The Preservationist

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

November 2008 Volume 116, Number 3

A view of the Job Lane House with a fine crop of cabbages (foreground) where apples trees now grow. From Mrs. Lillian Dutton's photo album, courtesy of her daughter, Mrs. Olive (Dutton) Nolin

Our own store!

For the month of December only, we are opening a gift shop and visitor center of our very own at 76 The Great Road, in the Blake Block across from the Common. The space has been made available to us as a charitable donation by Bruce Blake, owner of the stores. We are very grateful for this opportunity.

We will be open on Mondays and Fridays from 9 AM to 6 PM, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9-1, and on other days, evenings, and weekends to be scheduled.

Come one, come all! Come to shop, to see our exhibits, or just to sit a spell. This is our big chance to meet the public for an extended period. Call our office at 781-275-7276 for details, or to volunteer some time at the store.

Our own party!

It's almost time for our annual Christmas party. We've been doing it for a long time and we know how to have a jolly nice time for ourselves. This year we'll all gather at the home of Society members Carol Amick and Bill Moonan.

18 Crescent Ave., Bedford
Sunday, December 28, 2-5 PM

We're asking everyone to bring a little something to munch. We'll provide punch "with" and punch "without."

We'll also give a ride to anyone who would prefer not to drive to the party. If you would like a ride, or if you can give rides, please call our office at 781-275-7276.

About our newsletter

The Preservationist is published seven times yearly 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.

Alethea "Lee" Yates, Editor
(781) 275-3294 (home)
(781) 275-7276 (BHS office)
Email: bedford-history@usa.net

Archives hours

Our room in the Stearns building (a.k.a. the Police Station building) at 2 Mudge Way is *usually* open at the following times:

Monday, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5
Tuesday, 9 to 1 - Wednesday, 9 to 1

Other times by appointment. It's best to phone ahead before you stop by because we do step out for errands now and then. Please call our NEW PHONE NUMBER, 781-275-7276.

Bedford Historical Society organization, 2008-2009

Directors

Responsible for long-range planning and for large or long-term expenditures. (Proposed by the Nominating Committee, voted by the membership)

Miriam Brown (term expires in '09)
Don Corey (term expires in '09)
Jan van Steenwijk (term expires in '09)
Marion Bryan (term expires in '10)
Marietta Ellis (term expires in '10)
Donald Jenkins (term expires in '10)
Doris Crowell (term expires in '11) - Board Co-chair
Neil Leary (term expires in '11)
Judie Toti (term expires in '11) - Board Secretary
Carol Amick (term expires in '12)
Norman Toti (term expires in '12)
Julie Turner (term expires in '12) - Board Co-chair

Executive Committee Liaison to the Directors: Alethea Yates, President (*ex officio*; no vote)

Executive Committee

Responsible for the day-to-day running of the Society

Officers. **(Proposed by the Nominating Committee, voted by the membership)**

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

Committee chairs. **(Appointed by the President)**

Activities: TBD
Hospitality: Marietta Ellis
Sales Manager: TBD
Newsletter Editor: Alethea Yates
Program: Cecile Walker
Publicity: Bea Brown, Cecile Walker
Sunshine: Sharon McDonald
Welcoming: Lois Jenkins

Board of Director Liaison to the Executive Committee: Doris Crowell and Julie Turner, Board Co-Chairs (*ex officio*; no vote)

Nominating Committee

Responsible for finding candidates to serve as Officers and Directors

Wilma Johnson (appointed by Executive Board, term expires in '08)
Carol Amick (appointed by Membership, term expires in '09)
Julie Turner (appointed by President, term expires in '10)

Finance Committee

Responsible for the Society's investments. (Appointed jointly by the President and Board Chair)

Doris Crowell, Julie Turner (Board Co-chairs)
Don Corey (Treasurer)
Neil Leary (term expires in '09)
Frank Gicca (term expires in '10)
Don Jenkins (term expires in '11)
Alethea Yates (President)

New members

We are delighted to welcome new members this month:

Ned and Susan Leeming
Amanda Minaker

The Leemings are the people who moved an old house from Bedford to Harvard, as reported in our September newsletter. We met Amanda Minaker at Moms' Shopping Night, the Bedford Family Connection's event that she and Niki Curry put on last month. Welcome, all!

Annual Giving

We will soon begin our Annual Giving campaign. This is the only time that we ask our friends for funds to help us continue keeping Bedford's history alive.

Yes, these are difficult times for all. Please remember that we do a lot for a very little. When your Annual Giving letter arrives in the mail, please do what you can.

Community outreach

Lately we've done a number of things to reach out to folks throughout Bedford.

Moms' Shopping Night. In early November we set up our sales tables at the first annual Moms' Shopping Night, sponsored by the Bedford Family Connection. This early evening event is designed for parents of young children – or shoppers of any age – to get in a little gift shopping once the little ones have gone to bed. We met a lot of people who hadn't had a chance to shop with us before, and we even gained a new member. Amanda Minaker, one of the co-sponsors of the event, joined us on the spot!

Bedford books for Carleton-Willard Village. Many of the people at Carleton-Willard have shown an interest in Bedford's history so we checked with their librarian, Rev. Louis Pitt, Jr., to see if they have all the titles we offer. Because they had only a few, we donated copies of more than a dozen others. Rev. Pitt tells us that the library is well used and he knows the books will be appreciated.

History walking tour of Bedford Springs. On Thanksgiving Saturday, 42 people turned out for our walking tour of the area around Fawn Lake that was a health resort in bygone days. Many said they are residents of that neighborhood and were eager to learn more about the place where they live. We enjoyed the tour so much that we plan to offer it again when the trails around the lake are less muddy.

Bedford Room at Hanscom Conference Center. Hanscom Air Force Base has a heavily used conference center with six rooms, only one of which had a name. The people who run it had an inspiration. Why not name each of the other five rooms for surrounding towns, and invite those towns to decorate the rooms with photographs and memorabilia? We are pleased with the large, handsome Bedford room and will be very happy to provide copies of some vintage photographs and documents. A dedication ceremony is planned for early April, with VIPs from the five towns and the air base to be invited.

Bedford Community Access TV. BCAT is currently showing our September meeting with the National History Day winners, as well as the Bedford Tellers – John Dodge, Don Corey, Neil Couvee, and Lee Yates – who performed at the Three Apples Festival this fall. Check www.bedford.tv or the Bedford Minuteman for schedules.

Great Bedford gifts for folks large and small

We've got some of the best gifts around for folks of all sizes. In addition to our traditional line of Bedford books, gifts, and memorabilia**, we now offer traditional toys and kids' books** on early American life and crafts. An order form is enclosed with this newsletter. Please take a look before you write to Santa!

The hundred-day soldier's wife

A hundred days perhaps didn't seem a long time when Samuel Sage and several other Bedford men volunteered to do 100 days' service in the Union Army in 1864. But for Samuel's wife Martha, it was the beginning of a remarkable adventure.

Samuel Sage, born and raised in Bedford, was a surveyor. His father, also called Samuel Sage, was a wheelwright and an immigrant from England. In the family, the wheelwright was Samuel Sage the 6th, and the surveyor was the Samuel Sage the 7th.

Samuel the 7th married Martha Hill in 1862 and they had become the parents of a baby, Mary Sage, by the time that he enlisted for service in the Civil War.

Samuel was not assigned to go to the front. Instead, he was to serve as an orderly in a military hospital where he should have been out of harm's way. But hospitals are places of disease, and within four days he became so ill that he had to give up work and become a patient in his own hospital.

For the first month, his wife Martha lived in suspense, not knowing if her desperately ill husband were dead or alive. Then came a letter to tell her that she would be permitted to come to Washington to visit her husband. He had sunk into such a state of depression that the doctors felt that only the loving attentions of his wife could save Samuel's life.

Within hours of receiving the letter, Martha placed her baby, 16-month-old Mary, in the arms of the baby's grandmother and aunt, then boarded a train with family friend Thomas Stiles of Bedford, whose nephew was in the same hospital as Samuel.

So began Martha's extraordinary journey. Fortunately for us, she kept a journal of her experiences with the Union Army. Years later, Abram English Brown asked her to write an account of those days for inclusion in his *History of the Town of Bedford*.

Upon arrival in Washington, Martha was forced to wait an extra day before seeing Samuel while a military pass was procured for her. When she reached the door of the hospital, she later wrote, though she was eager to see her husband she was in such an agony of suspense, not knowing if he was still alive, that she could scarcely lift her foot over the threshold. When she entered, she found Samuel alive but in such low spirits that he told her, "You shouldn't have come. You can't help me. Nobody can help me now."

Samuel Sage the 7th – husband, father, surveyor, and hundred-day soldier in the Union Army

Samuel had temporarily lost some of his sight, his hearing, and his sense of smell. He suffered from fevers and was unable to eat. His doctors felt that he might perish suddenly, or might make a recovery if his spirits could be raised.

Martha visited her husband every day to do what she could to cheer him and the other men in the hospital. She was allowed to enter at 8 AM but soon learned not to come until 9 because the men had their wounds dressed before then and she could not bear to hear them groan with the pain.

Martha read to some of the men, prayed with others, wrote letters, tried to draw the despondent ones out of their sorrows. She even tried playing games with some of the younger men, though she said it was quickly decided that she was "excessively stupid" at games.

For exercise Martha walked around Washington. She particularly liked to look at the artworks in the Capitol. She visited the Patent Office hoping to see a model of a stove that had been invented by her uncle. One day she came across a distressing sight, a former slave market. Seeing the block on which many a slave had stood to be auctioned, she imagined with horror their sufferings.

One day Martha and a friend went to the President Lincoln's summer residence, the soldiers' home. They bowed and waved their handkerchiefs when the president rode by in an open carriage, and he waved back to them.

Samuel's health gradually began to improve. He took his first steps in order to go to a window and see some Confederate soldiers passing by. Perhaps he thought it was his only chance to see the enemy.

After a month in Washington, Martha returned home. Samuel was told that he could go home as well, but he was determined to spend the last of his 100 days with his regiment. He never caught up with them.

One day, after the other Bedford men had returned home, and Samuel's whereabouts were unknown, Martha heard his footsteps at their front door. When she opened the door to see Samuel, he declared, "Thank God, I'm home at last!"

After the war

Samuel and Martha had some happy years after he returned home at the end of his service in 1864. In 1869 Samuel and Martha became the parents of a son, Samuel Sage the 8th. That same year they moved to Billerica.

Sadly, Samuel the soldier died in 1877, leaving Martha to raise young Mary and Samuel alone. More sorrow was to come for the widowed Martha. Mary grew up and after attending Salem Normal School became a teacher at the Emerson School in Concord. she was still employed there when she died in 1887 at the age of 24. Her brother, Samuel the 8th, was a student at Cornell University when he died in 1888, just a year after his sister's death. He was 19 years old.

Martha lived for a number of years after losing her husband, only daughter, and only son. When Abram English Brown was compiling his *History of the Town of Bedford*, which was published in 1891, he asked Martha to write about her Civil War experiences. She complied with the request, she said, because by then people were becoming interested in the war as a historical event. She also wished to show her gratitude to the many people who had helped her during that difficult time.

When plans were made to install a Civil War monument in Billerica, a contest to write the inscription was announced. Martha entered and won. No doubt her thoughts of those who had served in the conflict were still very dear to her heart.

The Sage Collection

Perhaps because of her friendship with historian Abram Brown, and perhaps she had no living descendants, Martha Sage left a fine collection of family papers and heirlooms to the Bedford Historical Society. Perhaps the most remarkable items are the letters that she and Samuel exchanged during his wartime service. There are also letters that Bedford friends sent to Samuel in 1861 when, as a bachelor, he traveled to England to visit his father's home village, Dundry (near Bristol), and meet his father's relatives. One letter reveals an astonishing occurrence. When Samuel arrived in England, he was greeted with the news of his aunt's murder. No further information about this dreadful event appears in the family papers.

Mrs. Mary Sage, mother of Samuel the soldier

Other items in the Sage collection are a china doll that was sent from England to Mary Sage, the sister of Samuel the soldier, when she was a child. There are also a pewter mug, a Sage family heirloom; Samuel's pocket watch; some of his schoolbooks; some charming trinkets from Martha's school days; plus deeds and other official documents.

The Sage family pewter mug

Among the Sage collection there are a few photographs but none of Martha Sage, the hundred-day soldier's wife. We would dearly love to see a picture of this remarkable lady.

Helping the National History Day students at Bedford High

We truly enjoyed having the Bedford High School winners of the National History Day competition at our September meeting. The young people made wonderful presentations and gave thoughtful and articulate answers to all our questions. We look forward to honoring future History Day winners from Bedford.

We understand that there is a cost to creating the videotapes, stage scenes, and other materials that the students have to provide for the contest, as well as traveling expenses. Contributions to help defray these expenses will be greatly appreciated. Make donations payable to

Bedford High School History Day
c/o James Sunderland
Bedford High School
9 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730

Remember an airfield at 62 and the Middlesex Turnpike?

We recently received a research request and hope some of our readers can help provide answers. The message reads as follows :

"My name is Fred Madio and I am a retired employee of The MITRE Corporation. I am also a volunteer historian working on a project for the Massachusetts Aviation Historical Society to catalog as many old and abandoned airports in Massachusetts as possible.

"Based on some research that has already been done, we have discovered that there was a small 'commercial landing field ' in operation during the late 1930s -- early 1940s on the site of the present-day MITRE Corporation. By comparing a plot plan of the airport, dated 11/2/1940, with an aerial view from GoogleEarth, it is easy to see that the two intersecting runways were located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Bedford Road (route 62) and the Middlesex Turnpike where there are now three baseball diamonds. But that is all the information we have. We would greatly love to locate any photographs, maps, newspaper articles, court records, deeds, etc relating to this property.

"Can you provide any assistance, leads, suggestions, etc…?

"Best regards, and many thanks. "

We've advised Mr. Madio that the landing field was probably located in Burlington, rather than Bedford, so we don't have any materials concerning it, but perhaps some of our members have some memories to share. Please call our office at 781-275-7276 or email us at bedford-history@usa.net and we'll pass the word along. We'd be interested in hearing about it ourselves.

"Entering Historic District" signs installed

Bedford's Historic Preservation Commission, with the assistance of the Department of Public Works, has recently had three signs installed along the main roads that cross the boundaries of the Bedford Center Historic District. One sign stands at the corner of the Great Road and Hillside Ave., one on North Road across from the auto dealership, and one on Concord Road directly across from Wilson Park (the traffic island where the Pole Capping ceremony is performed each spring). We hope this will heighten public awareness of our historic heritage.

Historic District sign at corner of Great Road and Hillside Avenue

In memoriam

We have recently saddened to learn of the loss of three of our members.

Miriam Chrisman
Dee Hill
Robert Gary

Our thoughts and prayers go to their families.

Miriam Chrisman will be remembered an Archives volunteer who graciously donated her skills as a professional historian to help us understand some of our oldest documents. Working with her was always an entertaining and enjoyable experience.

New homes for old books

At the Society's annual meeting in June we deaccessioned some old books that were not related to Bedford's history and were taking up some of the limited space in the Society's archives.

Boston Book Company of Jamaica Plain, an antiquarian book dealer, purchased a few of the books this summer, bringing $435 to the Society. Cindy Haynes has since listed some of the other books with potential value on the internet. The Society just received a check for $200 less expenses from Cindy for the sale of "The Works of Robert Burns" in two volumes to a collector in Austria. What a small world! The customer was very satisfied and thanks the Society for the addition to his collection. Our thanks go to Cindy for making it possible.

Several other books are still for sale on the internet. The remaining books appear to have much less intrinsic value, being old religious treatises and 20th century publications. Those will be offered to anyone making a small donation to the Society. All of the income from sale of these books helps the Society to fulfill its mission.

Membership Application and Renewal Form

Dues (please check one):

__ Student:	$3.00
__ Individual:	$10.00
__ Couple or Family:	$15.00
__ **Supporting or Business:**	**$50.00**
__ **Patron:**	**$250.00**
__ Life – Individual:	$150.00
__ Life – Couple:	$200.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Donation

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

Total enclosed: $ _____

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
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Are your dues up to date? Please check the mailing label for your membership status

A group gathers for our history walking tour of Bedford Springs, once the site of a health resort