



Bedford Historical Society

The Bedford Historian

July 2004

BHS Presents Legacy Awards

In every town there are people who make a difference, those individuals whose love of their homeland spurs them on to create organizations or engage in a life's work that adds to the character of their community. These people are legacies to their town and the organizations they serve. At the Annual Meeting of the Bedford Historical Society on March 3, 2004, Shirley Bianco, President, presented Legacy Awards to three former Presidents of the BHS.

John P. Renwick, Jr. has spent a lifetime devoted to the Town of Bedford. As a descendant of one of the original proprietors, a lifelong Bedford resident, as well as a resident in the Historic District and local business owner, John took a personal interest in the preservation of Bedford Village and in the activities of the Historical Society to promote what is unique and special about Bedford. He joined the Board of the Society and served as President from 1988 to 1997.

Jim Renwick followed his family's dedication to historic preservation. He served as both Chairman of Buildings and Grounds and President until 1998 when he resigned from the Board in order to serve the entire community as a member of the Town Board. He continues to give us tremendous insight to business vitality in Bedford Village.

In 1999, the Board of the Bedford Historical Society, elected its first female president, Linda S. De Menocal. Linda was President from 1999 to 2003, secretary from 1993 to 1996, serving on the Board for twelve years. Also a resident of the Historic District, Linda brought the historical society into the new millennium by encouraging a greater presence in Town and improved administration of the organization and its buildings and activities.

Each of our Legacy Award recipients now sits on a newly formed Advisory Board so that their collective memory and perspective can help guide the historical society into the future.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Summer of the Burning Book Group
At the Bedford Free Library, July 7th

Burning of Bedford:
Interactive lecture by Col. James Johnson
The American Revolution in the Hudson River Valley
Friday, July 9 – 7 p.m. at the Court House
Reception following

Fall Sponsors' Party – September 11, 2004

Annual Antiques Show – October 16 & 17, 2004
At Historical Hall

Victorian's Secrets – Exhibition and Special Events
highlighting our costume collections
November 17 – 20, 2005 at Historical Hall

A Note from the President:

The Bedford Historical Society is approaching its 90th Anniversary. In 1916 an unlikely group banded together to preserve a 19th century Methodist Church which was being sold to a developer for conversion into a rooming house. This group saved the church, known today as Historical Hall and founded the Bedford Historical Society.

I call this group “unlikely” because in reviewing our original Articles of Incorporation at our last board meeting, John Stockbridge, our town historian, pointed out that of the nine original signers, five were women. The date of signing was four years before women were granted the right to vote!

The Bedford Historical Society has stayed true to its mission of preservation, education, collection development and interpretation all these years. The membership and leadership have always been “unlikely”. We don’t all have old houses or old family ties to the town. What we all do share is the love of our town’s historic character.

For many years, membership has had only slight growth. I am happy to report that for the first time in decades, we have increased membership by over 12% so far this year. This is a tribute to the hard work of our membership chairwoman and our entire board. This growth of new members will mean that our programs will evolve to match the character and interests of our members.

We still have far to go in membership growth. It is my hope and objective to count at least half of all households in Bedford as members one day. If you are a new member, thank you for joining! If you know of anyone new to town, bring them up to the office and introduce us. I look forward to your continued interest and support!

Respectfully,

Shirley Bianco



Jeff Tweedy, Shirley Bianco and Keith Kroeger stand with the 2004 Annual Meeting Speaker Robert Shafer who spoke on Private Collections: Public Benefit – Books, Manuscripts, & Libraries

Law Day



Prosecuting attorney, Kristin Windmuller questions defendant, B.B. Wolf, played by Eliot Smith, as Judge Kevin Quaranta listens to the testimony. The jury of BVES fifth graders later decided if Mr. Wolf did with malice aforethought destroy the houses of Moe and Larry Pig. Each year, with the help of local resident, attorney Peter Mahler, a group of students from Fox Lane High School write and produce a theatrical ‘moot’ court so that Bedford Village Elementary School fifth graders can learn about the law. During the course of the trial, Mr. Mahler and the judge explain the process by which laws are applied during a case.

Education Update

- Four Elementary Schools have participated in our Education Program this year. Tour Guides and Witnesses for the mock trials are always needed. Please contact the society if you would like to volunteer.
- As part of an independent social studies project, Fox Lane Senior, Eliot Smith, used sources in our offices as well as county libraries to research further the burning of Bedford

New Acquisitions

- Claudie Peterfreund: Documents related to the return of the First Indian Deed to the Town of Bedford. Books on Bedford and Westchester County.
- Dorothy Butler Harder: Assorted Bedford memorabilia
- Laura Jaffee: Set of Six Teaspoons by Stephen Holley Smith, Bedford
- Original Private Lanes Association 1931 Map of North Westchester – Gift of The Bedford Riding Lanes Association in memory of Wilhelmine Waller for her life-long dedication to historical preservation in Bedford and founding membership in the BRLA.
- *Summer of the Burning & Cassie’s Village*, signed by the author, Frances Riker Duncombe

Bedford 1787 Court House Garden

Have you ever had an occasion to study a photo taken in your living room or really looked at the amenities in a bedroom in anticipation of houseguests and suddenly realized that over the years the room's condition had deteriorated? We all get used to the status quo, and changes occurring slowly over time are barely noticed. This is what happened to the small garden to the side of the 1787 Court House in Bedford Village. The garden, originally designed by Mimi Lines and installed in 1992, had lost much of its form and appeal. Many of the boxwood, which outlined the garden's symmetry, had died or lost foliage on the lower branches. The espaliered apple on the back fence had grown tall and its 'arms' were above eye-level. The dwarf crab apples needed to be shaped.

The Bedford Historical Society got to work and coordinated the renovation project. Mimi Lines graciously ordered both new boxwood and a beautifully trained espaliered pear, and she oversaw the installation of all the new plantings. She did this completely at cost and donated her time and expertise as well. She even transplanted some of the old boxwood to an area near the post office to fill an empty plot once occupied by a tree.

Jeff Garson, a principal in the Empire Building, graciously replanted the area on the driveway that services the rear of the Empire Building. Without his participation even a beautifully renovated Court House garden would have failed to shine as the adjoining dying shrubs would have detracted from the garden. (Mr. Garson also has replanted the total area behind his building.)

Both the Rusticus Garden Club and the Bedford Garden Club gave substantial financial contributions to help defray the costs. The initial bills are only one portion of the cost as professional pruning will be necessary on at least an annual basis to keep the boxwood, espaliered pear and crab apples properly shaped.

Hugh Vargas who helps the Bedford Historical Society with maintenance replanted the grass and has kept the new plants watered. This is the most important task for the survival of these new plantings. Happily, so far the weather has also cooperated.

We all owe a huge "thank you" to Mimi Lines, Jeff Garson, and to Rusticus and the Bedford Garden Clubs.

The Town of Bedford and the Bedford Village Review Commission approved all the improvements. We hope you do too!



Old Plantings at the Court House



New Plantings at the Court House

Wilhelmine Kirby Waller

January 21, 1914 – April 7, 2004

The loss of Mrs. Thomas M. Waller as a dedicated member and supporter of the ideals of the Bedford Historical Society is deeply felt. Known familiarly as "Willie" and renowned for her local and national conservation efforts, she was a dedicated preservationist as well. When in 1990 she placed an extensive conservation easement on the open fields of much of her property, she granted it to the Society. This decision showed her faith in our organization.

In 1978 Mrs. Waller gave the twenty acres on the summit of Guard Hill to the Town. Originally named "Washington Lookout Park," it was rededicated in 1997 as "Wilhelmine Kirby Waller Park."

Her photographs and remembrances were critical to the publication of *Images of America BEDFORD*. She generously spent many hours with the authors Shirley Bianco, President of the BHS, and John Stockbridge, Historian for the Town of Bedford.

In addition to being a national figure in the environmental movement, she was also a nationally acclaimed horsewoman and breeder, especially of Tanrackin ponies. An amusing anecdote: Back in the 1950's she was asked along with Georgina Van Rensselaer and Ruth Sharp to identify some of the young children and horses which were in some of the movies that the BHS had found in its archives. Mrs. Waller confessed that she didn't recognize any of the children, but immediately recalled the names of all of the horses! "Willie" would have laughed with everyone else.

She loved all of God's creatures and Tanrackin Farm constantly revived her spirits. Her death is a substantial loss to Bedford's heritage. Her roots here were solid.

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The BHS Welcomes New Members

Alexandra & Bruce Ballard
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Barry
Mr. William Breakstone
Ms. Julia M. Burke
Kirtley Cameron
Ms. Christine Carmichael
Mr. Minturn V. Chace
Ms. Kaye Cocozza
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Cushman
Ms. Vanessa Diebold
Mr. & Mrs. Sherman Durfee, Jr
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Falise
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Feid
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas W. Ferguson, III
Maria & Ken Fields
Mr. & Mrs. Brian E. Fitzpatrick

Mr. & Mrs. William Foulke
Frank & Evon Fox
Mr. & Mrs. John Friedler
Virginia Getz
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Ginnel
Lyn Goodhue
Ambassador & Mrs. Donald Gregg
Ms. Katherine Hall & Mr. Paul Risko
Mr. & Mrs. Paul T. Haskell
Mr. Andrew H. Heine
Mr. & Mrs. Emil Henry
Mr. & Mrs. Erik P. Jacobsen
Cynthia Jaffee
Mr. & Mrs. Richard E. Kessel
Mr. & Mrs. Cary A. Koplin
Michael & Barbara Kornfield

Harry & Linda Krensky
Rebecca & Sasha Lainovic
Nicole & Josh Levy
Norman & Sarah Livingston
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph S. Lovering, III
Lola Margulies
Ms. Betsy Marrion
& Mr. Martin Goldberg
John & Gloria Marwell
Matthew & Abby Maslow
John & Lucille Oricchio
Kate & Michael Paletta
Penelope & Edward Potter
Lee & Ken Roberts
Dana Rosenberg
John & Allison Ryan

Mr. & Mrs. William C. Sandwick
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas E. Schimmel
Ms. Marcia Schlechter
Laura & Mark Schroeder
Mr. Theodore P. Shen
Cindy & Mark Swank
Lisa & Mark Schwartz
O. Lee Tawes
Mr. & Mrs. Luther L. Terry, Jr.
Peter & Virginia Tobeaon
Mr. & Mrs. Preston Turco
Ms. Christine Ward
Liz & Harry White
Cutler & Libby Whitman
Sally & Steve Williamson

Save the Date - September 11, 2004

Fall Sponsors' Party

To welcome our new members

To be held in one of Bedford's most special homes,
treasured for its unique architecture and stunning gardens

Board of Directors & Advisory Board

Jeffrey C. Tweedy - Chairman
Shirley L. Bianco - President
Peter R. Ehrlich - Vice President
Jaclin B. Farrell - Secretary
Nancy B. Borner - Treasurer

Benjamin C. Branch, Jr.
Dina Clason
Keith Kroeger
Walter D. McVicar
Peter T. Michaelis

Eric S. Reimer
Missy B. Renwick
Dookie E. Tingue
Nancy M. Vincent
Linda B. Wilson

Advisory Board
Linda S. de Menocal
James B. Renwick
John P. Renwick, Jr.

Lynne Ryan - Executive Director

John Stockbridge - Town Historian

Lloyd B. Cox, Jr. - Director Emeritus

Bedford Historical Society
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Hours: Monday - Friday 9:30 - 5:30
Museum Hours: Thursday-Saturday 11 am to 2 pm,
May-October or by appointment

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