

The Olde Tavern News

The Newsletter of
The West Boylston
Historical Society
Spring 2023
Volume 26, Number 1

MEMBERSHIP

The dues for the calendar year 2023 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



The Bigelow Tavern is in good condition and the grounds weathered the New England winter very well. Ongoing Maintenance! Looking forward to Spring!!

MISSION STATEMENT

"The West Boylston Historical Society collects, preserves and honors the history of the Town through programs. Be sure to check the

Historical Society website for up to date.

Information at:

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.
- 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. We look forward to chatting with you about the opportunities!

Historical Happenings

Wednesday, April 12, 2023, at the Bigelow Tavern 7:00 pm

We loved her and you loved her! The Historical Society is delighted to welcome back Sari Bitticks, President of the Auburn Historical Society. Sari will present on the History of Toys and has many treasures to show us! Please join us for what is sure to be a wonderful evening.

May 3, 2023 - Annual Meeting - Barber's Crossing Sterling, MA

Jane Flynn, Granddaughter of Pearl McGown. Pearl was "an American designer of hooked rugs and a teacher and innovator in the field". Separate Letter will be mailed out with more info.

September 9, 2023 - Town Wide Yard Sale, - at the Bigelow Tavern 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

Monday Evening Openings at the Bigelow Tavern June 26th, July 31st, August 28th

CURATORS CORNER

"Some say, and I quote, that you can't understand a person until you walk in his shoes. Perhaps you can't understand a whole community either until you are aware of how it's people used to live. Each chapter in it's history builds on preceding chapters."¹

This is a concept that I have always embraced. It is the reason history is so important and historical societies help to spread the word.

Whenever I travel, if possible, I seek out a local historical society to visit. It is a wonderful way to learn the history of the area and to meet the "locals" who are generally a wealth of information on all sorts questions you might have. I have had the good fortune to spend over a month in Sebastian, Florida this winter. I was able to spend time at the Sebastian Area Historical Museum where I met just such a person, Pat Morgan, a welcoming and knowledgeable volunteer. He brought the history to life with his firsthand stories of his town.

A group of like-minded individuals interviewed older members of the town to gather as much information as possible about Sebastian before it was lost forever.

Earl W. Reed and the George W. Reed & Son Company

West Boylston, Aug 4, 1923 – The youngest organ builder in Massachusetts has been



delegated the work of rebuilding the huge organ in Mechanics Hall, Worcester, Earl W. Reed of the firm George W. Reed & Son, of West Boylston has been chosen to change the huge organ, a four manual tracker instrument, to a modern one with electric pneumatic action. Mr. Reed will start work at once.

Mr. Reed is a native of West Boylston, a graduate of the high school here and later of Pratt Institute, Brooklyn N.Y. He is the youngest of three generations of organ builders and at the death of his father, George W. Reed, he assumed charge of the business of the firm. He

now employs eight helpers at the West Boylston plant, the oldest of whom is Herbert A. Holmes. Organs built by the Reed company have been installed in many of the largest churches in the country.

Among the modern organs with combined tubular and electric action that MR. Reed built or rebuilt are the Old South Church, Lincoln square church, Second Swedish Congregational church in Quinsigamond, all in Worcester. Church of the Reconciliation in Webster, St. Anne's in Lenox, and the First Congregational in Webster. The organ in the Second Swedish Congregational is one of the finest organs Mr. Reed ever built. It is said that the finest organ ever built by the Reed Company in the one recently rebuilt in the Congregational church in Spencer. It is the second largest organ in Worcester County. The largest is at Piedmont.

The Spencer organ was dedicated on January 18, 1923, with an organ recital by John Herman Loud, organist at the Park-street church in Boston. The latest work of Mr. Reed is a modern electric organ for Saint Thomas church in Palmer, a two-manual organ of modern type for Saint Mary's church in Turner's Falls and a most modern electric organ for Saint Mary's Cathedral in Fall River.

This week he commenced rebuilding the large four-manual organ in Mechanics hall. This large four manual tracker organ was built by G. E. Hook of Boston, said to be the best organ builder in America. In the spring of 1864, it was placed in Mechanics hall and was the gift of Icabod Washburn, the founder of the Washburn & Moen Wire Works.

At the time it was built, some 60 years ago, it was said to be the finest organ in the country. Late in the spring of 1864 it was dedicated, and the organist were B. J. Lang of Boston and Dr. John H. Wilcox, who at that time was organist in the church of the Immaculate Conception in Boston.

Steven Carlson, Historical Society Historian

CURATOR'S CORNER Con't from Page 2

This venture resulted in the publication of three books, "TALES OF SEBASTIAN", "MORE TALES OF SEBASTIAN", and finally "EVEN MORE TALES OF SEBASTIAN." They are jam packed with information, pictures, and maps of the town. Those publications were the catalyst to get society up and running. Early families were generous in their support and donated photographs, legal documents, clothing and household items. The Society was incorporated in 1985. In 1998, the Society opened its first museum. In 2004 hurricanes Frances and Jeanne severely damaged the building and it was closed. It reopened in 2007 at its present location, the restored, circa 1927 Sebastian Elementary School which had closed in the 1980s. They have six rooms filled with artifacts from Sebastians colorful past spanning the time of the Ais Indians to the present day.

It is so important to support local historical societies. They are struggling just as we are. Just like us, they depend on volunteers to keep the doors open and are completely dependent on donations for day to day operations. So, the next time you are in a new place, check out their historical society. I think that you will be glad that you did.

1. Indianriverlagoonbyway.com, Sebastian Area Historical Museum, Indian River Lagoon Scenic Byway

References:

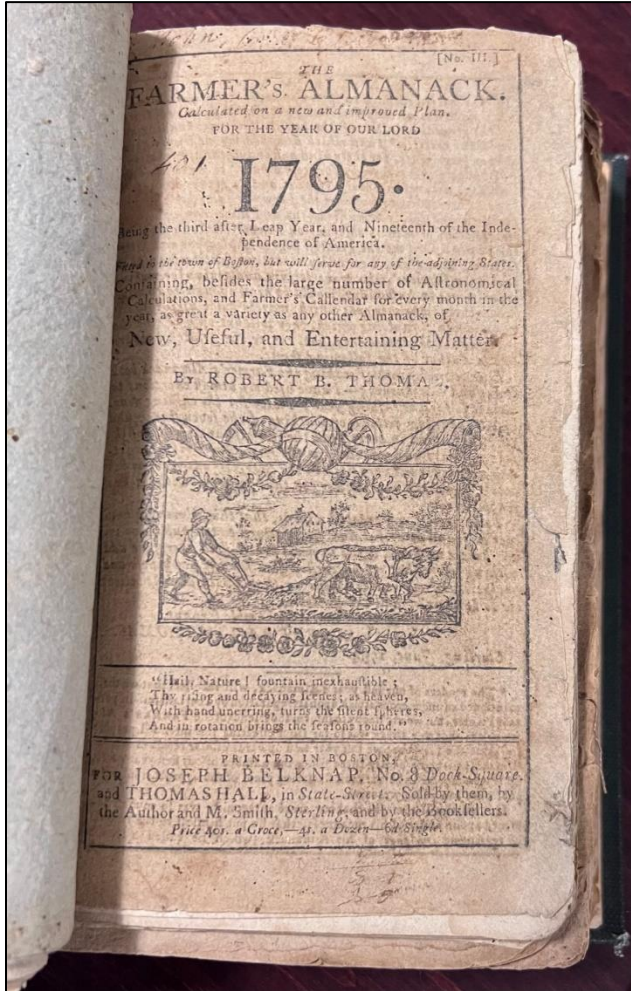
"Tales of Sebastian", 1990 "More Tales of Sebastian", 1992 and "Even More Tales of Sebastian" 2011. All are published by the Sebastian Area Historical Society, Inc.

Bev Goodale, Curator

Pat Morgan, a volunteer for the Sebastian Area Historical Society and assorted photos of some of their displays.



The Farmer's Almanac Corner 1795



Fun Facts: 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.

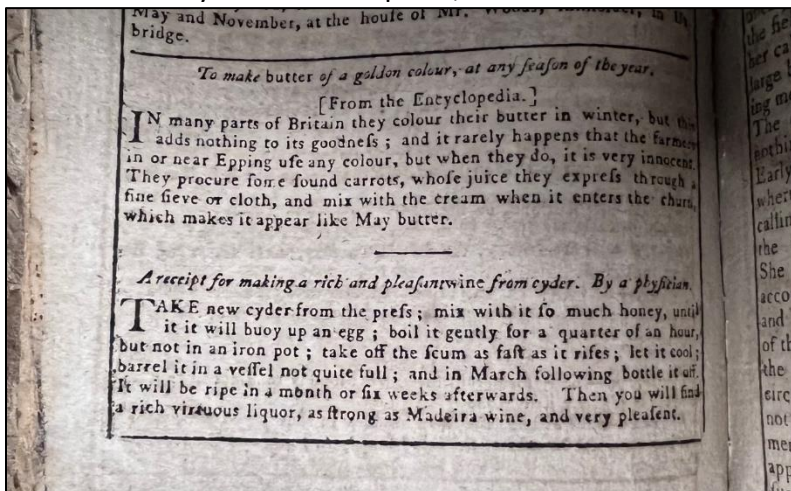
The word "old" was added to the name of the almanac in the 1830's to distinguish Thomas' almanac from other competing publications. It is the oldest continuously published periodical in the United States.

Let's peek at a few things from 1795!

"To be concise, my greatest wish is, that this almanac may ever be found useful and satisfactory to the public as is my sincere wish and desire to make it; I shall therefore add nothing more but my sincerest wishes for happiness and prosperity of my readers, desiring they would always believe me to be theirs, and the publics. Most obliged and most humble servant, Robert Bailey Thomas"

A receipt (recipe) for making a rich and pleasant wine from cyder. By a physician!

Take new cyder from the press; mix it with so much honey, until it will buoy up an egg; boil it gently for a



quarter of an hour, but not in an iron pot; take off the scum as fast as it rises; let it cool; barrel it in a vessel not quite full; and in March following bottle it off. It will be ripe in a month or six weeks afterwards. Then you will find a rich virtuous liquor, as strong as Madeira wine and very pleasant.

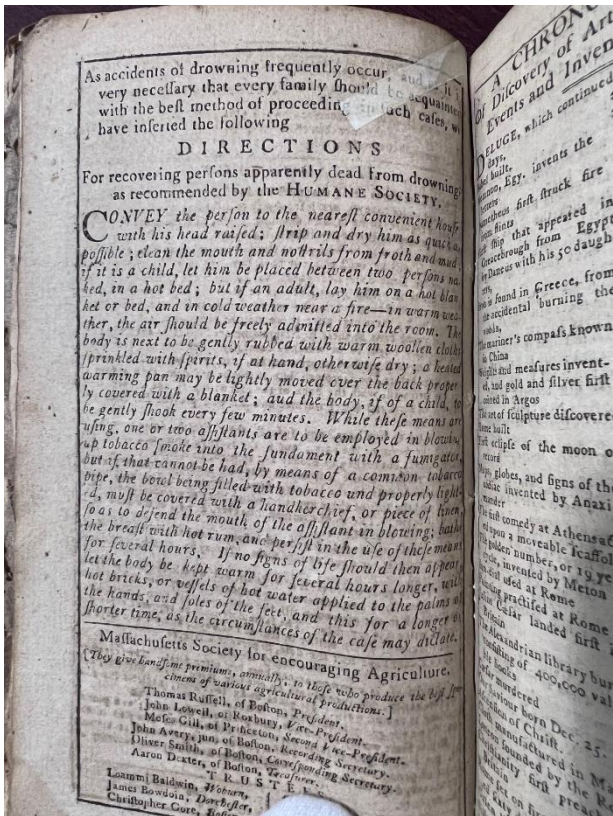
To make butter of a golden colour at any season of the year (From the Encyclopedia):

happens that the farmers in or near Epping use any colour, but when they do, it is very innocent. They procure some found carrots, whose juice they express through a fine sieve or cloth and mix with the cream when it enters the churn, which makes it appear like May butter.

A few quips from **The Sayings of Poor Ned** "which abound with good sense and humor, being useful in conversation and business."

- Poor Ned says, he that makes himself an ass, must not take ill if men ride him.
- Better a barn filled than a bed.
- Mans best fortune, or his worst, is a wife.
- Ready way to lose your friend is to lend him money.
- He that knows least commonly presumes much.

DIRECTIONS For recovering persons apparently dead from drowning as recommended by the Humane Society.



(I wouldn't have believed it if I didn't see the article myself!)

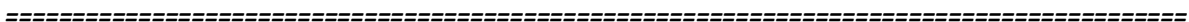
Convey the person to the nearest convenient house with his head raised: strip and dry him as quick as possible; clean the mouth and nostrils from froth and mud, if it is a child, let him be placed between two persons naked, in a hot bed; but if an adult, lay him on a hot blanket or bed, and in cold weather near a fire – in warm weather, the air should be freely admitted into the room.

The body is next to be gently rubbed with warm woolen cloths sprinkled with spirits, if at hand, otherwise dry; a heated warming pan may be lightly moved over the back properly covered with a blanket; and the body, if of a child, to be gently shook every few minutes. While these means are using, one or two assistants are to be employed in blowing up tobacco smoke into the fundament with a fumigator, but if that cannot be had, by means of a common tobacco pipe, the bowl being filled with tobacco and properly lighted, must be covered with a handkerchief, or piece of linen, so as to defend the mouth of the assistant in blowing; bathe the breast with hot rum and

persist in the use of these means for several hours. If no signs of life should then appear let the body be kept warm for several hours longer, with hot bricks or vessels of hot water applied to the palms of the hands and soles of the feet, and this for a longer or shorter time as the circumstances of the case may dictate.

Stay tuned for a glimpse of 1796 in the next newsletter.

Submitted by Kim Fisher



LOOKING BACK

Excerpts taken from the Mary Cook scrapbook collection

BRIDGE FINALLY COMPLETED

The long wait finally was over for the residents of West Boylston, Sterling and Clinton with the completion of the bridge over the reservoir opening a new direct route to Clinton and beyond.

The bridge was constructed on the site where the George F Howe Boot Shop once stood with a cost of \$41,000 to the state and it was expected to last for generations because of its huge rock foundations. There were over 233,000 cubic yards of fill that was hauled by team after team, month after month, for an eighteen month period until it finally was completed. The deepest part of the fill was seventy feet.

The stone paving on the sides of the bridge was eighteen to twenty-four inches thick stone which was cut from rock at the north end of the fill; this process taking a year to complete. The Nashua River formerly flowed through a place which is now closed by fill.

The new portion of the road connected with the road built by the state three years earlier from Worcester Street, passing under the B & M Railroad bridge, two hundred feet southeast of the West Boylston station.

The road began from where Walker's Store stood at the corner of Prospect and Holbrook Streets then through Captain Merryman's place to the brow of Merryman Hill then across the fill of an 800 foot spanning the reservoir. The road

continued through where Thomas Hall once stood and along Howe Street joining Fletcher Street opposite the John Brewer place.

The opening of this road meant the closing of Holbrook Street and that portion of Prospect doing away with the old stone bridge at the foot of Prospect Street; Cowee's Bridge near E. A. Cowee's Grist Mill, which also was closed.

The road took a year and a half to build and was 2,100 feet long, forty-three feet wide and ten feet of that was for the electric roadway. The new route was made of gravel, but it was expected that it would be macadamized the following spring.

The only building left standing in the valley were the old Beaman House, the cider mill, Sawyer's Store, the building used by the Metropolitan Police and the Boylston Construction Company's Blacksmith Shop. For the previous two years all the buildings in the valley were used as homes for laborers. It was at that time that Thomas Hall was moved to French Hill from the site where it stood near the old brick church.

Barbara M. Deschenes

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MEMBER OF THE “GREATEST GENERATION” GOES TO WAR

by Mary (Navaroli) Madden

WHO: Hugo (Ugo) Joseph Navaroli

WHAT: World War II

WHEN: February 28, 1941 He was 28 years old and was inducted into the U.S. Army, Company 1, 19th Infantry Regiment, *24th Infantry Division

WHERE: departed Fort Devens, Massachusetts

DURATION: 4.79 years total: 1 year, 9 months, 16 days in Pacific combat

HONORABLE DISCHARGE: November 21, 1945, \$300 “mustering out pay” He would turn 33 on December 24, 1945. One year later, he would father me.

And here’s the back story. There are few photos, no movies, no videos. Little exists before his military and adult life.

He never talked about the war, or combat, or being wounded, or contracting malaria. Not one word. It was not until I pored over his files and my husband, a student of history, put it all in context. “Your father was in some *bad* combat, Mary. For a *very long* time.” He told me what each medal and commendation meant and the significance of “The Victory Division,” First to Fight.

Hugo was born in West Boylston, the fourth of six children of Italian American immigrants. He attended school in West Boylston (Goodale) until a fire consumed his home and the family moved to Wheeling, West Virginia. (My mother always claimed that my grandmother had bootleggers living in the cellar, and that they caused the fire!)

Two report cards from Richland District High School (West Virginia) show a B+ to A student in Civics and English. My grandmother Erminia’s signature is on the back of the cards dated 1928 through 1930. Dad would have been 16 and 17 years old. He never finished high school; instead, he worked in nearby coal mines, helping support his family. What his siblings did and when the family returned to Massachusetts is not known; they settled in the Leominster-Fitchburg area. Dad worked at the Independent Lock and Key Company as a surface grinder operator, smoothing metal parts – most likely unmasked and inhaling the abraded metal dust.

With war raging in Europe and the U.S. entrance into war in the Pacific in 1941, thousands upon thousands of young men departed the U.S. for combat. Hugo was one of them. Before departing from Fort Devens, he returned to West Boylston to visit friends. Among them were

my maternal grandparents and their daughter, Giovanna (Jenny, who became my mother). They had been next-farm neighbors on Prospect Street. My mother recalled years later that my grandfather remarked: "That's a nice man; he's good to his mother." Dad began writing to my mother immediately upon joining the service. He wrote scores of letters, greeting cards, and post cards. Few of these remain today; the memories are mainly from my childhood, looking at them in a scrapbook. I have one beautiful Christmas card, the illustration showing a girl who is embraced by a soldier, their backs to the viewer. Her billowing skirt is a deep magenta velvet fabric inserted into the paper. The Norcross card cost 50 cents.

My parents' engagement is a mystery to me except for the very yellowed, crumbling Western Union telegram that reads:

DEAR HONEY, I ARRIVED SAFELY SHOULD BE THERE IN WEEK LOVE

HUGO J. NAVAROLI

It was sent on November 21, 1945. The next day was my mother's birthday. They were married in Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on March 2, 1946, and I was born in December, on Dad's birthday!

Dad's military service was another mystery, since he never, ever spoke of it. Discharge papers detail the facts: his physical description (5'8", 140#), length of service, locations, continental and foreign service, decorations, and citations. He was a fatalist and held the attitude "You do what you have to do. Just get it done." This was his lifelong work ethic. It appears in a local newspaper report (undated) detailing his participation in a first attack against Japanese forces in Mindanao. Digging in and finally overcoming the 50-man Japanese attack, his 35-man detachment prevailed after nearly running out of ammunition. "There wasn't anything to do but sweat it out," Navaroli said.

Dad's division, the 24th withstood horrific combat. Data shows that campaigns in New Guinea, Luzon, and Southern Philippine's, the sites where he fought, suffered 5,432 total battle casualties. Overall, with nearly 400,000 serving in the Pacific, over 30% died in combat. Though wounded, Dad survived, and after treatment for malaria, never appeared to suffer any future ill effects, either physical or psychiatric. I never learned the extent or location of his wounds other than a monthly U.S. Veteran's benefit compensation check.

Dad and Mom made their home at her childhood home: 294 Prospect Street. He maintained the fields and gardens while working full-time. He spent many years at Telechron-General Electric in Worcester as a degreaser. His job was to clean clock parts and the vats in which they were lubricated, most likely using trichloroethylene. TCE, a known carcinogen, was eventually banned in the late '70s. Small wonder that, after metal grinding work, coal mine exposure, cigarette smoking for decades, and solvent inhalation, he succumbed to lung cancer in 1984.

Dad’s final job was a huge boost for him. He proudly wore a professional uniform in his position as part of the Plant Engineering Department at Worcester County National Bank. In 1972 he received commendations from the bank and from Brink’s for his retrieval and return of a payroll bag containing \$10,000 that had inadvertently been left by Brink’s on a loading platform. The letter from Brinks contained a \$50 U.S. savings bond. Part of the text in the letter reads “This type of dedication certainly shows a man’s interest in his job and his character.” For sure.

My father was a hero in the sense of always acting bravely, under extraordinary conditions. He would not consider himself a hero, but I always did. He was the greatest influence in my life, and his photograph graces my desktop, and his framed 1984 commemorative certificate from the U.S. government adorns my office wall.

How excited and grateful I was to learn that the Historical Society would accept my father’s World War II memorabilia. Dennis and Carol Parker, my fellow West Boylston Lions (WEBO) friends, gave me one of the best gifts in my life: the knowledge that my father’s history will be housed here in our hometown.

Please visit the Historical Society to view Hugo’s medals and commendations. They are in a commemorative box with accompanying journal and photos at the Society’s headquarters 65 Worcester Street in the historic Bigelow Tavern.

With deep gratitude for displaying my father’s memorabilia,

Mary C. (Navaroli) Madden



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

West Boylston Historical Society
Town Wide Yard Sale - Major Fund Raiser

Saturday, September 9, 2023

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 11th, 18th, 25th, and September 1st 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.

Call for details at 508-835-6971. 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