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

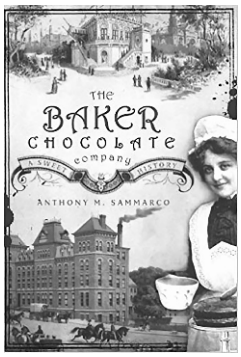
February, 2020 *Published for everyone interested in our history* Volume 130, Number 1


## *Enjoy our Next Program*

***Sunday, Feb. 23, 2020***
***2:00 p.m at Congregational Church***
25 Great Road, Bedford

***"The Baker Chocolate Company: A Sweet History"***

In 1765, Dr. James Baker of Dorchester stumbled upon Irishman John Hannon crying on the banks of the mighty Neponset River. Hannon, though penniless, possessed the rare skills




required to create chocolate, a delicacy exclusive to Europe, and Baker, with pockets bursting, wished to make a name for himself. Using a mill powered by the same river upon which they met, the duo built America's oldest and most beloved manufacturer of this rich treat. Local historian Anthony Sammarco details the delicious saga of Massachusetts's Baker Chocolate Company, from Hannon's mysterious disappearance and the famed La Belle Chocolatiere advertising campaign to cacao bean smuggling sparked by Revolutionary War blockades. Both bitter and sweet, this tale is sure to tickle your taste buds

*ANTHONY SAMMARCO is a noted historian and author of over seventy books on the history and development of Boston, and he lectures widely on the history of his native city. His books The History of Howard Johnson's: How A Massachusetts Soda Fountain Became a Roadside Icon, Christmas Traditions in Boston, and The Baker Chocolate Company: A Sweet History have been bestsellers.*


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

Mass Cultural Council


## Annual Town Meeting – PLEASE ATTEND!

Annual Town Meting will commence on Monday evening, March 23, 2020, in the High School Auditorium. This year one of the articles will propose use of Community Preservation funds for rehabilitation of Old Town Hall's (OTH's) middle floor for shared space including a town museum. Registered voters are urged to come to Town Meeting to support passage of this article.

Will the Old Town Hall on South Road be Bedford's future Museum? Please come and support the article.

Last year funding was approved by Town Meeting to rehabilitate OTH's ground floor. The usable space on that floor is less than half of the minimum recommended by the Select Board's study committee and about one-third of the size recommended by the Select Board's consultant. If the Society is required to vacate its space at the Police Station, the archives and stored artifacts will occupy almost the entire ground floor of OTH, with enough space for a small office and research area there.

The Select Board's consultant recommended use of OTH's middle floor for a town museum to display Bedford's historic cultural documents and artifacts. However, that space is currently occupied by Bedford TV. The warrant article proposes to provide rehabilitation funding to provide a small museum on that floor while ensuring that Bedford TV can also continue operating there until a suitable new location is identified.

Bedford's historic cultural documents and artifacts have remained in storage ever since 1996, when the Select Board closed the existing museum in the Stearns Memorial Building (now Police Station) without making provision for a new museum. We hope that some objects can finally come back out of storage for public display.

Don Corey

*The Society has received a reimbursable $600 grant from Bedford Cultural Council for our program series.*

# *The Images of Charles O. Hodgman*

By Kara Kerwin & Brian Qulighan

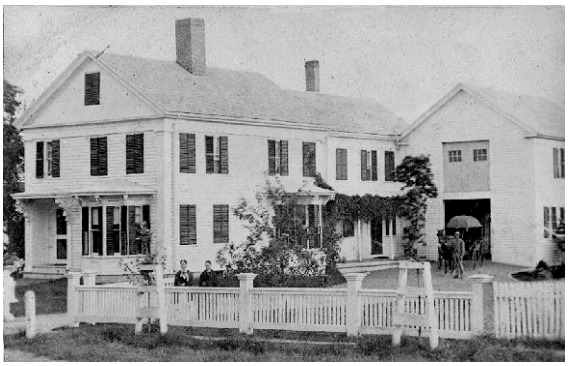
*Bedford's Charles Hodgman was a prominent early photographer shortly after its initial development during the mid-19th Century. This is the 1st of a 2-part article on his achievements.*

## Early Career

Charles Otis Hodgman was born in Bedford on August 27, 1835, to Joseph and Mary (Merriam) Hodgman. Little is known about his early life, although he is listed on the 1855 Bedford Census with the occupation of "gold beater", making gold leaf probably in either a watch maker's or jeweler's shop.

By the late 1850s, he had found his calling. Photography represented the forefront of technology and artistic expression when Hodgman entered the profession, and he became a prolific pioneer in this new art form. *Craig's Daguerreian Registry* lists Hodgman as working in Boston as a Daguerreian in 1859 & 1860. By the late 1860s his name shows up in Boston directories, listing him as a photographer at 140 Washington Street in Boston.

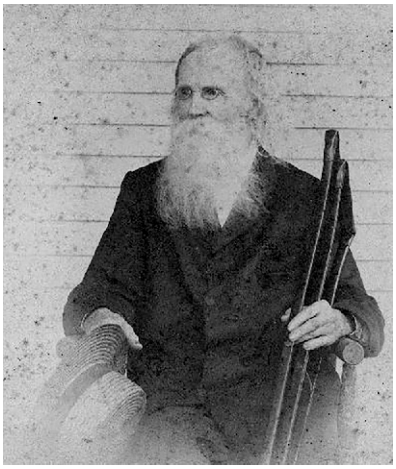
He moved to Holliston MA around that time, where on November 14, 1870, Hodgman married Anne Maria Thompson. His name appears as a "landscape artist" in the Holliston Census that year. Hodgman services seemed to be in demand, and he was able to set up a studio in Malden, where he worked from 1878-1883.



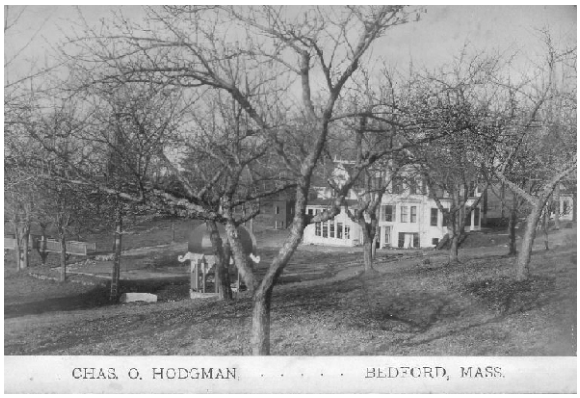
Hodgman photographed formal family portraits, as well as family properties.

During the late 19th Century, the public's desire for the work of Hodgman and his colleagues grew considerably. Families wanted formal studio portraits (photo on left) as well as larger, outdoor compositions featuring the family, and often prized livestock, formally posed before their homestead (photo on right 119 The Great Road). Both images are imprinted with his Malden studio address.

Hodgman's wife, Anne, died in 1879 and a year later Hodgman married Elizabeth Frances Clement. He kept his Malden studio for several more years before they moved to Maynard in about 1883. The label on the back of this photo of Bedford druggist Elijah Stearns (photo on right) indicates that Hodgman was working in Maynard at that time.



Portrait of druggist Elijah Stearns




## Return to Bedford

By about 1885, we find that he had returned to Bedford where his talents seemed to be in high demand. We believe that it was during this period that he captured most of Bedford's most iconic structures and scenes. In many cases, his photographs represent the only record of what those buildings looked like then.

This photo was taken looking down at the original owner's mansion at Bedford Springs. (photo on left) The house was torn down in the 1890s and replaced with Lakeside, Dr. William Hayden's much grander mansion.

*cont. on page 6*

# March Program

Saturday, March 28, 2020
2 PM - Old Town Hall, Great Room, 16 South Road

Co-sponsored with Bedford Leage of Women Voters

## "Votes for Women: Massachusetts Leaders in the Women's Suffrage Movement"

*Presented by Barbara Berenson.*

Long before the Civil War, Lucy Stone and other abolitionists launched the organized women's movement. After the war, state activist founded the Boston-based American Woman Suffrage Association to lead campaigns across the country. Their work laid the foundation for the next generation of suffragists to triumph over tradition.

Barbara Berenson is the author of *Massachusetts in the Woman's Suffrage Movement: Revolutionary Reformers (2018); Boston in the Civil War: Hub of the Second Revolution (2014);* and *Walking Tours of Civil War Boston: Hub of Abolitionism (2011, 2nd Edition)*. She is the co-editor of *Breaking Barriers: The Unfinished Story of Women Lawyers and Judges in Massachusetts (2012*). She earned her undergraduate and law degrees at Harvard University, and she works as a Senior Attorney at the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. She serves on the Boards of Boston By Foot and the Royall House and Slave Quarters.

# April Program

Sunday, April 26, 2020, 2 PM - Old Town Hall, Great Room, 16 South Road

## "A Cast of (18th Century) Bedford Characters."

*Presented by Sharon MacDonald*

Come to this presentation to learn the truth about some of Bedford's storied characters. What is the real story behind the Witch of the Shawsheen? Was the first minister of First Parish Joseph Penniman really fired for his quirky behavior, and what was that behavior? What about the tragic love affair of Calley Fassett? And how about Jesse Freeman born in Bedford, began life as an enslaved man and took his freedom by joining the army during the American Revolution?

Sharon McDonald is Bedford's Town Historian. She's a prolific writer and speaker about local history in and around Bedford. She's written several books about the town, and she has a soon to be published book for children that presents Bedford's early history. McDonald says, "History is part doing research, part keeping footnotes, part telling stories". She has been a speaker at Bedford Pole Capping celebration for many years, and has told bits of Bedford's story to a wide variety of audiences. McDonald's presentations to the Historical Society have addressed Bedford's geology, slavery in Bedford, "our neighbor Job Lane", and Bedford in the 19th century. Please come join us to learn a few more tidbits about the Town of Bedford from this beloved storyteller.

*"These programs are supported in part by a grant from the Bedford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency."*

Mass Cultural Council

# Then & Now

The image on the left shows the Jonas Monroe house that stood at 30 North Road. Built in the early 1800s, it was an attractive building, with wall murals by Rufus Porter throughout. Mr. Porter was famous for his work, and a museum in Maine is dedicated to his work. The Jonas Monroe house was purchased by a hotel chain and operated as Bedford Inn while the Bedford Motel was built at the rear of the property. The hotel chain later demolished the house after a long fight by the town to save it. Several Rufus Porter wall murals that were rescued from the house and donated to the Historical Society are now displayed in the Town Hall Auditorium.

Next door to the house (center image) was Fitzgerald's Package Store (Fitzy's) at 36 North Road, which was a very popular spot over the years for many Bedford residents. Fitzy's closed its doors a year ago, and that building is slated for demolition. By the time this goes to the printer, the only building left on those lots may be the Bedford Motel.

# Gunnar Hemmingson Family

Gunnar Hemmingson was one of Bedford's men that served in World War I ("The War to End All Wars"). He was one of those who were gassed by the Germans, but he recovered and served out his enlistment. His name appears on Bedford's WW I Memorial on the Common. In World War II Gunnar again served – this time with the Navy – and his two sons also served. Gunnar Jr. was in the Yankee Division, and Walter was in the Army Air Force.

This winter the Historical Society was contacted by Gunnar's granddaughter, Mrs. Sheila (Hemmingson) Gallant, for an appointment. She arrived with many Hemmingson family artifacts and papers that have been generously donated to the Society. They include:

Medals & Tokens received for his service in 1917-1919

continue next page

Continue from page 4

Gunnar's Military Discharge papers from both WW I & WW II (photo on right)

Bedford American Legion artifacts – Gunnar would have been a founding member, and he served as Commander.

WW II - YD Division Uniform Shirt, beret & accessories worn by Gunnar Hemmingson Jr.

WW II - Army Air Force Uniform Jacket, hats & accessories worn by Walter Hemmingson

These significant additions to Bedford's cultural history have been carefully stored with its other important documents and artifacts until a town museum is re-established where they can be displayed.

## *We thank you for your continued support*

Donors and Members, November 2019 - January 2020

Anonymous
Claire Anderson
Nancy Asbedian
Claire Austin & Don White
Ruth Beauchesne
Bedford Motel
Dot Bergin
Carolyn Bottum & Peter Ljutich
Margaret Button
Judith & James S. Brunner
Marion Bryan
Allen Buswell
James Burton
Irma Carter
Michael Cashman
Paul & Wendy Ciaccia
Leon & Aline Cierpial
Barbara Claflin
Barbara Clifford
Angelo & Gabriele Colao
Janet Collins
Bonnie Comley
Phyllis Cooke
Donald & Susan Corey
Paul & Andrea Couvee
Joseph C. Damery
Dante Daycayanan
William Deen
Joan & Emidio DiClemente
Jean Dirks
President & CEO Barbara Doyle
Robert & Sarah Dorer
Deb Edinger
Jacqueline Edwards
Arthur & Marietta Ellis
Roberta Ennis
George Epple
Robert & Paula Fowler
Karen Fredrick
Allen Gevorkian
John Gibbons & Sue Baldauf
Frank & Joan Gicca
Joanne Glover & Ted Carlson
Mary Hafer
Eric Haugen
Paul Hill
Cindy Howe & Daniel T. McBride
Janet & Eric Humphrey
Carol & Steve Jamison
Tom Kinzer
Roy & Shirley Kring
Ned & Susan Leeming
Rodney Leskowski
John & Marie Linz
Helen Litchfield
Donna Little
Roger Little
Alan & Carol Long
Sandra Maczko
Brian Magee & Rob Dobson
Allen Marshall & Anne Bickford
Sharon McClatchey
Sharon & Thomas McDonald
Peter Meyers
Vincent & Joanne Orlando
David & Virginia Packer
Barbara Perry
Zoe & Edward Pierce
Kathy Pietrasik
Larry Prugnarola
Heather & David Pullen
Paul & Barbara Purchia
James & Adele Purvis
Eunice Puzzo
Richard Reed
Maureen & Robert Reyling
Michael & Dawn Rosenberg
John & Linda Rudd
Lt. Col. Henry Schowalter
Paolo Sepe
Roger & Susan Shamel
Betty Slechta
Ellen Sorensen
Ginni Spencer
Kaye Spofford
Adrienne St. John
Walter & Rosemary St. Onge
Kimberlie Sweet
Jan van Steenwijk & Barbara Hitchcock
Norma Warner
Leslie & Paul Wittman
Emily Wade
Alethea Yates & Lee Walus
Linda Young

www.bedfordmahistory.org
Executive Director: Kistine Moore
781-275-7276
info@bedfordmahistory.org

*The Preservationist.*
Design, production & photography: Jan van Steenwijk
Contributing writers; Carol Amick, Don Corey, Kara Kerwin, Brian Oulighan, Sharon McDonald.

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

US Postage Paid
Burlington, MA 01803
Non-Profit Org.
Permit No. 30

"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.*

---

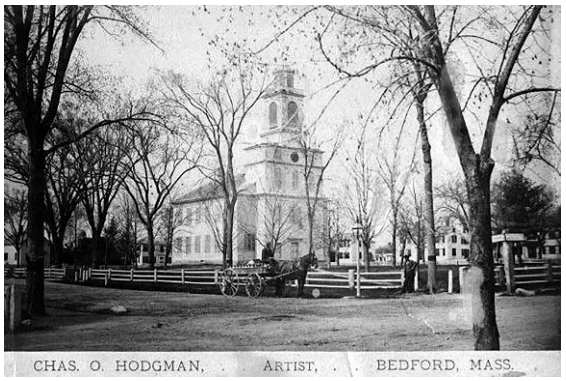
*cont. from page 2*

## Images of Charles O. Hodgman

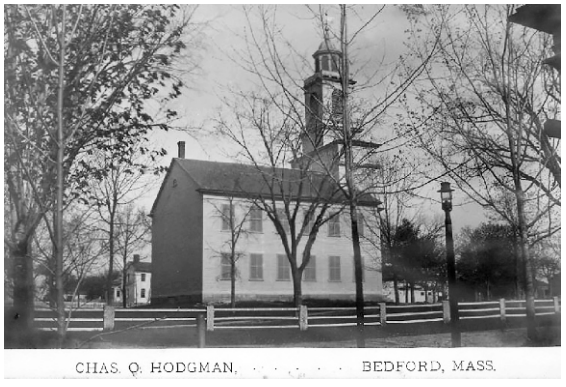
Pollard Tavern was a pleasant residence by the 19th Century. It was taken down in the 1930s. (photo on right)

The Bacon-Fitch-Ashby-Clark mill, which stood on the Shawsheen River, off Old Billerica Road. was owned by Herb Clark at the time this photo was taken. It was demolished in the 1950s. (photo on left)

Bedford Common and First Parish Church were popular subjects of Hodgman's career, and he photographed them from many angles. The photo on the right shows a horse-drawn wagon at the corner of Main Street and South Road.




The photo at right was taken of the side and back of First Parish Church from South Road.




*The Society has a large collection of Hodgman's photographs including many glass-plate negatives. Prints from these fragile plates were created through a grant from Raytheon in 1979.*