Rufus Porter
May 25th, 6:30pm
First Church of Christ, 25 Great Road

Porter founded “Scientific American” magazine in 1845 to encourage innovation in American arts and sciences. He promoted innovation, and, in a published poem, encouraged Americans through “thought” and “action” to lead the way into a progressive new age:

Sow the seed-withdraw the curtain,
Clear the way!
Men of action, aid and cheer them,
As ye may.

There’s a midnight blackness changing
Into gray
Men of thought, and men of action,
Clear the way!

Once the welcome light has broken,
Who shall say,
What the unimagined glories Of the day;
And our earnest must not slacken Into play.
Men of thought, and men of action!
Clear the way.

Professor Jaffee received his BA, MA, and PhD degrees from Harvard University. Since 2007, he has been Head of New Media Research at the Bard College (NY) Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture. From 1987 to 2007, he was a history professor at City College and the Graduate Center, CUNY. He has received fellowships from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Winterthur Museum, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Charles Warren Center in American History at Harvard University.

The program on Rufus Porter is not to be missed!

Annual Meeting, Rufus Porter and Potluck Dinner, May 25th, 6:30pm

Society members are encouraged to bring a main dish, side dish (vegetable or salad), or dessert for the Annual Meeting at the First Church of Christ, Congregational. Volunteers will be phoning reminders to all Society members, as this event will be the Society's last in its 2010-2011 season, and the starting time will be earlier: 6:30 p.m. Members will be asked to elect new Society Officers and Board members for the 2011-2012. Hope to see you all there!
**Bedford Trolley Being Restored**

By: Don Corey

Electric trolleys came to Bedford at the turn of the last century with the May 1902 introduction of the Concord & Boston Street Railway, a subsidiary of the Lexington & Boston Street Railway (L&B). Rails were laid on The Great Road, South Road and Loomis Street in 1900, and 4 trolley cars were built for the L&B. Later the street railway was extended up North Road, and the L&B ultimately connected Waltham, Lexington, Arlington, Woburn, Bedford, Concord, Billerica, Lowell and Boston.

In 1912, the Middlesex & Boston Street Railway absorbed the L&B. That street railway eventually owned 261 passenger trolleys serving 18 towns and cities. Buses gradually replaced all of the trolleys, and the tracks in Bedford were removed by the mid-1920s. By 1930 all trolleys had been removed from service. The MBTA took over the system in 1972.

Out of the 261 trolleys only one has survived. Trolley 41 was one of four originally built in 1901 for the L&B. After it was retired from service, trolley 41 became a diner in 1927 located at the corner of Route 27 and Route 9 in Natick. In June 1962, it was saved by the New England Electric Railway Historical Society in Kennebunkport, ME.

The museum houses over 250 trolleys from all over the US and the world. Work was started on restoring trolley 41 to its 1901 configuration when it was moved into the museum’s restoration shop in November 2010.

A volunteer with the museum, Douglas Carrier, Jr., has raised over $75,000 to start the work, but (as with restoration of Bedford’s Rail Diesel Car 6211) more money will be needed to complete the restoration. More information about the museum and trolley 41 can be found at [www.trolleymuseum.org](http://www.trolleymuseum.org), and Douglas Carrier can be reached at [MandB41@yahoo.com](mailto:MandB41@yahoo.com) if you would like to contribute to this worthy project.

The dashed lines on South Road and Loomis Street shown on this 1906 map marks the trolley route.
Beautiful Bedford - as seen in 1890

Over the years private authors, scholars, government agencies and others have written a variety of capsule summaries attempting to describe essential details about, and to capture the flavor of, Bedford and other communities. The following description was written in 1890, when Bedford’s economy was flourishing thanks to the arrival of railroads. There was ready access to markets in Boston for the town’s products, and many people escaped to retreats in Bedford including the resort hotel at Bedford Springs. Enjoy the Good Old Days!

Don Corey

A Gazetteer of the State of Massachusetts
By: Rev. Elias Nason, M.A.; revised and enlarged by George J. Varney.
Boston: B.B. Russell. 1890.

Bedford Massachusetts, 1890

Bedford is a beautiful agricultural town in the central part of Middlesex County, fourteen miles northwest of Boston; having Billerica on the north, the same with Burlington and Lexington on the east, the latter with Lincoln and Concord on the south, and the last, with Carlisle, on the west. Its general form is nearly a circle. It has an assessed area of 8,147 acres of which 3,200 acres are woodland. The population in 1885 was 930, with 208 dwelling-houses. The villages are Bedford and West Bedford; the post-offices, the former and Bedford Springs. There are three stations on the Middlesex Central and the Boston and Lowell system of railroads.

The Concord River marks the boundary on the northwest for several miles. Farley’s Brook enters from the south, and, receiving several other brooks, unites with Vine Brook in the eastern part of the town, and they become the Shawsheen, which has falls with power sufficient for small mills.

The views from the elevated land in the vicinity of Fawn Lake are very attractive. The geological formation of the town is calcareous gneiss and sienite, in which are good specimens of garnet. There is a mineral spring of some celebrity on elevated ground about a mile and a half north of the central village, known as Bedford Springs.

The land is very good; and the 113 farms yielded in 1885 products to the value of $139,023. The dairy item was $44,623; vegetables, $17,766. There were 934 neat cattle and 11,689 fruit trees. The manufactures of the town consisted of boots and shoes, carriages, leather, wooden goods, and food products, and had the aggregate value of $51,980. The valuation of the town in 1888 was $816,689; the tax rate being $13 on $1,000.

There were, in 1885, five school buildings, valued with land at $5,600. A town public library having nearly 5000 volumes, and the Sunday-school libraries, are the public provision for the literary appetite; while the “Bedford Bulletin” furnishes weekly the news of the region. The Unitarian church is an ancient landmark, but has received additions for adornment and for the comfort of the congregation. The Congregational church is very attractive and well furnished. The Roman Catholics also have a neat chapel; and there are flourishing Sunday schools.

The town was named for Bedford in England. Its territory came from Billerica and Concord, and its incorporation occurred September 23, 1729. A mill was built on the Shawsheen River before King Philip’s War, in 1675, owned by Michael Bacon, who was allowed to have two soldiers from the garrison stationed there for its protection. The first church was organized July 15, 1730, when Rev. Nicholas Bowes was ordained pastor. The first meeting-house was built in the same year, and "seated" according to the pay of the people.

Some of Bedford's eminent names are Nathaniel D. Gould, a musical composer and publisher; Rev. Samuel H. Stearns (1801-1837), an able divine; William A. Stearns, D.D. (1805), chosen president of Amherst College in 1854.


Community Events

This spring the Society is participating in a variety of community events serving people from our youngest to our oldest generation.

Don Corey recently gave a program on Bedford's railroad days and the renewal of Bedford Depot Park, a National Register Historic District, at the BrightView—Concord River assisted living facility. Residents there include Society members Neil and Margaret Leary and John Filios. The program will be given again in town and will be taped by BCAT for local television viewers.

The School Department is once more having the entire third-grade class participate in its Walk of Bedford during late May and early June. The class is divided into groups to tour and learn about Bedford's rich history. Stops include the Bedford Flag at the Library, Fitch Tavern, Penniman-Stearns Homestead, the Historical Society, Old Burying Ground, First Parish and the Town Common, and the Job Lane Farm Museum. Volunteers to assist at the Historical Society and Old Burying Ground would be welcome (and greatly appreciated!). Call or email the office if you can spare a little time.

The Society has again been requested to participate in Bedford’s Memorial Day observances. The morning program at the Civil War monument in Shawsheen Cemetery will include remarks by Don Corey. That will be followed by a program at the Old Burying Ground including remarks by Bob Slechts. The bronze plaque honoring Bedford's Revolutionary soldiers that are buried there was a joint effort of the Bedford Minuteman Company, the Historical Society and the Dept. of Public Works. Finally, during the parade past the Town Common, where the World War I monument is located, John Dodge, our town historian, will give brief remarks.
From our archives. Eyewitness account from the 1938 Hurricane.

The Tropical hurricane of September 21, 1938

The storm and high winds reached hurricane force about 5 P.M. after a rainy and windy day. They began to state about 6:30 P.M. At 7 P.M. the Board of Selectmen consisting of Mr. D.E. Perkins, Herbert L. Clark, and Stephen E. Tackney conferred with Mr. Frank W. Cloutier, Road Commissioner and declared that a state of public emergency existed. All electricity was out. Trees, branches, and other debris blocked every street in town.

At 7:30 P.M. the first crew of volunteer workers started to chop and saw a passage through the streets. Emergency vehicles arrived, and the crews went on as a matter of all the men available. Night and at noon continued work until 7.

The following day, work started for removing all the debris, and stump removal of all trees and branches. Work progressed to the extent of clearing the street and removing hazards.

JvS
Ellen Michaud, muralist par excellence

Some of the artifacts on view in a display case at the Bedford Historical Society are from a thousand to twelve thousands years old. Wow! They look terrific for their age! The murals that accompany the artifacts tell a wonderful story of what life might have looked like some nine thousand years ago. They are the artistic creation of Ellen Michaud, a long-time Bedford resident and member of the Society. Art has always been her passion, so Ellen studied Mural Techniques at the Rhode Island School of Design, fresco painting at Castle Hill Center for the Arts and graphic design at Mass. College of Art.

In 1961, Ellen and her husband Bob settled in Bedford with their two daughters after they had lived in California for many years. By that time, she had already proven to be an accomplished artist with a specialty in creating and restoring murals, but she also illustrated books. One of them was “The Deacon Job Lane House of Bedford, Massachusetts,” by Bedford Town Historian Ina Mansur. It described the historical and architectural evolution of the Job Lane House. Ellen also did extensive conservation on a mural in the former David Ullman home in Bedford as well as the Italianate (Secco Fresco) wall murals in another private home in Connecticut.

In 1983, Mary Hafer, the Society’s curator, received a grant from the Massachusetts Arts Lottery Council to have two murals made, describing the lives of the Paleo Indians who lived in Massachusetts at least nine thousand years ago. She commissioned Ellen to illustrate the life of these ancient people.

“Before I could produce the murals, I had conversations with Mary Hafer, who showed me many stone tools that were collected for the Society and that were now held in the archive, ready to be displayed,” Ellen said while we sat in front of her beautiful murals.

“I researched as much as I could, studying what the Indians looked like, the type of clothing they wore, and what their meals consisted of, etc. One of the publications which gave me valuable information was a booklet called “New England Indians,” by Leo Bonfanti published in 1971. I learned that one of the settlements of the Paleo Indians probably would have been located at Concord River. So I went out to scout the area and ended where the two Brothers Rocks are today. Here I made many sketches, and tried to envision what their daily lives could have looked like. They were nomadic hunters who subsisted almost entirely on wild animals for their daily food. We know that there were mammoths roaming in this area and; therefore, I painted this one mural with my concept of the hunt for this large animal.”

“The other mural is an overview of what I imagined the Paleo Indians did during the day: building primitive huts, building canoes for fishing trips on the river, hunting deer, skinning the fur, and preparing food, all necessary to survive. I was especially fascinated by the way they made their canoes with the relative primitively tools available at that time.”

Pointing at the mural, Ellen continues: “The trees were probably too big to be cut down with their small axes, so they would build fires at the bottom of the trees to bring them down. The next step was to hollow out the trunks. From descriptions given by historians, we know that they would use fire to soften the wood and then remove layer after layer. I drew a boy bringing water to extinguish the fire to avoid burning too deeply into the wood.”

“The grant that Mary Hafer received was for $400 and that was my honorarium for a whole year’s work! But I loved every minute of it, and was very proud that the Society placed the two murals in these cabinets in 1984 for all to see.”

The grant that Mary Hafer received was for $400 and that was my honorarium for a whole year’s work! But I loved every minute of it, and was very proud that the Society placed the two murals in these cabinets in 1984 for all to see. The Society is lucky to have such dedicated people as Ellen Michaud, and we thank her for her historic contribution. We hope that the next time you visit the Society’s office; you will spend some time studying our exotic past.

Text and photos: Jan van Steenwijk
It’s wood - probably oak - about six inches tall, and the knob at the top can be moved up and down. Seen from the bottom, at the end of the knob is a carved-out pattern. Again, we hope that our readers can give us the proper name for this item, and tell us what it was used for.

Jan van Steenwijk

Thank You!

Another great season for our Society members has come to an end, but, of course, we are already preparing for the next season that begins in September. Meanwhile, the Society will not just close its doors for the summer. We still have activities you can participate in. We will be present at Farmers Market in August and at Bedford Day in September to showcase and promote the history of our town. We need a few volunteers to help for a couple of hours on these occasions, so please don’t hesitate to send us a note if you want to help out.

There are many volunteers working almost daily behind the scene to keep the society moving forward. First of all, the Board of Directors meet once a month to discuss progress, evaluate what we accomplished, and make major decisions for the future. The Executive Committee also meets monthly to think of great ideas that will enhance our visibility. The Finance Committee keeps track not only of the money we have available, but also keeps a close eye on the assets we have invested in the financial market. Then there are the many sub-committees: Hospitality, Publicity, Reception, Outreach, Merchandise and Fundraising, as well as the Museum Exploratory, Bylaw, and Personnel Committees, etc. A special thank you goes to our friends at the First Church of Christ who always welcome our monthly meetings, as well as to Kara Kerwin, our administrative assistant, who manages the office of the Society.

On behalf of all of us, I THANK all our members and others who have supported the Society in so many ways. We hope that you will continue to support us in any way you can during our next season. Without you, the Bedford Historical Society could not exist!

Jan van Steenwijk

Summer Reading

Did you know that the Society has more than fifteen books and publications about Bedford?

Whether one wants to know about historic homes in our town, stories about the First World War, who is buried at the Old Burying Ground what Bedford was like in the early 1700s, or details about the famous Bedford Flag, the oldest existing flag in the United States, we offer the literature you are interested in, for a very modest price.

Please call our office or send us an email, and we can ship your order.

Thank you for supporting the Bedford Historical Society!
Bedford’s Early Evolving School System

The East School

By: Bob Slechta

One of the stipulations in the charter that Bedford was granted in 1729, establishing it as a new town, was that the Town provide a school for education of its children within three years. Initially, the school was held for several weeks each year in the new Meeting House on the Common and children were taught by the minister, Rev. Nicholas Bowes. By the deadline of 1732, the townspeople had raised funds to establish a “moving school” in the outlying areas and hire a teacher to teach in the central Meeting House, the first of which was Rev. Ebenezer Hancock of Lexington, brother of Rev. Bowes' wife, Lucy. The moving school was held alternately in private homes in the four quarters of town, North, South, East, and West. Classes were held for one quarter of the school year in each and teachers were selected from the better educated of the town's residents. The moving school was known as the “reading school” and the central school as the “writing school”.

In 1741, the town bought from Benjamin Kidder, original builder of what is now known as the Fitch Tavern, a house that he had previously built on his property for rental income. This was to serve as the first permanent Center School building and was moved easterly on the main road to the edge of the Common at about where South Road now meets The Great Road. The moving school continued.

Sixty-five years later, in 1806, the Center School was replaced by a new 20'x30' building constructed by Joshua Page, noted housewright of the time, and Ebenezer Clark. It was the first specially designed as a school and it served as the Center School until 1826 when it was no longer adequate to accommodate the increasing number of students. In that year, a new two-story brick building was built on the east edge of the Common just in front of what is now Old Town Hall and the former second, 1806, schoolhouse was bought and moved by Joshua Page to 56 Springs Road where it still stands as a private residence and home office of Oxbow Gardens.

The new brick schoolhouse, after several years, proved to be of inferior construction and, in 1856, was torn down and replaced by what we now know as Old Town Hall which was built just behind it. This new building now provided two floors for the Center School and a third as a hall for town meetings.

From 1753 on, each year the Center writing school was in session for four months and the reading or moving school for six months, one and one-half months in each of the quarters. In 1790, the town voted to build four new permanent school buildings in the North, South, East and West districts to replace the moving school. In 1792, the North School was built on the west side of North Road just north of the Dudley Road intersection; the South School, near the corner where the boundaries of Bedford, Lexington and Lincoln intersect, now an area occupied by Hanscom AFB; the West School, on the west side of Concord Rd near the Timothy Jones homestead (now # 231); the East School, on the north side of Page Road opposite its intersection with Shawsheen Road.

The center and four district schools then each continued to operate alternately for six weeks of the school year until the early 1850's when the town decided that they needed replacement.

The second East School was built in 1854, at what is now 37 Old Billerica Rd, and, although now considerably expanded and modified into a two-story, four bedroom house, it very likely was originally composed of a single large room, about 20'x30', with a fireplace and a central front entryway off of which were probably a coatroom and a closet or bin for storage of wood. The East School continued until 1891 when all five schools were replaced by the new Union School, now Town Center, and sold by the town as private residences. The East School was sold in 1892 to Hannah M. Butterfield.

Records donated to the Historical Society in 1995 by the Bedford School Committee include hand-written minutes of the Committee during the thirty-five years that the East School was in operation from 1855 to 1890. The minutes contain for each year: members of the Committee, usually three; teachers appointed, one for each term; numbers of students, usually 15-20; review and selection of textbooks; periodic reviews and visits of Committee members; rules of behavior; adjudication of behavioral problems of both student and teachers.

It is interesting to note that Abram English Brown, Bedford's noted hero-historian and author of the classic “History of Bedford”, 1891, served on the School Committee as either member or chairman during most of the 1870's and as the appointed teacher at the East School for a period of at least twelve years between 1874 and 1886.

The sale of the East Schoolhouse to Hannah Butterfield in 1892 began a long period of private ownership which continues to this day. Over the earlier years, a number of modifications were made, most notably, partitioning of the second floor by owner William H. Austin in 1948 and finishing of a bedroom and bath on the second floor in 1953 by owners James R. and Eleanor D. Strawbridge. In 1966, Francis A. and Mary Lawless lived in the house for a short time and, as told by Ms. Lawless, her husband mounted the sign “East School” on the front of the house. In 1968, the house was purchased by Charles W. and Theresa Theobald and in 1971 they made major revisions by adding a 16'x20' room and a deck on the first level and a new bedroom with enlargement of another on the second. In 2006, present owners, Peter and Jayna Ellsworth purchased the property.

The second East School, 1840-1891 (photo: 1885 with teacher, Edith Lane) 209 Concord Road, a private residence.

37 Old Billerica Road
Thank You!

This 1880s photo of William B. Hughes’ blacksmith shop and I. Newton Hartwell’s wheelwright shop (now 27 Concord Road) was recently loaned to the Society by Mrs. Irene Rivet.

“We Need Pictures”
Do you have images in a photo album or in a drawer, with old Bedford class pictures, especially interiors - please donate them to the BHS or, let us scan them and return them. We are looking for pictures from any age era.”

We would like to hear from you, please send an email with questions, requests or comments.
info@bedfordmahistory.org

Membership Application/Renewal
Please join us - and support our heritage!

| Name: ____________________________ |
| Address: _________________________ |
| City/Town: ______________________ |
| State: __________ Zip: ___________
| Phone: __________________________ |
| Email: __________________________ |
| Dues | Amount enclosed: $ ____________ |
| __ 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 |

About this Newsletter: Layout and production, Jan van Steenwijk
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