The Preservationist

Newsletter of the Bedford (Mass.) Historical Society

Founded in 1893

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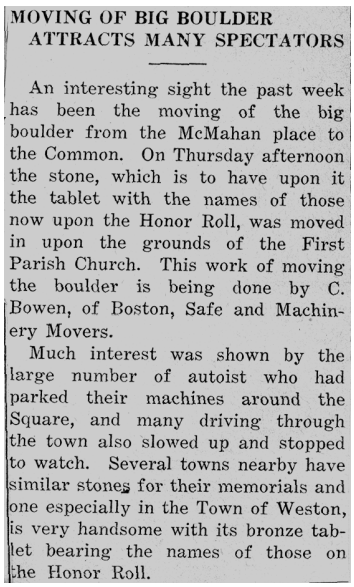
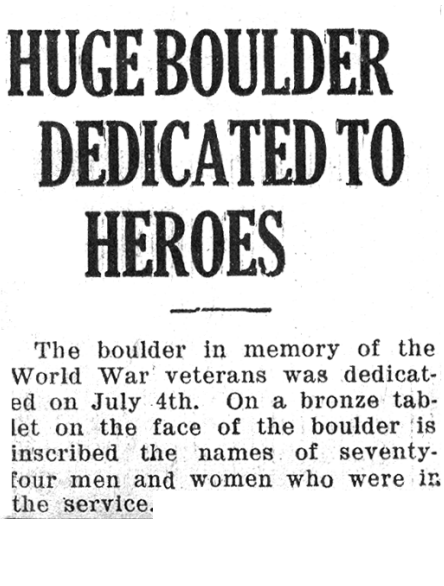


MOVING OF BIG BOULDER ATTRACTS MANY SPECTATORS

An interesting sight the past week has been the moving of the big boulder from the McMahan place to the Common. On Thursday afternoon the stone, which is to have upon it the tablet with the names of those now upon the Honor Roll, was moved in upon the grounds of the First Parish Church. This work of moving the boulder is being done by C. Bowen, of Boston, Safe and Machinery Movers.

Much interest was shown by the large number of autoist who had parked their machines around the Square, and many driving through the town also slowed up and stopped to watch. Several towns nearby have similar stones for their memorials and one especially in the Town of Weston, is very handsome with its bronze tablet bearing the names of those on the Honor Roll.



HUGE BOULDER DEDICATED TO HEROES

The boulder in memory of the World War veterans was dedicated on July 4th. On a bronze tablet on the face of the boulder is inscribed the names of seventy-four men and women who were in the service.

DEDICATE MEMORIAL BOWLDER TO BEDFORD WORLD WAR VETERANS

July 5

Bronze Tablet Contains Names of 74 Men and Women Who Served, and Three Who Fell in Conflict

Memorial boulder, dedicated yesterday to World War dead and veterans of Bedford.

A familiar landmark began as a boulder on Charles Jenks' land. On July 4, 1925, Bedford honored its World War I servicemen and women in a solemn ceremony to dedicate the memorial on the Common. Page 3.

Grist from the Mill

The Society's lecture series on local history resumes this month with "Grist from the Mill" by Richard Gnatowski, miller and historian, will tell us about the mill that still grinds the flour for the bread served at the Wayside Inn.

Wednesday, September 27, 7:30 p.m.
Congregational Church
25 The Great Road, Bedford

Our Program Chair, Cecile Walker, has once again done an excellent job in booking the year's talks:

October 25, "Romancin' the Rail, 1850-1950." Bill Patton tells the tale of the Union Pacific, the Orient Express, and other legendary trains, illustrated with art and photographs.

December: The Society's Christmas party, date and location to be announced.

February 28: "The First Black Soldier in the American Revolution on April 19, 1775." Charles Prince reenacts the role of Prince Estabrook, soldier and slave, who took part in the Battle of Lexington.

March 28: "Let's Learn More about Bedford." Don Corey and friends present the always-popular talk on treasures from the Society's collections.

April 25: "Nearby Native American Archeological Sites." Dr. Curtiss Hoffman will speak on sites within the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord River Watershed.

May 25 (6:30 PM), the Society's Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner. After-dinner music will be provided by Leonard Solomon and his one-man musical variety show – musically sophisticated and totally entertaining.

All our meetings are free and open to the public. Please bring your friends, family, and anyone who would enjoy learning more of Bedford's story.

The Preservationist is published seven times each year by the Bedford Historical Society 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, 2005-2006

Officers

Alethea Yates, President
Robert Slechta, Vice President
Phyllis Cooke, Secretary
Don Corey, Treasurer

Directors

John Brown ('07)
John Dodge ('07)
Neil Leary ('07)
Carol Amick ('08)
Norman Toti ('08)
Julie Turner ('08) - Board Secretary
Don Corey ('09) - Board Chair
Miriam Brown ('09)
Jan van Steenwijk ('09)
Marion Bryan ('10)
Marietta Ellis ('10)
Donald Jenkins ('10)

Committees

Activities: Jeannette Pothier
BOD Liaison to Executive Board: Don Corey
Hospitality: Rotating
Membership Secretary: TBD
Merchandise/Ways & Means: John Carlson
Newsletter Editor: Alethea Yates
Nominating:
Betty Slechta (appointed by President, '07)
TBD (appointed by Executive Board, '08)
TBD (appointed by Membership, '09)
Program: Cecile Walker
Sunshine: TBD
Welcoming: Lois Jenkins
Finance Committee:
Don Corey (Board Chairman, Treasurer)
Frank Gicca ('07)
Mike Seibert ('08)
Neil Leary ('09)
Alethea Yates (BHS President)

Society members participate in Memorial Day observances

The spring season ended with Memorial Day services organized by the town's Patriotic Celebrations Committee. As part of the Society's community outreach activities, Bob Slechta and Don Corey participated in the ceremonies at the Old Burying Ground and Shawsheen Cemetery, respectively. Those services honored the sacrifices of Bedford's war dead and its other residents who served in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, many of whom are buried in the two cemeteries.

Challenge Grant donation completed

As reported in *The Preservationist* last spring, an Ad Hoc Audit Committee was formed this summer to review the Challenge Gift and Matching Endowment financial records, documenting the Society's success in meeting the challenge. The results have been certified to the donor. This is the final step in the process of permanently transferring the $100,000 challenge gift to the Society. Our intent is to combine the two accounts into a single Museum/Archives Endowment Fund later this year.

Visit us on the Web

Need to know when our next meeting is being held? Would you like to order our books and other Bedford memorabilia? Would you like to download a **free** map of a trail to the Brothers Rocks? Please visit our web site:

www.bedfordmahistory.org

Archives hours

Our room in the Stearns building (the Police Station) at 2 Mudge Way, where we maintain our Archives and business office**,** is *usually* open at the following times:

Mondays, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5
Tuesdays, 9 to 12

Other times by appointment. Please call 781-275-1212 x 140. Note: Our phone is answered by our "roommates," the Bedford police; just ask for our extension. Don't hesitate to call us at any time.

Webber Family donates heirlooms to Society

We are delighted to report on the generous donation of several museum artifacts, photographs, paintings and other ephemera to the Society from the estate of Paul Baron Webber, Jr., by his niece, Pamela Annotto. One of the most interesting and valuable pieces is the Webber family cradle, a drawing of which is shown in A.E. Brown's *History of the Town of Bedford* along with the Webber family genealogy. The cradle dates to the 1690s and was first used by James Webber's family.

James (born in 1885) was a Scottish immigrant to New York and then to Medford. The Webbers of Bedford are descended from his son Benjamin and grandson John Webber. Capt. John Webber raised his family in the Danforth-Webber Inn, now known as the Shawsheen House at 137 Shawsheen Road. He was very active in public service during the Revolutionary War period. One of his sons, William (b. 1762), gave rise to the branch represented today by Abbott Reed Webber's family. A younger son, Job (b. 1769), gave rise to the branch represented by descendants of Wallace Gleason Webber, a Bedford native and co-founder of the Paine-Webber investment firm.

Paul Baron Webber, Jr. (1914-2002) was a grandson of Wallace G. Webber. He earlier made a gift to the town of a 20-acre conservation parcel, the Mary Putnam Webber Wildlife Preserve, located off Concord Road. The property was given to the town in 1991 and was dedicated to the memory of his grandmother.

These gifts to the town and to the Society will be appreciated for years to come.

A small boulder in Wilson Park marks the gathering place of Bedford's militia and Minutemen on April 19, 1775

Bedford's memorial boulders

Rocks and stones may have been the curse of the Yankee farmer, but the majesty and dignity of the largest boulders inspire feelings of awe and respect. Three boulder monuments in Bedford reflect the town's pride in its history and people.

Brothers Rocks

The two boulders chosen by Governor John Winthrop and Lieutenant Governor Thomas Dudley to mark their properties have always held a special fascination for Bedford residents. In the very first year after its founding, the Bedford Historical Society did four things it considered important enough to mention in the annual Town Report: it held lectures on local history, started a "valuable collection of relics," issued a book on the Bedford Flag, and carved into the Brothers Rocks the names of the two men who had made them famous.

World War I memorial

Nature placed the Brothers Rocks where they still stand; two men assigned special significance to them; and a century and a half later, a little work by a stone carver completed the creation of the town's first boulder memorial. The next one required far more work.

Newspaper clippings in the scrapbooks of Charles Jenks tell the tale. A War Memorial Committee, headed by George R. Blinn, was formed to provide a suitable reminder of the heroism and sacrifice of the Bedford residents who had served in "the World War." A boulder of impressive size was found on the property of Mr. Jenks, whose property was located close to the Town Common.

Although it didn't have far to go, the 40-ton boulder required the professional services of the Boston Safe and Machinery Movers to place it on the Common, an operation which drew crowds and stopped traffic.

A bronze plaque with the Honor Roll of those who served in World War I was mounted on the boulder. July 4, 1925, saw the dedication of the new memorial and the people of Bedford did it in grand style. It began with a parade in which the Anthony-Hunt-Hamilton post of the American Legion (named for the three Bedford men who lost their lives in the war), American Legion posts of neighboring towns,

the Bedford police chief, the Lexington and Concord Drum Corps, uniformed members of the Army and Navy, the Grand Army of the Republic, Sons of Veterans, army and navy veterans of the Spanish-American War, the Bedford Minute Men, and the Boy Scouts all marched up to the Common.

The dedication exercises began with the Star Spangled Banner and a prayer. George R. Blinn, chairman of the committee, presented the boulder and Selectman John Kirkegaard accepted it on behalf of the town. Speeches followed. A reporter for the Lexington Times later wrote that "with a tightening around the hear, a tear in the eye, we realized suddenly that this was the climax: A noble boulder fitting in its simplicity and lasting in its ruggedness —a fine memorial for 'Our boys.'"

Next, the Legion and guests went to the Grange Hall "to partake in one of the dinners for which Bedford women are so famous." After a moment of silence, the Toast Master, Mr. Blinn, introduced a variety of speakers. Lt. Col. George Morse, the main speaker, told of the days "over there" during the war and praised the discipline and courtesy of the American army. Other speakers followed. Among them, Major General Frank L. Hoyt observed the "No nobler title can be conferred… than that of American Citizen." Dr. Stearns of Billerica "emphasized that country towns represent certain patriotism." Mrs. Blinn spoke of the Red Cross and read the American Creed.

The event ended with three cheers for everyone who helped with the event, three cheers for Charles Jenks, the donor of the boulder, and finally "three cheers and a tiger" for the organizer, Mr. Blinn. "The cheers were given with a will; and thus ended a day long to be remembered in Bedford."

Parade and Dedication Well Carried Out

Dinner and Speeches at Grange Hall—Geo. R. Blinn Is Toast Master

On Saturday, July 4, the memorial exercises and dedication of the Honor Roll, started with the parade of the different posts of the American Legion and invited guests at the corner of Loomis Street and Great Road. The parade started off shortly after 10.30, with Chief of Police Frederick H. Sullivan at the head. To the inspiring strain of music played by the Lexington Drum Corps, and the Concord Drum Corps, the flashing of red and white uniforms of blue and khaki, Francis J. Kelley as Chief Marshal, with William A. Wilkins, ton Post No. 211, Stanley Hill Post, James J. Mansfield Post, Lincoln Post, Harold V. Estey Post, Grand Army of the Republic, Sons of Veterans, Spanish Naval and Military veterans, the Bedford Minute Men and the Bedoford Boy Scouts. Up Loomis to South, up South to Great Road, then up and around Wilson Park, back around the Common, and facing the boulder, the column came to rest.

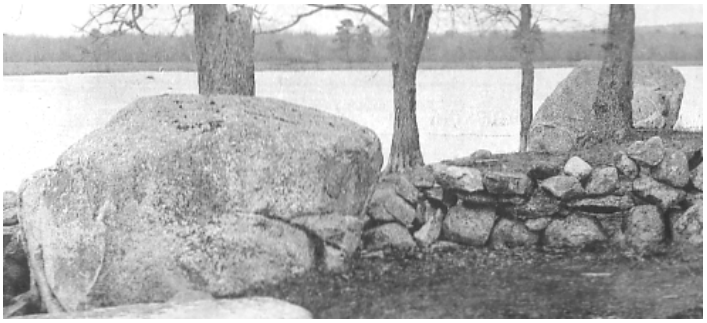
Bicentennial monument

Bedford's youngest boulder monument reflects both the town's Bicentennial spirit and its Bedford pride, being entirely Made in Bedford. The plaque, with its images of a Bedford Minute Man and the Bedford Flag, was designed by Bedford artist Charles Meyrick. The plaque was then cast by the George L. Meade Foundry on South Road in February of 1975. (See the photograph on the last page.) The monument was dedicated at the height of the town's Bicentennial celebrations on April 12, 1975, immediately after the Pole Capping ceremony in Wilson Park.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The Bedford Historical Society, an adjunct of the Library Corporation, is organized on a permanent basis and has been duly recognized among similar organizations of the State. It has quietly conducted its work during the year; several public meetings have been held, when papers of historic interest have been read. The valuable collection of relics has received some interesting additions. One small publication, "The Flag of the Minute Men," has been issued. The Winthrop and Dudley boulders, natural monuments, that date back to Colonial times in Massachusetts, and remind us of its eminent first governor, have been suitably marked, through the public spirit of Mr. Dudley L. Pickman, the present owner of the spot where Winthrop and Dudley landed in 1638 and located their farms.

ABRAM ENGLISH BROWN, *Secretary.*
GEORGE R. BLINN, *President.*



One of the first acts of the Bedford Historical Society after its founding was to carve "Dudley 1638" and "Winthrop 1638" onto the Bedford's two most famous boulders, as told in the Town Report for 1894.

Membership Application and Renewal Form

This is (please check one):

____ A new membership

____ A renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip:_____

Phone: _____

Email:_____

Dues

__ Student:	$3.00
__ Single:	$10.00
__ Couple or Family:	$15.00
__ Supporting or Business:	$50.00
__ Life – Single:	$150.00
__ Life – Couple:	$200.00

Amount enclosed: $ _____

Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730

781-275-1212, extension 140

We would appreciate a self-addressed, stamped envelope to help us speed your membership card to you. Thank you!

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

The Bicentennial monument behind the Stearns Building features a plaque that was designed by a Bedford artist and cast in a Bedford foundry

The Preservationist
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2 Mudge Way
Bedford MA 01730

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

Two vats of molten bronze stand ready to be cast for the Bicentennial plaque on the boulder that stands on the Great Road near Mudge Way. See page 3. (Photo by Mary Hafer)