Museum Funding Approved at Annual Town Meeting

We are pleased to report that voters at Annual Town Meeting in March approved appropriation of Community Preservation funds for several restoration projects at Old Town Hall. The article that passed includes $165,000 for renovation of the ground floor for re-establishment of the town's museum and $120,000 to preserve the Great Room on the top floor as an attractive space for both public and private functions. The support of this article is greatly appreciated.

The Society anticipates moving forward to the next step very soon, which is to work out terms of an agreement with the town for operation of the museum by the Society. The ground floor is presently occupied by a commercial tenant, but significant progress has now been made on this project.

When the space becomes available, we anticipate that the office, archives and research area will occupy the space where people enter that floor from the building entrance. The remainder of the floor will be laid out as display spaces that people can circulate through and enjoy at their own pace. A tentative floor plan is shown below.

Don Corey

Enjoy our Next Program - Sunday, April 28, 2019 - Old Town Hall - 16 South Road

Irish Need Not Reply

The History of the Irish in Boston

Early discrimination against Irish immigrants is to be the subject of the Society's April 28th program. Author, lecturer and history teacher Chris Daley will make a return visit to Bedford as the Historical Society's guest speaker with another thought-provoking topic: “Irish Need Not Apply: The History of the Irish in Boston.”

Mr. Daley, who has delighted Society audiences in recent years with fascinating talks on the Lizzie Borden case and President Lincoln's assassination, will examine many facets of the early Irish experience in Boston.

Society members and the public are urged to bring their friends – especially those that are Irish!

Mr. Daley will address the scant evidence about Irish brought over unwillingly as indentured servants in the late 17th Century; the arrival of the first Scotch-Irish or “Ulster Irish” in 1718; the increase in anti-Irish/Catholic sentiment in Boston; the burning of Charlestown's Ursuline Convent in 1834; and the Broad Street Riot of 1837. He will describe the massive wave of immigration into Boston after the Great Potato Famine with respect to the condition of the new Irish arrivals, the neighborhoods they settled, how they banded together, the work they did to survive, and their eventual assimilation into American culture.

His presentation will include short vignettes on Irish political leaders who rose up within the sphere of Boston politics, including Patrick Collins, Hugh O'Brien, Patrick J. Kennedy, John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, and the "Rascal King" himself, James Michael Curley.

Chris Daley is a history teacher in the Silver Lake Regional School System in Kingston. He has served as Chair of the Pembroke Historical Commission and President of the Pembroke Historical Society. He has turned one of his talks, entitled “Mass Murder: Massachusetts' Most Infamous Murders,” into a book called Murder & Mayhem in Boston – Historic Crimes in the Hub.

Carol Amick

“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.”
The Bells of Paul Revere

The Historical Society recently received the final installments in generous bequests from the Estates of Edward and Evelyn Stickney. The Stickneys were long-time members of the Society and were very active in it during their lifetimes. We are very grateful to those like the Stickneys who include the Society in their estate planning to support its mission of preserving the cultural and historic resources of Bedford for future generations.

A long-time hobby of the Stickneys was documentation of Paul Revere's work as a bell maker. They published a pamphlet titled “Revere Bells” originally in 1956 and revised it at least 3 times as new information was discovered. The following is taken from the 1976 version of their work.

“Our hobby of many years was launched by the chance remark of the minister of a little New England meetinghouse we were photographing. Very proudly he asked if we knew of the Revere bell in the steeple. Our reaction at that time we have since learned is typical. We knew of Revere's famous ride, we knew he was a silversmith and an engraver of note, but BELLS? The fact that this aspect of Revere's life was so little known intrigued us, and in the intervening years we have traveled thousands of miles, climbed hundreds of steeples … while searching for bells bearing the Revere name.

Paul Revere was a master craftsman who realized great satisfaction in doing to perfection everything he undertook. The bells cast in the Revere foundries have become priceless relics, and the fact that many are still in use today is a credit to the pride in their workmanship of the men of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Paul Revere's bell-making career was launched to a certain extent by chance. In 1792 the bell in the Second Church in Boston was cracked. At a meeting of church members including Revere it was decided to have the bell recast. In a gesture quite typical of his personality, Paul Revere offered to cast the bell even though he knew nothing about bell casting. When the FIRST CHURCH BELL CAST IN BOSTON 1792 BY P. REVERE [inscription] came from the foundry its tone was harsh, but Boston had produced its first bell and Boston was proud of it. It still rests in the auditorium of St. James Episcopal Church in North Cambridge, Mass.

What is considered by many to be the Revere masterpiece – one of the largest and finest cast – hangs in historic King's Chapel in Boston. Its 2437 pounds resound daily with … a sound so individual it can be easily recognized by Bostonians even from a great distance.

We should emphasize the definition of a Revere bell – an original casting from the Revere foundry bearing the Revere name. To date we have located 134 bells inscribed with the Revere name, most of them in New England and most of them still in use.”

The Stickneys determined that the 2nd bell cast is the oldest Revere bell in constant use. It is located in the Congregational Church, Groveland, MA. The 3rd bell, in the People's Baptist Church, Boston, has the oldest black congregation in New England.

The extraordinary work that went into the documentation of Revere bells by the Stickneys is remarkable. The Historical Society has copies of three updated versions of the pamphlet if anyone would like to obtain information on their work.
**USS Concord - Pride of the Fleet**

Patriots Day celebrates the Fight at the Old North Bridge in Concord as the opening battle of the Revolutionary War. In subsequent years Concord’s importance has been recognized many times in many ways, including by the U.S. Navy.

The battleship Maine blew up and sank in Havana Harbor in 1898, triggering the Spanish-American War. A pamphlet that was issued at the time contained photos of “the greatest and most noted ships of our Navy”. A copy was loaned to the Historical Society for this article.

Among the photos is the Gunboat, **USS Concord**, launched in 1891. The Navy no longer had “wooden ships and iron men”, but the days of sail were clearly not quite over. Coal to feed the boilers in smaller ships like this was quickly depleted on long voyages, so sail was still often needed when underway.

The photos of 15 Cruisers in the fleet include the **USS Boston**, launched in 1887. It also had masts so that it could be under sail at sea. It was a far cry from the modern guided missile cruisers in today’s Navy.

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**Support the Society at Stop & Shop**

We are excited to announce that the Bedford Historical Society is participating in the Stop & Shop Community Bag Program. For the entire month of May each time a reusable Community Bag is purchased at the Stop & Shop located at 337 Great Road, Bedford MA, $1 will be donated to the Bedford Historical Society. Thank you for your support!

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**Director’s Corner**

Are you overwhelmed with your family collection of photographs? Not sure how to take care of them? Join me for a free lecture on “Taking Care of Your Family Photos” at the Bedford Council on Aging at 1:00 on Monday, April 29th. Bring along some family photos and I’ll be happy to answer any questions you have!

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**THANK YOU for Your Continued Support!**

**Donations**  
Bernard Fuller  
Maureen & Robert Reyling  
Ann Seamans  
Frans van Berkhout

**Bequest**  
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The Preservationist
Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
2 Mudge Way
Bedford, MA 01730-1238

“We Don’t Make History...
We Keep It Alive!!"

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....”

Finally, the USS Massachusetts was one of five battleships photographed, which were apparently those remaining in the fleet after the USS Maine was sunk. Launched in the 1890s, this ship served in the Spanish-American War and probably in World War I. The USS Massachusetts that served in World War II and is berthed in Fall River was a newer ship that replaced this one.

The Spanish Navy was no match for this United States fleet, which contributed to the rapid conclusion of that war.

Don Corey

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.