

Old Stone News

*The Newsletter of
The West Boylston
Historical Society
Spring 2020
Volume 23, Number 1*

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



As we move into spring we are thankful that it was an easy winter for snow removal. Now we can turn our attention to spring cleanup and get ready for grass mowing. Last fall we installed a sister beam in the attic to prevent further roof sagging.

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

Spring is in the air! Well, not the day I am writing this but it is on its way. The months seemed to fly since the fall newsletter. Maybe it's because the winter was good to us as far as snow fall. It has been a good year and one we can look back at proudly. We have had 4 good fundraisers that have brought in much needed revenue. Our annual yard sale has always been successful in June but will be moved to the Town Wide Yard Sale in September. The No Bake Bake Sale was great and gave us the revenues to add much needed outside lighting. Our Christmas Open House was very special this year. Thanks to Shirley Smith for giving us 50% of the proceeds from the sale of her art work. She has allowed us to continue to display her paintings for future sales. Also, a big thank you to Elaine and Charles Crane for providing wonderful music in period costumes. This month we are having a very successful calendar fundraiser thanks to our local businesses. We sold 105 calendars at \$10.00 each!

It was going to be a great spring but with this pandemic it is important that we do the right thing and close the society temporarily. We want to do our part in keeping our members and the community healthy. Although we are closed, we will need to continue paying our bills and depend on your support through your membership to do this. We will get through this and move on!

As always, we will continue to work on growing our membership, volunteer support and keeping up with our financial needs in the 2020-2021 year. We couldn't have accomplished all of this without the dedication of our Board members and volunteers!

Carol Parker, President

Historical Happenings

Due to the Pandemic all Programs have been Cancelled

Wednesday April 1, 2020 - 7:00 p.m. at the Bigelow Tavern

- Mark Alzapiedi, Watermark Antiques - Cancelled

"Our Own Antique Road Show" at the Tavern

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 - 5:00 p.m. at Barbers Crossing North,

Sterling MA - Annual Dinner Meeting - Cancelled

At This Time, The Yard Sale is Still On.

Saturday, September 12, 2020 at the Bigelow Tavern -Outdoor Yard Sale as part of the Town Wide Yard Sale

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 Johnson's.

Do you have any memorabilia from Howard Johnson's 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.



HISTORY BY THE INCH

West Boylston's Oldest House



West Boylston's oldest house was said to have built in the year 1720, when roads were merely footpaths through the woods and when travel between towns was a long tedious journey using horse and carriage or by foot travel.

The location of the house; which was known as the Jacob Hinds house, was on a lane leading off the main road to Worcester. In present day, this location is off Worcester Street and the house was located where the Walmart building stands, the front of the house faced Worcester Street.

Not far from its site was the old Block house and between the two buildings many strange relics of the American Indian had been found. The house, while the country grew from a province to a nation, had weathered a thousand storms and a thousand people had passed by who had long passed the great divide.

After standing for two centuries through shifting scenes of time, the old Hinds house met its final toll on July 9, 1920, due to fire from an unattended oil stove. The house burned to the ground with only its chimney remaining, which stood there for many years later.

The house was of a fine colonial type, with a quaint hip roof of the period. At first it contained a living room, a big kitchen and a bedroom. Years later another room was added to one corner and there were two bedrooms upstairs. The land on which the house was built included 100 acres, and was originally granted to Jacob Hinds by the general court of Massachusetts in compensation for service rendered in the Indian Wars.

The house was built of hand-hewn oak timbers and all the clapboards and shingles used in the house were made by hand and carted over the road by team from Gardner. The house also had a splendid convenience of having fresh water supply created by hand made clay pipes, and laid a quarter of a mile from a spring on high land near the house. These pipes brought the water to tubs a few feet from the door of the house, and the overflow ran in other clay pipes to the barn. This homemade water system was created in the early 1800's and few houses in town had such a fresh water supply.

Children had come into life in the old house and from its doors have passed solemn funeral processions. Jacob Hinds married Grace Morse of Marlboro, and it is supposed that he died in the house. He was succeeded by his son, Benjamin. Benjamin was trice married and was the father of 17 children, 16 of whom lived to grow to mature years. Benjamin died in the house in 1794, and his son Jacob, who was born July 21, 1767, lived in the house until his death on October 28, 1852. Jacob had four children, one of whom, Cicero became a prominent man in town.

Generations came and went; the last of the Hinds family members to live in the house was Solon Hinds, a great grandson of the first Jacob Hinds. Solon was married three times, and was known as a lover of flowers and shrubs, all of which he started from seed. He had a large orchid of apple trees, mulberry trees, peach trees and large quantities of grapes all grown on the property.

After the death of his three wives, Solon Hinds made an agreement with Mrs. Halsey Fletcher of West Boylston that if she would come to his home and care for him as long as he lived, he would give her the farm. This she did, and on March 22, 1870, the farm was transferred to her. Solon died February of 1891, and on April 30, 1903 Mrs. Fletcher sold the farm to Andrew J. Scarlet.

For over two hundred years, the property had only been owned by three parties – Jacob Hinds and his descendants, Mrs. Halsey Fletcher and Mr. Andrew Scarlet. Today it is known as Scarlet Brook Market place.

Steven Carlson, Historical Society Historian

LOOKING BACK

CON ARTISTS INVADE TOWN

On October 24, 1904 two women came to town to play a little confidence game on the unsuspecting housewives of the community.

They were real con artists with slippery tongues and bewitching personalities and were quite successful in separating a few ladies from their hard earned cash for what was claimed to be genuine Irish linen but proved to be cheap cotton lace.

They would visit a home and say that they were teaching lace knitting and they wished to instruct the lady of the house as well as any daughters who were old enough to learn. Their credentials were impeccable as they had taught this art to nuns in Ireland.

The lessons were \$1.00 each but many residents did not have the time to spend learning this art so the ladies would present a piece of linen Irish lace to show their workmanship and take orders at \$1 a yard which they claimed was dirt cheap for such a work of art.

The beautifully wrapped lace was then delivered to the lady who had ordered it; the lace makers were paid and then scooted.

After the lace was unwrapped buyers realized they had not received the beautiful lace they were shown, but the cheap cotton lace that could be purchased at Oakdale for ten cents a yard.

And a month later, another con artist, former Selectman William B. Woods of Woods St was the first person to drive over the new causeway that crossed over the Wachusett Reservoir at 11: 00 a.m. on the morning of November 26, 1904 amid cheers of bystanders.

Of course, this wasn't the official crossing as he was dared to do it even though the dirt was still soft and difficult to travel.

Barbara M. Deschenes

Taken from writings by James A. Cooke and Mary Cook

West Boylston Historical Society
Outdoor Yard Sale - Major Fund Raiser

Saturday, September 12, 2020

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.

Items may be dropped off at Society on the following:
Thursdays, August 13th, 20th, 27th, and September 3rd
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.



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