

Old Stone News

*The Newsletter of
The West Boylston
Historical Society
Fall 2019
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MEMBERSHIP

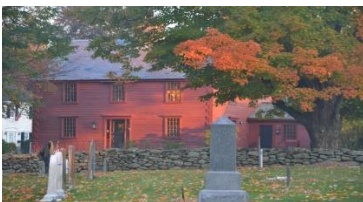
The dues for the calendar year 2020 are now due. If you have received a due's envelope with this newsletter, it means that we have not received your dues. The Society needs and would very much appreciate your continued support.

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



Grass mowing has come to the end of the season. Thank you to Keith Fancy, Richard Goodale and Malcolm Deauvais. We are continuing to work on the new lighting and, hopefully, it will be in by the time the clocks change in November. Thanks to Dwight Goodale for much needed window washing.

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

It seems like the summers go by faster and faster as we get older and older! We often say, "Where does the time go." Or "How time flies." I hope everyone enjoyed the summer (but not the heat) and are looking forward to the pleasant days of fall. This summer, we stayed open on Thursdays and had some great Open Houses on the last Mondays of June, July and August with the next one on September 30th from 6:30-8. It was great to see some new people and those that said they wanted to visit but couldn't make Thursday mornings. We even had two teenage girls from Holden visit us on a Thursday. They were looking to get away from their electronics and enjoy an outing to West Boylston. They were very interested in the Tavern and stayed quite a while. We would love to see more young people because that is important for keeping us going into the future. Sadly though, the Colonial Days for Kids was canceled because only 4 enthusiastic 3rd graders signed up. We will not give up and will try to do it again in the fall. We did, however, have another successful 3rd grade tour in June. In the coming year, we have some great programs planned, so please keep the program pamphlet nearby so you don't miss out. Every year we depend on the yard sale to bring in needed revenues and the donations are very much appreciated. We also participated in the Town Wide Yard Sale. We saved items from the June yard sale to do this. Our Bakeless Bake Sale was very successful so that we can cover the cost of the new lighting. Thank you so much to everyone. With the new lighting at the street and in the parking lot, it will be easier and safer to attend our programs.

Carol Parker, President

Historical Happenings

Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2019 - 7:00 p.m. at the Bigelow Tavern

"John Brown's Raid at Harper's Ferry"- Fr. Walter Riley, Pastor of Immaculate Conception Church, Worcester, MA

Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2019- 7:00 p.m. at the Bigelow Tavern

"Viking Fighting Moves from the Sagas of Icelanders" - Dr. William R. Short, Manager of Hurstwic, LLC - Dr. Short will review the history, culture, and society of the Viking-age people.

Sunday, Dec. 1, 2019 - 3:00 pm - 5:00 p.m. Holiday Open House at the Bigelow Tavern - Relax and enjoy colonial Christmas music by ***Charles and Elaine Crane*** who will perform in period costumes.

Lighting of Christmas Tree on the Common immediately following open house

CURATORS CORNER

Welcome to our Fall edition of the Curator's Column. Things slow down considerably during the summer at the Historical Society but we keep "trucking" along, Janet Buck has done a wonderful job organizing the way we record the donations we receive. We have added a number of donations to our collection since our last newsletter. It seems we always add new items when we have our yard sale, as was the case this year.

Joe and Linda Christo donated a nice collection of older pieces of pewter and two ladder back chairs circa 1840.

Doris Cannon gave 11 very special plates. They were made expressly for the Worcester County Sanatorium by the Bailey Walker Co.

We received a number of sewing objects from Janet Buck including a wooden egg from the Chicago Worlds Fair with thimble, a darning egg, and a pin cushion. She also gave a woman's metal chain purse and she made a copy of an early History of Oakdale Methodist Church, even sewing it together as was the original.

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

www.wbhistory.org.



HISTORY BY THE INCH

Armistice Day – November 11, 1919

The following article was written by C.B. Blodgett for the Worcester Telegram and Gazette dated November 11, 1919 on the observance of Armistice Day.

West Boylston, Nov. 11- Welcome home was observed in West Boylston today in honor of the 75 men from West Boylston who entered the service. On account of the weather, the exercises were in the Congregational Church, which was crowded.

The church was decorated with the national colors, and the women of the reception committee, who ushered the guests, wore white with red, white and blue sashes. One side of the church was reserved for the service men in honor, along with the Spanish War veterans, selectmen and other invited guest.

The program opened with singing "The Star-Spangled Banner," led by Eugene Caton, with Miss Fannie A. Hair at the organ. Capt. Charles E. Burbank gave a welcome to the ex-service men.

Chaplain George W.C. Hall of the Harold N. Keith post conducted a memorial service for the dead. The audience sang "Nearer, My God to thee," and "Taps" was sounded by Bugler Warren N. Phelps, lately of the U.S.S. Montana.

Charles A. Brigham and Dorothy Lundblad, aged 5 years, presented Harold N. Keith post, a flag in behalf of the women of West Boylston and Oakdale. Dorothy recited a poem. Charles A. Brigham told the history of the flag after which he said, "In behalf of the ladies of West Boylston and Oakdale I present this flag to the Harold N. Keith post in the memory of the three boys that the supreme sacrifice. He then presented a wreath of galax leaves and daybreak carnations with the words, "This wreath I present in loving memory of the comrade whose young life was so suddenly taken from our ranks."

At the close of the program, the members of the post went to Mt. Vernon cemetery, placing the wreath on the grave of Comrade Tracy Sumerwood and Warren N. Phelps sounded "Taps." The men marched back to the church, where they joined the audience and there was a half-hour of community singing.

Dinner was announced and the post with its many guests filed into the dining room where a bounteous chicken dinner was served. Covers were laid for 177 guests. The dining room was decorated with the national colors and potted plants. Mrs. Angie F. Prescott was in charge of the room, assisted by Mrs. Wayland A. Tuttle and the waitresses were women from the churches. Troop 1 was present at the exercises and gave musical selections and were among the invited guests at dinner.

One of the waitresses was Mrs. W.W. Keys, who waited on the tables at the Congregational church when the boys came home in 1865.

While the dinner was in progress, many who wished to stay to the night entertainment went over to the Baptist church. That church was decorated in the

national colors and on top of the steeple was a large electric star. The Y.P.S.C.E., served a lunch. Sandwiches, frankfurters, pies and doughnuts were on the menu. Upstairs there was a continuous concert from 6:30 to 8 o'clock with piano, organ, Victrola, cornet selections, readings and singing.

After the boys had finished their dinner, they fell in line and marched to Eastover, the home of Maj. Victor E. Edwards. Maj. Edwards had an acre of corn cut down for the husking tonight and his big barn and garage were used by the huskers. Ned Newcomb played the fiddle. There was plenty of sweet cider and apples for all. At 9 o'clock the boys came back and went to the Odd Fellows hall which they found filled with many of their friends who had come from the Baptist church. There was dancing from 9:30 to midnight, an orchestra from Leominster playing. All the halls in West Boylston were open to receive the guests. The Ladies relief corps hall was decorated with the national colors, with a large sign in front with the words "Welcome Home." A shield at the top of the building bore the date, "Nov. 11, 1919." The reception committee served refreshments. At the Odd Fellows hall, the Masons and Odd Fellows have meetings on the second floor with card tables and smokes for the boys and for the women of the grange they have their meetings downstairs and serve refreshments to the dancers.

Oakdale, Nov. 11 - Armistice Day opened in Oakdale early this morning with the ringing of bells and firing of cannon. Mason Goodale and Lester Hastings, Laurel Street, were among the noisiest, and kept their cannon going after the other had ceased. Flags were flown from many of the homes, and in the afternoon most everyone went to West Boylston to the welcome home celebration on the common.

Steven Carlson, Historian

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CURATOR'S CORNER Con't from Page 2

Roslyn Sliwa donated a large rug hand braided by her mother, Jacqueline Platt in 1962. She was an accomplished artist and made many wool items, rugs and stone rubbings. Her husband worked in a supervisory capacity for MDC. She also gave a Claire Murray wool rug.

From Dick Toupin we received a book of 8 1/2 x 6 1/2 photographs taken in West Boylston around the late 1800's, early 1900's with a two page index, always welcome. Dick also donated a large, 19 x 22 book dated July 31, 1919, made of newspaper print. It is titled, "Peace Edition" Worcester Telegram, Worcester, Mass. commemorating Worcester's Part in World War I. It contains many ads by sponsors and

includes historical articles and articles on many local soldiers including several from West Boylston. Dick has long been a generous donor to the society.

A collection of clothing was donated by Pat Condon, including a wedding veil, baby blanket and child's petticoat.

We received documents about the Boston Post Cane and the Aaron Goodale house.

Maps from 1900 to 1940 of West Boylston were donated by the Robinson family.

Thank you to all of our donors. Your gifts are much appreciated.

Bev Goodale, Curator

LOOKING BACK

Excerpts taken from the Mary Cook scrapbook collection

BEAMAN TAVERN

The celebrated Beaman Tavern, built in magnificence in 1764, was the scene of mirth and revelry of over 150 years. It was a stage stop for coaches running between Lancaster and Barre in 1811 and for the coaches that ran from Rutland to Boston. As late as 1840 the stage drivers who drove the Worcester-Lowell and Worcester-Fitchburg routes always stopped there to change horses and to eat.

The tavern was built of the best materials available with the architecture enhanced by hand-carved wooden moldings and panels. There were two large dance halls and numerous fireplaces throughout the building.

The building was used as a tavern for well over a century by Major Ezra Beaman and then by his son, Ezra who was assisted by "Aunt Dolly". At the time of Aunt Dolly's death, it was rumored that she owned most of the tavern "in lieu of wages".

Horatio Houghton, who for 26 years was the Town Clerk of West Boylston, was interested in purchasing the building which he remembered as early as 1827. He often spoke of the time when he was six years old and he and his father were travelling from their home in Sterling and the team ran over something in the road. It was just past dusk when the incident occurred and Mr. Houghton sent young Horatio to see what they had run over. There was a bag of grain that apparently fell off a wagon on its way to the tavern. "Aunt Dolly" rewarded them by giving each a huge mug of "hot flip".

It had been bitter cold and young Horatio was very tired from the trip. The heat from the roaring fire in the fireplace and the ingredients of the hot toddy didn't sit too well with the young lass which is why he was a temperance man for the rest of his days.

Around 1874 the main part of the tavern was moved approximately thirty rods away from the street and was made into a tenement house by Mrs. Helen Harl who had purchased the property when it was on Sterling St. The large ell was fitted up as a home for the Harlow family who occupied it for 30 years. Mrs. Harlow also purchased the cider mill which was converted into a dwelling house and occupied by the Howard Shepard family (Mrs. Shepard was formerly a Harlow).

There were two barns on the property, each one about eight feet long. One was moved and converted into a tenement house to be used by the employees of Clarendon Mills.

The watering trough was one of the main features of the tavern and was donated to the town by Mrs. Harlow when she sold her property to the state. The trough is now at the intersection of Central and Newton Streets in front of the library and is filled with seasonal flowers courtesy of the Beaman Garden Club.

Barbara Deschenes

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