The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Bedford (Mass.) Historical Society

Founded in 1893

November 2009 Volume 117, Number 3

Another bygone Bedford Restaurant. Domine Manse has had a long history. Built by the town's first minister in 1730, it was a restaurant for a time and is now an office building.

Holiday Party to feature tool-guessing contest

This year's Historical Society Holiday Party will be held on Sunday, December 27, from 2 – 5 p.m. at the home of Carol Amick and Bill Moonan, 18 Crescent Avenue. Their home, an historic Victorian-farmhouse built about 140 years ago, will feature holiday decorations and an enormous display of antique tools – collected by Bill. The house will provide a gracious setting for the holiday gathering.

Not only are all members of the Society invited to attend, but all Bedford residents living in historic Bedford homes are being invited as well – even if they are not members of the Society at this time – to meet Society members in a relaxed, social atmosphere.

This year's party will include a special tool-guessing contest. Guests will have the opportunity to identify the name or use of a number of antique tools from Bill's collection by casting secret ballots during the party. The two persons with the most correct answers will win special prizes donated by the hosts.

Members attending are requested to bring sweet or savory finger foods to share with other guests. Punch (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) and coffee will be provided by the Society.

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.

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Bedford Historical Society, 2009-2010

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(vacant) Vice President
Phyllis Cooke, Secretary
Don Corey, Treasurer

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Julie McCay Turner (Board Chair)
Don Corey (BHS Treasurer)
Neil Leary ('09)
Frank Gicca ('10)
Donald Jenkins ('11)
Jan van Steenwijk (BHS President)

EXTENDED Archives hours

We have extended our office hours by an additional half day a week.. Our office and Archives in the Stearns building (a.k.a. the Police Station building) at 2 Mudge Way will *usually* be open at the following times:

Monday, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5
Tuesday, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5
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 781-275-7276.

Memorial donations

The Society is honored to be the recipient of donations made in memory of Mina and Larry Kimball. Our warmest thanks go to Nancy W. Doty, Eunice Puzzo, and the Bedford Woman's Community Club for their generosity. We will use their gifts to carry out the work of preserving and sharing the Bedford history that was so dear to Mina and Larry.

Annual Giving

We have just launched our once-a-year Annual Giving fund drive. If you are on the mailing list for this newsletter, you will soon receive our Annual Giving letter in the mail.

We know that the financial downturn has affected everyone, not just the Society. In times like these, the contributions of our members and friends are appreciated all the more. Please remember that we are able to make a little go a long way in carrying out our mission of collecting and sharing Bedford's history. If you like the things we do for Bedford, won't you please help us to whatever extent you can? Thank you.

New members

We are delighted to have gained two new members since our last newsletter:

Rachel Murphy
Louis Hills

Welcome!

Archives wish list

Do you have a desktop or laptop computer that needs a new home? The Archives would love to adopt it, provided it has three essentials:

- Windows XP or higher
- At least one USB port
- A CD burner

The older of the two Archives computers has given noble service but is now obsolete and needs to be retired. We are sorely in need of a replacement. If you can donate one to us, we promise to cherish it and honor you. This just could be your ticket to Archives Heaven! Please call us at 781-275-7276. No need to deliver; we can pick up.

History on the move

Imagine that you built your house. Contractors bring in hundreds of 2x4s, joists, thousands of bricks for the chimney, plus roofing, siding, plumbing, wiring, flooring, and drywall – myriads of materials that over a long period of time take on the shape of your dream house. You lost count on the number of pieces. Then you must move.

Someone else buys the house and decides to move it to another town – then they take your house apart, piece by piece, and take it with them…?

This scenario is exactly what happened to the house that was once located on Carlisle Road in Bedford, just behind the gas station on the corner of Carlisle and North Road. It is believed that the house was built between 1690 and 1720, but details are still being researched.

Jump some 300 years to the late 1970s. The house had been empty for many years, boarded-up with plywood, and was slowly decaying. Raccoons, squirrels and other creatures had made it their postal address.

One day, Ned Leeming, a person with great interest in history, came by. It was love at first sight! He and his wife Susan eventually bought the "ruin," but wanted to move it to their newly bought property in Harvard, Massachusetts. How does one do this? There was only one right way to accomplish this daunting task. They found an extraordinarily dedicated crew of people with the experience needed. Among them architect and historian for the National Park Service, Orville Carroll. The team made very detailed drawings and took photographs of every square inch of the house.

The building was then dismantled piece by piece – every stud, every door and window, every joist, every floor board, every brick from the chimney. Every single item from the house was numbered and cataloged for later use. All the old nails were carefully removed from the timber and, whenever possible, straightened to be re-used. Truckloads of materials were then transported to their new location, sorted, cleaned and treated for old insect attacks. Now a new daunting enterprise began: putting it all together again!

Slowly, the tremendous puzzle began to look like the house as it appeared a long time ago. Finally, the Leeming family could put clean sheets on the beds and move into their "new" home.

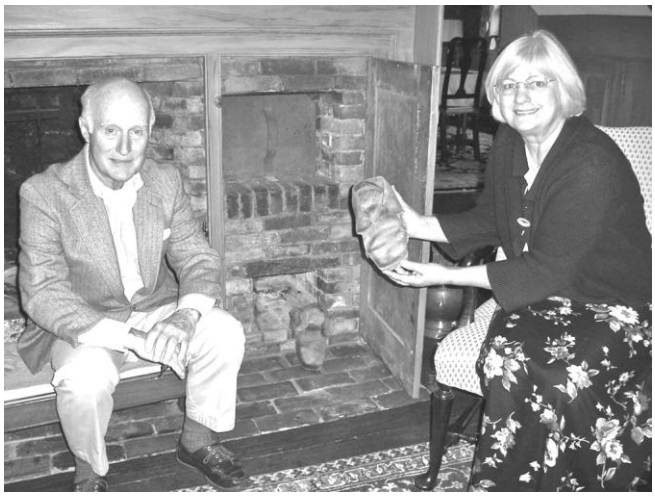
A small group of Bedford Historical Society members had the privilege to visit the home recently. Susan and Ned gave us the grand tour and we listened to their candid, enthusiastic stories about this journey. "Seeing the home slowly arise from the foundation was an exhilarating experience for us," said Susan. Ned added, "The endless discoveries we made in this process – like finding that there had been exit doors in different places – made the whole adventure worthwhile."

At the end of our tour they brought out a pair of old shoes they wanted to donate to the BHS. "We found them deep inside the chimney's 'ashtray,' the space next to the open hearth. Apparently it was customary many years ago to leave something as a good luck token. Maybe someone can research the facts and determine the age of the shoes and where they were made," Ned said handing over this wonderful treasure. In addition, they gave us several old documents and pieces of original wallpaper for us to scan and to add to our collection.

Ned and Susan have agreed to give a lecture to our members about the whole project sometime next year. We look forward to meeting them and hearing their wonderful story again.

A great thank you to Susan and Ned. And congratulations on their commitment to keep Bedford's history alive, even if it was moved a few miles away from its original home-town location.

Jan van Steenwijk



Ned and Susan Leeming in front of the restored-brick-by-brick fireplace where they found this old pair of shoes, now donated to the BHS. Photo by Jan van Steenwijk

From the President: Cambridge Savings Bank gives donation

During their official opening at its new location on the Great Road last month, Cambridge Savings Bank presented a check for $5,000 to the Society. The donation was made as an encouragement for all the good work the Society provides to keep Bedford's history alive.

On behalf of the Bedford Historical Society, I would like to thank Cambridge Savings Bank for this very generous donation that we will use wisely to continue to preserve our heritage. One of the Society's long-term objectives is to work toward establishing a museum in Bedford. This wonderful gift will help us to reach that goal a little bit sooner. When Robert M. Wilson, the President and CEO of Cambridge Savings Bank, presented the check he stated, "…the importance of local history can never be underestimated." He continued to say that the bank has existed for 175 years and has been in Bedford for 54 years making it, too, a part of our heritage.

To be able to more of our treasures to a larger audience, to hold a variety of events, and more easily accommodate researchers and others who wish to know more about Bedford, we are now actively working towards a major goal: looking for an appropriate location in town to create a museum and visitors' center. The greatest challenge is, of course, to obtain the financial means. That's why, when a donation like this one comes our way, all our members feel encouraged and optimistic that our goal will be realized one day. Once again, a big thank you to Cambridge Savings Bank.

Jan van Steenwijk

Society donates Sheraton sofa to Job Lane House

To honor the memory of the late Louise K. Brown, Bedford's Town Historian, several decades ago the Bedford Historical Society used the Louise K. Brown Memorial Fund to purchase a sofa for the parlor of the Job Lane House. The 1830s Sheraton-style sofa was acquired from the Champney family for a very modest sum in order to help furnish the parlor with period-appropriate furniture. Because the parlor is in a part of the house built in the 1820s, the sofa is eminently suitable for the room.

The sofa has now adorned the Job Lane House for many years and it has been in need of reupholstering for some time. The Friends of the Job Lane House would like to have the work done, at an estimated cost of $1,200. However, because the Bedford Historical Society, the administrator of the Louise K. Brown Memorial Fund, is technically the owner of the sofa, the Friends have been hesitant about expending such a large sum on property which does not belong to them.

In order to make it possible for the Friends to proceed with reupholstering the sofa, the Society's Directors recently voted to deaccession the sofa and transfer it to the Friends of the Job Lane House. Under the Society's bylaws, the transfer becomes complete after 30 days' written notice to members.

In the last few years the parlor has had several improvements. The Rufus Porter murals were restored with Community Preservation funds, and this summer an antique Persian rug donated to the Friends by Barbara and Don Marshall was installed. Once the sofa has been reupholstered, its improved appearance will further enhance the parlor's wonderful atmosphere.

The Sheraton sofa occupies a place of honor in front of a Rufus Porter mural at the Job Lane House

Community outreach

Our lectures series is "on vacation" until February, but we continue to offer activities year-round :

- A **guided tour of the Shawsheen Cemetery** is currently being shown on Bedford TV.
- We appeared on October 18 at the **Bedford Farmers' Market**, with special guest John Dodge, Town Historian joining us to share some of his Bedford memories with the crowd.
- We have partnered with the other history organizations in town to keep the **Bedford Freight House** open on weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Society receives further grant for Lane Family Papers project

The Bedford Historical Society was recognized by the Greater Lowell Community Foundation as a grant recipient at its annual ***Celebrate Giving*** event in October. The Society received a $1,000 grant to continue work on its Lane Family Papers project.

The history of the Lane Family in Bedford began in 1664 when the first Job Lane acquired a tract of land originally granted to Governor Winthrop. The land comprises one-fifth of what is now Bedford. Thus began the extensive involvement of the Lane family in local affairs, as public and church officials throughout the colonial period and as officers and soldiers in every military engagement of note during that time.

The Society maintains a collection of more than 230 Lane family documents, nearly all dating from the 1650s to the late 1790s. The primary purpose of this project is to enable the Society to make available to the general public some of its archival collections on its web site, starting with the Lane family papers. The model for such a project is the online display of the Adams Family papers on the Mass. Historical Society's web site (www.masshist.org), where visitors can see scanned images of actual documents along with transcriptions.

The Society was awarded a grant of $850 by the Bedford Cultural Council in February 2009 in order to initiate this project. The Society has committed some of its own funds to the project, and the Greater Lowell Community Foundation grant will permit more work to continue. The first products of the project will be up on the Society's web site in the near future. The Society is extremely grateful for the recognition by and support of its grant donors.

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: $ _____

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Are your dues up to date? Please check the mailing label for your membership status

The Y-D Restaurant on the Great Road. Established in the 1920s, it is now long gone.