The Preservationist

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

May 2006 Volume 113, Number 7

A booth at the Bedford Grange Fair circa 1953. See Page 4.

Annual Meeting and potluck dinner concludes the year

This month we close our program year with a brief Annual Meeting followed by the best potluck dinner in Bedford. Musical entertainment will close the evening.

Callers will call to ask if you are coming, and you will be asked to bring 8 servings of the food of your choice; a main dish, a salad, or dessert. (If in doubt, remember that it's always better to have too many main dishes than desserts.) Someone may want to donate rolls and butter, and certainly cream/milk is always welcomed. Please call if you can bring flowers for 8 tables, fresh from your garden. We will provide the vases. Also, if anyone has the large blue flowered tablecloth, please call Jeannette Pothier at 781-275-8794.

NOTE: As usual, we'll be meeting on the *fourth* Wednesday of the month, not on the last Wednesday. There are five Wednesdays this May, so please mark your calendar carefully.

Wednesday, May 24, 6:30 p.m.
(not 7:30 as usual)
Congregational Church
25 The Great Road, Bedford

Of course, the best potluck dinners have the best helpers: some to set the tables at 3:30 that afternoon, some to receive the food at 6:30 and help serve it, and some to clean up afterward. Many hands make the work light and sociable. If you can help, please call Jeannette at 781-275-8794.

The Preservationist is published seven times each year by the Bedford Historical Society 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, 2005-2006

Officers

Alethea Yates, President
Robert Slechta, Vice President
Phyllis Cooke, Secretary
Don Corey, Treasurer

Directors

Pat Leiby ('06) - Board Chair
Pat Corea ('06)
Marion Bryan ('06)
John Brown ('07)
John Dodge ('07)
Neil Leary ('07)
Carol Amick ('08)
Norman Toti ('08)
Julie Turner ('08) - Board Secretary
Don Corey ('09)
Miriam Brown ('09)
Jan van Steenwijk ('09)

Committees

Activities: Jeannette Pothier
BOD Liaison to Executive Board: Don Corey
Hospitality: Jeannette Pothier
Membership Secretary: Michael Seibert
Merchandise/Ways & Means: John Carlson
Newsletter Editor: Alethea Yates
Nominating:
Cecile Walker (appointed by Membership, '06)
Betty Slechta (appointed by President, '07)
Lois Brown (appointed by Executive Board, '08)
Program: Cecile Walker
Sunshine: Ruth Pike
Welcoming: Donna Argon, Pat Corea
Finance Committee:
Pat Leiby (Board Chairman)
Neil Leary ('06)
Frank Gicca ('07)
Mike Seibert ('08)
Alethea Yates (BHS President)
Don Corey (BHS Treasurer)

In memoriam

The Society is saddened to hear of the passing of member Virginia Gerdes, wife of John Gerdes. We send our thoughts and prayers to her family.

We're on the web!

At long last, the Bedford Historical Society has a web site to call its own:

www.bedfordmahistory.org

Want to find the date our next meeting, look up our contact information, view our newsletter online, send us an email, or order our merchandise? It's all just a few keystrokes away. If you're an internet user, please navigate to our web site and bookmark it now.

Assistant webmaster needed: If you're web-savvy (or want to be), we can use your skills to enhance and maintain the site. Will train. Please send us a message at **bedford-history@usa.net**.

Sunshine is just a phone call away

If you know a Society member who's been unwell or needs a little cheering up, please call our Sunshine Lady, Ruth Pike, at 781- 275-8474. She'll be happy to send a card on behalf of the Society.

Please don't hesitate to call even if you think that someone else may already have called Ruth. Better to have several callers than take a chance of overlooking someone. Your help is appreciated.

Archives hours

Our room in the Stearns building (the Police Station) at 2 Mudge Way, where we maintain our Archives and business office**,** is *usually* open at the following times:

Mondays, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5
Tuesdays, 9 to 12

Other times by appointment. Please call 781-275-1212 x 140. Note: Our phone is answered by our "roommates," the Bedford police; just ask for our extension. Don't hesitate to call us at any time.

See us at the Plant & Craft Fair, Saturday, May 20

The Bedford Historical Society's sales season begins very soon. We will be unfolding our booth at the First Parish Plant and Craft Fair on the Bedford Common next Saturday, May 20, 10 AM to 3 PM. We'll start setting up at around 9 AM with our stock of Bedford history books, maps, flags, memorabilia, gifts, and all other things wonderful and Bedfordish.

So what is the Plant and Craft Fair all about? Let our fellow Society member Julie Turner tell you about it in the invitation she sent to us:

"First Parish has produced some great Plant & Craft fairs over the years, but this year may set a record - and I hope that you'll be available to be part of the fun.

"The plants, as always, will be spectacular: great perennials dug from private gardens (including some from Marty & Jan Schafer's in Carlisle), annuals and specialty plants (Tuscan rosemary, lilac whips, hydrangeas, willows, and a few roses).

"This year's craft offerings will include a selections of rugs (these sales will directly benefit First Parish!), as well as many familiar faces and new crafters.

"Entertainment to honor the memory of Til and Eva Schafer will include previews of the Three Apples Storytelling Festival (coming to Bedford this fall!) as well as performances by Brad Conner and Ben Sears, and the Barathakalai Indian dancers.

"In addition to the storytellers, kids' activities will include face painting and games organized by a Junior Youth team.

"There'll be lunch, and the Bake Sale -- all in all a great day. And, how much longer can it rain?!? Will this be our year for a sunny day?

"It will be GREAT to see YOU on the Common come Saturday, May 20."

See us at the Job Lane Craft Faire, Saturday, June 10

After the season opener on May 20, we'll be in fine form for the eighth annual Craft Faire at the Job Lane Farm Museum, 295 North Road, Route 4, Bedford, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. We'll set up our booth alongside a fine selection of colonial crafters and demonstrators. Bring the whole family to see, shop, learn, and enjoy. The Job Lane House will be open for tours, too. Come to the Faire!

Helpers are needed to set up and run the booth. If you can work a two-hour shift or even part of a shift, please contact Lee Yates at 781-275-3294 or John Carlson at 781-275-2564.

Note: Other Job Lane open house days this season are Sunday, May 28; Sunday, June 25; and the second and fourth Sundays in July, August, September, and October, from 2-4 PM.

Rufus Porter Museum hosts Cultural Heritage Series

The Rufus Porter museum in Bridgton, Maine, is hosting a Cultural Heritage Series with classes, lectures, and workshops to provide education in the traditional arts of the nineteenth century. The classes and lectures include Folk Painting, Historic Murals, Traditional Floor Cloths, Basket Weaving, Moses Eaton Style Stenciling, and much more. There are also classes and events for children.

For more information check their web site at **www.rufusportermuseum.org** or write to P.O. Box 544, Bridgton ME 04009.

Bedford History Fair Spring Showcase

We've been invited to see the work of the rising generation of historians from Bedford.

Three Bedford High students have won a state history competition and will proceed to the national championships in Washington, D.C. At the Spring Showcase you'll have a chance to see their winning film, "Stetson Kennedy: A Legend's Stand Against Racial Injustice."

Projects by the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes will also be on display. Bedford High students who take part in the program have gained a reputation for the fine quality of their research and their enthusiasm for history.

Wednesday, June 7, 6 to 9 PM, Bedford High School.

Home on the Grange

Bedford would not have been Bedford without the Bedford Grange.

Shortly after the Civil War, Oliver Hudson Kelley, a Department of Agriculture employee and a Mason, founded the Patrons of Husbandry, better known as the Grange, as a fraternal organization for the nation's farmers. Self-improvement and community improvement were its goals. Meetings emphasized the Christian foundations and some of the same rituals employed by the Masons.

An early effort of the Grange was to combat the monopolies of the railroad owners and grain elevator operators who wielded a great deal of power over farmers' lives. The establishment of buying cooperatives and a campaign for Rural Free Delivery of mail also enhanced farm life.

Founded in 1909, the Bedford chapter of the Grange quickly became a thriving social and educational institution. Meetings were held in the Old Town Hall until 1925, when the Bedford Grange purchased the Bedford Hotel on the corner of The Great Road and Elm Street. Regular meetings featured educational lectures, "light collations," and musical entertainments, along with solemn rituals to induct and inspire the members.

From the earliest days meetings routinely drew large numbers of attendees. Community events drew many more. A highlight of the town's year was the annual Grange Fair, with a wide range of competitions in all aspects of animal husbandry and domestic arts. Small cash prizes were awarded.

Everybody who was anybody in agriculture or horticulture – in fact, just about everybody in Bedford – belonged to the Grange. Unlike most other fraternal organizations, the Grange welcomed women as equal members. Young people, too, could become full voting members at age 14. Grange yearbooks show whole Bedford families on the membership roles.

A large collection of Bedford Grange records and memorabilia in the possession of Bedford native John R. Comley III has been placed on loan to the Society for copying. The collection will eventually be donated to a Grange museum. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn more about this important part of Bedford's history.

Grange officers assembled in the Old Town Hall. How many can you name? (Note the clock at the top of the picture. It now hangs in the Selectmen's room in the current Town Hall.)

Membership Application and Renewal Form

This is (please check one):

____ A new membership

____ A renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip:_____

Phone: _____

Email:_____

Dues

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

Amount enclosed: $ _____

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730

781-275-1212, extension 140

We would appreciate a self-addressed, stamped envelope to help us speed your membership card to you. Thank you!

Dues are due

For those with annual memberships, dues are now due. Please check the mailing label on this newsletter to see your membership status. If you have already renewed your dues or are a Life Member, please disregard this notice.

You may pay your dues at the Annual Meeting on May 24, or renew by mail.

Thank you for your support!

Benefits of membership in the Bedford Historical Society

- Annual series of lectures on Bedford and local history
- 10% discount on BHS merchandise purchased through us or at the Freight House on South Road
- Seven issues per year of our informative newsletter
- Christmas party and potluck dinner at Annual Meeting in May
- Opportunities to meet the foremost experts on Bedford history
- The satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to preserve Bedford's history

Grange ladies at the candy booth, 1953. Winnie (left), Thelma Swanson (right)

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Bedford Grange members pose as the Dionne Quintuplets. L to R: Freda Comley, Dot Richardson, Thelma Sorenson, Ruth Johnston, and Rena Webber. From albums loaned to the Society by John R. Comley III.