Enjoy our Next Program

Sunday, November 11
Great Room, OLD TOWN HALL
16 South Road - 3:30 pm →
Veterans Day talk to tell of Afghanistan Mission

Refreshments will be available from 3:30 followed by a 4 pm talk by GINA RADA

One of the few female Veterans Agents in Massachusetts, who fills in for Bedford's part-time Veterans Agent, will be the Bedford Historical Society's guest speaker at a special Veterans Day program on Sunday, Nov. 11. Gina Rada is District Director of

Gina Rada received an Army Commendation Medal for her Afghanistan service from her Commander, USAF Lt. Col. Gordon Phillips

Veterans Services for Lexington and Bedford. She will describe her experiences in Afghanistan from 2007-2008 as a member of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which are humanitarian missions run by military troops and civilians.

Before going to Afghanistan, Ms. Rada served in the U.S. Air Force for six years as an Aerospace Medical Service Technician at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi and Hanscom in Bedford. In Afghanistan, she worked as part of a medical team accompanying U.S. Army Civil Affairs personnel into neighboring villages in Nangarhar Province near Jalalabad City to meet with the village elders, identify their needs, and devise strategies on how the military might assist. The medics set up satellite clinics in the villages and provided the locals with basic medical care and dispensed medicines.

For her service, Ms. Rada received an Army Commendation Medal for “outstanding meritorious service and commitment to excellence while deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.” She retired from the Air Force in 2008.

Carol Amick

Holiday Party on Dec. 16
Always a Fun Social Event

18 Crescent Avenue, from 3 pm to ....?

Historical Society members Carol Amick and Bill Moonan are this year's hosts for the Society's annual Holiday Party on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 16.

All of the first-floor rooms in their Victorian farmhouse home at 18 Crescent Avenue, Bedford will be decorated for the holidays, and the fireplaces will be roaring to complement the warmth and cheer of the guests' holiday spirits.

Each family is asked to bring an appetizer to share.

Soft drinks, coffee and punch will be provided by the Society. Former Society President Marion Bryan will make her “nice” punch and the hosts will supply the “naughty” punch.

Back by popular demand, Bill Moonan will host the guessing game, “Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me It's Bedford History” and encourage Society members to identify which one of three short stories about Bedford history -- that he researches and writes -- is historically-accurate. Prizes will be awarded.

This event, which in past years has drawn up to 65 guests, will start at 3 pm on Dec. 16 and end at 6 pm “or whenever it wraps up,” says Carol Amick.

The Ice Industry in the 19th Century
By Mary Drake

As we casually fill our glass with ice from the refrigerator ice dispenser or buy a bag of ice from the store, we don't realize how much different it was for everyone in the early 1800's. Keeping food fresh was difficult and a real issue for everyone. As the saying goes “necessity is the mother of invention”, so the New England farmers of the day discovered how to harvest ice from local ponds and rivers and deliver it to the townsfolk, and in at least one case, turn it into a very lucrative business.

Farmers with access to a horse and sawdust, fashioned tools similar to a farmer's plow that would score the ice in parallel lines and then at right angles. It could then be separated using long-handled chisels and stored in an ice house for later use using sawdust and sometimes hay or straw as an insulator.

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Carol Amick
The main application of the ice was the storage of fresh food and especially keeping butter and milk fresh. We have been able to document two ice houses in Bedford; one on the Pickman estate off Dudley Road, most likely taking ice from the Concord River and there was also one on the Mill Pond at the end of Wilson Road. Apparently, there were also three on Dudley Road in Billerica, belonging to the Greenwood family, also using the Concord River.

Hiram Young owned the Bedford Ice Company on Main Street, delivering ice to residents. An invoice dated September, 1914 shows Louis Pfeiffer being billed $3.03 for 865 pounds of ice. A card placed in the window meant that ice was needed, and the position of the square card told the size. Heavy tongs were used to bring in the ice and an ice pick was used to fit the ice into the ice box. In his book about Bedford in the 1900’s, *An Awesome Century*, Williston Farrington mentions following the ice cart, grasping splinters of ice as the block was cut to size.

In March of 1918 an auction was held as Hiram Young moved from delivering ice by horse and wagon to using motor trucks. Several horses along with harnesses and wagons were auctioned off.

Frederic Tudor, through trial and error, eventually became known as the Ice King. He found a way to harvest large quantities of ice, from January through March, mainly from Fresh Pond and Spot Pond and in 1847, nearly 62,000 tons of ice was shipped out of Boston to twenty-eight different cities and towns. He became partners with William Rogers and outfitted a ship called The Tuscany, to hold roughly 180 tons of ice and sailed to Calcutta, India. He calculated that the ice would melt at a rate of fifty pounds an hour over the four-month voyage and that 120 tons should remain when the ship docked in Calcutta.

When Frederic Tudor came to Walden Pond to harvest ice, David Thoreau was living in his cabin and wrote “…..there came a hundred men of Hyperborean extraction, swoop down on to our pond one morning, with many carloads of ungainly looking farming tools, sleds, ploughs, drill-barrows, turf-knives, spades, saws, rakes and each man was armed with a double-pointed pike staff such as is not described in the New England Farmer of Cultivator…..” Frederic's story is told in *The Frozen Water Trade* written by Gavin Weightman.

For a time, Queen Victoria enjoyed a supply of ice from Massachusetts. It was delivered by an American enterprise called the Wenham Lake Ice Company, which in the 1840s had an ice store and a shop in London with a window onto the Strand, in which a large cube of crystal-clear ice about two feet square was displayed every day in the summer, dazzling people walking by.

The 1897 Sears Roebuck Catalogue offered ten refrigerators with ice compartments, ranging in price from $8.00 for a small chest to $61.00 for one with elaborate double doors.

It wasn't until the development of small electric motors after the First World War, that a refined version of the electric refrigerator was eventually produced by the American company General Electric. In 1926, two thousand were sold. By 1931 there were a million models of various designs made, and in 1937, nearly three million were sold. Just as Frederic Tudor's endeavors had made the United States the first nation in history to regard refrigeration as a necessity of life, America would also lead the way in the ownership of domestic coolers, as the gleaming new piece of kitchen equipment replaced the messy and inconvenient delivery of the summer ice to which Americans had been long accustomed. Over the next several years the natural ice business faded and came to an end, and our entrepreneurial ancestors moved on to the next challenge.
Processing the Yates Postcard Collection

We are pleased to announce that Ashley Barrington has joined us as an intern from the Simmons University Master of Library and Information Science program for the fall semester. Ashley is interested in working with historic documents and is training to become an archivist. She is currently processing the Yates Postcard Collection, donated by our long-time member, Alethea “Lee” Yates. The collection includes more than 270 images of Bedford landmarks, businesses, schools, notable citizens, churches, homes, and landscapes. The cards range from 1900 to the 1960's and were featured in Lee Yates's book “Postcard History Series: Bedford” published in 2013; copies are available for sale at the Bedford Historical Society.

Ashley is carefully placing each postcard in a protective sleeve and will be creating a finding aid that describes the collection so that they can be easily accessed by staff and researchers. The cards will also be added to our collections management software, PastPerfect, and will be soon available for viewing on our website at www.bedfordmahistory.pastperfectonline.com.

Thank You!

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Donations (Monetary donations)

Gary Feldman
Carolyn Bottum
Katherine Graff
Evelyn Stickney Trust
Angelo Colao

With your support Bedford’s past can be accessed in the future!
One of the Myriad of Artifacts the Society housed in its Archives that we can Display in our Future Museum

Among the many artifacts to be displayed in the future town museum, the Society's prehistory collection includes a number of ancient spear points and stone tools that were found here in Bedford and donated to the Society. It includes a very rare spear point found on the bank of the Concord River, which has been authenticated as a Paleo-Indian “Clovis” or “Folsom” point left here 9,000 to 12,000 years ago, shortly after the last Ice Age.

Spear points left behind by hunters have been found throughout town in both the Concord and Shawsheen watersheds and dating to various Archaic and Woodland cultural periods back to the Paleo-Indian era. Native American stone tools that would have been used in a village and date to the Late Archaic period up to 6,000 years ago are also important artifacts in the collection.

Don Corey

Rare Paleo-Indian spear point

You discover “it” in your attic; you find “it” in the back of that drawer; or when planting a new tree in your backyard, you find a piece of an old tool or maybe a thousand year old spear point. Give the Society a chance to look at it. Maybe someday you will see it on display in the future Bedford Museum identified as “Donated by....”