The Bedford Flag, the oldest existing flag in the United States. On view at the Bedford Library.

The Preservationist

Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - Bedford - Massachusetts
Founded in 1893

May 2017 *Published for everyone interested in our history* Volume 127, Number 4

Tuesday, May 23rd
Annual Meeting & Pot-luck

Congregational Church, 25 Great Road

Bedford Rocks (or A History of its Geology)

The lecture will begin around 7:30 pm, following a pot-luck dinner and the Society's Annual Meeting. Appetizers and Marion Bryan's famous punch will be served beginning at 6 pm. The buffet dinner will begin around 6:30 pm.

Come to the Bedford Historical Society's Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner, and hear Bedford Town Historian Sharon McDonald answer these and other questions as she shares her extensive knowledge about the history of Bedford's geology.

- What is hiding under Bedford's ground? Why is the bedrock under Bedford considered special?
- What geological activities led to the creation of ochre, that was mined in South Bedford and provided the coloring for the paint, "Bedford Yellow?"
- Where did the chunks of garnet in the Society's collection come from?

Mrs. McDonald is President of the Friends of the Job Lane House and Curator of the Job Lane Farm Museum. She is best known for serving as the Children's Librarian at the Bedford Free Public Library for 40 years. During her long association with the library, which houses the historic Bedford Flag, she was inspired to research and write her first book, "The Bedford Flag Unfurled," published in 2000.

She just finished a new book, the history of Bedford's First Parish Church.

In December, 2014, Mrs. McDonald was appointed by the Bedford Selectmen as the Town's Historian, and has been one of the most active in this role, giving talks to numerous organizations in and around Bedford about the town's history. She has been a Director of the Society's Board of Directors since 2013 and has served for many years as a member of the Town's Historic Preservation Commission.

Presidents Message

The Society will close out its Spring activities with the following public events:

Annual Meeting – Our Annual Meeting will be on Tuesday, May 23. Following dinner and the election of officers, we will have a very interesting and entertaining program by our very own Town Historian, Sharon McDonald. More details are provided elsewhere on this page.

Memorial Day - The Society will again participate in Bedford's Memorial Day activities. Members will speak during observances at the Civil War monument in Shawsheen Cemetery, the Revolutionary War marker in the Old Burying Ground, and the World War I monument on the Common.

Don Corey

Memorial Day Poppies

Memorial Day was established following the end of the Civil War, but the association of poppies with Memorial Day is a WWI legacy. After a young Canadian artillery officer was killed in action, his friend and brigade doctor Major John McCrae conducted the burial service. Following the burial Major McCrae wrote his now famous poem "In Flanders Fields"

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Please bring a Pot-luck dish to share

Society members are requested to bring a salad, main dish, or dessert that can serve about eight people for the pot-luck supper. Reminder phone calls are being made and emails sent to get a sumptuous array of foods for this final event of the Society's 2016-2017 season and to get volunteers to help with the dinner set-up and clean-up.

Only those members who do not have email are being called about this event. Any Society member willing to help with phone calls should contact the Society's office at 781-275-7276 or email Kara Kerwin at info@bedfordmahistory.org.

Carol Amick

Bandits Raid Town of Bedford

The sensational headlines of the day....

It was about 1:00 in the morning on March 4th, 1919, when Mrs. Whiton, the doctor's wife, heard the crash of breaking glass over on the Post Office block.* Alarmed, she alerted Police Chief William Kenney. Kenney dashed to the scene. He found the front windows of Cosmo Albani's fruit and candy store, Henry Lyon's grocery store, and J.M. Chase's drug store were smashed. Further, the Post Office door had been forced open. Approaching, he thought he had seen a flash of light in one of the stores. But he was too late. The robbers had fled.

The Chief immediately sent out a riot call, summoning the State Guard Company. They arrived quickly – and so did about half the townspeople of Bedford; furious and determined to catch the "yeggs." Someone gave the order for the streetlights, which customarily were turned off at midnight, to be switched back on. A close search of the center ensued, and then extended down South Road to the Boston and Maine Railroad Depot. There the searchers were distressed to find that the bandits had struck once more. Using a sledgehammer, they had bashed off the knobs and combination wheel of the safe, but had failed to crack it. The floor was littered with train tickets, but there had not been more than a couple of dollars in the register. In their haste, the marauders had overlooked the pay phone entirely.

Following the detection of a light in one of the stores, a riot call was sounded by order of Chief of Police William Kenney, and the local State Guard Company called out.

The town street lights, which had been turned off at midnight, were switched on at 1 a. m., in the hope of assisting in the detection of the desperadoes. Half the townspeople turned out in a midnight man-hunt.

Mrs. Ross K. Whiton, wife of Dr.

"Lights off..."

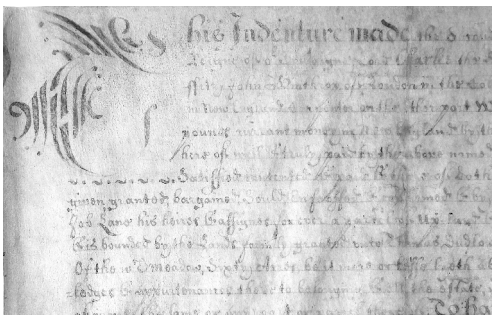
At last the hunt was called off. The desperados had gotten clean away. Yet, in all, their ill-gotten gains amounted to no more than $25 and some cigars. Bedford storekeepers were too shrewd to leave a lot of money in their tills overnight! Next day, the Boston newspapers pounced on the story. The Boston American even gave it a large point headline in red ink, and called it "one of the biggest nights in the history of Bedford, and one the town will not soon forget." But word was out to all miscreants: we may be a small town, but don't you dare mess with Bedford!

**Where the Blake Block now stands.*

Sharron McDonald

Winthrop-Lane document made readable.

Camera set-up


Regular B&W picture

Final result, a negative image

Photo: © Jan van Steenwijk

You can't see it, but it can make your skin darker or burn it. It will, eventually, bleach your dark oak floor, furniture and nice paintings and photographs on the wall. The sun has plenty of it – it's called Ultra Violet, or UV in short. When we use it in the dark with a "black" bulb, popular at parties, our faces and many objects take on psychopathic colors. Freckles we did not know we had, suddenly become dark spots on our face.

UV light projected on paintings or old documents sometimes reveal things invisible to the naked eye. Museums will photograph most objects with UV and/or IR (infra-red) light sources as well as X-rays to determine age, or often faux "originals."

Our Historical Society has many old documents, and paintings which often hide something "behind" what we can see. The three images above show how an old faded document from our archives can be slightly enhanced. The ink has degraded over the years, and many places, especially in the folds, has disappeared. Ink was made from a mixture of oak iron gall and plant extracts, a tannic acid which, when exposed to oxygen and light will fade over time. But as the sample shows, some enhancements have been made, and now most of this document can be read.

The process is rather simple: one needs either UV filters or a UV light source. I used newer UV LED lights. It has to be totally dark in the studio when photographing, no regular light allowed. Most modern SLR digital cameras can be used, but many lenses won't produce an accurate result, because manufacturers add a coating to avoid UV light when we take regular pictures. The result when the picture is transferred to, for instance PhotoShop, is a very bluish image, which first has to be converted to black and white, and then enhanced with contrast, and finally reversed as a negative. It is a time consuming, trial-and error process, and it sometimes fails to reveal what one hopes to find.

In the case of the Winthrop-Lane document, it was possible, although not perfect, to make a lot of the old letters more readable. So now we can decipher most of the old, very elegant hand-writing.

Jan van Steenwijk

Car Businesses I Remember

Back in the 50's, the automobile was already a big part of life in Bedford. Over the years, all sorts of businesses had sprung up to meet the town's demand to keep moving. For those that did not have a car, there were a lot of taxi's in town, such as Bedford G.I. Cab Service, Meta Luby on Hartwell Rd., G.I. Taxi Service, Frank Cloutier and Town Taxi, Arthur Rivet and Patterson Taxi on North Rd., Link's Taxi on South Rd., Lincoln Currier; and Arrowhead Cab Co. at 105 Great Rd.

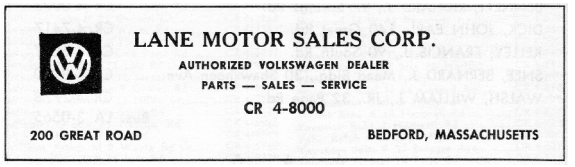
One longstanding business was established by Richard S. Dodge in 1925. He opened Bedford Motor Sales which was both a Ford dealership and Sunoco station at 180 Great Road. They celebrated their 35th year in business in 1960. After Richard Dodge moved on, the name of the business changed to Bedford Sunoco and Tire, and it was run by Cal Brammer for many years. It remains a Sunoco to this day, known as Riggio Auto Repair. The Sunoco station was where you went to have a tire changed, including when everyone had to change the summer tires from the winter studded snow tires (rear only, of course). Cal may have charged a dollar each to change them, but, sometimes, he didn't bother to charge anything at all. Even so, one spring I watched a guy pull all the studs out of his snow tires with a pair of pliers, so he didn't have to buy summer tires. That took him all day.

Richard S. Dodge Ford Dealership, now Riggio Auto Repair

Bedford Auto Parts was located at 34 South Rd. and 50 Great Rd. in the 50's and 60's before moving to 200 Great Rd. Before that, 200 Great Rd. had been Middlesex Garage and Irvin Puffer Chevrolet in the 30's. In 1961 it became a VW dealership known as Lane Motor Sales, Charles E. Lane, Treasurer. When they moved to North Road in 1966, they changed the name to Minuteman Volkswagen, later adding an Oldsmobile dealership and changing the name to Minuteman Oldsmobile and VW. VW shipped their cars here in large wooden crates with a large VW painted on all sides, and a few of my neighbors got some empty crates and made tool sheds from them.

Still going strong in 2017

Of course, there were a lot of "filling" stations in town, and they were always staffed by attendants because "self-service" did not exist. Most of them were up and down the Great Road, which by the 1960s was being referred to as "Gasoline Alley." Frank Cloutier had the only "Filling Station" in town before 1930 on Main St. Walter Bieren ran a garage on North Rd. in the 30's, later to become an Esso station and Murphy's Coffee Pot. Walter Bieren's garage was on Concord Rd. later in the 30's. This was Clarence Russell's Garage before Walter took over. The Amoco station at 318 Great Rd was Dom Palmeri's place for many years. Dom was always good to us. Dick's Esso, owned by Richard Hansen was at 341 Great Rd. It had been Mike's Esso in the 50's, and Andie's Exxon later.



Some of my friends worked at these gas stations. That came in handy when you needed to work on your car at night after the boss left. We sometimes got "free" gas, too, but don't tell anyone.

Brian Oulighan

Thank You! *Our supporters help keeping history alive!*

Dues Renewals:
Judy Storer, Sandra Hackman

New Members:
Kathy Pietrasik

Donations:
Carol Amick & William Moonan

Donations in Memory of Barbara Marshall:
Diane (Ian) Thomas, Lois & Brown Pulliam, Heather & David Pullen

Donation in Memory of Earl Sorenson:
Don Marshall

Member Application

Annual Membership Dues:

_ Individual: $25.00
_ Couple/Family: $45.00
_ Contributing: $100.00
_ Patron: $175.00
_ Benefactor: $300.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Return this with your check to:

Bedford Historical Society
2 Mudge Way
Bedford, MA 01730

Wish to pay by credit card?

Please visit our website at:
www.bedfordmahistory.org
Look for the PayPal "Donate" button on the bottom left of our page.

Officers
Donald Corey, President
Merri Lee Johnson, Vice President
Brown Pulliam, Secretary
Patricia Leiby, Treasurer

Board of Directors
Frank Gicca ('17) Chair
Bea Brown ('17)
Joan Gicca ('17)
Richard LeSchack ('18)
Sharon McDonald ('18)
Lea Ann Knight ('18)
Judie Toti ('19)
Atty. Paul Dick ('19)
Paul Purchia ('19)
Julie McCay Turner ('20)
Carol Amick ('20)
Lee Vorderer ('20)

Finance Committee
Frank Gicca, Board Chair
Donald Corey, President
Patricia Leiby, Treasurer (non-voting)
Jan van Steenwijk
Atty. Paul Dick
Brown Pulliam

WANTED
Bedford
Memorabilia

www.bedfordmahistory.org
Executive Administrator: Kara Kerwin
781-275-7276
info@bedfordmahistory.org

The Preservationist.
Design, production & photography: Jan van Steenwijk
Contributing writers ; Carol Amick, Don Corey, Kara Kerwin, Brian Oulighan & Sharon McDonald

The Preservationist
Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford, MA 01730-1238

US Postage Paid
Bedford, MA 01730
Non-Profit Org.
Permit No. 30

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

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

Bedford in World War I

This continues the Society's series of articles chronicling the 100th anniversary of that war.

The USS Nansemond with Officers and Crew in 1919

The McMahans were another Bedford family that saw multiple members off to the war. Martin Francis McMahan enlisted in the Navy and was assigned to the USS Philip, a Torpedo Boat Destroyer that engaged in convoy duty with troop transports to France until the end of the war. His brother, Philip Edward McMahan, also enlisted in the Navy. After being made Captain of a Gun Crew, he was transferred to the USS Seattle, also doing convoy duty to France. Their sister, Johanna Elizabeth McMahan, joined as a Red Cross Nurse. After joining the Red Cross, trained nurses were transferred into the Army Nurse Corps, where she served until discharged.

After the Armistice was signed, Martin became a crew member on the troop transport USS Nansemond (see photo) and made 5 more trips to France bringing troops home.

Don Corey