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

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Enjoy our Next Program

Sunday, October 22 - 2:00 PM

Congregational Church, 25 Great Road

A refreshment period from 2 - 2:30 will kick-off this event.

How has the dining experience changed over the years from back when Bedford was first being settled? How have our tastes changed and how did people ever manage to put a meal together before the arrival of modern appliances? The evolution and expansion of cooking capabilities over the years clearly enlarged our options. We'll look at some kitchen artifacts from the Society's own collection, and will test audience members' memories and their ability to identify a few of them.

Stories of Bedford's taverns, inns and restaurants will be recalled from the time when going out to dinner in Bedford first became possible up through the early 20th Century, from Pollard Tavern to the closing of the Bedford

House. In more modern times during the 20th Century, the restaurant business changed considerably due to a number of things that we'll consider. The new wave of Bedford restaurants that opened from the 1920s on provide even more stories. Photos and mementos of many of them from the Society's collection will be shown, and audience members will be encouraged to add their own memories of Bedford dining.

Honored as Bedford's 2002 Citizen of the Year, Don Corey is a former Bedford selectman and planning board member, and he currently serves on the Town's Historic Preservation Commission and Community Preservation Committee. He is active with the Friends of the Job Lane House as well as the Historical Society. In addition to his occasional appearances at Historical Society meetings, he has given talks on historical topics to various groups including Carleton-Willard Village and BrightView assisted living facilities and to Lane School students during their Walk of Historic Bedford in the spring.

Presidents Message

The beginning of the school year also signals a ramp-up in the Society's activities. Discovery kit boxes were again delivered to Lane School with a variety of historic home artifacts that may be hard to identify. They are helpful in getting the 3rd graders to think about and talk about Bedford's history.

The Society at its September meeting was very pleased to honor the Bedford High seniors who won a bronze medal at the National History Day competition last spring with their documentary about Zora Neale Hurston. Their advisor James Sunderland noted that the Society's recognition of Bedford High competitors over the last 10 years is much appreciated.

We are also delighted that we have been able to help in a small way two of Nashoba Learning Group's special needs students to progress, as described in the story on p.2.

Bedford Day was special, as always, with the Society's very large Bedford Flag in the parade and blacksmith Dean Rantz sharing the Society's booth, with an interesting demonstration of his craft.

Finally, it was a great pleasure to have First Parish in Bedford co-sponsor our September meeting, which focused on the 200th anniversary of the Second Meetinghouse. The meeting included a premier showing of Ron Cordes' documentary of the Meetinghouse's history. We are honored that First Parish chose to make a donation from its Celebration on October 1 to the Society, "who safeguard some of our artifacts". Such items include the lock plate from the front door of the First Meetinghouse and go back ages to a stone spear point left behind by a resident of this piece of the planet immediately after the last Ice Age.

Your support is appreciated to enable the Society to continue its service to the community.

Don Corey

Nashoba Learning Group Students Move Up

The Nashoba Learning Group is a private school in Bedford that was founded to provide a "different life trajectory" for severely impaired students with autism. In response to a request from the school to local organizations for opportunities to provide community involvement and meaningful work experience for their students, the Historical Society has had a pair of teenage students, Alexandra and Dario, working with job coaches and Society volunteers on projects every week for the past year. Work included recording search terms to index people, places and other items of interest contained in articles in many of the vintage scrapbooks in the Society's collection, so that people can now quickly and efficiently find such information that was previously hidden away in these treasured old books. The students also scanned photographs, labeled the scans for easy identification, and organized them into digital subject files.

They were also able to enter maps and plans in the Society's collection into the computer database. They also started digital files of Vital Records from the last half of the 19th Century in order to make that information more readily accessible.

At the end of September the Nashoba Learning Group advised us that our students had been hired to work at Wicked Cool for Kids, a STEAM program. Their new job will have them working collaboratively to package a variety of lessons for after school and other programming. As the school noted, "Working at BHS has been an incredible learning experience for them both, without which I don't think they would have been able to land paid positions."

The Society is pleased that this community outreach project was so successful, and we are looking forward to working with a new student, who will be starting in mid-October.

Don Corey

Readers Response

We received two separate replies in response to our query about the location of the Villa Malta Kennels.

Jo Champney remembered seeing the sign for the kennel in front of a white house set back from the road behind a circular driveway, just 2 or 3 houses past the town line on Concord Road in Billerica.

Diane Jenkins came in to visit and shared her recollections with our volunteer, Janet. Diane lived near the kennels when she was young. She recalled Trick or Treating at the Calvaresi home with her friends on Halloween. Before any of the children could have their treat, they had to meet all the dogs and new puppies (which was always a treat in itself!). Based on their descriptions, we have determined that the Calvaresi home was at 388 Concord Road.

Charles Hodgman, Early Bedford Photographer

From our Hodgman Photo Collection comes this rather somber image of a woman in black, standing among the graves stones in a cemetery. Although the notations on the back are vague, we believe this is a photo of Mrs. Mary Taylor Prescott, standing at the grave of her brother, John Taylor. The stone reads, "John Taylor, Died May 26, 1850." John is buried in Green Cemetery, in Carlisle.

Kara Kerwin

RUFUS PORTER Mural on the Move

Jonas Monroe was a successful merchant, who married Abigail Stearns, a daughter of Rev. Samuel Stearns, in 1831. His house was built at what is now 30 North Road in about that year, and he hired Rufus Porter, an important mural painter of the period, to decorate it with numerous wall murals. The home was an attractive private residence for many years, until it was acquired by a hotel/motel chain in the 1950s. At that time, the house became the Bedford Inn with fine dining, while the Bedford Motel was constructed at the rear of the property. Unfortunately the house was allowed to deteriorate, and despite Bedford's legal efforts to save it, it was demolished by the 1970s.

Several of the Rufus Porter murals were saved from the Jonas Monroe house. One was donated to the Historical Society, and it is displayed in the Town Hall Multipurpose Room on the wall near the elevator. A second mural was saved and stored in the barn at 1 The Great Road by the former owner of that property. Rick and Kaye Spofford inherited the mural when they acquired the property, and earlier efforts to donate the mural had been unsuccessful.

Now many years later the Historical Society has gladly accepted the Spofford's donation of the mural, which is an important historic remnant of the home and of the artist's work. During the last week of September it was moved by Facilities Department personnel from the Spofford's barn to the Town Hall Multipurpose Room, where the mural will be displayed on the wall opposite the other mural after the support structure is completed. Due to the considerable weight of the wall section on which the mural is painted, that support could not be designed until the mural was moved and could be examined.

The fragile move in 7 pictures

1- Stored from 1970s at the Spofford's barn
2-Carefully removing it for transportation
3- Protecting it in blankets and plywood
4- On the truck
5- A very slow ride to the Town Hall
6- Arriving at the Town Hall
7- The heavy historic mural in its new place

Story by: Don Corey

A rendering of what it eventually will look like when the mural is placed on the wall.

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

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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. Support your Heritage.

Bedford in World War I

Andrew Bierenbroodspot

Albert Bierenbroodspot

Continuing the Society's series of articles during this 100th anniversary of the United States entry into WWI, this month we remember the Bierenbroodspot ("Bieren")family. Both Andrew and Albert enlisted in the U.S. Army and were sent to Camp Devens for training. Excerpts of Andrew's service account follow.

"I sailed from New York for France July 5th and landed there July 10th. Was transferred to the 80th Division, 320th Infantry.

I was taken very sick with influenza. Got out of that all right, and then traveled five days in French box cars. Some suffering I can tell you. There was room for eight horses, and there were sixty soldiers in it, some wild ride.

One day a little later, about eighty of us fellows were lined up for mess, when an aeroplane went over, then it came back and dropped a bomb, result was - there were twenty men killed out of the eighty. I was one of the lucky ones that night believe me. I did not want anything to eat that night. Later I was out in a search party carrying the wounded off the battlefield. That was a terrible experience.

The first battle I was in was the Meuse Argonne. Went 'over the top' with 240 men, came back with 37. Another time I was lucky.

One night before we went into battle, we slept in an old barn, the night was deafening, with the roar of the big guns and aeroplanes was terrible. We were two days in German trenches before we went over the top.

I don't have to tell how happy we were the day the Armistice was signed."

Don Corey

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