



# Bedford Historical Society

## Annual Report 2004

### Looking Back and Looking Forward

It is through the eyes of history that we can visualize and share our past. We look back and see the old homes and artifacts which give us a clear vision of our community's roots. We can grasp history and imagine what role Bedford played in the early days of our country. How special it is to look upon structures which existed at the very birth of our country! How inspiring it is for some of us to vote in our 1787 Court House! While our country has grown and expanded, we continue to use this place of colonial history to conduct an occasional, but important, government function. This reminder, connecting Bedford to its historic past, gives our town a special character which is well worth preserving. Through this preservation, we have an understanding of how past generations lived.

As we look forward, the Bedford Historical Society not only actively preserves its own buildings but strives to inspire private individuals who own historic homes to see the reason to respect the historic integrity of their properties. It is through saving old structures that we understand the context and historical texture of our community. The historic knowledge of this past allows us to make informed decisions about our growth and development going forward. We become more thoughtful about what has worked in earlier generations and what will likely work in the future. When demolition occurs, it sometimes takes with it a piece of our past which will quickly be forgotten. One needn't drive many miles to see the ramifications of preservation ignored. Whether it is the loss of the Cider Mill in Armonk (which became a housing development) or the grand Victorian hotels in Saratoga Springs (which became commercial strip malls), in many cases the community is irreparably changed. We are preparing for our future. Do we bestow a continued sense of history on future generations? Or do we live only for today?

### 2004 - A Year in Review:

Our Long Range Planning Committee, under the guidance of Peter Ehrlich, plots the course for our organization and sets goals for the year. It is, however, the hard working Board and our Executive Director who have accomplished an unbelievable set of objectives this year. In looking back at the long list of goals we set in January 2004, more than 80% of the tasks have been accomplished and the remaining are well underway. Again, we have another list of tasks to tackle in 2005, and our Board has already begun.

**Finances:** The attached operating statement prepared by our treasurer, Candy Borner, shows again our careful attention to increasing revenue while managing spending. We are transferring \$74,000 from the 2004 operating budget to our reserve for major repairs this year. Our maintenance and restoration plan for 2005 is expensive, thus requiring most of our savings, but we will continue to carefully assess and plan for it.

**Advisory Board:** We were thrilled to introduce a new board category and announce wonderful new members. Members of our Advisory Board are John Renwick, Jr., Jim Renwick, Linda de Menocal, Paula Desperito and Mary Farley. Each one of these members is familiar with the operation of the BHS and has been an invaluable advisor in many areas.

**Historic Properties Maintenance and Repair:** Under the capable direction of Ben Branch, Peter Michaelis and Keith Kroeger we have had another year with tremendous historic restoration. The 1829 Schoolhouse has a much-needed new roof. We also discovered significant foundation decay which will require a large and expensive repair in 2005.

We continue to restore the old and drafty windows of the 1787 Court House. We have removed, repaired and returned eight more windows this year. Only four remain to be done in 2005.

If you have visited Historical Hall recently, you may have noticed the new railing which has been installed on the balcony. Now this space becomes safer for all of us.

Also, with the gracious pro bono efforts of landscape designer, Mimi Lines, and with financial support from the Bedford Garden Club and the Rusticus Garden Club, Nancy Vincent coordinated the renovation of the planting in the 1787 Court House garden.

**Collections:** Through a special gift we were able to purchase Museum Collection software which will help us maintain the digital files and images of our vast collections. Jackie Farrell, Linda Wilson and Nancy Vincent continue to lead this important aspect of our organization. We are thrilled to announce a vintage costume exhibit this November 2005 showcasing Victorian pieces, many from local families.

**Education:** The education program for area school children continues to be an enormous success and wonderful teaching tool of early American history. Under the guidance of Walter McVicar, the program continues to grow. With the expertise of Jamie Edgar, a new DVD highlighting the program we offer is in production. I have no doubt that as word continues to spread on the success of our “living history” in Bedford, more and more 4<sup>th</sup> graders from schools around the County will request tours. Here is an area where we will need a number of additional volunteers. If you are interested in history and get a thrill from seeing children experience how justice was served in an 18<sup>th</sup> Century courtroom or how students were taught in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century one room school house, please volunteer.

**Fund Raising:** This year, we were treated to an exciting “return from the summer” fundraiser at the home of Susan and Keith Kroeger. The September event was made all the more special at their unique home, Pooks Hill, which will be featured in our next newsletter. Dina Clason and Ellen Reimer led a terrific committee to organize this memorable evening. We also wish to thank Consider the Cook, Lloyd B. Cox, Inc., and Renwick & Winterling Realty for underwriting some of our expenses.

**Tenant Leases:** Planning for historic preservation also involves the revitalization of the small village of Bedford. We are fully leased and thrilled with our tenants. Our focus will continue to be “retail” tenants in all of our spaces. Eric Reimer and Jeff Tweedy lead the legal and technical efforts of this major component of our income. We encourage all of our members to visit and support the retail establishments.

**Membership:** BHS membership continues to grow. We have included a membership list in this report with all new members designated with an asterisk. The number of new members is quite astonishing, and we owe great thanks to our membership chair, Dookie Tingue. We will continue seeking member input and involvement in 2005. It is all of you who understand our mission and who choose to support our goals. Thank you!

**BHS Annual Antiques Show:** Every year I can't imagine that this small, but important show, could ever get better. This year it was better yet! Missy Renwick and Dookie Tingue, along with their team of talented volunteers, do an unbelievable job in creating the high caliber of the Annual Antiques Show.

**Volunteers:** We are most grateful to our team of volunteers for helping in so many ways. We thank all of these devoted people – from the team who help with our education program to the weekly support of Betsy Hoffman and Joyce Vicenzi. Also thank you to our volunteers who continue supporting the Antiques Show and all other special events. Ada B. Combes was a tremendous help with our photograph archive and Kirtley Cameron has joined our generous volunteer staff where she has taken full leadership of maintaining our photograph and paper collections.

We still have much to do. I wish to thank all of our members who join with us in recognizing the significant history of our town. We can inspire each other by looking back at our unique history and by looking forward to plan for future preservation.

In addition to our 2004 Membership List, we have also recognized a few members who over the last two and more years have contributed to each and every event we sponsor. We affectionately refer to those of you in this category as “Our Oaks”. We have decided to formalize the “Oaks” into an ongoing list of members who support every single one of the events we sponsor. Thank you so much!

Respectfully,

Shirley Bianco  
President

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#### **Board of Directors**

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Shirley L. Bianco, President  
Peter R. Ehrlich, Vice President  
Jaclin B. Farrell, Secretary  
Nancy B. Borner, Treasurer  
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Keith R. Kroeger  
Walter D. McVicar  
Peter T. Michaelis  
Eric S. Reimer  
Marjorie B. Renwick  
Diane E. Tingue  
Nancy M. Vincent  
Linda B. Wilson

#### **Advisory Board**

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Paula Desperito  
Mary Farley  
James B. Renwick  
John P. Renwick, Jr.  
  
Lloyd B. Cox, Jr.  
Director Emeritus  
  
John Stockbridge  
Town Historian

#### **Staff**

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Executive Director  
  
Shirley Jordan  
Bookkeeper  
  
Hugh Vargas  
Buildings Superintendent