

# Old Stone News

*The Newsletter of  
The West Boylston  
Historical Society  
Spring 2019  
Volume 22, Number 1*

## MEMBERSHIP

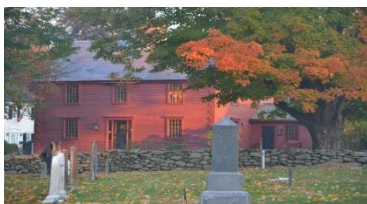
The dues for the calendar year 2019 are now due. If you have received a due's envelope with this newsletter, it means that we have not received your dues. The Society needs and would very much appreciate your continued support.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

[www.wbhistory.org](http://www.wbhistory.org)  
[bigelow@wbhistory.org](mailto: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



Many thanks to Phil Chevalier for plowing this winter and to Keith Fancy for helping me with the shoveling. There are no major issues with the building right now. Hopefully it will stay that way! An electrician is working with us to see how we can improve the outside lighting.

## 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

We trust everyone survived a somewhat mild winter with not too many storms. We are sure you are all looking forward to a warm and sunny spring. We had a very successful fall with 3 great programs and encouraging attendance at our programs. Barbara Berenson captivated our interest with stories and slides on Worcester's role in the suffragette movement. In November, we were able to "ride" the Central Mass Railroad from its beginning to its end. Again, great stories and slides of old depots. Although the weather was against us for the Christmas Open House, Robert Van Buren entertained us with his story of his aunts' motorcycle trek across the country. Thanks to the Light Department, there was a tree lighting. Our antique appraisal night in March was a big success. The audience saw a wide variety of items being appraised by Mark Alzapiedi who was quite entertaining. We want to thank our Vice President, Andy Sontag, for adding social media on Facebook to our regular program postings in the Item. Our next program is a visit to the Willard Clock Museum on April 28th.

Did you know that we have a Reading Room dedicated to Mary B Hyde? You just may find what you are looking for in your genealogical research in one of the great books. we have.

As we close out this year with our Annual Meeting in May, we will begin to plan for the 2019-20 year. A pot luck supper for members and guests is planned for the fall so watch for details on the website, Facebook and Item. It will be a great way for the Board and members to get to know each other. Our members are fortunate to have such a dedicated board, but we cannot move forward without the help of volunteers. There is a saying, "Many hands make light work". There are always short term projects that could be completed in no time with your support. Here are some projects we could use help with: planning a fund raiser, mowing and trimming the grass, helping with the store, including researching new items to sell, providing refreshments and of course, the yard sale in June. Several people have mentioned that since they work, they are not able to visit the Tavern when we are open on Thursday mornings. This is something that the Board has discussed and is working on finding the best way to be open more but in order to do this, we would need some volunteers.

The Annual Meeting is Wed. May 15th at the Wachusett Country Club. George Baker will provide an interesting program as John Adams.

*Dennis and Carol Parker, Co-Presidents*

## Historical Happenings

Sunday, April 28, 2019 - 11:30 a.m. Meet at the Bigelow Tavern if you want to carpool

Road trip to the Willard Clock Museum for a bring your own lunch and guided tour.

Enjoy lunch together at noon in the barn (weather permitting) or main hall followed by tour at 1:00 pm.

Wednesday, May 15, 2019 5:00 p.m. at Wachusett Country Club **Annual Dinner Meeting "John Adams Today" - George Baker**

In "Meet John Adams - A lively & revolutionary conversation with Americas's Second President", John Adams talks about his life and times in a humorous and inspiring performance and discusses, among many other incidents in Adams' life.

Saturday, June 1, 2019 (rain date Sat., June 8, 2019) at the Bigelow Tavern -**Outdoor Yard Sale**

## HISTORY BY THE INCH

### **West Boylston as a Summer Destination 1919**

Louis Cutting House



As I was reading through the newspaper articles of the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, written by West Boylston town reporter Mary Cook, I stumbled upon an article in reference to a few individuals and families that only reside in West Boylston part time. I found that very interesting since most of us today would not consider living in a town that does not have recreational water for swimming or to construct summer camps on. West Boylston had its newly created Wachusett Reservoir that perhaps brought in tourists to seek its peaceful tranquility and newly formed nature among the ruins of what once was a thriving town.

#### **The July 19th 1919 article states as follows:**

West Boylston has no camps at the present time, and but a few summer cottages, there is scarcely a day during the warm season that families come to West Boylston for a boarding place or a cottage. If the Housing Corporation of Worcester would possibly buy a lot of land in West Boylston and build groups of small houses, most of them would be rented before they were finished, and in fact would be rented as soon as word went out that they would be built. As an example of this is that of Charles S. Merrill of Central Street, who is completing a two story apartment house, he has already between 25 to 30 applicants for one of the apartments, which he does not want to rent at the present time.

West Boylston is one of the most delightful country towns in Worcester County and has an excellent school system, library, church and community activities. There are 15 to 20 families that come to West Boylston every summer, and it is a well-known fact that when they come once they will come again.

Orville P. Whitney of Brooklyn New York has a summer home on Malden Street; he bought the house over 30 years ago from the Raymond Lovell heirs and has occupied it every summer since from Memorial Day until Thanksgiving. Lester Ladd of Cambridge has bought the Addison Lovell place on Malden Hill and occupies it during the summer, returning to Cambridge in September.

Judge W.H. Whiting of Pleasant Street in Worcester owns a fine bungalow on Malden Hill, which he calls "Hilltop", it is 40 acres, 880 feet above sea level and on a clear day one can see 20 towns and villages. Judge Whiting is a West Boylston native born in the village of Harrisville and resides at Hilltop from April until November.

Avery White and family of Hollywood Street in Worcester own a summer cottage on Pierce Street and spend the entire summer there.

Louis Cutting and family of "Walnut Crest" in Oakdale occupy their house from May until cold weather sets in and in winter they board in Worcester. As a side note, "Walnut Crest" was destroyed many years ago and a new house sits in its place on Cutting Street off of Beaman Street.

Theodore Marsh and family of Dedham remain at their summer home on Prospect Street from July 4 until September 7.

Warren P. Harthan of Worcester Street has rented his summer cottage on Ardmore Avenue to Frederick Barth of Worcester, he will occupy the cottage from May until the first of January.

The Walter H. Lodged cottage has been sold to George Jaques of Chandler Street in Worcester and will occupy it until cold weather.

Any family desiring a delightful home for either summer or permanent home could not do better than come to the little town of West Boylston on the shores of the Wachusett Reservoir, and make their home with the 1500 present inhabitants of 1919.

**Steven Carlson, Historical Society Historian**

## **CURATORS CORNER**

### ***Do you remember Ho Jo's?***

Part of our Mission Statement states that the Society is to collect, preserve and honor our history. At one time we had a thriving Howard Johnson's Restaurant, now the Mill, and a Howard Johnson's Motel, now Classic Suites, complete with Gate House. The Gate House is all that remains in near original condition.

Howard Johnson's began in 1926 when Howard Deering Johnson borrowed \$2,000.00 to buy a small corner pharmacy in Quincy, Massachusetts. After he installed a soda fountain, it became the busiest part of the business. He then set out to come up with a new ice cream recipe and along the way developed 28 flavors. This would be his trademark. Howard Johnson would become the largest restaurant chain in the US in the 60's and 70's. We would like to document this business before more time has passed. Many people have fond memories of trips to Howard Johnsons.

Do you have any memorabilia from Howard Johnsons that you might be willing to donate? We are also asking if you would share your memories with us, a dinner or outing there, your favorite foods, maybe you worked there, any recollections. We will add your comments to the collection we are putting together. So write them down and bring them to the Annual Meeting. Thank you for your participation.

***Bev Goodale, Curator***

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

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



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## **LOOKING BACK**

### **AT OUR FIRST TOWN HALL**

A special town meeting was called on August 25, 1902 to vote on two warrant articles. Article I was for a town hall and Article II was to build a high school. West Boylston had been 96 years without what most towns had - a proper town hall. Voters approved spending up to \$15,000 on the town hall including a lock-up and a library and up to \$20,000 for the high school at the corner of Crescent and Prospect Streets.

In 1903 residents were eagerly looking forward to the start of construction of our first town hall at a cost of \$15,000. The chosen site was at the corner of Crescent and Prospect Streets where the former Murdock School once stood and where the Municipal light Building now stands.

The first floor of the building housed town offices, a kitchen, dining room and a library room. There were stairs leading to a large assembly hall on the second floor that seated 350 people. A curtained stage in the front of the hall provided the area for conducting town meetings and plays and a room on each side was used as a dressing room and storage. A stairway from the hall led to a 125 seat balcony that overlooked the hall. Lighting was provided by gas lamps with a generator housed in the basement adjacent to the town lock-up which consisted of 2 iron cells.

The grand new building was dedicated on January 18, 1904 with a "respectable" number of people in attendance; however, more than 125 couples attended the Dedication Ball that evening until the lights went out due to a malfunction of the generator. Fortunately no one panicked and the lamps were recharged with the outage lasting less than a half hour.

The town hall was the center of activity for 14 years; the first town meeting was held there on March 27, 1904; at the beginning of WWI the State Guard held weekly drills there. It was the site where dances, plays and social gatherings were held but all this ended on the morning of Christmas Eve, 1917 when fire broke out at 2:45 a.m.

Church bells rang out to inform everyone of a fire and the only fire fighters that could respond were the volunteers with their hand held extinguishers. The fire was too great so they concentrated on the nearby homes and all were thankful for the heavy snowfall the day before which helped to extinguish any fallen timbers and the fact that there was no wind at all. The vault containing many of important town records withstood the heat and most records were saved.

It was not until 1938 that another building was provided. During those 20 years town meetings were held in the Odd Fellows hall and graduations took place in the Congregational Church.

What a sad sight to see on Christmas Day – A very useful building that the townspeople had wanted for nearly 100 years was gutted and destroyed. With the nation at war, immediate replacement was impossible.

So since 1917 we have seen town offices located on the second floor of the DPW building, then moved to the former Mixter School on Prescott St.; then next to a factory building at 127 Hartwell St. and finally our own building at the corner of Worcester and Franklin Streets but town meetings are held at the high school and elections are held in the basement of the Catholic Church.

***Barbara Deschenes***

*Taken from writings by James A. Cooke and Mary Cook*

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

*Saturday, June 1, 2019*

*9:00 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 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> between 9:30 am – 12:00 noon.

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 at 781-249-3627. It is, first come first serve.

*Rain Date is June 8, 2019*



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