

# The Olde Tavern News

*The Newsletter of  
The West Boylston  
Historical Society  
Spring 2024  
Volume 27, Number 1*

## MEMBERSHIP

The dues for the calendar year 2024 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



Dennise Parker reported building repairs will continue in the spring along with yard clean up and ongoing maintenance.

## 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."

Be sure to check the Historical Society website at:

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

## From the Board of Directors

**Ready to do something fun? – West Boylston Historical Society is seeking active volunteers and new board members!**

Board members meet monthly and work together to keep the place going. We work together on programs, keeping the building afloat (maintenance and finance wise), fundraising, managing the website, social media, newsletters, open houses, annual meeting and more. ***Are you interested in joining us? We'd love to have you!***

We are also seeking active volunteers who may have time and interest in helping the board! ***How? There are so many ways you can help and assist with your talents. Here are a few:***

- Program ideas and coordination.
- Fundraising ideas and coordination.
- IT help
- Upkeep of our website.
- Social media upkeep and postings.
- Open Houses
- Semiannual cleaning of the house.
- Grounds and building maintenance.
- Annual yard sale.
- Writing historical articles for our bi-annual newsletter.
- Baking for our program events.

***And more!***

If you are interested in joining our board or becoming one of our active volunteers, ***please email us at [bigelow@wbhistory.org](mailto:bigelow@wbhistory.org). We look forward to chatting with you about the opportunities!***

## Historical Happenings

**Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> 7:00 p.m. - Antiques Roadshow  
with Mark Alzapiedi from Watermark Antiques.**

\$10 donation for up to 3 items to be reviewed!  
Location: Historical Society/Bigelow Tavern.

**Wednesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> 6:00 p.m. – Annual Meeting and program on Lafayette,  
presented by Steve Taskovics, Captain of Saint Onge, representing the French  
Military Experience during the Revolutionary War.**

\$5 suggested donation. Pastries and beverages will be served.  
Location: Beaman Memorial Public Library

**Historical Society Open Houses 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.  
Monday, June 24, 2024 - Monday, July 29, 2024 - Monday, August 26, 2024**

**Saturday, September 14, 2024 – Town-Wide Yard Sale, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Maps will be available at the Historical Society

**Opening of the Woodland Street School 1924**  
**Worcester Telegram & Gazette, Mary Cook, correspondent**

**CURATORS CORNER**

**Class History**  
**By Walter E Robbins**

The class of 1901, which numbered 24 pupils, was the largest that ever entered the high school so that on our entering, two or three extra seats were put in, making the school number fifty-six scholars. We entered under the reign of Mr. Gilpatric, Miss Clark, and Miss Butler, whom we found to be our Friends, and our willing teachers. They ruled without a break the first term, and well we remember the first lessons on subjects we had never studied before. These studies, such as Latin and Algebra, were very hard at first, but -"where there is a will there is a way", and we conquered them. At the beginning of the second half of the first year, we were minus one member, G. Garfield Burns. Garfield might have been the class jester, but studies were not his general favorite. The next to leave was Sidney W. Hardy; then two of our Oakdale friends, Carrie E. Smith and Christine B. Tight. They were two pretty weighty girls, and deserve a great deal of space. Roy W. Warner next left us. He hardly ever came to school without a pink in his buttonhole, and of course was a "favorite" among the girls.

.....Cont. on Page 3

Everything is in readiness for the opening of the new schoolhouse on Woodland Street on Monday morning. But three of the four rooms in the building will be opened at present. The teachers will be Mrs. Irene L. Smith, principal and in charge of the first-grade pupils; Mrs. Lena O'Malley, who will have charge of grade 1 and grade 2 and Mrs. Mary Donohue O'Connor, who will have charge of grades 3, 4, and 5. The janitor of the new building is W.B. Parker. The new building cost the town some \$35.00 and is modern in every respect.

One of the special features of the new building is a shower bath placed in the basement of the building suggested by the school nurse, Miss Mary Wilson, and seconded by the school physician, Dr. Harry W. Trask.

There are four school rooms on the first floor, 20 x 30 feet each. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. O'Malley will have the two rooms on the east side of the building. Each room has four large windows and a window box for flowers is placed underneath each group of four windows on the outside of the building with which each of the four rooms is lighted. The floors are all hardwood, the furniture all oak. Around three sides of each room are slate black boards and what are known as "pin boards" of burlap in which the children can fasten their drawings or pictures. There is also in every room a large closet. Between the rooms of Mrs. Smith and Mrs. O'Malley are folding doors of the height of the room which can be opened in full, thus making one large meeting room. There is also a ventilation system in each room.

On the left side of the building Mrs. Mary Donohue O'Connor will have the children of grades 3, 4, and 5. While the fourth room will not be used at present, furniture for all four rooms has been ordered. Most of the furnishings were bought from the state by law, but the 125 combination desks and chairs, which are movable, were bought from outside.

Through the center of the hall which extends through the building is a long rack for the children's clothing. In this hall is also a fire alarm system. Fire escapes lead from each room. In the basement is the boiler room, with two furnaces and a 500 gallon tank for water. There is a boy's playroom as well as a girl's playroom. In one corner of the basement is the shower bath given by the women of West Boylston at a cost of \$400.00.

The curtains of the entire building are brown denim and hung so they can be run from the top or the bottom, thus lighting any part or room desired. The building committee who have worked so hard to get the desired results are the selectmen, Edmund D. Brigham, Francis N. Luce, Willard F. Keith and the school committee, Lora C. Neal, Albert W. Hinds and Harlan T. Pierpont. The committee organized with Albert W. Hinds chairman, and Frank N. Luce, secretary. Merle A. Sturtevant, superintendent of the district, has watched the work from start to finish.

The plans and specifications for the new building were made by Fuller & Delano of Worcester. The general contract for the building of the new school was given to E.P. Pitfield Co., Worcester and the heating and ventilating to M. D. Holmes. Electric wiring was done by J. Ernest Burpee of West Boylston. The contract for an artesian well was given to Walter E. Chapman of Oakdale. The original appropriation for the school was \$20,883.33.

Cont. on Page 3

**HISTORY BY THE INCH**..... Con't from Page 2

Later at a special town meeting, an additional appropriation was made of 15,000, which included the furnishing of the entire building. The new school will be open for public inspection on March 30.

On March 31 the schools in town opened for the spring term. The Woodland Street school opened that day with 78 students. In the first grade Mrs. Irene L. Smith had five new students and 17 students transferred from the Goodale Street School. Mrs. Lena O'Malley, who had grades 1 and 2, had 36 students and Mrs. Mary Donohue O'Connor, who had grades 3, 4, and 5 had 26 students.

On April 29, 1924, the building committee and the school committee arranged a reception at the Woodland Street School house from 7 to 9:30 pm, a Thursday evening, for people who wish to see and inspect the building. Supt of Schools Merle Sturtevant, the building committee, the school committee, and teachers were all present to show visitors through the building and to answer any questions.

Woodland Street School thrived for many years serving the town of West Boylston and was a neighborhood elementary school, but unfortunately the school met its demise in December of 1973 and was no longer needed by the town, the building started to age and needed repairs. The building sat vacant for a few years and was finally torn down and now is a recreation area for town activities.

This is the Woodland St. school principal.  
Mrs. Irene L. Smith



***Steven Carlson, Historian***

---

---

---

**CURATORS CORNER** ..... Con't from Page 2

The first-class meeting of the class of 1901 was nearly a failure as no one person could keep the rest quiet; but at the last we chose as our president Arthur H. Sawyer, and as secretary Mollie C. Howe, who have held their offices the entire four years. The first meeting was to see if the class would hang a May basket to Mr. Gilpatric. This motion was carried, and the basket hung regardless of the torrents of rain that were falling that night.

At graduation time of that year, we were minus five members of the class of twenty-four, but we were not discouraged as our class of nineteen still took up more room than any in

school. After that graduation there was a ride to the Mountain which needs to be mentioned here.

September 1898, we went back to school with eighteen in the class. Homer Clark one of our bright young men and a jolly good fellow, to the great sorrow of the girls, had gone to Worcester to work. Mr. Gilpatric and Miss Clark came back as teachers, but Miss Butler had gone to another school, and her place taken by Miss Chaplin of Worcester.

We were sorry to have Miss Butler go, but her place was very well filled by Miss Chaplin of Worcester who was always ready to help us in anything she could.

Time rolled on, and during that year we lost more members but we did not lose heart as our class was still the largest in school. One of those to depart was Carlotta L. Jencks, a young lady from Boylston. She was very bright, and was the first to arrive each morning.

Two very quiet people were Katie A. Whalen and Mary E. O'Brien. Who lived in Boylston, and always came late to school. Katie was great on explaining propositions in Geometry. These two girls and Sadie L. Buss from the south part of West Boylston, left us without our having any idea why. The last to leave the class this year was E.E. Young.

*Bev Goodale, Curator*

---

---



## Farmer's Almanac Corner 1797

**History:** Robert Bailey Thomas, founder, and editor of the Farmer's Almanac, was a West Boylston resident for most of his life. The Beaman Memorial Library owns the complete collection of The Farmer's/Old Farmer's Almanac from the first publishing in 1792 (for the 1793 edition) to the present. The library holds the honor of owning one of three complete collections; the others are located at the Almanac headquarters and the Library of Congress.

**And now, in recognition of 2024 being a Leap Year, an article from 1797 about time. *Different Times when the Day begins, and a short Account of the Old and New Stile***

"The ancient Egyptians and Romans supposed the day to begin at midnight, and it is also now considered by the United States of America, Great-Britain, France, and most of European counties, as beginning at that time. In astronomy, however, it is supposed to begin at noon, or at the time when the sun is on the meridian. The beginning has been fixed at sunrise by some nations, as the ancient Babylonians, Persians, and at sunset by others, as the ancient Jews, Grecians, &c. In the Julian calendar, or old stile, a method of reckoning time

adopted by Julius Caesar about 45 years before the birth of Christ, which was much preferable to any that preceded it, a year was supposed to consist of 365 days and 6 hours; each of 3 years in succession was a year of 365 days, and, on account of the annual excess of 6 hours, another was added to every fourth which consequently consisted of 366 days and was called a leap year. As the solar, or the time of apparent annual revolution of the sun, is not exactly 365 days and 6 hours, but nearly 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 48 seconds, it follows that the Julian year exceeded the solar by about 11 minutes and 12 seconds. This annual excess amounts to 1 day in 129 years. Notwithstanding this inaccuracy, the Julian stile was generally used in Europe till the year 1582, when it was reformed by Pope Gregory the thirteenth, who introduced what is called the Gregorian or new stile.

It having been found that the vernal equinox, which had been fixed to the 21<sup>st</sup> of March by the council of Nice, held in the year 325, happened the 11<sup>th</sup> day of March in 1583, the difference of 10 days between the civil and the real time was taken from the October of that year, and the 21<sup>st</sup> of the next March, reduced to the true time of the Equinox. But as the Protestant States refused, at that time, to the new stile, which the Pope had enjoined on all of the ecclesiastics within his jurisdiction, and exhorted the Christian princes to adopt it in their respective dominions; it did not commence in the British empire, of which the present United States of America then made a part, till the year 1752, when, the error having increased to 11 days, they were, by an act of parliament. Struck out of all the calendars from the month of September, the third day, according to the old stile, being called the 14<sup>th</sup>.

The reformation of the calendar consisted not only in expunging the excess of the civil above the real time, but also in the introduction of a principle which should prevent a like accumulation of error in the future. According to the old stile, the last year of every century is a leap year, but in the new, only every fourth of these leap years is retained; the real being considered as common year. This diminution of the number of leap years nearly balances the error, which, at the rate of 11 minutes and 12 seconds a year, amounts to 1 day in 129 years, and 3 days in about 4 centuries. It is, however, to be observed, that at the above annual rate of 11 minutes and 12 seconds, the accumulation in 4 centuries is 3 days, 2 hours, and 40 minutes, so the deduction of 3 days in 4 centuries falls short of the difference between the civil and real time by 2 hours and 40 minutes, which error will become equal to 1 day in 3600 years, or 36 centuries."

Submitted by Kim Fisher

=====

**LOOKING BACK**

*Excerpts taken from the Mary Cook scrapbook collection.*

**HARRIS MANUFACTURING SOLD TO WATER BOARD**

It was October 11, 1899 when the papers were passed for the transfer of L.M. Harris Mfg. Co. in Harrisville to the Metropolitan Water Board for \$194,000. The mill was the largest and most important manufacturing establishment among those that were destroyed to make way for the reservoir. The terms of the sale were that the company was to leave the site and not relocate in the basin area; however, the company did have the right to remove machinery and to dismantle the buildings or any parts thereof.

The property included the Whiting mill, the L.M. Harris mill and the tenements. There were 155 acres of land at Canada Mills which was about two miles above Oakdale and also a shoddy mill and a few farm buildings had been built on a portion of the land.

The cotton mills were in Harrisville. The upper mill was known as the Whiting and the lower one as the Harris Mill; both were on the Quinapoxet River about 800 feet apart.

**L. M. . HARRIS MFG. HISTORY**

In 1829 a small sawmill was operated by Henry Holt; several years later he enlarged it and installed machinery to manufacture cotton yarn. It was in October of 1845 when Mr. Holt sold the mill to L.M. Harris, Gideon Harris and their brother-in-law Alfred Whiting for \$6,000. The property at the time of the sale consisted of three acres, a double tenement, a barb, and the small cotton mill.

The trio organized immediately under the name of L.M. Harris and Co. manufacturing cotton yarn for two years for the Lancaster Quilt Mill in Clinton. Charles M. Harris joined the company in 1847 and soon they put looms in the mill and began to weave cloth, an enterprise they carried on for over 30 years.

In 1884 Gideon Harris died and a year later the mill was destroyed by fire. The mill owners, noted for their true grit a keen business sense, began immediately to rebuild the mill of stone. Exactly one year later they began once again to manufacture cloth Shortly after they reopened they had to add on more space to accommodate the 40 looms which they had acquired and by the early 18702 they had outgrown their plant. It was at this time that they erected their second mill, The Whiting, about 800 feet upstream. The building was constructed of brick and stone with all the carding and spinning done there.

The company manufactured cheese cloth, bag goods, shoe linings and also bandage goods that were used by hospitals in New York, Philadelphia and Boston with total sales between five and six million yards of cotton every year.

Charles M. Harris died in 1889 and Alfred Whiting died a year later. L. M Harris died on November 13, 1893. Henry F. Harris of Worcester, son of Charles Harris became the president of the business which employed over 100 people, most of which were French Canadians.

---

## ***News From The Vault...***

As a recently appointed/elected member of the West Boylston Historical Society board it is both a challenge and an honor to serve and learn some of our town's history at our headquarters and de facto museum, Bigelow Tavern, located at 65 Worcester Street across from the Congregational Church. There is no one better equipped to explain and more patient and knowledgeable than our long-serving historian, board member and town librarian, Steve Carlson.

I had inquired about the collection inside "The Vault". The Vault was part of an L shaped addition added in the 2007-2008 time period and named after Edgar A. Whitcomb, the Society's Founder, Past President and Historian. One might say the "George Washington" of the West Boylston Historical Society but as with Washington many fine men at his side like Aaron Goodale and others as well.

As expected, The Vault is locked with some measure of temperature and humidity control with many long shelves that go back some distance holding a large variety of freely donated items of past historical significance. The range and scope are impressive and hard to grasp and describe. Some as "simple" as old high school senior class outing pictures from the 30's to exotic locales like Washington DC, to important town memorabilia like badges, pins, and hats from old fire chiefs. Significant town events like the town bicentennial recognition and other important town milestones are memorialized by artfully designed ribbons, pins or photographs.

However, one recently donated item caught my eye in particular. A 1930's era Navy's officer Lt. Commander Dress Review Hat with epaulettes for ceremonial occasions worn by Lt. Cdr. George C. Cummings, son of the former Rev. Cummings of the West Boylston Congregational Church, as donated by his relative Scott Cummings currently living in Schaumburg, Illinois. This is typical of the process of how the Historical Society comes to possess some of these unusual items. A relative may thoughtfully think of our local Historical Society when they come into possession of a historically significant asset of a former town resident. We are proud to provide a home for such items and hope to increase our ability to curate and further display and share these items with the community. We always welcome interested volunteers with a love of history.



***Gerry Gomes***

---

# West Boylston Historical Society

## Town Wide Yard Sale - Major Fund Raiser

Saturday, September 14, 2024

8:00 am – 2:00 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 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and September 5<sup>th</sup> Between 10:00 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.

---

### 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

## **WEST BOYLSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

*Membership is open to all individuals, organizations and businesses who share an interest in West Boylston history.*

*We are always looking for new members to join in to help preserve the history of West Boylston.*

### **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL**

*Please make checks payable to West Boylston Historical Society, Inc.*

*Name* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address* \_\_\_\_\_

*City* \_\_\_\_\_ *State* \_\_\_\_\_ *ZIP* \_\_\_\_\_

*Email* \_\_\_\_\_

*All Memberships begin on January 1 and end on December 31*

*This is:* \_\_\_\_\_ *New Membership* \_\_\_\_\_ *Renewal*

*Membership*    \$25.00

*Contributing Membership*    \$35.00

*Ezar Beaman Contributor*    \$250.00

*Robert Bailey Thomas Contributor*    150.00

*Abel Bigelow Contributor*    \$100.00

**The West Boylston Historical Society, Inc. is a non-profit charitable cooperation.**

**Please send application or renewal to:**

*West Boylston Historical Society*

*Box 201*

*West Boylston, MA 01583*



**JOIN US AT THE  
WB Historical Society  
ANTIQUES  
ROADSHOW**

with Mark Alzapiedi  
from Watermark Antiques

***Wednesday***  
***April 3 at 7 p.m.***  
\$10 for 3 items

**Annual Meeting  
May 1 at 6 p.m.**

**At Beaman Memorial Public Library, 8 Newton St. West Boylston**



Enjoy a presentation by Steve Taskovics,  
Captain of Saint Onge Living History Regiment.  
He will speak about the French Military  
experience during the Revolutionary War.  
Pastries and beverages will be served.

The business meeting begins at 6 p.m. followed by the program at 6:30 p.m.  
Suggested: \$5.00 donation to benefit the WB Historical Society.