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

March 2014 *Published for anyone interested in our history* Volume 123, Number 3

Join Us For Another Great Free Lecture

Wednesday, March 26, 7:15 pm

Congregational Church, 25 Great Road

"Introducing Our Neighbor, Job Lane"

by Sharon McDonald

As a member and now president of the Friends of the Job Lane House and Curator of the Job Lane Farm Museum, Mrs. McDonald is very familiar with former Bedford resident, Lieutenant, and Deacon Job Lane. Job Lane was prominent in Bedford's early years. His family farm originally was located in Billerica in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but became part of Bedford when some Billerica and Concord lands were incorporated in 1729 to form the Town of Bedford. Job Lane built the house at 295 North Road around 1713. He and his wife had 11 children; six grew up in the house that today is owned by the Town and open to the public through the efforts of Mrs. McDonald and other Friends of the Job Lane House volunteers.

Describing her talk as "half good storytelling and half plentiful footnotes," McDonald will reveal Job Lane's activities and the daily life of his family and extended family.

McDonald is an enthusiast of all things Bedford. She recently retired after 40 years as the Children's Librarian at the Bedford Free Public Library, and began volunteering a few hours a week in the Historical Society's archives office at the police station. Last year she was elected to serve on the Society's Board of Directors. She also is a member of the Town's Historic Preservation Commission.

Her long association with the Bedford Library, which houses the historic Bedford Flag, led her to publish her book, "The Bedford Flag Unfurled" in 2000. Mrs. McDonald is currently writing a history of Bedford's First Parish Church, where she is an active member.

The event will begin with refreshments at 7:15 pm and guest speaker McDonald will start her presentation around 7:45 pm.

Other free upcoming lectures see page 4

The Bedford Almshouse by Brian Oulighan & Don Corey

The Town of Bedford, for many years had an Almshouse, called the Town Farm or the Poor Farm. It stood on the east side of Springs Road on land that is today owned by the V.A. Hospital. The Town Farm, containing 118 acres, was originally conveyed to the Town from Oliver Pollard in 1833. As far back as 1850, I found records of people living at the Farm. These were people that were either very old or they had some disability where the family could not take care of them anymore. In 1855, there were 4 people living there with the Constantine family, David and Abigail. They were the Superintendent and Matron of the Town Farm. It was called a farm because it was an actual working farm. The people at the farm worked there to support themselves, and they sold milk, potatoes, wood, etc. each year to help buy necessities. The town also put money into the budget each year for support of the farm. In 1918 the Town put aside $1,594 for assistance and the farm sold $2,554 in products that year. At the end of the year, the farm had a surplus after all expenses.

The Town Farm in every community was visited each year by the State Inspector of Charities to check on the conditions there. The visitor in most cases was a woman, who had exercised the experience gained in domestic life for testing the housekeeping of these establishments. The visit in February 1898 resulted in the following report:

"This almshouse is under the same efficient management as last year, and was found in a neat and clean condition. Better heating facilities, a bath-room, and some repairs are much needed. Of the one hundred and eighteen acres of land about twenty-five are under cultivation, the income from the farm last year having been $1,800. There is no separation of the sexes. The warden and matron receive a salary of $500."

We also know the names of most of the other Superintendents and Matrons of the Town Farm from Federal and State Censuses.

1860 Robert & Emeline Edwards (Robert enlisted in the Civil War in 1861)
1865 David & Abigail Constantine (1850 & 1855)
1870 Loammi & Sarah Saunders
1880 Jonas & Sarah Melvin
1887 Joseph & Miss C. Robinson
1890 – 1895 James & Alice Spredby (James was a Civil War Veteran)
1895 – 1899 Charles & Nellie Gault
1900 – 1918 William & Sarah Thompson

The population of the Town Farm fluctuated greatly, with the peak reported in 1880 at 15 "inmates". The Town Farm also provided lodging for poor travelers, or "tramps". The 1875 Annual Report contains the following entry, "Number of paupers at commencement of year, 7; present number, 5; deceased, 3; left, 1. Number of travelers lodged, 175". By the 1884 Annual Report we find the following entry, "Number of inmates at commencement of year, 14; none died; received, 3; present number, 13. Number of tramps lodged, 64".

The 1912 Report of the Overseers of the Poor noted the following,

"Owing to the unusual expenditure for outside aid and the necessity of purchasing a new horse to replace one which died, our appropriation has been used up. Our almshouse ranks high for cleanliness. We wish we might have the building more comfortable in Winter. This could be done by installing a heating system"(!)

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A Voice Heard by Donna Enz Argon

(A reprint of an article published in the September 2013 Carleton-Willard Village Newsletter, Vol. 31, No.3)

Donna Enz Argon

It sounded like an older woman's voice, "Do you know where the old Page home is?" "No, sorry, I don't," answered the busy Town Clerk at her desk. It was a quiet summer morning in 1983 in the Old Town Hall in Bedford, Massachusetts when I heard the query from my office in the Council on Aging across the hall, It was my responsibility to help older folks, and I knew the answer to the question. Thus began a morning that I very much appreciate.

The lady and her nephew were invited into my office where I could show them a map of the town. She was Dorothy Page Miller, a retired professor from California who recalled visiting her Page grandparents at their ancestral home in Bedford when she was a child. It seemed to me that octogenarian ladies (as I am now) do not usually cross a continent to possibly view a house, so I asked her what brought her to Bedford.

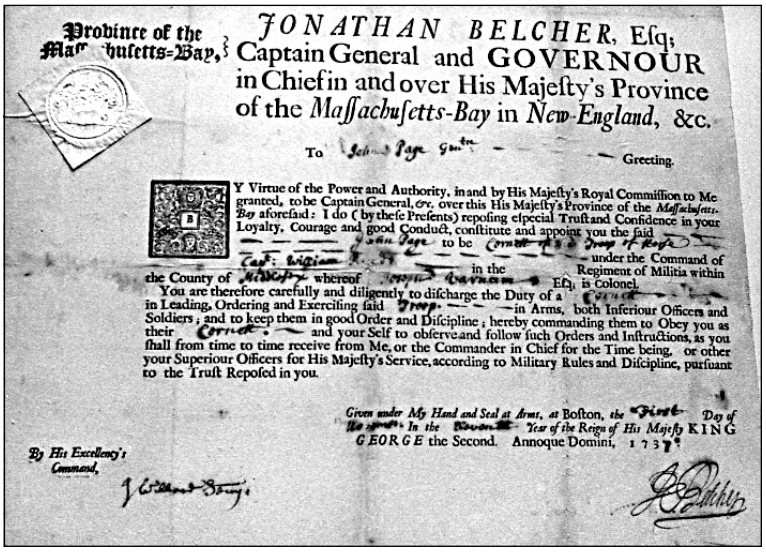
"I have a document," she said. She explained that the document was from Colonial times, a 1737 commission from Governor Belcher of Massachusetts Bay Province commissioning John Page to be the Cornet (flag bearer) of the Tri-county Troop. The office descended through his male descendents; one of them carried the flag, now known as The Bedford Flag, to the fight at the Concord Bridge. Eventually, the commission descended to Dr. Miller's brother, but he was shot down over the English Channel during World War II. The family saved the commission document.

Dorothy Page Miller presented the original document to the Town of Bedford in 1983.

"Would you like to see it?" she asked. "Oh, yes, I would indeed," I replied. Her nephew brought it in from the car and laid it on my desk. (I could hardly breath.)
I was stunned when she announced that she had an appointment with the Director of the Concord Museum in the afternoon, as she planned to give them the document.
"Do you realize," I said, "what this document means to the town of Bedford? Do you know that we have the original flag, and it is the proud symbol of our town?"

My guest had a cup of tea while I called Larry Kimball of the Historical Society. He and Mary Hafer, Bedford Historical Curator, soon came to take them to the Bedford Library to view the original flag in its vault. I couldn't close my office but I did send my "guests" off to the Library with my little desk-top Bedford flag, a map of the town, a sample of the official town stationary showing the flag on the seal, and an imprint of the seal.

I was certainly in a state that afternoon, not knowing what was happening. Later it was reported that the lady and her nephew were very impressed by the flag and the town's proud ownership. I was told she offered to give the ancient document to the Town of Bedford if the Historical Society representatives would call the Director of the Concord Museum to tell them she had changed her mind. They were very happy to make that call. The commission was given to Bedford, where one may visit it in the Library's special room, home at last!
And to think that it resulted from hearing an older lady's voice. ■



Province of the Mas[illegible]hufetts-Bay, } JONATHAN BELCHER, Eſq; Captain General and GOVERNOUR in Chief in and over His Majeſty's Province of the *Maſſachuſetts-Bay* in *New-England*, &c.

To [illegible] Greeting.

IN Virtue of the Power and Authority, in and by His Majeſty's Royal Commiſſion to Me granted, to be Captain General, &c. over this His Majeſty's Province of the *Maſſachuſetts-Bay* aforeſaid: I do (by theſe Preſents) repoſing eſpecial Truſt and Confidence in your Loyalty, Courage and good Conduct, conſtitute and appoint you the ſaid [illegible] to be [illegible] under the Command of [illegible] in the Regiment of Militia within the County of [illegible] whereof [illegible] Eſq; is Colonel.
You are therefore carefully and diligently to diſcharge the Duty of a [illegible] in Leading, Ordering and Exerciſing ſaid [illegible] in Arms, both Inferiour Officers and Soldiers; and to keep them in good Order and Diſcipline; hereby commanding them to Obey you as their [illegible] and your Self to obſerve and follow ſuch Orders and Inſtructions, as you ſhall from time to time receive from Me, or the Commander in Chief for the Time being, or other your Superiour Officers for His Majeſty's Service, according to Military Rules and Diſcipline, purſuant to the Truſt Repoſed in you.

Given under My Hand and Seal at Arms, at Boſton, the [illegible] Day of [illegible] In the [illegible] Year of the Reign of His Majeſty KING GEORGE the Second. Annoque Domini, 1737

By His Excellency's Command,

John Page (1704-1782) was the 3rd Page generation in Bedford and was the father of Nathaniel Page, who carried the Bedford Flag to Concord on April 19,1775. The original Page Commission is on display in the "Flag Room" next to the original Bedford Flag at the Bedford Library.

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The following year (1913), the Overseers had to make the following report,

"Unfortunately on June 17 our barn at the Town Farm was struck by lighting and burned to the ground with harnesses, hay forks and other tools".

By 1916 things were more or less back to normal, as noted in the Town's Annual Report

"The Board of Overseers of Poor herewith submits their annual report.

The live stock at the Town Farm comprises: 3 horses, 10 cows, 1 bull, 1 heifer, 1 calf and 140 hens.

There are 28 tons of hay, 9 cords of cord wood, 6 cords sawed and split, 2,500 ft of pine boards and 1-1/2 tons coal. We have one 2-horse tip cart, one 1- horse tip cart, two wagons, one sled, one democrat mowing machine, horse rake and tedder, one double harness and one single harness.

At the time of writing there were 25 bushel potatoes and 10 bushel turnips at the Farm. During this year we placed a bath tub in the Almshouse and hope very soon to have this connected with running water. At the beginning of year there were three inmates at Almshouse. There are now two. For outside aid we have paid for transportation $10.00. For rent, fuel and groceries, $713.73. In addition to this we have sent direct from farm for outside aid, potatoes and wood amounting to $31.20. It is a pleasure to report that Mr. and Mrs. Thompson are giving such efficient service as Superintendent and Matron at our Town Farm."

By 1917-1918 the Town Farm population had dwindled to two inmates, and the Overseers of the Poor submitted the following in the 1918 Town Report,

"At the Town Meeting in March it was voted to sell the Town Farm. This was accordingly done, and the new owner took possession Oct. 1st. At that time we had two inmates. One has been committed to the State Hospital, leaving but one to support at present. There has been very little outside aid the last year".

The new owner, Dr. Harold D. Cross, planned to use the farm as a summer home. However, when the Veterans Administration chose Bedford as the site for its hospital to care for brain-injured World War I veterans, the farm was purchased and razed in 1925.

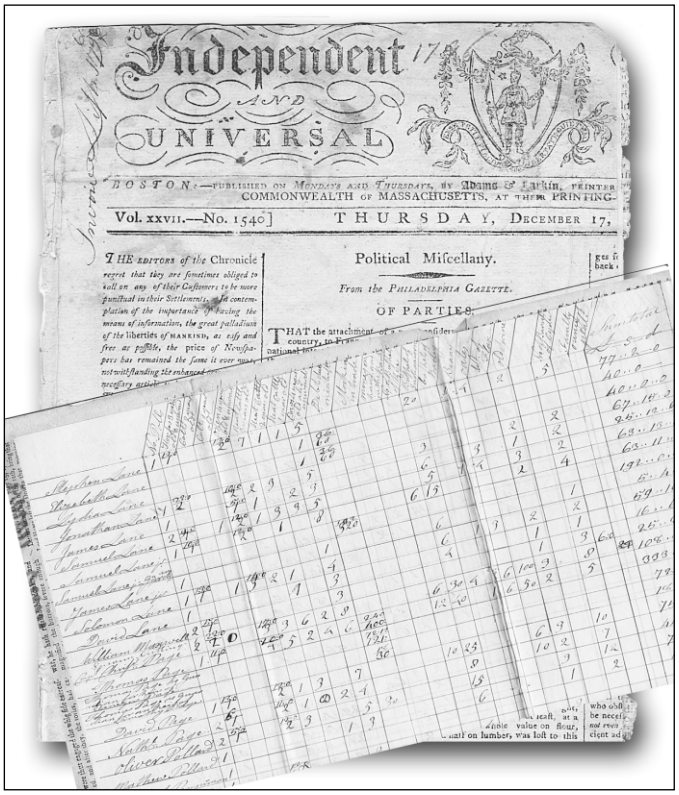
It is interesting to note that the VA Hospital is working on construction of a new 70-unit housing project for homeless veterans that will be located very close to, if not on the site of, the former Town Farm. ■

Correction!

We apologize for an incorrect caption that was attached to the lantern photo in the February Preservationist.

The correct caption is "Stonebridge Folding Lantern - used in World War I".

New Acquisitions of 18th Century Tax List



Neatly handwritten and hand-stitched in newspapers from the time, these wonderful, historic ephemera, are from the Assessors in Bedford. This one is from 1795.

Luckily, Ralph Hammond knew exactly what he wanted to do with the packet of yellowed parchment that an old friend gave him: pass it on to the Bedford Historical Society! The lists of names and inventories — cows, horses, oxen, bushels of Indian corn and barrels of "cyder" — proved to be Bedford lists of polls and personal property from the 1790s.

Put together by tax assessors William Merriam and Thompson Bacon, the seven little booklets resided in the attic of the Bacon House at 133 The Great Rd until the 1960s, and then slowly made their way to us. Hooray for people who clean their attics but don't throw away unique Bedford stuff!

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

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

The Bedford Flag, the oldest existing flag in the United States. On view at the Bedford Library.

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A New Book About Bedford is now Available

The Society is very pleased to announce the publication of a new book on Bedford's history, The Ina Mansur Reader. During her service as Bedford's Town Historian from 1975 until her death in 1988, Ina did an extraordinary amount of research on local history. She published several books and a series of more than 100 newspaper articles that appeared in the Bedford Mintuteman. This book, The Ina Mansur Reader, is a compendium of those articles published in their entirety for the first time. The book is available through the Society for $20.

The Society is also indebted to Alethea "Lee" Yates for her skill and patience in assembling, proofreading, illustrating and preparing the book for publishing. Without her dedication the book could not have happened.

The Bedford Historical Society continues to offer a wide range of free lectures. Please mark your calendar for these upcoming exciting programs.

Wednesday, April 23

The lecture will be at the Congregational Church on 25 Great Road - **at 7:00**

"The Kennedy Assassination: 50 Years Later"

Speaker: Christopher Daley

Note: This talk is about 90 minutes long, so the evening will begin at 7:00!

Mr. Daley, who has delighted our audiences in past seasons with presentations on Lincoln' assassination and Lizzie Burden, will, again enlighten the evening about this so tragic event 50 years ago.

Wednesday, May 28

The evening will be held at the Congregational Church on 25 Great Road - **at 6:30**

Annual Meeting - Put Luck and Lecture

Speaker: Dave Downs

"Downsizing Your Historical STUFF"

Mr. Downs will explore six common reasons why we acquire "stuff" of historical value and save in our basements, closets, attics, garages, and sheds - and will provide some helpful hints for managing this "problem."

NOTE: If for any reason, we have to cancel an event, we will send an email and leave a message on the Society's answering machine - call 781-275-7276

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

www.bedfordmahistory.org

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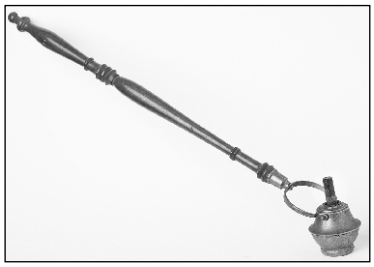
The Preservationist.

Design, production & photography: Jan van Steenwijk
Contributing writers ; Carol Amick, Don Corey, Kara Kerwin, Brian Oulighan & Sharon McDonald

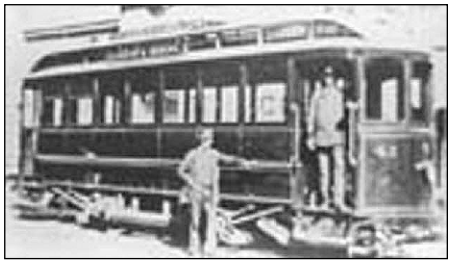
New Collection Item

The Society recently acquired this charming doll-size chest of drawers standing just 15" high. The back of the chest and each drawer is stamped "Flint House - Bedford, MA". Several generations of Flints lived at 46 Elm Street behind the Common. They were farmers and Lucy Flint, the widow of Charles L. Flint, still lived there into the 1930s. The exact purpose of the chest, and whether the Flints made these as a source of extra income, is unknown.

The Society would welcome any additional information.



A Parade Torch



Yes, we had a Trolley once

From our Rich Collection

The Preservationist

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We Keep It Alive..!"

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