

# *The Bigelow Tavern Times*

Volume 28, No. 1 Spring 2025  
Website: [www.wbhistory.org](http://www.wbhistory.org)

News from The West Boylston Historical Society

## *Upcoming Programs!!!*

See our new website for additional details  
[wbhistory.org/programs](http://wbhistory.org/programs)

All programs are to be held at Beaman Library unless  
otherwise noted

April 2: The Original Bucky Lew, Basketball's First Black  
Professional Player with author Chris Boucher

May 7: The Women of '76, a theatrical performance by Rita  
Parisi representing 5 women of the American Revolution

June 6: Major Taylor: The Worcester Whirlwind with  
Lynne Tolman.

September 3: Serving the World with Worcester Dining  
Cars with Richard Gutman

October 1: Material Needs: Colonial Worcester County and  
the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade with Scarlet Hoey

November 5: Mel Bloom, a female US Air Force veteran  
will present the history of female veterans

December 8: Holiday Open House at Bigelow Tavern

## **The 250th is Coming!**

We are very rapidly approaching the 250th anniversary of  
April 19, 1775, followed by the 250th of July 4, 1776.

How many of us know of the April 19th 1775 10 AM  
Watertown to Worcester alarm ride of colonial express postal  
rider, Israel Bissell? Amazingly it is believed he covered the  
approximate 36 miles along the old Post Road in just two  
hours! Resting then in Worcester, before he continued on  
his historic marathon alarm journey. Not only did he carry the  
alarm to Worcester (perhaps even thru current day West  
Boylston, then part of Shrewsbury ) but per the request of the  
Committee of Safety, continued much further. Through  
Connecticut and even all the way into Philadelphia, alerting  
the Continental Congress, with additional stops in New York  
City and New Jersey! Covering the approximate 345 mile  
journey in just five days! (Yes, at times stopping and  
changing horses along the way.) His familiarity with the  
Boston/ New York postal route serving him well, as he  
declared along the route. .."To arms, to arms...the War has  
begun!"

## *President's Letter*

Welcome to the Spring 2025 West Boylston Historical Society  
newsletter, we at the society have been busy behind the scenes  
planning programs, answering emails and phone calls and general all  
around necessities of office work and upkeep of the building this past  
winter.

For the most part of the winter months we have been open on  
Thursday mornings, except for a couple snowy icy days in February, but  
otherwise our Thursday hours are 10 am to 1 pm.

We have some exciting informative programs coming up this  
year and have had two successful programs already, one being our first  
ever zoom program which was well attended and very informative  
about New England Lighthouses.

Please check out our updated website or our Facebook for event  
listings and historical interest, our programs are held at the Beaman  
Memorial Public Library unless otherwise noted.

We will start taking donations for our annual yard sale after July  
15<sup>th</sup>. The yard sale will be at the society building in September the day  
of the town wide yard sale.

We always welcome new members and also monetary donations  
or donations of items of historic interest to the town of West Boylston.

Please check out our website at [www.wbhistory.org](http://www.wbhistory.org) or email us at  
[bigelow@wbhistory.org](mailto:bigelow@wbhistory.org) We look forward to hearing from you.

*Regards, Steven Carlson, President*

## **Excerpts from The Old Farmers Almanac**

William Tell was an illustrious Swiss patriot, chief instrument of the revolution  
which delivered the Swiss Cantons from the German yoke in 1307. Grisler, the  
governor of these provinces for the emperor Albert, having ordered him, under  
pain of death, to shoot an apple placed on the head of one of his children, he  
had the dexterity though the distance was very considerable, to strike it off  
without hitting the child. The tyrant, perceiving he had another arrow concealed  
under his cloak, asked him for what purpose? To which he boldly replied, "To  
have shot you through the heart, if I had had the misfortune to kill my son," The  
enraged governor now ordered him be hanged; but his fellow-citizens,  
animated by his fortitude and patriotism, slew arms, attacked and vanquished  
Grisler, who was shot to death by Tell and the association for the independency  
took place that instant which has been since known by the name of the United  
Provinces of Swiss.

## Clippings from Mary Cook's Scrapbook

Among the valuable papers presented to the town of West Boylston this month is that of a deed of a parcel of land bearing the date May 25, 1799, and two with a date of February 7, 1831.

The first named paper was a deed of a parcel of land owned by Joseph Dwelley, who lived on the farm later called the James Fiske farm in the town which at that time was called "Holding." He enlisted in the Revolution when 15 years of age and "faithfully served his country as a soldier during the last three years of that war." The deed reads:

*"In Consideration of \$9 paid to me by Asaph Merrifield of said town county and state in said Holding, The receipt I do hereby acknowledge, give, grant, and convey unto said Asaph Merrifeild his heirs and assignees forever. This is a small piece of land lying in Holding and containing about 13 rods of ground being a barn, yard and ground where it now stands, a lane from the house to said plot and a part of the same Fram that Asaph and Timothy Merrifield bought of Johnathan Emmory of Boston.*

*In witness whereof I the said Joseph Dwelley have here unto set my hand and seal this 25th day of May, 1799.*

*Signed in the presence of James Kendal, Ezra Beaman, May 25, 1799. The above named, acknowledged this instrument to be his free act and deed, before me, Ezra Beaman, Justice of the Peace."*

*The other two documents are from William T. Barry, one time postmaster general of the United States. They are in regard of the appointment of Thomas B. Davis, Esq., as postmaster in the County of Worcester and the State of Massachusetts, Feb. 14, 1831.*

*"To all who shall see these presents, greeting: Know ye that confiding in the integrity, ability and punctuality of Thomas E. Davis, Esq., I do appoint him postmaster and authorize him to execute the duties of that office at West Boylston in the County of Worcester and the State of Massachusetts according to the laws of the United States, and such regulations conformable thereto as he shall receive from me.*

## Doomed Town

Recently I stumbled over an interesting highly illustrated 1895 Edition of "Picturesque Worcester" (published by the W.F. Adams Company of Springfield, Mass). Near the end of the volume, an interesting section on neighboring Worcester towns, such as: Shrewsbury, Holden, Boylston and yes, West Boylston are to be found. Each section extolling the country charm, ambiance and own unique characteristics of each respective town. The one exception being the "Doomed Town" of West Boylston.

As early as 1895 the Wachusett Reservoir was in the planning stages along with the flooding of approximately 2200 acres of West Boylston land! The authors speak of the progress of having a reliable fresh large supply of water for Boston, and a large preserved protected bucolic landscape with trails around the future reservoir (Completed in 1905).

The price of said progress primarily being the destroyed, drowned, "Doomed Town" of West Boylston! Paraphrasing the last sentence, "While the people of West Boylston will have nothing except a few thousand dollars to pay for the loss of their property, while unfortunately the law does not provide damages for lost associations."

Gerry Gomes

## Membership Reminder

If your newsletter has a checkmark next to your name, it means we didn't receive your membership renewal.

If you already renewed, thank you for your continued support.



In Appreciation of  
*Barbara Deschenes*

Who over 40 years gave her time to  
the West Boylston Historical Society



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