**Enjoy our Next Program**

**Tuesday, May 22 - 6:00PM**

Congregational Church, 25 Great Road

**6:00pm Refreshments, 6:45 Dinner, 7:30 Annual Meeting, 7:45 Guest Performance**

Interpretive performers Susanne Powers and Larry Young, better known as the Musical PASTimes, will sing and perform using several different instruments for the Bedford Historical Society's Annual Meeting and potluck supper.

Scheduled for Tuesday, May 22 in the Upper Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Christ, Congregational, the evening will bring to a close an exciting season of Society programs.

The event will start at 6 pm with a social period in which appetizers and Marion Bryon's famous punch will be served.

**Potluck Dinner**

For the potluck dinner, each Society family is asked to bring a main dish, salad, vegetable or dessert to feed about 8 people. Coffee, tea, and water will be provided by the Society. At about 7:30, after participants have gone through the buffet line to pick out their favorites among the bounty of salads, main dishes, vegetables and desserts that each family will bring to share – and are relaxing with a cup of coffee or tea -- the Annual Meeting to elect officers and directors will be held.

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**Martha Hill Sage - Volunteer Civil War Nurse**

Memorial Day is a time to honor those who give their lives in the service of their country, as well as to recognize all of those who served. This year we remember one who served without compensation in tending sick and wounded Union soldiers.

Samuel Sage enlisted with a number of other Bedford men in July 1864 in Company D, 6th MA Infantry Regiment. The regiment was transferred to Washington DC in late July, by which time “camp fever” struck a number of soldiers. Transmission of communicable diseases among large groups before vaccinations were developed was a major problem for centuries. Other men were able to return to duty, but Private Sage was very ill, and the regiment surgeons gave consent for his wife Martha Sage to come to the hospital.

Martha's account is summarized in her letter to Abram English Brown, which is included in his History of Bedford. The following segments provide a little understanding of her experience.

“My little daughter Mary, seventeen months old, that had never been away from me, was taken over to grandmother Sage's, to be under 'Auntie Sage's' care... I had left my little Mary, who, I knew, would miss her mother; and I knew not if I were to meet the living or the dead...” Upon reaching the hospital, “I resolved to look in each bed in order till I found the face I wanted. In the first bed I saw the thin pale face of a sick boy... I could not leave this poor lad without a word.”

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Carol Amick
A most interesting artifact found in the archives of the Bedford Historical Society is an eighteenth-century pamphlet concerning the abolition of slavery, printed in 1776 and dedicated to the Continental Congress! Considering that race relations remain a contentious issue in the twenty-first century, this artifact is still quite relevant today. This valuable item provides insight into the thoughts of some people in the United States at the time that the Declaration of Independence was written. Although slavery was considered by many to be an important institution during that time, this artifact reveals that some people very early in our nation's history wanted to end it on moral grounds.

The pamphlet was printed by Judah P. Spooner (1747-1807) in Norwich, Vermont. Spooner claims to have been a patriot at Bunker Hill and published Vermont's first newspaper. Unfortunately, the only historical record found about him was his arrest under the Sedition Act of 1798 for writing that President Adams was “old, querulous, bald, blind, crippled, [and] toothless.” This happened soon after he published a letter by Vermont Representative Matthew Lyon that said under President Adams “every consideration of the public welfare” was “swallowed up in a continual grasp for power, in an unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation, and selfish avarice.” Both men were arrested, but only Lyon was convicted.

The main argument of the document is that African slaves must be freed, and the Atlantic slave trade ended in good conscience if the patriots were fighting for liberty and the idea that all men are created equal. One of the first arguments which the pamphlet states in the opening paragraph is religious/moral: the patriots, by upholding the terrible institution of slavery, are violating God's law.

This pamphlet is a great find since most people believe the abolitionist movement did not really gain traction in the United States until the 1830s. In fact, the issue of slave emancipation had been already broached in 1777 by Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, which promised freedom to African American slaves who escaped their owners and then fought for the British. Lord Dunmore was the Royal Governor of Virginia in 1775. In fact, the British did try to keep their promises of freedom after the war, and this is documented in the Book of Negroes from 1783.

The pamphlet is in good condition, considering its age. The paper has faded to a tan color, and there are some water spots, but it is readable—important because it is a primary source for historical research, and its condition allows it to be read. In all, the pamphlet is a fascinating artifact that has been archived by BHS that retains relevance today.
Readers Respond - Planet Herschel  
Submitted by: Tom Kinzer  

The article in last month's newsletter about our 1845 Farmer's Almanac noted that its list of known planets at the time included Herschel, named for the astronomer who predicted its existence. Our parenthetical note – the planet “now known as Neptune” - has been corrected by a member of the Society, Tom Kinzer, whose knowledge on such matters is greatly appreciated.

William Herschel discovered the planet named for him in 1781, near the end of the Revolutionary War. Later astronomers studying fluctuations in its orbit suspected that there was another very large object somewhere near it in space. Several predicted the location of that object in the sky, and in 1846 a search of the sky in that area by a German observatory with a powerful telescope quickly confirmed the presence of another planet. That planet, not discovered until the year after publication of our Farmer's Almanac, is the one now known as Neptune.

It wasn't until 1850 when planet Herschel was officially renamed Uranus.

Martha Sage, continued fr. pg 1

The wretchedness of the whole thing flashed before me.” A following entry, “unprepared to find Samuel so much depressed. His first words were, 'Sorry you came, you can't do me any good, nobody can, nothing can'.”

Several days after her arrival, the 6th Regiment was ordered to Fort Delaware, and Samuel Sage and other hospitalized soldiers were transferred to Armory Square Hospital in Washington. Martha Sage's letter continues, “This hospital is always full of the worst cases, because it is nearest the boat landing... more than half in this room have lost a limb, quite a number more than one, and I cannot bear to hear the groans when they are dressed.”

Martha Sage stayed and worked at the hospital for the next several months. “Each morning the doctor writes against each patient's name the food for each meal ... and the waiters bring the specified food, hot and appetizing, to each man's cot. Better baked beans and Indian pudding I never tasted.” Later, “Mrs. Hawley, the lady nurse, left some time ago for her vacation. I am the only woman in this ward, here most of the time till 6 P.M. I find many who are glad to have me read, write, or talk with them; occasionally I try to play games with some of the younger ones.”

When Samuel Sage's enlistment was almost up, his doctor reluctantly sent him to meet his regiment at Fort Delaware, and Martha returned home. When the rest of the Bedford men from the regiment returned home together, he was not among them and no one had seen him. Only later did he arrive home on the doorstep, exhausted from the travel and his illness.

Don Corey

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THANK YOU!

Renewals  
Stanley Wenworth, Luisa Grannito & Wendell Smith, Bill Kelleher, Kimberly Sweet.

New Members  
Darrin Clouse

Donations  
Darrin Clouse

With your support Bedford’s past can be accessed in the future!
The Wright farm barn on the north side of Page Road at the Bedford-Lexington town line is visible in both of these photos.

“Headin’ Home” May 1989 - This Bedford Minuteman photo shows what was a daily routine for decades late in the 20th Century. After grazing in the pasture at the Wright farm on the Bedford-Lexington town line, the horses were brought back to the Corey's stable on Page Road each afternoon to be fed their grain and to be kept overnight and during bad weather.

May 2018 – The 21st Century has brought change, as shown in this photo taken several weeks ago during the same time of day. Commuters with smart phones and GPS devices guiding them to Page Road now create a steady stream of traffic during afternoon rush hours. Pedestrians and cyclists on the road at that time of day require extra caution, and walking horses back home then would no longer be possible.

Don Corey