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

March 2019 *Published for everyone interested in our history* Volume 129, Number 2

Enjoy our Next Program

Sunday, March 24, 2019
Congregational Church

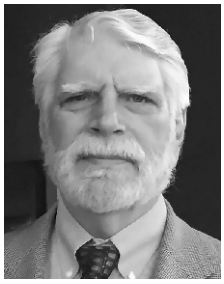
→ 25 Great Road - 2:00 pm ←

Refreshments from 2:00 followed by a 2:30pm talk by John Morrison

Survival: Boston 1630

In the summer of 1630, a thousand people with dwindling supplies of food and medicine stepped off their boats into the wilderness. These early Massachusetts settlers lived in caves or wigwams or tents; food began to run out. In winter, Boston Harbor froze solid for two months.

Almost half of the original Puritans died or fled back to England during these early, dangerous years, when the only occupants of the area that became Bedford would have been native Americans. How the early English settlers survived in the place that became the City of Boston will be the subject of an illustrated talk by John Morrison, Trustee and Treasurer of the Partnership of Historic Bostons (PHB).



Mr. Morrison, an Arlington resident, grew up in an 1810 house in Waltham, watching and helping his parents restore it. Over the last decade, he has continued his exploration of architecture and history. He researches original sources and has written two tours for PHB; he currently is working on his third. In addition to writing and giving walking tours for PHB, he has lectured on New England history for Boston by Foot and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. He is also a Civil War re-enactor.

Carol Amick

Mass Cultural Council

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

Museum Funding Article - Annual Town Meeting

Annual Town Meeting commences on Monday evening, March 25, 2019, in the High School Auditorium. One article proposes use of Community Preservation funds for Old Town Hall renovation and restoration projects, including rehabilitation of the ground floor for a museum. **Registered voters are urged to come to Town Meeting to support passage of this important article.**

Many residents are unaware that the town had a museum in the Stearns Memorial Building (now Police Station) for many years. Construction of the building was funded almost entirely with generous donations made by residents over decades to the Bedford Free Public Library. While the building was under construction, additional needed donations were made by the Pickman family in order to complete its construction. Town Meeting unanimously accepted the donations, subject to a permanent "assembly room" being provided for the Historical Society there. The Society moved into the building in 1951 upon completion of construction, and its space became the Pickman Memorial museum.

The museum was closed in 1996 to accommodate conversion of the building to the Police Station. The Society's permanent "assembly room" was redefined as an office there, now packed with documents and artifacts donated to the Society over the past century. The Police need the space occupied by the Society.

Efforts have been ongoing ever since to find an alternate museum location for display of the documents and artifacts from Bedford's rich historic and cultural past. ***The efforts became encouraging when the Selectmen formed a study committee and then brought this issue back before the community.*** *Residents at Town Meeting voted funds for a study of potential locations, and the resulting consultant report recommended re-establishment of the museum at Old Town Hall. This current funding request moves us closer to realization of the Society's goal to re-establish a town museum.*

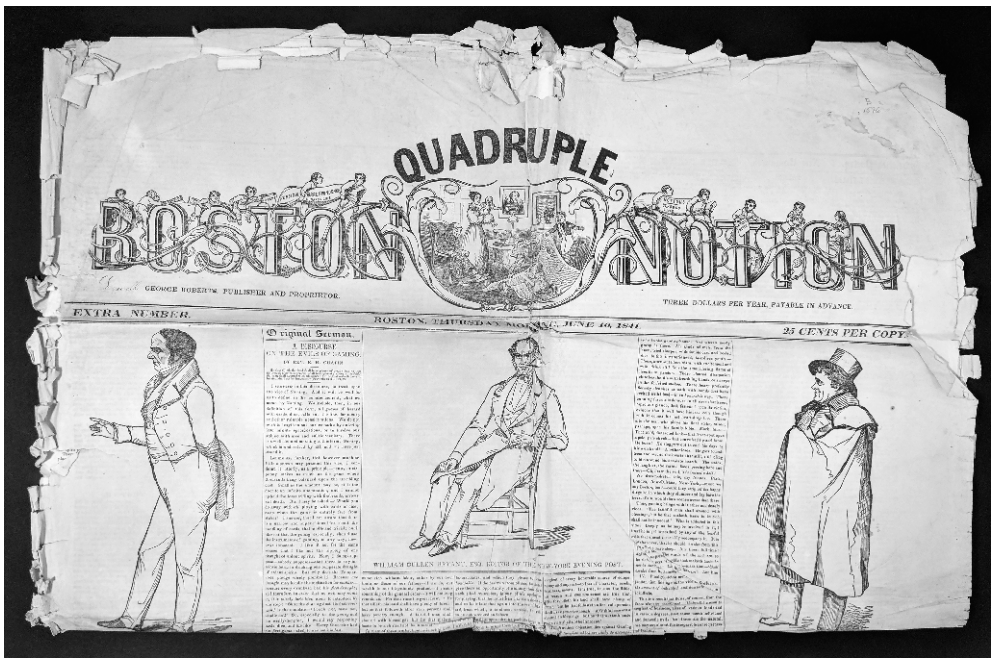
Don Corey

What's in Bedford's Attic: June 1841 Newspaper By Matthew Leece

The Bedford Historical Society has many wonderful items in its archives, but an old newspaper really stands out. The reason? It is dated June 10, 1841, perhaps a rather ordinary day in history, but a newspaper can often reveal important things about a time and place. Like newspapers today, this specimen included stories about foreign relations and humanitarian crises at home and abroad. Many old newspapers have been scanned into databases and are still of use, but this is an actual printed relic of a bygone era. Although it is not complete, with only pages 1, 2, 15, and 16, even so it should be appealing to antiquarians and historians alike. The newspaper, published by George Roberts, is called the *Boston Quadruple Notion* and cost 25 cents a copy at the time. That is equivalent to $6.75 or about the cost of the Sunday *New York Times*.

The newspaper's front page is covered with artwork. The man on the left is Daniel Webster, who was Secretary of State at the time. While he was a famous orator, most people now would know him as a character from the short story "The Devil and Daniel Webster" taught in schools. The second man is William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the *New York Evening Post* and famous poet and well-known friend of Transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau. The third figure is Daniel O'Connell, known as the "Liberator" or "Emancipator" of Ireland because of his work on behalf of Irish Catholics as a member of the British Parliament.

As interesting as each man is to a historian, the modern reader must remember these were the celebrities of their time instead of the athletes and movie stars of today. The three men were picked due to their relation to the contents of the paper. At that time Daniel Webster was negotiating an end to the "Aroostook War" over the boundaries between the United States and Canada. On the back page of the newspaper, a series of letters between Daniel Webster and the British Envoy, Henry S. Fox, appear. Each side sets forth its positions on the matter in a column called "Public Documents." William Cullen Bryant appears due to the short stories and poetry reprinted on the front page of this edition. Dan O'Connell is included because this is some of the first reporting on the "Irish in Ireland," and the article describes a funeral related to the potato famine.



The front page also features a reprinting of a preacher's sermon on the "Evils of Gaming" (gambling). The preacher is noteworthy in that he, E.H. Chapin, also had a national following as an editor, writer, and poet. Many of the arguments made by Chapin against gambling are familiar to us today, such as likening it to drinking alcohol and calling it a disease. Since these days one can find gambling almost everywhere one turns, with state lotteries and casinos generating revenue for many states, this look back to the past is thought-provoking. What would the people of the 1840s think of state-sponsored gaming?

"What's in Bedford's Attic?' highlights some of the fascinating artifacts held in the archives of the Bedford Historical Society, kept on behalf of the town of Bedford. What's in your attic? Visit us at 2 Mudge Way, Bedford, MA or call 781-275-7276.

Spring Intern Processes Bedford Minuteman Photos

The Society is delighted to host Catherine Miller as an archival intern this spring. Catherine is processing a group of photos from the Bedford Minuteman newspaper with guidance from our Executive Director, Kathleen Fahey. The collection includes about 250 photos of everyday life in Bedford including town events, school activities, and local club meetings from the 1970s-1990s. The collection will be placed in archival sleeves, housed in acid-free boxes, and arranged by subject so that they may be easily accessed by staff and researchers. Catherine is a student at Simmons University and is working towards a Master of Library and Information Science with a concentration in archival studies.

Director's Corner

Kathleen Fahey, Executive Director

As winter ends, the Society wraps up its annual appeal and I'd like to thank all of you for your generous support. Your membership and annual appeal donations help the Society to preserve our historical collections, provide educational materials to local schools, answer research inquiries, and host an amazing lecture series. Thank you!

Have you noticed some recent updates at the Society? We revamped our website, are posting regularly to Facebook, and are sending out several emails per month. We'd love to hear from you, so please check out our website at www.bedfordmahistory.org and connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BedfordMaHistory. If we don't already have your email, please send it along to info@bedfordmahistory.org so you don't miss another fun "History Mystery," "Today in History," or event reminder.

The Ice Industry - readers response

Our November 2018 newsletter contained an article by Mary Drake about the Ice Industry in Bedford. That prompted Brian Oulighan to send the following newspaper clipping, showing one of the hazards of the business.

"CONCORD ENTERPRISE – Wed., March 12, 1913
J. H. Brown Had An Icy Bath While Cutting Ice. J.H. Brown, Springs Road *[Bedford]* while cutting ice in his pond one day last week, had a narrow escape from drowning – He stepped on a loose piece of ice and touched bottom in seven feet of water. Eddie Temple, who was with him at the time, with great presence of mind, rushed to the spot where he had last seen Mr. Brown and when he arose to the surface, grabbed him by the coat collar and dragged him to safety. Mr. Brown is a Civil War veteran and the spryest man of his age in this town. He states that he suffered nothing from his involuntary bath in the icy waters."

John Henry Brown (1844-1918) served as a private in the 6th Reg., Co. D, Mass. Vol. Infantry during the Civil War.

February 2019 Donations

Dorothy Africa & Guy Fedorkow, Julie Braschler
Bob Browne, Joseph C. Damery, Clive Grainger
Maxwell Meyers, David & Virginia Packer, Katherine Shutkin
John Stewart, Norm & Judie Toti

Donations & Renewals - THANK YOU!

February 2019 Memberships

Dorothy Africa & Guy Fedorkow, Reed and Barbara Anthony
Bedford Funeral Home, Kim Borshay, Michael Cashman
Barbara Claflin, Paul and Andrea Couvee, Joseph C. Damery
Melinda Dietrich, Arthur & Marietta Ellis
Fowler, Robert O. & Paula, Terry Gleason, Joanne Glover
Lloyd & Ilsa Gottlieb, Jennifer Griffin, Carol Grof
Tom Kinzer, Ned & Susan Leeming, Donna Little
Christine McGovern & Anthony Leonti, Merri Lee Johnson
Maxwell Meyers, David & Virginia Packer
Zoe and Edward Pierce, Jeannette Pothier & Rick Manley
Vernon Rivet, Jr., Michael & Dawn Rosenberg
Fay Russo, Deborah & Ronald Smith, Doris Smith,
Ginni Spencer, John & Lucia Stewart, Norm & Judie Toti
Stanley Wentworth

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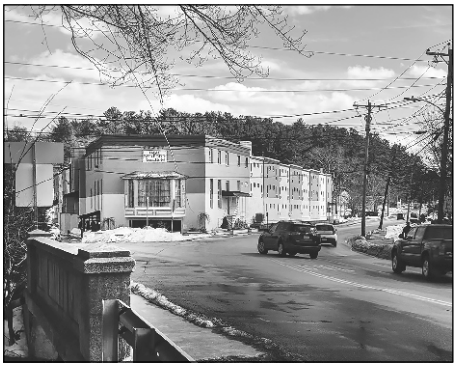
"We Don't Make History...
We Keep It Alive..!"

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

Then & Now

The photo on the left shows Polly's Restaurant, a popular Bedford eating spot dating back to the 1920s. It was on Great Road by the Shawsheen Avenue intersection. The landmark airplane on the roof took a final flight during the Hurricane of 1938, landing on the opposite side of Great Road near the Shawsheen River. A new plane was later purchased and placed atop the building. After Polly's closed, the building became the Lobster Pool restaurant until the 1960s.



In the mid-1960s the building was demolished and replaced with the Arrowhead Motor Inn. Under changing ownership since then, it has been the Lord Bedford Motor Inn, Best Western Motel and other names at various times. It is currently the Bedford Plaza Motel.

Don Corey

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...."

Thinking of moving on or downsizing?

Call Suzanne for a FREE market analysis of your home

SELLING YOUR FAMILY HOME IS NEVER EASY!

Let me HELP make the transition go smoothly & get you the best VALUE for your home

Help Wanted!

Bedford's Historic District Commission (HDC) currently has several vacancies. The HDC is responsible for oversight, including design review, of any proposed changes to properties within the Local Old Bedford Center Historic District. More information is available on the town website. The Commission would welcome inquiries from individuals that might be interested in serving. Please call or email the Society's office if interested and your contact information will be forwarded.