

Old Stone News

*The Newsletter of
The West Boylston
Historical Society
Spring 2018
Volume 21, Number 1*

MEMBERSHIP

The dues for the calendar year 2018 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. We promise not to share them.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS



The buildings and grounds committee is now down to one and a half members. This makes taking care of the property difficult. Please consider joining us in the care of the property. Contact Don at 774-239-3652 if you are interested in helping.

MISSION STATEMENT

"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

This is my final letter as your president as my family is relocating to Melbourne, Florida for better weather, a nearby Air Force Base and our daughter's family. It has been my honor to have served. Also, our treasurer, Don DeMarsh, will be leaving for Rochester, N.Y. later this year. He has been a valuable member both handling the finances and the facilities. Therefore we are looking for someone to fill this important position. Please contact Don DeMarsh if you are interested at donald.demarsh1@gmail.com.

Our society is in very good financial condition but the board's main challenge is membership, especially younger members. Several board members are in our 70s and 80s. This past month we welcomed two new members to the board, Andy Sontag and Heide Roemmele, and are looking forward to their input and service. But we still need other younger members. Why not bring a guest to our next program? Contact any of the board if you can help at the society. We will again conduct a Yard Sale on June 2 or June 9 (if rain) as one of our society fund raisers.

Historically in the Past, Neil Norum

Historical Happenings

Wednesday, April 4, 2018 - 7:00 p.m. at the Bigelow Tavern

"God's Acre, Deed Rock and The Hermitage"

Jan Parent, Preservation Worcester

Wednesday, May 2, 2018 5:00 p.m. at Wachusett Country Club
Annual Dinner Meeting

"Google Earth - Wachusett Reservoir - Then and Now"

Robert Smith

Saturday, June 2, 2018 (rain date Sat., June 9, 2018) at the Bigelow Tavern -Outdoor Yard Sale

HISTORY BY THE INCH

CURATORS CORNER

Our curator is currently convalescing from a broken ankle so the primary work of inventorying our vault is being continued, albeit at a slower pace. Don, Nancy and Janet have worked tirelessly organizing, inventorying and recording in the computer the contents of the vault. The end goal is to make all this information easier to locate. With the return of spring and those who reside in Florida for the winter we hope to finish the project this year. Thank you.

Bev Goodale, Curator

Be sure to check the Historical Society website for up to date information at:

www.wbhistory.org.



Harold N. Keith West Boylston's first casualty of the "Great War"

Corp. Harold N. Keith was the first resident from the town of West Boylston to make the supreme sacrifice during the war to end all wars, (World War 1). He was killed in action in France on July 20 1918; according to word received to his parents Mr. & Mrs. J.F. Keith, on August 28, 1918. Communication one hundred years ago was extremely slow and must have been very difficult for loved ones to sit and wait for word from their family members overseas; this is comparison to today's instant breaking news.

Harold N. Keith was born in Grafton MA, coming with his parents and siblings as young children to West Boylston to settle on a dairy farm on Prospect Street, to what is now known as Pinecroft. Harold graduated from West Boylston High School, class of 1908. After taking a course in dairying at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, he entered the milk business. By his strict integrity and pleasant ways he made many friends in business and at the same time he was called to service he had a flourishing business route in Greendale.

Harold was a member of the Centennial Lodge, I.O.O.F. and the Albert Rebekah Lodge. He was an active worker in the grange and was master for two years. He was a member of the Congregational Church and had served as President of the Y.P.S.C.E.

Corporal Harold N. Keith went into service at Camp Devens on September 19, 1917, along with town residents Carl Bigelow Jones, Byron W. Barker, Raymond S. Huntington, they all left from Town Hall on a Friday morning at 7:30 am to Ayer MA at Camp Devens. Harold's brother Erving F. Keith had enlisted in the engineering Corps at Fort Slocum New York on June 1, 1918 and was shortly transferred to Camp Humphrey in Virginia on June 9, 1918.

The last letter received by Harold's parents that Harold had sent them was dated June 29, 1918, the postmark was August 2 and the letter was received on August 20. An extract from that letter states:-

"If it wasn't for the fact that somebody has a birthday or wedding anniversary, we could never keep track of the days of the week, as it is a long time since we have seen a calendar."

"Some of the boys haven't heard from home yet, Raymond Huntington is one of them. I have been lucky enough to get 24 letters, but I haven't received any mail for some time."

In another letter to his parents dated May 5, 1918 it states:-

"Just a few lines to let you know I am still somewhere in France. We are situated in a nice quite town on the bank of a canal. On either side of the canal is a beautiful growth of farming land beyond. It has been almost two months since I have heard any news from home, but we expect any day to have a whole bunch of mail, I have had so many addresses that I don't wonder we do not get the mail, but now that we have a permanent address we ought to get our mail quicker."

"Last night a young fellow came up and shook hands with me, and said his name was George Shephard, one of the families that lived on Mountain Street at the Summit."

"I went down the canal about two miles to another camp last night, where there was a moving picture show in the Y.M.C.A. hut, it was the first one I have seen in a long while."

"How is everything going at home now? Please write and let me know."

Corp. Harold N. Keith "L Co., 102d infantry, A.E.F., by way of New York"

A memorial service for Corp. Harold N. Keith was held on Sunday September 13 at the Congregational Church at 3 O'clock in the afternoon by the Rev. Edwin Woodman, pastor. The public being invited to attend and full uniform dress rites of the Centennial Lodge, Albert Rebekah Lodge, the West Boylston Grange and E Co., M.S.G. All to honor the first West Boylston man to make the supreme sacrifice in the Great Conflict of 1918.

Steven Carlson, Historical Society Historian

LOOKING BACK

TROUGH OF COOL PUNCH

Article 18 on the March 25, 1901 Annual Town Meeting warrant is "To see if the town will accept the Beaman watering trough as a gift from Thomas Harlow, or take any action thereon."

The old trough, with its century of supplying water for man and beast is situated on the historical Major Ezra Beaman farm. It was hewn by Major Beaman and placed by him along the roadside directly across from his tavern and is a town landmark greatly prized by residents.

Water was supplied by an aqueduct 40 rods away with a constant stream of water coming from a spout in a stone column near the trough. The purity and coolness of the water was famous for miles around.

The old Beaman property came into possession of Helen C. Harlow, wife of Thomas Harlow 35 years ago. The family left the home which it had occupied for such a long time and moved to Shrewsbury after the property was purchased by the water board. The big 80' barn with its heavy hand hewn timbers had been razed to the ground with the house and other buildings to soon follow. As of March 21, 1901 the famous button tree, commonly referred to as the Beaman Oak, located a few feet from the trough had been spared which was

stipulated by Mr. Harlow in the sale of the property. That tree was planted by Ezra when he was a young 12 year old lad.

The trough has a deep hollow on one side from top to bottom where the water overflowed for a century and ran down the sides wearing away the stone.

Years ago the Beaman Tavern was a favorite for miles around and every traveler passing through West Boylston stopped for a punch made by the proprietor to dedicate his trough. The trough was filled with punch and invitations were sent near far for the celebration.

Ezra Beaman, Jr., a bachelor, continued his father's tradition of running the tavern with his faithful old housekeeper Aunt Polly for almost half a century. The tavern was a favorite resort not only for sinners but saints as well which was proven by a bill found among the early records for entertaining a church council from Shrewsbury for 7 days. The bill was made out to and paid by Jonathan Keyes and Cyprian Keyes. On March 25, 1901 the trough was unanimously accepted to be a town monument.

The trough is currently located at the junction of Newton and Central Streets in front of the Library.

Barbara Deschenes

Outdoor Yard Sale - Major Fund Raiser

Saturday, June 2, 2018

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 working 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 10th, 17th, 24th, and 31st 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 9, 2018



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