources of the Society. The location of the reference bookcase in the hall allows them to be browsed freely by individuals at any time without needing an appointment when the office is open.

Our early ancestors obviously moved around, and many were here before Bedford even existed. These print references are often

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

Boston Post Cane - update by Bob Slechta/Don Corey.

Edwin Atkins Grozier, who bought the Boston Post newspaper in 1891 when it was about to go into bankruptcy, started this tradition. He built the newspaper back up so that it was recognized as one of the nation's leading morning newspapers at the time of his death in 1924. As a creative promotion to increase circulation, in August 1909 canes made of African ebony with 14-carat gold heads were sent to the Boards of Selectmen in many New England towns asking that the canes be presented in a ceremony to the town's oldest living man. The tradition was expanded to include a community's oldest woman in 1930.

Few people realize that Bedford had this tradition over a century ago - honoring its oldest citizens with the presentation of the Boston Post cane. The honorary presentations were well covered in local newspapers, and most recipients were gratified to receive such recognition. However, over the years many of the canes were stolen or lost when families of the last recipient failed to return the cane. Bedford's cane was retired in 1992 a few years ago after its Citizen of the Year program was started, and the cane is now displayed at the Council on Aging.

Many towns maintained records of their Boston Post cane recipients, but Bedford neglected to ever do so. Bob Slechta - Bedford's Citizen of the Year in 2010 - had been working to remedy this oversight and to add those individuals' names to the town's permanent records. At the time of his death he had just completed a review of a century of Selectmen's meeting minutes in the basement archives at Town Hall. While there are still a few gaps to be filled in, Bob was able to identify most of Bedford's Boston Post cane holders. Recipients include the following:

The original Boston Cane, displayed at the Council on Aging.

Name	Date Honored - Age
Moses Elbridge Rowe	Aug 1909 - 86
Oliver Josiah Lane	Dec 1915 - 87
Benjamin F. Day	1916 - 82
James Clapp Jones	07/24/1918 - 83
Charles E. Hayward	01/01/1919 - 84
George Francis Livermore	07/14/1923 - 93
Quincy Sumner Cole	1939-40 - ca.84
John Albert Peterson	?
Frisbie Holman Proctor	05/21/1947- ca.87
Winifred Fitch	06/22/1962 - 91
James L. Duncan	03/21/1969 - 96
George B. Janes	1971 - 92
Alton Hastings Hathaway	11/20/1978 - 96
Edith E. Boyer McNaught	late 1980s - ?
Esther D. Stephanson	09/16/1991 - 99

Genealogical Resources - cont.

more useful in tracking those early ancestors than on-line secondary sources. In a very brief cursory review of the discarded references, Don Corey found information on three direct ancestors (who had lived in Boston, Chelmsford and Watertown) that might have take hours to find on-line and some of which is probably not available there. □

Thank You!

We thank the following who generously made donations in memory of Bob Slechta. In the near future, the Society will use the funds in an appropriate way to honor Bob.

Bedfords Arts & Crafts
Brown, Bea
CH2MHill
Corey, Donald L.
Forrest, Nancy
Garrett Family
Hamilton, Marguerite
Hitchcock, Barbara
Jenkins, Lois & Donald
Katzanek, Frances
Knecht, Dzidra J.
McDonnell, Judith
Pittis, Debora & Family
Pratt, Kenneth
Prone, Kathy & Rich
Puzzo, Eunice
Spofford, Kaye & Rick
van Steenwijk, Jan
Webber, Doris
White, Christopher & Jane
Widegren, Robert & Marjorie
Anonymous

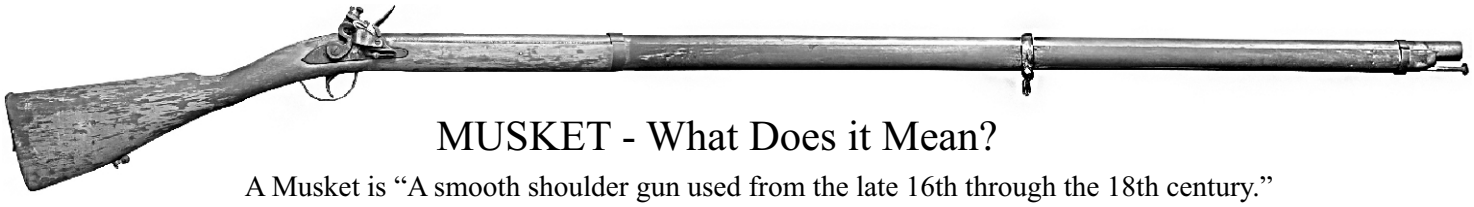
Phoners Needed!

Every year for the Historical Society's annual meeting in May, the Society organizes a potluck supper along with the final guest speaker of the season. This year's Annual Meeting and Potluck dinner will be held on Wednesday, May 22, starting at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational, on Great Road. The guest speaker will discuss "Beneath the Streets of Boston: Building America's First Subway."

Since there will be a potluck supper with Society members bringing dishes to share (salads, main dishes, and desserts), a group of telephoners is needed to call every Society member with a reminder about the meeting, the early start-time, and bringing a food dish.

In the last few years, this phoning brigade has been organized by Carol Amick. Anyone willing to help Carol make about 15 minutes of phone calls (pages of the Yearbook are assigned) should contact her at carol.amick@verizon.net or **781-275-5278**.

Thank you in advance for your help.



MUSKET - What Does it Mean?

A Musket is “A smooth shoulder gun used from the late 16th through the 18th century.”

1- [French mousquet, from Italian moschetto, *a type of crossbow, musket*, from moschetta, *little fly, bolt of a crossbow*, diminutive of mosca, *fly*, from Latin musca.]

2- According to the Etymology Dictionary, firearms were often named after animals, and the word musket derived from the French word *mousquette,* which is a male sparrowhawk. An alternative theory is that as French *mousquet*, from Italian *moschetto*, means "little fly" – from the shape of the crossbolt – and that the English word is actually a diminutive of 'fly' with the proto-Indo European root *mu.

The musket shown here is a part of the Bedford Historical Collection.

The Cub Scout’s History Lesson

In February the Society hosted a tour by members of Cub Scout Troop 194 and their families in order to see a small portion of our collections of local historical significance. The scouts were shown Native American spear points and stone tools dating from hundreds of years ago to over 10,000 years ago that were collected here in Bedford. They were also interested in some of the Society's Revolutionary War collection, including muskets, cartridge cases, swords and related items. At a later date the Cub Scouts will visit the Bedford Flag that was carried by Nathaniel Page to Concord on April 19, 1775, but during their visit they saw Nathaniel Page's musket that is in the Historical Society's collection.

You’re never too young to learn about our history... according to Don Corey.

Did You Know...?

Igor Stravinsky

Did you know that Igor Stravinsky, the famous Russian-born composer was married in Bedford? His musical works and compositions, before and after World War I, were a spark of modernism during his long working life. Some acknowledge him as one of the most important and influential composers of 20th century music.

An excerpt from Town Historian Ina Mansur, written in 1978 reads; *“Once every few years, Keith Phinney, director of music at Bedford High School, asks his students what famous musician was married in Bedford in 1940. A group of classmates then goes to the town clerk's office with questioning eyes. Town Clerk Donald Pfeiffer shows them the small, green book of original certificates of intent and marriage. Those prepared by Igor Stravinsky and Vera (de Bosset) Soudeikine are included. The pupils report to Phinney that Stravinsky's second marriage did occur in Bedford that year on March 9.”*

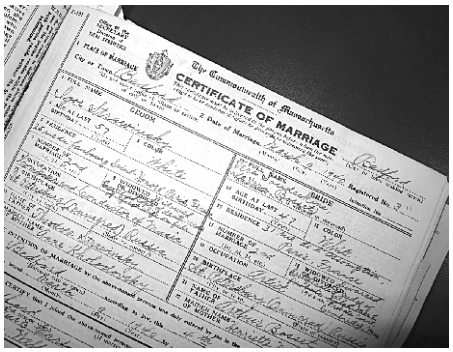
Isolated as he was from his native Russia by the First World War and the subsequent revolution, Stravinsky had become a citizen of France in 1934. Now, in 1940, since he could see the onrush of the Second World War, he leaves France to live in the United States. Before moving here he had composed several Symphonies, among others: the “Symphony of Psalms” for the Boston Symphony Orchestra which had its world premiere in 1931. After several personal tragedies, the death of his mother, his wife Catherine, and his daughter, Ludmilla within a few months he looked forward to living in America. He became a widely recognized composer in this country.

As soon as he was settled in Boston he invited Vera, his long time friend and artist in her own right, to follow him here and to become his wife.

From John Gibbons, Reverend of the Unitarian Church in Bedford, we received additional information: *“I've been tracking down the story of composer Igor Stravinsky whose second marriage, to Vera Soudeikine, was performed in Bedford on March 9, 1940. The wedding was performed at 564 Springs Road in the home of his good friends, Dr. and Mrs. T.A Taracozio, by an assistant to the Town Clerk, Arthur E. Carson, residing at 10 Webber Avenue. I have now a copy of the marriage license.”*

Stravinsky died in 1971 and Vera died in 1982 in California.

Thanks to the following: Angelo Colao, who first brought the story to my attention, to the invaluable information of Ina Mansur, and the follow up of John Gibbons.



The Marriage License

Jan van Steenwijk

The Preservationist

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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.

2013 Lectures

Wednesday, March 27, 2013, 7:15:
at the Congregational Church, Great Rd.
Robert Slechta: "Joshua Page: Builder of Bedford's Center."
Note: This lecture will be given by Don Corey, based on the research by Bob Slechta.

Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 7:15 pm,
at the Bedford Library: *Richard Smith: "An Evening with Henry Davis Thoreau."*

Wednesday, May 22, 2013, 6:30 pm,
at the Congregational Church, Great Rd.
Potluck Dinner ,Annual Meeting.
Guest Speaker *Joe McKenry: "Beneath the Streets of Boston: Building America's First Subway."*

Sister Mary Augustine at St. Theresa's Convent, part of Marist Seminary on Springs Road. Taken in 1940. Electronic version of photo donated to the Society by the subject's first cousin, Spence Wende. Her original name was Sophia Ann Kerby.

The Holy Family Sisters who lived in St. Theresa's Convent, were there to do the cleaning and other chores for the Marist Fathers, brothers and students at the seminary.

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Membership Application

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