MEMORIAL GATES, SHAWSEN CEMETERY
The gates at the Great Road entrance to the Shawsheen Cemetery turned 100 years old this year. See page 4.

Time to celebrate!
Please come to the Historical Society’s annual Christmas party, to be held at New England Nurseries, thanks to Judy and Nat Brown. The setting is beautiful and perfect for us. The parking is ample, and close to the entry.

Bring finger foods, both savory and sweet, and have them completely ready to serve (and please bring your own serving implements if needed). We will provide punch.

Come relax, catch up with old friends and enjoy the festivities.

Sunday, December 17, from 5 to 8 PM
New England Nurseries, 216 Concord Road

Car pooling for the party
This year we plan to do some car pooling for our party. Would you like a ride? Or can you give someone a ride? Please call our office (781-275-1212, extension 140) and leave a message by Saturday, December 16. We’ll do our best to match up riders and drivers. We don’t want anyone to miss the party!

Mystery photo challenge
Last month’s Preservationist presented a series of mystery photos for readers to identify. The answers, so far as we know them, are on Page 4.

Visit our web site: www.bedfordmahistory.org
More new members

We’ve gained two new members since our last newsletter.

Paula Young and Lawrence David

Welcome, Paula and Lawrence!

Great holiday gifts

The Bedford Historical Society invites you to visit its website to view unique and affordable solutions for your holiday gift-giving and stocking-stuffer needs.

www.BedfordMAhistory.org

We are pleased to offer unique Bedford historical merchandise to the public. Whether you’re looking for a book, antique maps, Bedford Flag stationery, “Old Town Seal” jewelry, Old Town Hall tiles and decorative plates, or numerous other reminders of Bedford’s history, you’re sure to find something to help you and your friends learn about, remember and enjoy Bedford’s past.

Even though the Freight House on South Road is closed for renovations, you can still purchase Historical Society merchandise in any of several ways:

- by visiting our web site
- by mail order
- by phone, 781-275-1212 ext 140
- by visiting our office at 2 Mudge Way (please call ahead).

For a gift that will give pleasure year-round, why not give a Bedford Historical Society membership? See the application form on Page 5.
Bedford 1906

For a vivid portrait of Bedford 100 years ago, one need look no further than the town’s Annual Report.

Bedford in 1906 had only three Selectmen: George M. Dimond, Howard D. Skelton, and Irving L. Hodgdon. These same three men also comprised the Board of Health. With a population of just over 1200, Bedford had to fill many roles with few people.

Abram English Brown, the author of History of the Town of Bedford and one of the most civic-minded citizens in Bedford’s history, held four elective positions: Town Clerk, Registrar of Voters, member of the Shawsheen Cemetery Committee, and library trustee. He was also appointed to serve as the town’s Burial Agent. When writing his Shawsheen Cemetery report, he was particularly proud to mention the installation of the new memorial gates (see photo, Page 1).

Three Overseers of the Poor served the town, though by that time the Town Farm (the polite term for the Poor Farm) had only 4 residents at the close of the year. A Superintendent and Matron were appointed to run the farm.

The three-member School Committee boasted the only female elected official, Mrs. Winifred B. T. Simonds. Though women still could not vote in general elections, they could vote for and serve on the School Committee.

The library trustees included four elected members, who served “together with the chairman of the Board of Selectmen, chairman of the School Committee and pastors of the three churches.” Separation of church and state seemed to be somewhat incomplete from today’s viewpoint.

Several elected officials seem to have performed some of the duties now filled by the Department of Public Works: the Shawsheen Cemetery Committee, five Field Drivers, a Pound Keeper, a Tree Warden (Charles Jenks), and three Park Commissioners, among others.

The Town Report lists the townspeople’s votes for Governor, Lt. Governor, and other state and county offices, and for Representative in Congress. Residents did not vote directly for a Representative in the Massachusetts legislature; instead, he was elected by the Town Clerks of the district, who chose Albion F. Parmenter by a landslide.

Eighteen births, 15 marriages, and 26 deaths were registered in 1906. The birthplaces of all parties were listed, showing that Bedford was certainly a town of immigrants in 1906. Of the 36 new parents, only 2 were born in Bedford and 9 elsewhere in Massachusetts. Other birthplaces were Scotland, 1; Cape Breton 1; Prince Edward Island, 1; Ireland, 1; England, 3; New Brunswick, 4; Denmark, 4; Norway, 1; Maine, 3; Australia, 1; New York, 1; Canada, 1: Manitoba, 1; Nova Scotia, 1, and Sweden, 1.

The Auditor’s report indicate that the town received a total of $41,845.97 from various sources, mostly tax revenue. The town’s total debt amounted to $4,000 from two loans. Bedford spent $5,485.78 on the schools, of which $2,064.00 went to Concord to educate Bedford’s high school students, there being no high school in Bedford. For the school year ending in 1906, there were 41 high school pupils and 166 in all other grades. At the Union School there were seven teachers including part-time Music, Drawing, and Sewing teachers; one janitor; and one truant officer.

Bedford also spent $2,669.94 on moth eradication. Gypsy moths were then causing havoc in eastern Mass. and great effort was being made in hope of eradicating them entirely.

The fire department reported 17 fire alarms, with 7 fires believed or suspected of having been caused by “spark from locomotive.” The fire engineers urged the town to sell “the old Hunneman tub” and replace it with a combination fire wagon fitted out with all the latest appurtenances. The Police Chief reported “24 arrests for the following offenses: Drunkenness, 14, selling mortgaged property, 1, breaking and entering, 4, bastardy, 1, insane, 2, carrying firearms at night, 2, suspicious persons, 1.”

Macadamizing (paving) the roads a few at a time was seen as a vast improvement over the old method mending unpaved roads as needed. To the town’s delight, the state paid to macadamize the whole length of Carlisle Road. Page Road was done at the town’s expense. Two citizens paid the town to pave the roadway in front of their houses. Sidewalks were “treated” in several locations, but it was difficult “to get men to handle the shovel” when needed.

The Inspector of Animals reported having inspected 696 cattle, 3,062 swine, 5 sheep, and 3 goats, which means that livestock outnumbered residents by more than three to one.

Smaller, slower, quieter; but in other ways the Bedford of 1906 is still with us in 2006. We’re just as proud of our little town, and are just as involved in civic affairs. May it always be so.
Mystery photo challenge

Here are the answers to our mystery photo challenge in the October newsletter. Some of the photos remain unidentified, alas! If you can help, please let us know.

119 The Great Road, the William A. Putnam house. A porch has been added along the front and left-hand sides, and the fence removed.

Winthrop Rock, the more northerly of the Two Brothers Rocks.

56 The Great Road, the Albert Bacon house. This side of the house is now hard to see because a later building, the BankNorth building on the corner of Fletcher Road, stands close to it.

This is now the Best Western Sovereign Hotel, of course.

We don’t know this one. Do you?

Another mystery house.

Still unidentified. Any guesses?

The old town dump on South Road. The function of the odd three-story building is unknown. The building to the right and behind it was the railroad depot, before a second story was added.

Still unknown.

The Carlisle Road bridge.

Not yet identified but thought to have stood in Bedford. We’re still investigating.

Also under investigation.
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

Amount enclosed: $ _________________

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730
781-275-1212, extension 140

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

Doing your holiday shopping? Remember, Bedford Historical Society memberships make a wonderful gifts!

Don Corey with the centuries-old Webber Family cradle, recently donated to the Society and on display at the Job Lane House.
Are your dues up to date? Please check the mailing label to see your membership status

Some of Bedford’s Masons in full regalia on a sunny Bedford Day, 2006