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, February 25 - 2:00 PM

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
25 Great Road

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

Steve Wood to bring
Abe Lincoln Alive

February is the month we celebrate President Lincoln's birthday on Feb. 9th and President's Day on Feb. 19th, so it is appropriate that the Bedford Historical Society welcome Steve Wood in "A visit with Abraham Lincoln" on Sunday, Feb. 25 in Upper Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational.

The event will start with a social period at 2 pm. Following announcements from Society President Don Corey at 2:30, Mr. Wood will present his re-enactment.

His first-person historical interpretation of our 16th president will start with a description of Lincoln's early life. He will comment on Lincoln's campaign debates with Stephen Douglas, his run for the presidency, and the Civil War. He will conclude with a stirring reading of the Gettysburg Address.

This program is funded in part by a grant from the Bedford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

A graduate of the University of Maine, School of Forestry, Mr. Wood retired in 2003 after nearly 30 years as an Extension Educator in Forest Resources for the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service. Since 1995 he has been researching and presenting Living History programs as Abraham Lincoln, and has performed for historical societies and at schools, libraries and community events. He portrayed Lincoln as part of the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibit, "American Originals."

Mr. Wood is a member of the Association of Lincoln Presenters, the League for the Advancement of New England Storytelling and the NH Storytelling Alliance.

Carol Amick

Presidents Message

Progress

With the new year, additional progress has been made toward re-establishment of the town museum. The study funded by Town Meeting has been completed and was presented to the Board of Selectmen in January by the consultant. Old Town Hall was strongly recommended as the preferred site, and the costs associated with that option are significantly lower than those for the other sites that were considered. However, new accommodations for the Bedford TV studio, currently located in Old Town Hall, must first be dealt with. The Society looks forward to working with the Selectmen this year in moving forward to a satisfactory solution for all parties.

While progress is being made toward the museum, the Society is focused on strengthening its collections. Important donations continue to be made by friends of the Society, and the Board of Directors again voted an annual budget of up to $1,000 to acquire items of specific relevance to Bedford that are sometimes offered on Ebay and other internet sites.

We are also very pleased with the broad response to Society's year-end fund-raising appeal. The donations and new- and renewed-memberships are gratefully acknowledged in this newsletter. The Society is also a beneficiary of a bequest from the late Edward and Evelyn Stickney. They were very active members of the Society for years, and they became authorities on the many bells cast by Paul Revere. An initial distribution has recently been received from their trusts.

Don Corey

The Sun Never Sets on the Bedford Flag

The Bedford Flag posted by our troops in Afghanistan

Our beautiful flag, the Bedford Flag, is known far and wide beyond Bedford! In fact, you could say that the sun never sets on the Bedford Flag. Many people have seen replicas of it at Disney World and in the Hall of Flags in the Massachusetts State House. It's at West Point in Annapolis. It is framed in the ranger's hall at the Cathedral of the Pines in New Hampshire. Of course there's one in Washington, and Queen Elizabeth herself has one in a drawer somewhere in Windsor Castle. And the Bedford Flag is enjoyed by stamp collectors worldwide. During the 1976 Bicentennial, Norfolk Island (a British territory in the South Pacific) issued a series of stamps commemorating early American flags. First in the series was the Bedford Flag. The Society was given a set of the stamps.

Bedford folks often want their own, and buy small 10" flags, or large-flying-outdoor 3' flags at the Historical Society Archives office. These find new homes across the world. They also accompany people on their travels. Here are just a few of the many places the Bedford Flag has been:

Randy Messineo packed the flag when he was posted to Afghanistan during the fierce battles of 2011.

It's hung for 20 years in the tiny village of Abásfalva, Transylvania, where its story was recounted in Hungarian by Unitarian Universalist pilgrims from Bedford.

It was given in solidarity to the AME Mother Emmanuel Church in South Carolina after the horrific mass shooting.

Abby Hafer carried the flag to the Women's March on Washington in January 2017.

A full-sized flag went on a cruise around the Caribbean with Julie Phylis.

Bill and Pauk Brzeski flew it from atop Mt. Whitney, the tallest mountain in the contiguous US; Steve Gerlick flew it atop Mt. McKinley, North America's tallest mountain; and Peter Ingraham carried it to the peak of Mt. Blanc, highest mountain in the Alps.

Thomas Bojorcas with the Bedford Flag at the summit of Mount Fuji, Japan.

Thomas Bojorcas took it to the top of Mt Fuji in Japan. He also flew the flag on multiple combat missions in Syria and Afghanistan. It's been with him in Qatar and Kuwait. But his flag is not done yet! He tells me he will soon be traveling to Korea, Thailand, France, Germany, England, and Romania, and of course his flag will be in his duffle bag!

To top it all off, the Bedford Flag goes everywhere with the unknown man (glimpsed by Noreen O'Gara) who had it tattooed on his bicep!

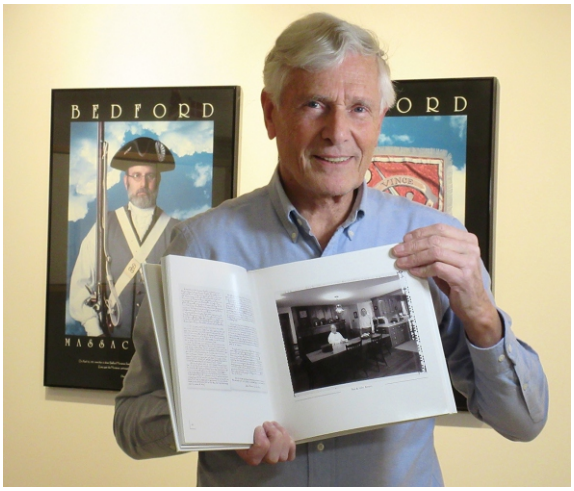
And where have YOU taken our ancient flag?

During the 1976 Bicentennial, the Bedford Flag was on a stamp commemorating early American flags.

Sharon McDonald,
Bedford Town Historian

Ordinary People

Jan van Steenwijk recently completed publication of "Ordinary People", a wonderful book containing two portfolios of Bedford citizens that Jan had created previously. Jan appreciated that much of what makes a town like Bedford thrive are its ordinary citizens who volunteer their time and energy, and he decided on this project to recognize those efforts. He first made a series of photographs of individuals in environments that helped to describe their volunteer work and asked them to hand-write whatever they would like others to know about them. He made a second series of photographs of couples taken in their own homes to illustrate how a small sample of citizens lived at a certain time and place – the opening of the 21st Century. A number of those "ordinary people" have since died – the Kimballs, Bob Slechta, John Brown, the Schwerins, Earl Dick, Elmer Bartels, Mimi Adler, John Dodge, Connie Donovan, Fred Hafer, Bob Michaud and others – but Jan's book helps to preserve their memory and their achievements.



The book titled:
"Ordinary People - Extraordinary Stories"

Publication of the book was facilitated by a grant from the Bedford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, and by additional funding from the Bedford Free Public Library and the Bedford Historical Society. Copies were presented to the Library and the Society, and a small number are available at cost from Jan.

Don Corey

Then & Now

Dog sleds on The Great Road? Impossible!
Not so long ago it really was possible. Before World War II and availability of heavy-duty plows, snow was often packed down on roads as in this photograph, taken next to the Town Common. The Society has several old photos of such scenes. A few years after this one was taken, a lead sled dog from Admiral Byrd's Second Antarctic Expedition, Jack the Giant Killer, lived out his retirement here in Bedford (go to the March 2015 Preservationist on our website for Jack's story).

As the Now photograph illustrates (taken in January 2018 with 36-38 The Great Road in the background), plows including the one in the photo now clear our roads and driveways right down to the pavement. Sled dogs are still raised around here, but they're pretty much limited to off-road travel nowadays.

"Who doesn't like to compare old sceneries and modern times? If you have any old views of Bedford, consider donating them for our archives."

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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.

THANK YOU!

The Bedford Historical Society appreciates your support

Donations

Dorothy Africa, Bob Bass, Susan Bennett, Bea Brown, Barbara Clifford, Angelo and Gabriele Colao, Phyllis Cooke, Donald L. Corey, William Deen, Joan DiClemente, Mervi Fantasia, Frank and Joan Gicca, Mary Hafer, David and Francine Hennessey, Cindy Howe, Carol and Steve Jamison, Gene Kalb and Linda Pollitz, Roy and Shirley Kring, Patricia Leiby, John and Marie Linz, Roger and Lyn Little, Donald Marshall, Meredith McCulloch, Maxwell Meyers, Patricia Pellegrini, Barbara Perry, Paul and Barbara Purchia, Eunice Puzzo, Cynthia Schweppe, James Shea, Katherine Shutkin, Betty Slechta, Kaye and Rick Spofford, Walter and Rosemary St. Onge, Jan & Barbara van Steenwijk, Emily Wade, Doris Webber, Linda Young

Renewals

Dorothy Africa & Guy Fedorkow, Allen Marshall & Anne Bickford, Reed Anthony, Nancy Asbedian, Brandon Avery, Bob Bass and Lee Vorderer, Ruth Beauchesne, Bedford Funeral Home, Bedford Motel, Laura & Edward Bensley, Kim Borshay, Timothy and Karen Kalil Brown, Judith and James S. Brunner, Marion and C. Ray Bryan, Carol and John Carlson, Carlton & Duran, CPAs PC, Paul and Wendy Ciaccia, Leon and Aline Cierpial, Janet Collins, John R. Comley III, Phyllis Cooke, Paul and Andrea Couvee, Bonnie and John Croteau, Joseph C. Damery, Richard Davidson, Jean Dirks, Melinda Dietrich, Mary Drake, H. Gary Echols, Jr., Jaci Edwards, Stephen and Elizabeth Ellen, Roberta Ennis, Jane Franklin, Allen Gevorkian, Joanne Glover, Lloyd and Ilsa Gottlieb, Carl and Signe Hanson, Paul Hill, Dana and Myle Holley III, Janet and Ellen Humphrey, Carol and Steve Jamison, Tom Kinzer, Jeannette Pothier & Rick Manley, Maggie Debbie and Vito LaMura, Meredith McCulloch, Christine McGovern & Tony Leonti, Maxwell Meyers, Peter Meyers, Mayada Najim, DDS, Vincent & Joanne Orlando, Bob & Debra Parkhurst, Zoe and Edward Pierce, Brown and Lois Pulliam, James & Adele Purvis, Maureen Reyling, Michele Rosen, Michael and Dawn Rosenberg, Dan & Gaye Carpenter Smythe, Ginni Spencer, Susan and Michael Wingfield, Sue and Ron Swanson, Cindy & Lawrence Walsh, Norma Warner, Wilma and Merri Lee Johnson, Leslie & Paul Wittman, Linda Young

With your support Bedford's past can be accessed in the future!