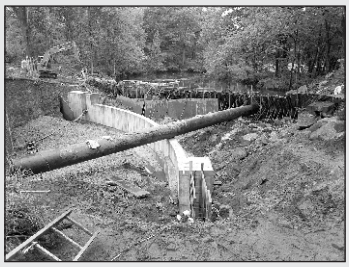

The Wilson Mill site, from 1676 is being renovated as a historic park

The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
Bedford - Massachusetts

Founded in 1893

November 2012 Volume 120, Number 7

Don't miss our next Lecture

Congregational Church - Great Rd.

Sunday, Nov. 11, 2012, 2 pm

The last of the two-part series on World War II veterans will be presented on Sunday, Nov. 11th – Veterans Day. Starting at 2 pm with a social period in the Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational, the presentation will include more video oral history presented by Society President Jan van Steenwijk on his taping of veterans living at Carleton-Willard Village, as well as portions of a film about World War II cemeteries provided by Society Board Member Don Jenkins. "Hallowed Grounds" is a 2009 PBS documentary directed by Robert Uth and narrated by Peter Thomas.

Veterans organizations from Bedford and surrounding towns are invited to attend and participate in this moving program and share their war stories.

Please come -
our lectures are always free!

Another Great Year...

This issue of the Preservationist is the last one for 2012. We hope that you have enjoyed the Society's previous six newsletters which are created to keep you up-to-date with the many activities we provide to our membership.

Although the year is not over yet, it is my pleasure to report that the Society, again, had a terrific year. The seven lectures we presented—as always—covered a broad variety of topics and attracted large audiences. Another highlight is, of course September's Bedford Day, where we showcased our merchandise and displayed historical treasures from our archives.

Behind the scenes are dedicated people who make sure that the Society's finances stay in good shape and that its daily obligations are kept in order. The office receives many requests every year from people all over the country, from "who lived on 23 North Road in the early fifties…?" to "do you have a map of Bedford from 1492…?" Unfortunately, the answer to this question is no, we don't have one; our earliest town wide map is dated 1760, and we sell a facsimile at a low price–a great Christmas gift!

Traditionally, we entertain Bedford's third graders annually. The boys and girls are always very interested in our collection of old dolls, the thousand-year-old flint tools and the red "Witch Cape."
We also recognize the achievements of our High School students at the National History Competitions.

We welcome the many new members who joined us; they are an invaluable asset to our continued success. This year in particular, the Society has received many wonderful donations: books, scrapbooks, photographs, letters and other artifacts. On page 3 you can see a few of our newest acquisitions—metal objects found in the ground of the old Wilson Mill site. We are still trying to identify some of the pieces. Our ultimate goal is to again have a small museum so we can display some of our collection for all to see.

On behalf of our Board of Directors and our many volunteers, I wish you all pleasant and healthy holidays, and look forward to seeing you at our Holiday Party and meeting you again in 2013.

Jan van Steenwijk

Celebrate the Holidays with us, Saturday, Dec. 15, 2012, 3-6pm

The Society's annual Holiday Party will be held from 3-6 pm on Saturday, Dec. 15 at the home of Carol Amick and Bill Moonan, 18 Crescent Ave., complete with holiday decorations. This event is open to Society members and their guests, and has in previous years drawn large crowds, who enjoy the sociability, the fabulous hors d'oeuvres and the famous punches brought by Society members, as well as various entertaining contests (like guessing the use for the hundreds of antique tools in Bill Moonan's collection!

Carol Amick

The Holiday Party is for members and their guests only.
It's not too late, please become a member and enjoy this great tradition!

The Good Old Days...

The year is 1917 and the Bedford Fire Department just received a new fire truck. Time for a picture. Note the bell in the middle of the truck and the kerosene lanterns. The ladder could reach a height of 12 feet, enough to climb to the second floor of homes of that era.

Bedford in the Civil War - Disease Took a Huge Toll By: Don Corey

Earlier *Preservationist* articles described some of the bloody campaigns and battles that many of Bedford's Civil War soldiers served in. Seven of Bedford's servicemen died in battles, and many more were wounded. Disease was also a major factor in that war, and in fact seven other Bedford servicemen died of disease during the Civil War.

During the years before modern medicine and vaccinations, disease typically took as many or more lives as battlefield wounds. That was actually the case with the Bedford men who served in the Civil War. Clark Cutler died of disease before being ordered to the field, with the cause of death in such cases described as "camp fever" and being any one of a number of communicable diseases. Thomas Isaacs enlisted in 1861 and served with the 16th MA Infantry Regiment but was discharged for disability in October 1862 (2 months after having served at 2nd Bull Run). He died the next spring of consumption or TB, which was also a common cause of death at that time.

However, a most disturbing finding was that New Orleans became a killing ground from disease for Union troops stationed there after its capture by Admiral Farragut in April 1862. The five other Bedford servicemen who died of disease all contracted it there, although 2 returned home to Bedford to die. The causes of death were either typhoid fever, cholera (both spread from contaminated drinking water), malaria or yellow fever (both spread by mosquitoes).

- Henry Hosmer served with the 6th Battery MA Light Artillery, which participated in the capture of New Orleans. He died of disease a few months thereafter. Military records listing the men that served in that unit show that 6 of the 27 men listed on the same page as Henry Hosmer - about 1 in every 4 - died of disease contracted there.

- The MA 47th Infantry Regiment was stationed at various locations around New Orleans. It never saw any action but 24 of its men died of disease, including Bedford's John Byron and James Monroe.

- Charles Saunders served with the 15th Battery MA Light Artillery, which was sent to New Orleans in April 1863. He and others in his unit also died of disease in New Orleans.

- William F Gragg survived the sinking of the USS Housatonic that was blockading the Gulf Coast; it was torpedoed and sunk by a submarine of the Confederate Navy, the first successful sinking of a war ship by a submarine. He then served on the USS Circassian in the US Navy's West Gulf Blocking Squadron, supporting the Union cause by supplying the troops, bringing wounded soldiers to hospitals, and moving Confederate prisoners to secure locations. The Circassian arrived at the Boston Navy Yard for repairs on 14 December 1864. Boston was Gragg's last port of call, as he died 10 days later at home in Bedford of typhoid fever. ■

Lectures to come in 2013:

Sunday, Feb. 10, 2013, 2 pm:
First Church of Christ,
Christopher Daley: "Lincoln's Assassination."

Wednesday, March 27, 2013, 7:30 pm:
First Church of Christ,
Robert Slechta: "Joshua Page: Builder of Bedford's Center."

Wednesday, April 24, 2013: 7:15 pm:
Library Meeting Room,
Richard Smith: "An Evening with Henry David Thoreau."

Wednesday, May 22, 2013: 6:30 pm
First Church of Christ,
Pot Luck Dinner, Annual Meeting, and Guest Speaker Joe McKenry: "Beneath the Streets of Boston: Building America's First Subway."

The Bedford Flag

A new addition to the Society's Bedford Flag collection is a brochure, History of the American Flag, published prior to World War II and belonging to Don Corey's family since he was a child. Included along with pictures of numerous versions of the U.S. flag are various Colonial, Revolutionary and other early American flags including The Bedford Flag! However, the caption contains some curious information. It reads, "The Bedford Minute Men Flag **used by Paul Revere** 1775"! That one would take a little research to pin down - perhaps there's more to Paul Revere's Midnight Ride than we've ever been aware of?

The brochure contains the original patriotic wording of the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, which was recited by every school child every morning during World War II. The Pledge was written in 1892, and in the latter half of the 20th Century the words "under God" were added.

Human Relations Council of Bedford

It was reported in the September *Preservationist* that records of the Human Relations Council of Bedford (HRCB) had been donated to the Historical Society's archival collections. A recent conversation with John Gibbons, who served as HRCB's President in the mid-1990s and has donated additional materials, recalled some important contributions of that group and its predecessors. One example involved the Bedford Fellowship for Social Action (organized in 1963 and which evolved with other groups into HRCB), when only 12 non-white families lived in Bedford. It organized a Good Neighbor Pledge card drive seeking signatures affirming "I believe people should be welcomed in my neighborhood without discrimination because of race, religion, or national origin. I shall endeavor to make my personal practices consistent with this belief". About 1200 pledge cards were returned, representing about 2000 residents at a time when Bedford's population was much smaller than it is now. Its full-page ad in the Bedford Minuteman reflecting the success of the drive is shown here.

HRCB has suspended its active operations, as town and other local organizations have become more involved with these social issues. It continues to be represented in a partnership with town officials known as RSVP (Response System in Voluntary Partnership) that shares information and may respond whenever a member becomes aware that a hate incident may have occurred.

Don Corey

What is It?

These 3 artifacts were found at the Wilson Mill site when the old dam was recently replaced with a new one. There were many more objects found that now are in our archives. Rusted as they are, the objects are made of steel and clearly look like they could have been buried for 200 to 300 years. The top picture is probably a fragment of a larger piece.

We don't know what they are, so if you think you have the answer, please let us know.

JvS

Have you ever wondered what Bedford looked like in earlier days, how people lived, what tools they used, or what kind of work they performed to survive?

The answer might be available in our Society. Contact us any time to get information from our vast archives.

The Preservationist

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bedford, MA 01730-1238

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"We Don't Make History...
We keep It Alive..!"

The Bedford Historical Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Please support your Heritage.

Come and see us.
Visit our FaceBook page
Or visit our website:
www.bedfordmahistory.org
Admistrative Assistant:
Kara Kerwin
781-275-7276

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The Preservationist.
Design, production & photography:
Jan van Steenwijk
Contributing writers:
Carol Amick, Don Corey, Kara Kerwin, Bob Slechta

"In 1891 the Bedford Lumber and Manufacturing Co. was established adjacent to the railroad. It was the largest industry ever founded in town, employing 50 people. As well as being a lumber dealer, the company manufactured building components such as doors and window sashes."

Please become a member or renew your membership

Membership Application

Name:_____
Address:_____

City/Town:_____
State:_____Zip:_____
Phone:_____
Email:_____

Dues

☐ 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
☐ Donation:	$

Amount enclosed: $_____

Please send check to:
Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - 2 Mudge Way - Bedford, MA 01730-2138