President’s Message

Feedback

We appreciate feedback on articles that appear in the Preservationist and welcome suggestions for possible future articles. It was therefore a happy surprise to be greeted recently by former Town Historian Judith McConnell with the exclamation, “I knew Jack!” Jack of course was Jack the Giant Killer, lead sled dog on one of Admiral Byrd’s Antarctic Expeditions and the subject of a recent article. By the time of Jack’s retirement to Bedford in the 1930s, Judith was quite explicit that he was a friendly gentle dog with her and the children in the family where Jack lived. She shared more recollections, and we anticipate having additional input for a follow-up article from the family of Stuart Paine, who had been in charge of the Expedition’s sled dogs.

The Society also exchanges complimentary newsletters with other nearby historical societies. Last month we received a request for a replacement from the Tewksbury Historical Society, whose copy had been badly mutilated by the Postal Service. They look forward to our newsletters, and the Society was pleased to send along a replacement copy.

Let us know if you have suggestions. Don Corey

More Family Treasures have Arrived

George Dimond was a prominent Bedford citizen during the early 20th Century. He was one of Bedford’s original Water Commissioners in 1908 and was a Selectman during the town’s 200th birthday celebration in 1929. His daughter, Virginia, married George Timothy, and they had one daughter, Jane. Jane had saved many of her grandfather’s papers, photos and other memorabilia, and since her death last year the family has given a number of them to the Historical Society. Included is a book written by then Governor Calvin Coolidge with the inscription in the front, “Gift to G.M.D. from the author” so it appears that Mr. Dimond was a political friend of the future President. He also had correspondence from a variety of other political figures, continued on pg 2

The arrest last month of a 79-year-old Connecticut convict with possible connections to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum theft has museum officials, the art history world and the FBI wondering whether this reputed mobster has clues to the whereabouts of the 13 artworks stolen 25 years ago, including Rembrandt’s Storm on the Sea of Galilee (1633).

One of the people working with the FBI and chasing leads is the Gardner’s Director of Security, Anthony Amore, who will update Society members and guests about this new clue as guest speaker at the Society’s Tuesday, May 26th Annual Meeting.

Mr. Amore, author of “Stealing Rembrandts: The Untold Stories of Notorious Art Heists,” will describe the infamous Gardner theft of artworks worth $500 million, and also recount art heists around the world.

Mr. Amore’s professional career has been in the security field since his graduation from Harvard University. He worked first with the federal government, and later at Logan Airport after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

While at the Gardner, he started studying the history of the theft, which began in the early morning hours of March 18, 1990 when two thieves disguised as Boston police officers gained access to the museum, conned a guard on duty, overpowered two guards, and gained entrance to the museum’s galleries.

His interest in the Gardner theft led him to write his 2011 book, which describes thefts committed, in some cases, by “bumbling crooks.” One of the book’s colorful stories recounts the case of Myles Connor, a Massachusetts con man in trouble with the law in 1975. Told by a DA that he could help his cause by recovering a stolen Rembrandt, Connor stole one from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, hid it, and then delivered it to get his deal. He never admitted he was the thief until years later, when writing his autobiography.
including letters signed by then-Governor James M. Curley and U.S. Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (who was instrumental in founding the Bedford V.A. Hospital).

The Society is extremely pleased to add these valuable documents and family photographs to its archival collections.

What’s it worth...?

Please mark your calendar!

Appraisal event

Progress is being made on having a charity appraisal event here in Bedford this fall. The date has been set for Thursday, November 5, 2015. Kaminski Fine Art-Auctions-Appraisals will be sending a team of experts to provide information on the age and history of pieces brought to the event and to give verbal appraisals of what the pieces might fetch at auction. Kaminski is providing their services for free, so 100% of the proceeds will benefit the Society in its work with the town to re-establish an historic museum.

Since the Library discontinued its annual appraisal events, a number of people have expressed interest in again having them. The Society is very pleased to have worked out this agreement with Kaminski, and we look forward to a very successful event. More details will be forthcoming.

$50.00 or $50,000.00?

The Civil War’s Final Campaign

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the end of our Civil War. Coming out of winter quarters in Petersburg VA in early April 1865, General Lee had attempted to move his Confederate troops to a railroad a few miles to the west. He hoped to reach supply trains that had been sent to him there and then to move his troops south to the Carolinas and join other Confederate forces there.

General Grant's Union army had laid siege to Petersburg since the previous summer, and they quickly pursued the Confederate army. The Union army was well equipped and vastly outnumbered the Confederate forces. In a series of attacks, thousands of Confederates were captured, and George Custer's Yankee cavalry division reached the Confederate supply trains first and seized them. By April 9 General Lee found his pitifully outnumbered Confederates blocked by General Sherman's cavalry and infantry. Later that day, in the village of Appomattox Court House, General Lee surrendered his army.

Although field casualties in that final campaign were relatively light, thousands more Union soldiers were to die. The steamer Sultana on her journey from New Orleans to St. Louis on the Mississippi had taken on board in Vicksburg 1,964 Union prisoners freed from Andersonville and other

Confederate prison camps. Already heavily overloaded with other soldiers and freight, in the middle of the night on April 29, one of her boilers blew up and the Sultana burned to the water's edge with the loss of over 1,500 lives. It remains the worst maritime disaster in our history, with more lives lost than on either the Titanic when it struck an iceberg or...
A few changes
Officers, Directors and bylaw proposal at Annual Meeting

The Bedford Historical Society’s Nominating Committee has completed it work to identify candidates for Society Officers and Directors for approval by a vote of the membership in attendance at the May 26th Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper.

The Nominating Committee, which is comprised of Carol Amick, Marion Bryan and Julie McCay Turner, recommends the following slate for Society Officers for the 2015-16 season:

President: Don Corey
Co-Vice Presidents: Robert Dorer and Merri Lee Johson
Secretary: Brown Pulliam
Treasurer: Pat Leiby

The Nominating Committee recommends that the following Directors, whose terms are up this year, be re-elected to the Board of Directors for four-year terms:

Atty: Paul Dick
Paul Purchia
Julie Toti

At the Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee will recognize and thank this year’s officers for their service to the Society: President Don Corey, retiring Vice President Phyllis Cooke, Secretary Brown Pulliam and Treasurer Pat Leiby.

Bylaw proposal

Society members attending this May’s Annual Meeting also will be asked to approve a bylaw proposal recommended by the Board of Directors. This bylaw change would discontinue the Individual and Couple/Family Life memberships, but retain the Life membership category for Society members who already have purchased it, as well as the Honorary lifetime membership.

The specific language of the bylaw change was published in the April Preservationist and announced at the Society’s April 26 meeting, in compliance with Society bylaws.

Last February, the Society’s Board of Directors voted unanimously to support this bylaw change for two main reasons. First, it discovered from other historical societies that none have Life memberships because this type of membership does not help to grow the organization or to encourage an engaged membership. Second, the Board felt that a greater level of annual donation would occur if Life memberships were eliminated.

If this bylaw change is approved at the May 26 Annual Meeting, all Society members who purchased Lifetime memberships as of March 31, 2015 will retain those memberships.

Thank you to recent donors and renewals

Donations for April/May
The Leeming Family

New Members:
Merri Lee Johnson, James Sullivan

Renewals: Luisa Granitto & Wendell Smith, Kate Reynolds,
Norma Warner, Bob Wakeham

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Celebrating 70 years of selling the freshest eggs in Bedford!
Do you happen to have this original painting by Johannes Vermeer...?  
Please bring it to our next lecture and be rewarded with a lot of money!

The Bedford Historical Society’s next lecture takes us on a journey of how a few men, disguised as police officers, managed to get away with 13 of the world’s most famous pieces of artwork from the Isabella Steward Gardner Museum in Boston. The BHS might not be able to show such an invaluable item in our museum (coming in the near future), but it shows that good security is extremely important!

See page one for more information
Please join us for this FREE lecture.

Happy Summer from all of us at the Bedford Historical Society.

We hope to see you again in September, beginning with Bedford Day and throughout the fall for our new Lecture Series.

And we thank you for your continuing support!

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“We Don’t Make History...
We Keep It Alive...”

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