Visit our Exhibitions in the Old Town Hall and learn about the Bedford Flag and other historic relics

The Preservationist

Bedford Historical Society, Inc. - Bedford - Massachusetts
Founded in 1893

May 2024 *Published for everyone interested in our history* Volume 134, Number 2

Don't Miss our Next Free Lectures

Carol Amick

Sunday, April 28 at 2 PM

Old Town Hall, Great Room

Former Bedford Historical Society President and Executive Director Lee Yates will lead a Panel of Baby Boomers: *"Growing Up in Bedford During the Baby Boom."*

In addition to Lee Yates, this panel will be comprised of baby boomers who actively contribute to a Facebook group called "You Know You're From Bedford, MA if," which is managed by Yates. Panelists' names will emailed closer to the April program.

The Baby Boomer period encompassed almost two decades after World War II (1945-1965); U.S. boomers today range in age from 58 to 78 and total almost 72 million Americans.

"The Baby Boom period was a wonderful time to grow up, especially in Bedford. Do you remember the Center and Page Schools, the ski lift on Old Billerica Road, skating at Belle Isle, and shopping at Bowen's toy store? Panelists will tell a bit about their memories and then we'll open the session for your own stories. We'll have some Baby Boom items on display, as well," Yates explained.

Alethea "Lee" Yates was born at the height of the Baby Boomer period and has come to appreciate that fact more and more as time goes on.

Lee is the author of *Bedford, a Postcard History of the Town.* She has resided in Bedford since 1991 and considers herself to be a "local history nerd."

Sunday, May 19, at 2 PM

Old Town Hall, Great Room

Annual Meeting and Lecture

The Society's Annual Meeting is followed with the lecture by Town Historian and President, Sharon McDonald who continues her series: *"A Cast of 18th and 19th Century Bedford Characters, Part 4."*

Our casual meeting starts at 2:00 p.m. to enjoy coffee, refreshments, and to meet friends.

A short business meeting will begin at 2:15 p.m. The agenda includes a summary of last year's activities and the election of four members to Director's seats.

President's Message

Sharon McDonald

Is the May 19th Bedford Historical Society Annual Meeting on your calendar? The program itself will begin at about 2:30 p.m., and I am pleased to be your speaker! I've entitled it *A Cast of Historical (Bedford) Characters, Part IV.* Over the last few years, I have offered a series of biographies of interesting - often quirky - folks from our town's 300-year history. Here are four more! (Note: I've selected almost no characters from Bedford's Revolutionary times – we have a rich and splendid history apart from our well-known minutemen!) All the biographies will be compiled into a book to be published by the Society in time for Bedford Day. Be able to say you heard it live!

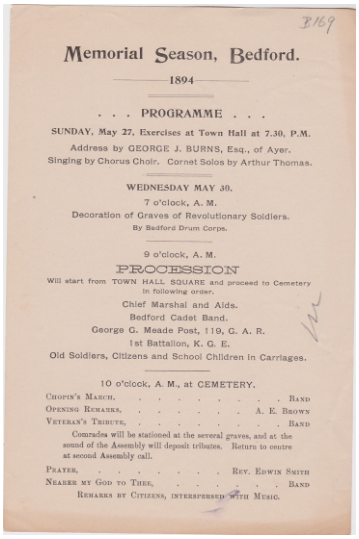
A piece of sad news – Emily "Paddy" Wade, a long-time Bedfordian serving on our Board of Directors, passed away in March. Aged 98 years, she attended Directors' meetings on Zoom, and her delighted bursts of laughter would shimmer out of the screen! She and her late husband, Jeptha, were wise and generous citizens of the town. Wrote Carol Amick, "Paddy was a wonderful person. We had many interactions over the years, and I was very fond of her…. We worked together on several state environmental initiatives. More recently, she would call me to come over and dig some of the plants she was growing in Jeptha's conservatory! She was always a dedicated, extremely knowledgeable, and classy lady. She will be missed."

Memorial Day - Looking Back

Don Corey

The origin of Memorial Day dates to 1868 when Major General John A. Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic (Civil War veterans), established Decoration Day with the following proclamation to honor the Civil War dead by decorating their graves.

"[This day] … is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating, the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country … and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance, no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit."



Memorial Season, Bedford.

1894

. . . PROGRAMME . . .

SUNDAY, May 27, Exercises at Town Hall at 7.30, P.M.

Address by GEORGE J. BURNS, Esq., of Ayer.

Singing by Chorus Choir. Cornet Solos by Arthur Thomas.

WEDNESDAY MAY 30.

7 o'clock, A. M.

Decoration of Graves of Revolutionary Soldiers.

By Bedford Drum Corps.

9 o'clock, A. M.

PROCESSION

Will start from TOWN HALL SQUARE and proceed to Cemetery in following order.

Chief Marshal and Aids.

Bedford Cadet Band.

George G. Meade Post, 119, G. A. R.

1st Battalion, K. G. E.

Old Soldiers, Citizens and School Children in Carriages.

10 o'clock, A. M., at CEMETERY.

CHOPIN'S MARCH, ... BAND

OPENING REMARKS, ... A. E. BROWN

VETERAN'S TRIBUTE, ... BAND

Comrades will be stationed at the several graves, and at the sound of the Assembly will deposit tributes. Return to centre at second Assembly call.

PRAYER, ... REV. EDWIN SMITH

NEARER MY GOD TO THEE, ... BAND

REMARKS BY CITIZENS, INTERSPERSED WITH MUSIC.

This has evolved into our broader current observance of Memorial Day.

Bedford's Memorial Day in 1874 was a grand ceremony. The Ladies Aid Society, which made garments during the Civil War and raised money to assist soldiers and comfort the sick and wounded, raised money after the war for the Civil War monument in Shawsheen Cemetery as a gift to the town. It was dedicated that day, and both parent towns of Concord and Billerica participated. Ralph Waldo Emerson was among the speakers. Shawsheen Cemetery was the focal point for Memorial Day observances for many years

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Memorial Day, continued from page 1

thereafter.

The 1894 Memorial Day program shows that the tradition of decorating Revolutionary Soldiers' graves in the Old Burying Ground, an early initiative of the Bedford Historical Society, was established. On Memorial Day, a procession formed on the Common and proceeded to Shawsheen Cemetery for the main ceremony, hymns, prayers, and decoration of graves.

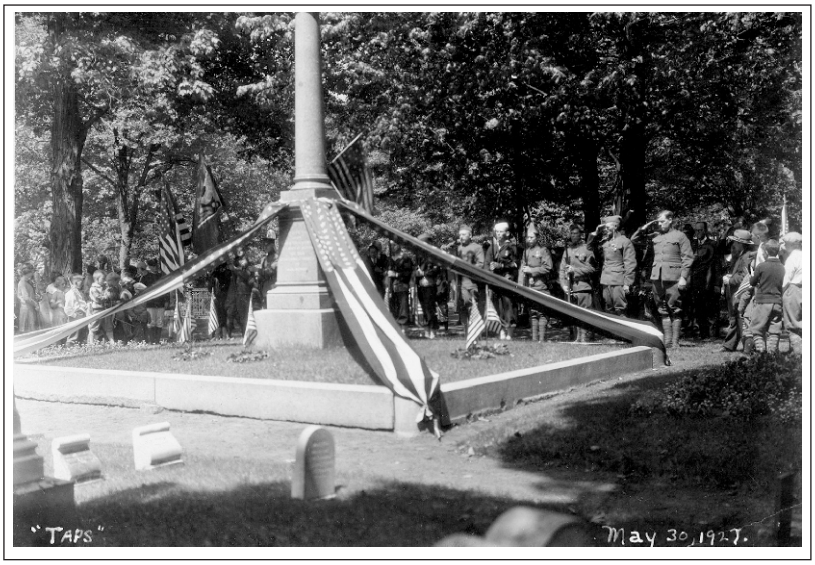
A poem written during the First World War has become one of the most recognized memorial symbols associated with Memorial Day. Lt. Col. John McCrae was a Canadian physician, poet, and soldier. After a friend was killed in a battle in the Flanders region of Belgium, he wrote "In Flanders Fields" in May 1915. The poem and symbolic poppies are now widely recognized, particularly throughout the British Commonwealth and in the United States.

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders Fields, the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.



Memorial Day Service, May 30, 1927. Photo: Bedford Historical Society.

The main focus of Bedford's Memorial Day observances shifted after WWII, as Veterans Memorial Park and memorials elsewhere in town were established to honor those who served in WWII and subsequent conflicts. An article describing Bedford's observances this year is found below.

Honoring Heroes on Memorial Day

Paul Purchia

On Monday, May 27, the Bedford Historical Society will join the Patriotic Holiday Committee and other organizations in Memorial Day ceremonies taking place throughout Bedford. For many years Historical Society members have played an important role in town events that honor the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in answering their nation's call. They feature prominently in this year's commemoration.

Speakers, veterans and dignitaries meet at the Shawsheen Cemetery

Following a brief 8:30 AM outdoor ceremony at the American Legion Post 221 on the Great Road, there will be an 8:45 talk given by Navy veteran and former BHS President Don Corey at the Civil War Monument in Shawsheen Cemetery. The talk will touch on the creation of this beautiful cemetery and the sacrifices that were made by Union troops from Bedford who are buried there.

At 10:00 at the Old Burying Ground, BHS member Alethea Yates will join the Bedford Minuteman Company to honor Bedford's early patriots. More than fifty men who fought in the American Revolution, including three former slaves, are buried there.

The Memorial Day parade will step off from the high school at 11:00 and will stop at the WWI Memorial on the Town Common. Alethea Yates will talk briefly about Bedford during the Great War and remember the Bedford veterans who fought and died in the "war to end all wars." The parade will continue along the Great Road to Veterans Memorial Park for the main town ceremony which begins about 11:15. Please join us on May 27.

New to the Collection

Sandra L. Duffy

Bedfordians have played a crucial role in preserving Bedford's history by generously donating artifacts and ephemera of historical significance to the Bedford Historical Society's collection. This is as true today as it was when the Society was established in 1893.

Earlier this year, Bedford native Kevin Duffy made a significant contribution to the Bedford Historical Society's collection. He has generously donated an ambrotype of First Parish and Bedford Common in memory of his parents, Michael and Joan Duffy. This photograph, dating back to c. 1855–1860, is a valuable addition to our collection. It is possibly the earliest known photograph of Bedford Center, providing a unique glimpse into its appearance in the 1850s.

Ambrotype photograph of First Parish, c. 1855-1860

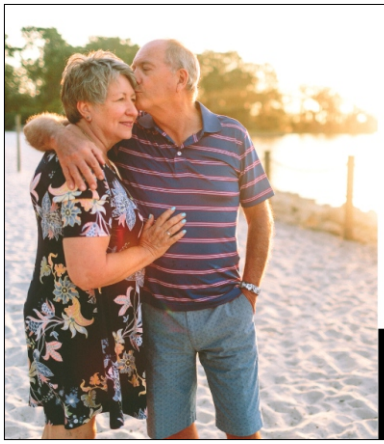
Upon acquiring the photograph, Duffy felt that, in the long-term, the ambrotype belonged in Bedford, not in a private collection. He recently decided it should be permanently preserved in the Society's collections, ensuring it is available for future generations to study and enjoy. This commitment to preservation and sharing is at the heart of the Society's mission.

Left: Gentleman sporting a handlebar mustache. Right: Women often used a hairpiece to achieve elaborate hairstyles.

Unknown portraits by photographer, Charles O. Hodgman

The ambrotype is in excellent condition given its age; however, the cover of the case, which possibly included the photographer's name, is missing. Could this have been an early photograph taken by photographer Charles O. Hodgman? A Bedford native, Hodgman worked in Boston as a Daguerreian by 1859. The Bedford Center area seems to have been a favorite location for Hodgman to photograph his subjects; the Society has four other photos taken by Hodgman from this approximate vantage

Continued on page 4



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Collection, continued from page 3

point. Unfortunately, we will never be able to identify the artist, but it is intriguing to consider the possibility.

The Society does have what is arguably the most extensive collection of known Hodgman photographs, and we have recently made a significant addition to the collection through the acquisition of four photographs. Three of the images are portraits taken in Malden, where Hodgman operated a studio circa 1878–1883. The subjects' identities are unknown, but the photos provide a fascinating insight into the fashions of the period.

Around 1885, Hodgman returned to his hometown of Bedford, where he operated as a photographic artist, and lived here until his death in 1889. During his tenure in Bedford, Hodgman snapped our fourth acquisition, a photo of a handsome Victorian home on a tree-lined street with sidewalks. The house is neighbored on one side by a similar Victorian house and on the other by what appears to be a Colonial house.

Victorian house, location unknown.
Photo by Charles O. Hodgman

The Society has yet to identify the location of this photograph. Although the house strongly resembles homes on Fletcher Road, careful examination of the details, such as the roofline, determines it is not. It is likely that the house was not in Bedford. Hodgman is known to have taken photos in Lexington, Concord, Littleton, and other surrounding communities during his tenure in Bedford. If anyone recognizes the location, please let us know!

Child wearing side-button boots.
Photo by Charles O. Hodgman

The Society is actively collecting unique items connected to Bedford's history. If you are interested in donating photographs, documents, or objects related to Bedford's history, please call (781) 275-7276 or email us at info@bedfordmahistory.org.

Help Support the Society's Work to Preserve Our Past

Member Application

Annual Membership Dues:

☐ Individual:	$25.00
☐ Couple/Family:	$45.00
☐ Contribution:	$100.00
☐ Patron:	$175.00
☐ Benefactor:	$300.00

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Wish to pay by credit card?
Please visit our website at:
www.bedfordmahistory.org
Look for the PayPal "Donate" button on the right margin of our website.

Return this with your check to:
Bedford Historical Society
16 South Road
Bedford, MA 01730

We are grateful to all our members and donors who have contributed to our Annual Appeal and have renewed their memberships. Your generous donations and membership dues support our mission to discover, preserve, and share stories and artifacts from Bedford's history. Your contributions also support our work to develop exciting new exhibits, present interesting programs, provide educational programs for Bedford students, and offer internship opportunities for local college students.

If you haven't had a chance to renew your annual membership or contribute to the Annual Appeal, there's still time! You can mail a check to our office at 16 South Road, Bedford, MA 01730, or use a debit or credit card by clicking on the "Donate" button on our website at **www.bedfordmahistory.org**

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Kristine Fitch White
Jerry Wolf

The Society Welcomes a New Volunteer from Nashoba Learning Group

Text & photo: Sandra L. Duffy

Janet Collins and Kelly preparing the mailing of our newsletter.

The Bedford Historical Society is pleased to welcome Kelly, a new volunteer from the Nashoba Learning Group (NLG). Kelly began volunteering at the Society in September and fills a void left by our previous NLG intern, Josh, who graduated from the NLG program in June 2023.

Kelly, a 17-year-old junior, volunteers at the Society weekly throughout the year and performs a variety of tasks that help keep the Society running smoothly. Kelly helps with *The Preservationist* mailing by affixing the mailing labels and postage. He changes the message on our sandwich board sign to advertise the Society's programs, and he utilizes his janitorial skills to help maintain a clean and inviting space in our home on the ground floor of Old Town Hall. Kelly is also expanding his computer skills while learning transcription skills by continuing a project started by previous NLG volunteers. By entering information found in the Town of Bedford Annual Reports into an Excel spreadsheet, Kelly is creating a searchable database of Bedford Vital Records, making the information more accessible to researchers.

Nashoba Learning Group is a private school in Bedford founded in 2002 to offer a different life trajectory for individuals with autism. Since 2016, the Historical Society has hosted several students from NLG as part of the school's Vocational and Life Skills Program. This program provides students with community involvement and meaningful work experience to increase their chances of obtaining gainful employment as adults. Kelly's work at the Society is helping him achieve his goals while providing a valuable service to the Society. Thank you for all your hard work, Kelly!

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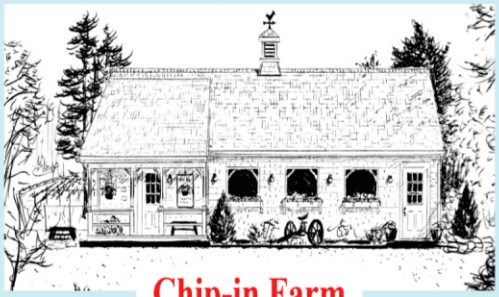

Chip-in Farm

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Celebrating 80 years of selling the freshest eggs in Bedford!

Each time the Society has an interesting announcement, like a free lecture, the Town allows us to set up an easel reminding the public of the event. But, as one can see, we are not alone.

Competition to get your attention.

PLEASE NOTE:
Our new address is:
16 South Road,
Bedford MA 01730

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info@bedfordmahistory.org

The Preservationist
Design, photography & production: Jan van Steenwijk
Contributing writers: Carol Amick, Don Corey, Sandra L. Duffy, Paul Purchia, Sharon McDonald.

The Preservationist
Bedford Historical Society, Inc.
16 South Road
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A Recent Donation

Sharon McDonald

The Museum received a gift of roller skates.
They're truly vintage, but they're not mates.
One is skinny and one is fatter;
If you don't plan to wear them, it doesn't matter.
I had skates, too but it's been a while.
Now they make them the in-line style.
The grippers that grip the skate to your shoe
Remember how hard that was to do?
(Sneakers really didn't work at all –
If your Mom made you wear them, you'd surely fall.)
But wait – this donation is missing a part
Without it, the fun would never start.
You needed one more vital thing:
You wore it around your neck on a string.
Let me jiggle your memory:
If you're gonna roller skate, then you gotta have the key!

Photo: Jan van Steenwijk

Roller skates donated by Judith Gray

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We Always Look for Volunteers

Would you like to help the Society with its mission to preserve and protect the history of Bedford? The Society always welcomes volunteers to help with a variety of tasks, including helping at events, researching and writing about Bedford's history, providing clerical support, and cataloging archival materials. Contact us at **info@bedfordmahistory.org** to learn more!