

The Bigelow Tavern Times

News from The West Boylston Historical Society

Volume 27, No. 1 Fall 2024

What's in Your Attic?



Spring and fall are typically clean up times. Do you have items that you are thinking of donating? We would love to have your antiques and collectables, household items, jewelry, small furniture, tools, children's toys (complete and in good working condition), books and gift items for our booth at the Town Wide Yard Sale on September 14. Items may be dropped off at Society on the following: Thursday, August 29th, and September 5th between 10:00 - noon. Thank you for your generosity.

Upcoming Programs!!!

See our new website for details
wbhistory.org/programs

WB Town Wide Yardsale Sept. 14 from 8 am-2 pm

October 2: Paul Marrone: Before the Reservoir at Beaman Library from 6-7:30 pm

Nov 6: Dave Lindberg: Silent Sentinels of Gettysburg at Beaman Library from 6:30-8 pm

Dec. 1: Holiday Open House from 3-5 pm

President's Letter

Welcome to the new Fall 2024 West Boylston Historical Society newsletter, we have a new look and a even better updated website for you to explore and enjoy at your leisure. Our new features include historical aspects of the society, such as our restoration work, and collections, an extensive town history section, upcoming programs, past newsletters, historic snippets, many old photos and new historic research links..

Board member Susan Gomes has been very busy this summer season researching, studying and updating our computer email and website, we thank Susan for all her efforts into this endeavor. Please check out our new website and enjoy. We have a new feature for an online donation to the society through the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, but of course we always accept monetary donations at any time, made out to the West Boylston Historical Society. We always welcome historical items related to West Boylston's history or town related.

Please check out our new website: wbhistory.org or send us an email at bigelow@wbhistory.org. We look forward to hearing from you. We have some exciting programs planned for the upcoming year so please stop by and check us out.

Regards, Steven Carlson, President

Membership Renewal for 2025

Return the enclosed envelope with your payment to
West Boylston Historic Society
PO Box 201

West Boylston, MA

Or point your phone camera at the QR code, then click the "tinyurl.com" to the membership form. Print the form and mail it with your check to the address above.



HISTORIC TRIVIA

Where was Harrisville?

Harrisville was in Oakdale. It was that section of Oakdale that housed the L. M. Harris Mfg Co. and surrounding houses. L. M. Harris Mfg was a textile mill specializing in cotton flannel. Harrisville was located on the south bank of the Quinapoxit River, approximately where River Street is today (formerly known as Holden Street). River Street can be seen on the right side of Thomas Street, heading from Oakdale to the high school. L.M. Harris Mfg was demolished in 1902 to make way for the Wachusett Reservoir. Sources - MWRA pictures, various references on the internet.

Cast Iron Toys

Most early cast iron toys were made in America towards the end of the nineteenth century by small foundries and factories and mass produced. They were made by a factory method called sand casting. The finer the sand, the finer the casting and the final the detail and finish will be. Age and quality are determined by the finish.

These wonderful toys came in a variety of subjects, including but not limited to, fire trucks, farm toys and tractors, transportation, the circus, home improvement and figures to accompany them. One can date cast iron toys by following the technology trail. For example, horse drawn toys were replaced by tractors and cars. Today these toys are highly collectible and also pricey, so bring your wallet. They can be found online, in antique shops, at auctions and flea markets. Several known manufacturers of these toys are Hubley, Kentontoy, and Kingsbury Toys.

Bev Goodle. Curator

This information was taken from Real or Repto, "Cast Iron Toys", by Mark Chervenka and "The Toy Fire Engine", from the Smithsonian Institute National Museum of American History.



Two cast iron toys from the West Boylston Historical Society's collection. The elephant pull toy is unmarked. The little bus was made by Hubley.

News from the Vault



On a recent afternoon while sorting through older donated town related items, I came across a stash of notes, letters, and farm receipts from Mrs. Shepard and the Shepard family farm. Noticing that the address on the receipts looked quite familiar, 65 Worcester Street, i.e. our current headquarters, aka The Historic Bigelow Tavern, I asked about the items. Our current president, historian and master of all facts worth knowing about our town history, Steve Carlson, remarked. "Those are some records and papers, having to do with The Shepard Turkey Farm, that was here on this site before the Historic Society, purchased the property!" "Wow", I thought. Steve, then further adding in his knowledgeable way, "They used to choke and slaughter the turkeys, right over there", where Nancy (Nancy Barakian our treasurer) was sitting. Nancy smiled wryly and seemingly surprised, looked around, as if she was checking the 1770's era Tavern floor for dried up turkey blood!

But interestingly it's all true, between the time period of 1946-early 1960,, the Shepard family operated a turkey farm on the current site of our Tavern. A Thanksgiving week, Worcester Telegram & Gazette article from November 17, 2011, featuring an extended interview, with Paul Shepherd, who as a young 10-12 year old son of, Lawrence Shepard, helped his father with the numerous daily rigorous chores of the turkey farm. Sadly his father's passing of a sudden heart attack on Christmas eve, 1960, spelled the closing of the farm within two years. However, Paul Shepard as expressed in the article, has many fond memories of his family's time on the farm and when it was sold to the town Masons in 1972, they allowed his mother to continue to live on the property.

Eventually the Masons opted to buy elsewhere (on Church Street) and sold the current property and Tavern to the Historical Society in 1990. The rest as they say.....is Town History.

Gerry Gomes



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