The crowd makes way for British Regulars to approach as “Minute Maid” Sharon McDonald gives a speech and Minuteman Bryan Nash prepares to climb the pole at Bedford’s annual Pole Capping ceremony, 2007

The best potluck dinner in Bedford

This month we close our program year with the best potluck dinner in Bedford. After a brief business meeting with officer elections (see page 3) and a vote on a bylaw change (also on page 3), we will close the evening with musical entertainment.

Please 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.) Fresh flowers from your garden would be appreciated, too; we’ll provide vases.

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 23, 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 5:00 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. Please call the Society’s office, 781-275-1212, ext. 140, and leave your name and number if you can help in any way. Thank you!

Please visit our web site: www.bedfordmahistory.org
New member

The Society is pleased to welcome Kate Reynolds, formerly of Bedford and now of Berwick, Maine, as a member. Kate is a Lane Family descendant and is well known among the members of the Friends of the Job Lane House. Welcome, Kate!

Annual Giving continues

The Society gratefully acknowledges contributions to the Annual Giving Campaign from the following members and friends:

Robert Bass
Angelo & Gabrielle Colao
Judie & Norm Toti
Stan & Blanche Wentworth
Bill Moonan & Carol Amick

July 4 on the Common

We’ll be setting up our sales booth and joining the festivities at the annual Independence Day fair on the Common on Wednesday, July 4, 11-2. The town is hosting the traditional July 4 celebration on the Common with old fashioned games, a doll carriage and bicycle decorating parade, music, a craft fair and more. Come join us if you can!

Archives hours

Our room in the Stearns building (the Police Station) at 2 Mudge Way 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. Please don’t hesitate to call.
Officer elections

At our business meeting in May we will vote for officers for the coming year. Nominating Committee members Betty Slecht a, Wilma Johnson, and Carol Amick have proposed the following candidates:

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

Our heartiest thanks to Betty, Wilma, and Carol for their work in arranging the slate of candidates.

Bylaw change proposed

As noted in the last newsletter and announced at the last meeting, the Society’s Board of Directors has proposed an amendment to the bylaws to create an Executive Director position.

It is the Board’s belief that the Curator and Archivist positions no longer represent the complete duties of the Society’s existing staff person, and it wants to give the Society greater flexibility in hiring so that exciting new opportunities made possible from the generous Challenge grant can be better administered. The Society engaged its first part-time paid consultant in 1999 when it retained Lois Hamill as Archivist. Susan Bennett replaced her when Lois accepted full-time archival employment elsewhere, and Alethea Yates was appointed to the position by the Board when Susan became Executive Director of Lexington’s Historical Society. In the interim, the Society’s activities have broadened considerably, and the duties performed by the Archivist during the 1-1/2 days per week that she is paid have necessarily expanded well beyond those that would be expected of an Archivist.

The Board is contemplating a part-time Executive Director position to replace the part-time Archivist position. The Board voted to recommend to the membership that Article VII of the bylaws be amended to add a staff position of Executive Director. The title of Article VII is recommended to be changed from “The Curator and Archivist” to “Staff Positions.” The amended article is printed below. Consistent with the requirements of Article XIII of the bylaws, an announcement of the “intention to amend” was made in writing in the last newsletter and at the last regular Society meeting. A discussion and a vote on the amendment are planned at the General Meeting on May 23.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

ARTICLE VII

STAFF POSITIONS

Section 1. The Executive Director, Curator and/or Archivist shall be appointed for terms as determined appropriate by the Board of Directors.

Section 2. The Executive Director shall be responsible to the Board of Directors for the conscientious preservation and supervision of the Society’s properties and collections, and the proper use of resources for the education of its members and all people interested in the history of Bedford. The Executive Director shall perform the duties of the Curator and/or Archivist as needed or, if other individuals are appointed or volunteers serve in such capacities, to supervise those individuals. The Executive Director shall work with the Board of Directors to develop and implement policies and procedures of the Society.

Section 3. The Curator shall be responsible for …; shall keep an accurate account of any article out on loan; and shall submit a written report maintain a written record of additions to the Society’s collection at the annual meeting.

Section 4. The Archivist shall be responsible for …; shall keep an accurate account of any documents out on loan; and shall submit a written report maintain a written record of additions to the Society’s collection at the annual meeting.

Section 5. Together with the Chairman of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the Curator or Archivist as appropriate shall decide on the acceptance or rejection of gifts offered to the Society … in conformance with the Society’s Collection Policy.

Vacancy on Historic Preservation Commission

There is currently a vacancy on Bedford’s Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission helps manage historic town properties including the Job Lane House and the Wilson Mill Site; applies for and manages grants for historic projects; nominates properties to the National Register of Historic Places; promotes placement of historic signs and plaques; administers Bedford’s demolition delay bylaw, and more. The Board of Selectmen appoints the members. Interested? Speak to one of the Commission members (Chuck French, Lee Yates, Neil Leary, Suzanne Schmuhl-Koller, Bob Slecht a and Don Corey) or contact the Town Manager’s Office.
Around the town, 1940

In May, 1940 the government erected a temporary tower on the Town Common for the purpose of making a geodetic survey. A scrapbook of Leona Proctor Cail, now in our Archives, provide a series of photos taken from the tower by Alfred Webber. They give us a panoramic view of Bedford as seen from the tower (beginning with the church on the Common and turning left).

The tower on the Common, with the Fletcher Block across the street

The First Parish Church

The Old Town Hall. Smoke in background seems to come from the town’s industrial zone near the Depot

Looking eastward with Great Road on far left and Old Town Hall roof on right

The view northward along Springs Road, with VA Hospital water tower in the distance

Continues on next page
Open house at Golden Ball Tavern, Weston

The Golden Ball Tavern Museum in Weston is holding a very special event next Saturday, May 20. This property, a tavern during the American Revolution, is exceptionally well preserved and beautifully presented. It is ordinarily open only by appointment, so Historical Society members may wish to take advantage of this opportunity to tour the house and enjoy a visit with Colonial re-enactors.

Spring at The Golden Ball Tavern

The warm weather of May brings good cheer
Join costumed reenactors as they celebrate spring
at Isaac Jones’ Tavern
at the Sign of the Golden Ball

Play trap ball or bowls on the lawn
Drill with the militia
Seek a cure from Dr Skinner
Have the peruke maker refresh your wig
Watch the milliner create a new gown
Play a round of whist in the tavern
See a quilted petticoat prepared
Try your luck at the faro table

Sunday, May 20, 2007
1pm – 4pm
The Golden Ball Tavern
Boston Post Road
Weston, MA

Admission: Adults $5, Children $2, members free
The lady and the street sign

Mrs. Bessie Liljegren with a former pupil, Robert Goddu, the student council president

The high school students chose it and the Selectmen unanimously endorsed it. The new road leading from Concord Road to the high school was to be named Liljegren Way.

Mrs. Bessie Liljegren was a beloved teacher. When she announced her retirement at the end of the 1959-60 school year, she had been teaching for 50 years. After about 15 years other towns she began some 35 years in Bedford, where she taught first at the Union School, then at the Junior High, and finally at the newly-opened Page School. Mrs. Liljegren had taught all subjects in all grades and particularly enjoyed English. Her final year was with a sixth-grade class. Her specialty was directing the annual Christmas play for the PTA, and the performance in 1959 was the climax of her career.

At the April, 1960 meeting of the Page School PTA, a program was held in tribute to Mrs. Liljegren. As an article in the Lowell Sun stated, “Everywhere she taught, she became the idol of her classes and evidence of this was shown in the special program of tribute in which all ages participated.” Mrs. Charles Kespert gave a reading, “Through the Years with the Bedford Schools.” Sixth-grade pupils read poems in honor of their teacher. Junior and senior high school students who had been taught square dancing by Mrs. Liljegren gave a performance. The tribute concluded with presents and a scroll signed by a long list of past and present students.

From the Archives

Here are just two of the many items in our collections of items from Bedford’s past.

This sampler was made by Lucy Porter when she was 9 years old, circa 1793

A silhouette of Elijah Fitch, the brother of Abram English Brown’s grandmother. Abram Brown was most likely the donor.
Dues are due

Dues for our annual members are now due. Please check the mailing label on the back of this newsletter to see your membership status. Your prompt payment will help the Society continue its work and will be very much appreciated. (Please note that many Society members have already paid this year’s dues; if so, there’s no need to pay again until next year.)

Special Town Meeting in June to consider Blake Block

A Special Town Meeting will be held in June to consider a single article dealing with redevelopment of the Sheldon-Blake block of stores located on The Great Road opposite the Town Common. A petition article submitted to the Selectmen by the property owner, which triggered the Town Meeting at this time, is to be replaced by an article drafted by the Planning Board. Due to the location of this property at the heart of Bedford’s Historic District, there is concern that the scale and style of any new project be sensitive to and protect the historic integrity of the area. Plan to participate in Town Meeting (open to all registered voters) and to consider the issues.

Community outreach

Your Society continues to provide programs to enrich the community as well as make more residents aware of the Society and its resources. Some recent and pending programs:

Bob Slechta and Don Corey recently gave a program on “The History of Bedford” to a group of MITRE Corporation employees as part of its TechTalk Series.

Society members again participated in the annual “Wonderful Walk of Bedford” for Bedford’s entire third-grade class. Highlights include the Fitch Tavern, the Bedford Flag, Penniman-Stearns House, the Society’s Museum displays at the Stearns Building (Police Station), First Parish, the Old Burying Ground, and the Job Lane Farm Museum.

The town’s Patriotic Holiday Committee has again asked the Society to participate in events at Shawsheen Cemetery and Old Burying Ground during Memorial Day observances. Don Corey will speak again at Shawsheen Cemetery, and Lee Yates will be speaking at the Old Burying Ground.

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
___ Life – Individual: $150.00
___ Life – Couple: $200.00

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

Total enclosed: $ ___________________

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730
781-275-1212, extension 140
Are your dues up to date? Please check the mailing label for your membership status

Marchers in the Pole Capping parade, 2007