

Old Stone News

*The Newsletter of
The West Boylston
Historical Society
Spring 2016
Volume 19, Number 1*

MEMBERSHIP

The dues for the calendar year 2016 are now due. If you have received a due's envelope with this newsletter, it means that we have not received your dues. The Society needs and would very much appreciate your continued support.

CONTACT INFORMATION

www.wbhistory.org
Bigelow@wbhistory.org

We would very much like to have everyone's email address so as to notify you of changes when we need to reach you quickly and efficiently. It also saves us time and money. Please share. We promise not to pass them out.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS



The house committee spent the fall sealing the basement and has found no sign this winter of the chipmunks that were freely roaming the house. And a thank you to Philippe Chevalier for plowing the parking lot again.

MISSION STATEMENT

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"The West Boylston Historical Society collects, preserves and honors the history of the Town through programs, exhibitions, publications and maintenance of the historic Bigelow Tavern as its headquarters and museum."

## From the President

It's been busy. We had a successful basket raffle at our Fall Festival Booth in October. Thanks to all who helped set up and participated in the raffle. Also, in October Wachusett Reservoir Ranger Lt. Rebecca Baronoski gave us a very informative talk on the Patron System and the workers who help build it.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our annual away trip in November because of insufficient sign-up. The Masonic Heritage History Museum in Lexington and a dinner follow up would have been a treat, we had booked the Old Timer in Clinton for dinner, and then a few months later it closed. What a bummer. The Old Timer had an atmosphere that will long be remembered.

Our Holiday Open House Victorian with historical reenactor Pat Perry was well received followed by the lighting of the Town Common Christmas Tree and caroling. The West Boylston Cultural Council helped fund the presentation.

There are a lot of folks who make our historical society run smoothly; the board members, hostesses at our programs, our curator Beverly Goodale, and those who maintain the building and grounds. Every Thursday morning many of these workers are at the Bigelow Tavern to help visitors.

We also welcomed long-time helper and Historical Commission member Dennis Parker to our Board of Directors. Many remember the old movie films shown at the Bicentennial and at one of our programs. These 16mm and 8mm movies were approaching the century mark and deteriorating. We transferred them to DVDs insuring their survival and making them easier to use.

And finally, thank you for all who generously gave in Aaron Goodale's memory. The funds will be placed in the endowment and the addition that Aaron was instrumental in building will be dedicated to him with an exterior plaque and interior photo later this year.

Stay safe, smile and hope to see you all at our next program.

Neil Norum

## Historical Happenings

Wednesday, April 6, 2016 7:00 p.m. at the Bigelow Tavern  
*Worcester Royal Corsets - Marilyn Polito, Preservation Worcester*

Wednesday, May 4, 2016 5:00 p.m. at The Manor  
*Annual Dinner Meeting*

*Songs and Stories of Vaudeville - Jack Craig, Music Education / Entertainer*

Saturday, June 4, 2016 (rain date Sat., June 11, 2016) at the Bigelow Tavern - *Outdoor Yard Sale*

## CURATORS CORNER

As most of you know, our society is a relatively new organization in our town when we consider that the first settlers came here around 1742. For years the library, built in 1911, was the repository where much of our earliest memorabilia was donated. Since 1982 when the society purchased the Bigelow Tavern, we have worked hard to collect materials that tell the story of our town and its people and preserve its artifacts. We collect information and treasures in many ways - thru generous donations and or many times by helping a person who has logged onto our website to find facts about a person or place. This is a very important way to glean new information for the society and so I share the following with you.

Recently Dennis Parker, a member of our Board of Directors, stopped by with a copy of a Friday Morning, March 9, 1877 edition of the "Boston Daily Globe" that he had found in his grandmother's things. Initially we thought she had saved it because it had belonged to an aunt. However, as I perused the paper, ..  
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Be sure to check the Historical Society website for up to date information at:

[www.wbhistory.org](http://www.wbhistory.org).



## HISTORY BY THE INCH

### Worcester County Truants School, Oakdale

"It was long since demonstrated that if we make the bad good, we must do something besides punish". It is this thought that had prompted the construction of the state truancy on Beaman Street in the Oakdale section of West Boylston. In the mid 1880's the state of Massachusetts began to look into a new experimental concept of truants schools and the Oakdale location was chosen as the site for such a school mainly because of easy access from the Oakdale train station, where the Massachusetts Central crosses with the Boston and Maine railroad.

In an article dated December 31, 1891, from the "West Boylston Enterprise", (the weekly town newspaper at the time) describes the newly opened school as a commodious structure, two stories and attic high, in the shape of a Greek Cross. The length, north and south is 113 feet, east and west is at 90 feet. The walls are of brick with mottled Conway trimming, while the west frontage is about 60 feet in length. It was stated that the impression that one perceived when nearing the building was imposing and happy at the same time.

Upon entering the main hall, at the left was the superintendent's office, and at the right, the reception room. Further east, on the north side, is the family dining room, which is separated by windows, only, from the much larger room where the boys take their meals. Returning to the hallway, one would enter into the library, with shelf room for over a thousand books and a large center table for study. Adjacent to the library was a beautiful modern well-lit school room.

Ascending a flight of stairs, one would enter the dormitory in the south wing, this was a large room above the school room, where every boy would have his own bed, and these made of iron with wire woven springs laid with hair mattresses good enough for a king. There were fifty boys sleeping in the dormitory with the attendant sleeping in the adjacent room. A small room on the west side had numbered spaces for every boy to hang his apparel, upon going to bed. On the north side, above the boy's dining room was a large classroom for manual training. In the attic was a large water tank fed by a spring on the hillside, which supplied water to all parts of the premises. The attic also had a playroom and a drilling classroom.

In the basement level, there was an ample kitchen, modern in its day, with a range, oven, pantry, refrigerator, sewing room and rooms for attendants. Also in the basement were the laundry room and the lavatories for the boys; which there were sixteen individual bathrooms supplied with hot and cold water. Also in the basement, boxes were provided and labeled for each boy to place his out of door footwear in, and in return wore a pair of slippers before going upstairs.

When each boy first entered the institution, his old clothing that he entered in with was either sent back home or destroyed. Each and every boy was clothed in a nice blue uniform, and when he went away he was given a nice suit to wear.

On the farm of thirty six acres, there was little idleness. The farm work needed to be done but there was also time for recreation play with an excellent baseball field, and on the man-made pond with the newly built ice house, the boys were allowed to skate during the winter months. Also as part of the farm, south of the school building was a very large barn where six cows and a span of horses was kept.

Of course, as much work within reason was exacted from the boys, for their own good and for that of the public. The manner of dealing with juvenile offenders at that time was an experiment but when left in competent hands it proved a success.

The Truant school, which later became known as John Augustus Hall, was destroyed by a devastating fire in the late 1960's and rebuilt in the early 1970's. The state closed the school in the late 1970's and the building and land is now part of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation with offices held there.

Steven Carlson, Historian  
West Boylston Historical Society

I found the following column entitled "New England by Mail". It is as follows and I quote:

**"Murder at Oakdale-Arrest of the Homicide"**

The usually very quiet little village of Oakdale was thrown onto a state of great excitement yesterday, by the announcement of a probable murder in its very centre. About 11:30 the wife of William F. Speakman went to the market, leaving him at home with his sister. Soon after her return the neighbors were startled by cries for help coming from one of the rooms of the house. Responsive to these cries Mr. A.C. Smith immediately rushed into the house, where he found Speakman in one of the bedrooms choking his wife, who was down on the floor with her head just under the edge of the bed. Mr. Smith who is a constable, immediately arrested Speakman, and Mrs. Speakman ran out upon the street and extended the alarm, finally seeking refuge in the house of a neighbor, where she tried to regain her strength, she having been choked so badly as to cause blood to issue from her mouth. By this time quite a crowd had reached

the scene of the excitement. On going into the woodshed they found the sister of Speakman lying on the floor near the coal-bin, with her head and neck fearfully lacerated, and her brains crushed out. She lived almost three quarters of an hour after the crime was committed. The family are all English. Speakman is about fifty years of age, and his murdered sister is about seventy. He has until recently been employed in the mill of the West Boylston Manufacturing Company as a mule spinner. He is a man very much given to intoxicating liquors, and very often has his sprees. Last Saturday he returned from Clinton, where he has been stopping of late, in an intoxicated condition, and since then he has been having the delirium tremens. There are four strokes of an axe, one on the left shoulder at the back side, the full size of the blade of the axe; one on each side of the neck, where it is apparently cut only by the corner of the axe, and the fearful gash, diagonally, back of the ear, across the base of the skull, four or five inches in length".

"Wow", I thought, that name is familiar". So I went digging through some old emails that I had kept and found, that in 2012, I had corresponded with a man looking for information on just this subject. As it turned out, we had nothing on this person at the time at the society. I contacted the Town Clerk's office and they were able to give me some vital record information that I was able to pass on to the family. I heard back that they had come upon a newspaper article that they would forward but that never happened so I put what we had in our files.

After reading the story in the "Boston Daily Globe", I went back into ancestry.com, a genealogical research website, and much to my amazement it contained a lot of new information then I had found previously. I have been able to put together a much better picture of a family and it's life in Oakdale.

We are always looking for information and artifacts on our town that tell it's history. You never know when someone will call or stop by and bring something that either solves a mystery or starts a new conversation and helps keep our shared history alive. We welcome your contributions or the sharing of information. This is your Historical Society. What do you have that might expand our knowledge of the town and it's people?

We keep files on families, places, and events in West Boylston. Currently we are looking for pictures and information on the following: The West Boylston Drive In---Worcester Sanitarium---the Plantation Restaurant, where Coral Pool is,---the Crossroads---Howard Johnsons---and Town Events from the Past

As stated in our Motto, we need to collect and preserve our history for future generations.

**Bev Goodale, Curator**

PS: Mr. and Mrs. Speakman arrived in America in 1866 aboard the Delaware. Both it seems worked in the spinning, weaving industry. You might be interested to know that Alice Speakman, William's wife, lived until December 17, 1895. William was apparently committed to the Taunton Insane Hospital after the murder. He lived there 29 years, 10 months and 13 days, dying on September 1, 1907, aged 87.

**LOOKING BACK**

**Excerpts taken from the Mary Cook scrapbook collection**

**September 14, 1900**

**WEST BOYLSTON MAN FLEES BUT IS FOOLED**

**April 20, 1902**

Deputy Sheriff Baldwin, along with Metropolitan officers Burns, Corsia, Closson and Knight raided a house on the north side of Cross Street, known as the Porter Place, earlier this evening and got three cases of beer. The place is in the reservoir district, and is said to be kept by Dominico Maranno, and has been watched for a week, it having been reported that a week ago there was a fight in the building in which knives and revolvers were used.

The officers learned that a quantity of liquor was taken to the place and a warrant was secured yesterday.

As the officers entered the premises Maranno jumped out of a window, making tracks for the woods, some 500 feet away. Several officers chased him but he was too fast.

Inside the house two men were playing cards and drinking beer. Friends of the two men gathered around and wanted to know what could be done to free the prisoners. The police were foxy and said the first thing to be done was to produce the proprietor of the place.

Maranno was hunted up by some of his fellow countrymen who brought him to the building apparently

thinking that their act would help matters. Then Maranno was bagged and there were three prisoners.

While the police were at the place, J. McGourdy of West Boylston, happened along and the police, thinking him drunk, put him under arrest also. He stayed in the cell in the metropolitan lockup while the others were bailed out. All are to appear in court in Worcester in the morning.

**April 21, 1902**

Carmine Maranno was fined \$50 by Judge Samuel Utlely for illegally selling liquor; Mr. Alesantro and Mr. Lepore were each fined \$3 for gaming on the Lord's Day and James McGourdy was fined \$10 for being drunk. He was unable to pay the fine and was committed to the Summer Street jail.

The metropolitan police force schedule has been released and went into effect today. Officer Burns will do day duty; officers Closson and Knight will be on nights. Chief Baldwin and his officers will have new gray uniforms with brass buttons to replace the blue uniforms which will be discarded.

*Barbara Deschenes*



**Grants**

We have just received word that we have been approved for a West Boylston Cultural Council grant made possible by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. We are very grateful for this gift. I want to thank Neil Norum for putting the grant proposal together.

**Bev Goodale, Curator**

*West Boylston Historical Society*  
*Outdoor Yard Sale - Major Fund Raiser*

*Saturday, June 4, 2016*

*8:00 am – 1:00 pm*

Save Clean Useable Items in Good Condition -

Please no luggage, Large Electronics, Technical Books or Clothing

*Wanted*

Antiques and Collectables, Household Items, Jewelry, Small Furniture, Tools,  
Children's Toys (complete and in good condition), Books and Gift Items.

Baked Goods wrapped in clear plastic wrap and labeled with ingredients)

Items may be dropped off at Society on the following:

Thursdays, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and June 2<sup>nd</sup> between 9:00 am – 12:00 noon.

Or you may drop off by appointment at 774-239-3652.

We will also have a limited number of spaces available for vendors at \$15 per  
11ft by 11ft. space. You will need to supply your own table, etc.

Call for details 508-835-3704. It is, first come first serve.

*Rain Date is June 11, 2016*



**Vendor Registration**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mail with your check of \$15 to: West Boylston Historical Society, 65 Worcester Street, P.O. Box 201, West Boylston, MA 01583