

History of the Bedford General Store

The Bedford General Store has been a longtime fixture in Bedford history. Built around 1838, the structure was originally located about 500 feet south of the Presbyterian Church manse on Pound Ridge Road. It originally functioned as a country store which was owned and run by W. O. Scribner. As was common in the nineteenth century, it served a dual purpose as a post office with Scribner as the postmaster. In a 1954 article in *The Villager*, long-time Bedford resident Elizabeth H. Williamson (1860-1960) recalled the following about Scribner's store: "At that time a general store was said to sell anything from a needle to a wash board... Many of the supplies displayed on the counters were in open boxes... There were prunes, apricots, smoked fish, salt fish and open cracker barrels, cookie barrels, pickle barrels."

The building was moved to its current location sometime between 1880 and 1890 by James Millimore. An unofficial history of the building probably written by Dr. George T. Coopernail relates that during the move the building became stuck in the middle of the road as a result of snow and ice. For the whole winter it stayed mired in front of the James MacDonald house (also known as the Gerard Wood house) and drivers had to maneuver around it. Prior to the building's move, another building owned by James Lounsbury existed on the same property. It functioned as a general store called "Jimmerson's" run by S. Howard Jimmerson, who also ran a local hotel and published the first Bedford Village newspaper called *The Advance*. An 1876 edition of this paper stated, "The other day a youth came into our store and bought one pen holder at one cent and a pen at one cent, total 2 cts. Then he wanted us to give him a five cent cigar for his trade, no sir, we do not give cigars, or cigars for trade."

Since being moved to its present location, the Bedford General Store building has held a long list of diverse owners and tenants, although it appears as though it consistently functioned as a general store until Randall Trumpy, an antiques dealer, bought the building. According to one source, the first store owner in the new location was Charlie Keeler. He was followed by the Vinton Brothers, Henry and Fred. H.G. Arnold recalled in a 1949 letter to Coopernail that the store was next owned by a teenager named Ed Stead. Stead attempted to operate a general store but was unsuccessful until his sister, Minnie, left their father's farm to help him. The two of them lived on the building's second level and ran the store together until Minnie married a traveling salesman named George Purcell. The store closed until Arnold agreed to partner with Stead and they reopened the store around 1900. Arnold and Stead ran the store until 1912 when they purchased the Lounsbury Building and moved their store there.

Some time around the 1920s, Hyman Glasser took over the building and opened a general store. In an oral history taken in 2003, local resident Eileen Powell recalled of Glasser's store that "They sold everything there—horse collars to food." While running this store, Glasser built the Empire Building. A large family, the Glassers ran many other stores in Bedford Village over the years, including a butcher shop, a haberdashery and a restaurant.

The final owner of the building before the Historical Society was Randall H. Trumpy who operated an antiques store. In 1968, the Historical Society purchased the building from Trumpy and raised funds for its restoration. The building was immediately leased to John Renwick who was taking over his mother's real estate business and didn't wish to continue operating the business from her home. Later tenants of the building included the travel agency "Travel Trends" and George F. Henschel, Jr., Architect.

In 2007 the Board of the Directors of the Bedford Historical Society resolved to renovate the building and to move its headquarters there. It had long been a goal of the Historical Society to have a ground floor presence on the Village Green, the historic vista they have preserved and protected for over ninety years. That goal was realized in June of 2008 when the Bedford Store reopened. As home of The Bedford Historical Society, it is a community resource for information, education, research and archives – a place where Bedford's history is celebrated daily.