

Old Stone News

*The Newsletter of
The West Boylston
Historical Society
Spring 2015
Volume 18, Number 1*

MEMBERSHIP

The dues for the calendar year 2015 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. Please share. We promise not to pass them out.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS



Waters Warner's House
c1889 Central Street

The house committee continues to plow, snowblow, shovel, clear the SNOW.... *Some things never change!*

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."

From the President

As I write this, we are yet again in the throes of a major snowstorm. Have you had enough yet? I am sure that you will agree that the winter of 2015 will be measured against future winters for years to come as it continues to break records of all past storms. History in the making! It has been a real challenge to keep the historical society open what with all the snow and record cold temperatures as well. We are deeply indebted to Philippe Chevalier who continues to do a wonderful job plowing our driveway. With Aaron and Norman on the disabled list, the task of snowblowing and shoveling has fallen to Don DeMarsh. Thank you to both of these men.

I am happy to report that we have received a grant from the West Boylston Cultural Council to help fund our Annual Meeting in May. We are very grateful for their support. I would also like to acknowledge a very generous donation from Patricia Madden Wilhelm for maintenance of the Lovell Bell Garden on the Gazebo Common and the historical society and also one from her brother, David Madden, to the society. They are both grandchildren of the late Julius Lovell, a long time selectman and public servant in West Boylston. These gifts are very much appreciated.

Two of our members were recently honored by the by the "World's Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade" Committee at a banquet on February 7, 2015 at Wachusett Country Club. Aaron Goodale received the "Tip of the Hat, Lifetime Achievement Award" and John "Jack" McCormick received the "Quiet Man Award". Congratulations to you both. The parade will be held on Sunday, March 15, 2015. The society will take part in this fun event and we hope that many of you will join in the celebration.

Beverly K. Goodale

Historical Happenings

Wednesday, March 4, 2015 - 7 p.m. at the Bigelow Tavern
WWII Experiences - Battle of the Bulge & The Wereth 11
Christian de Marcken, Battle of the Bulge Historian
To commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the end of WWII

Wednesday, April 8, 2015 - 7 p.m. at the Bigelow Tavern
Letters to Home - Civil War Remembrances - John Emerson Anderson
David Lindberg, Civil War Historian

Wednesday, May 6, 2015 - 5:30 p.m. at The MANOR
Annual Dinner Meeting
Patriots of Liberty - Betsy Ross, Deborah Sampson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Amelia Earhart
Patty Carver - Creator & Performer of "This Old Hat", original musical, "Women Patriots of American History"

CURATORS CORNER

"Early American Life Magazine" is doing an article about General Timothy Ruggles with an accompanying shorter piece on his daughter, Bathsheba Spooner. The society was contacted about our drawings in the attic of the Bigelow Tavern that depict the hanging of Bathsheba, etc., and asked if we would allow the images we have to be reproduced for the article in the magazine. We sent two of the images and understand that they will be included in the April 2015 issue with full credit to the society.

I want to thank photographer, Patrick O'Connor for enhancing the images and facilitating this process.

We recently received a group of family photographs and memorabilia from Lucy Salluce. They were brought in to us by Paula Salluce Howard. We love getting items of this sort for our collection and thank you for thinking of us.

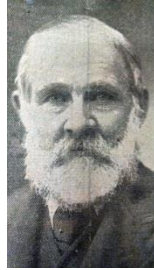
Be sure to check the Historical Society website for up to date information at:

www.wbhistory.org.



HISTORY BY THE INCH

Levi Shepard Andersonville Prison Survivor



On December 29, 1926 Levi Shepard, the only surviving member of the G.A.R.(Grand Army of the Republic), in Sterling and Princeton, celebrated his 82nd birthday. Four days earlier Levi's friend and neighbor in Sterling, Warren Kendall also of the G.A.R., died in the Holden Hospital. At this time period many Civil War veterans had already passed on and their stories needed to be told. Levi was also a member of West Boylston's now extinct George D. Wells Post and Levi's wife had been a member of the West Boylston Relief Corps for many years.

Levi Shepard was born in Philipston, MA, on December 29, 1844. He came to the Oakdale section of West Boylston as a young boy with his family. His father worked in the mills in Oakdale. Levi spent his childhood and school life in Oakdale. At the age of 17, Levi ran away from home and he enlisted in the army at the at the Fairgrounds in Worcester in Company C 34th Massachusetts Volunteers on July 23, 1862, under Col. George D. Wells, second brigade.

On May 15 1864, Levi then 19, was taken prisoner at the Battle of Newmarket, Shenandoah County, Virginia. The Confederates were the victors in this battle and the Union casualties totaled 841, 96 killed, 520 wounded, and 225 captured or missing. Levi was held a prisoner at Andersonville Prison in Georgia for seven months until his escape on November 19, 1864.

While serving his time in Andersonville Prison, Levi met George A. Hitchcock of Ashby MA. George Hitchcock was captured on the battle line in Cold Harbor Virginia on June 2, 1864. Two weeks later he was brought to Andersonville Prison. The two were tent mates and became lifelong friends. George A. Hitchcock did write a book about his Civil War experiences in war and in prison entitled "Death Does Seem To Have All He Can Attend To" The Civil War Diary of an Andersonville Survivor, edited by Ronald G. Watson, 2014 copyright.

Levi described his meeting of George Hitchcock at Andersonville in this manner.

"As I was watching the moving throng, my eyes saw a boy some 19 years of age, whose bare shoulders were bandaged with bloody swathes and whose face indicated much suffering. As our eyes met, one of us exclaimed,

"Hello comrade, what regiment?"

"Thirty fourth Massachusetts", what's yours? "

"Twenty-first Massachusetts."

From that day forward Shepard and Hitchcock through all the terrible months that followed, shared the same blanket and comforted and cheered each other in health and sickness through prison survival."

Levi noted that the shady side of life was most prominent at Andersonville. "Human nature would break if not relieved by some sort of cheer. Hardened to the sight of suffering and death, we would sit for hours under the shadow of our woolen blanket raised by sticks, warding off the hot sun, cracking jokes, planning feast at home when released, and think positively. At night when rations had been distributed, the camp resounded with peddler's cries. It would have seemed ludicrous to hear the various cries, were it not a matter of life and death to many whose conditions would not permit them to eat their rations. Who's got a soup bone? Who has grits for beer? Yes, beer was a familiar sight, a huge pine log was hollowed out and filled with water and grits souring under the intense heat, this was beer. When the raw sorghum became a ration, this was added and quite a respectable drink was made. It was an offset to foul rations."

When Levi was discharged from the army and reached his home back in Oakdale, he weighed just 85 pounds. On November 19, 1864 Levi Shepard walked out of Andersonville Prison, released by the Confederates when prisoners were exchanged. He was a ragged sick boy 20 years of age. He grew into manhood, married and had six children. Each year that passed on November 19th he celebrated his release from Andersonville Prison. He invited guest into his home and would recount his story of the Civil War and his experiences in the Andersonville Prison so in time no one would forget the devastation of the Civil War.

Steven Carlson, Historian

LOOKING BACK

Excerpts taken from the Mary Cook scrapbook collection

March 31, 1900

BEAR DRAWS BLOOD

John Toomey, landlord of the Central House, has the distinction of having been bitten as none of his townsmen have been since the days of flint locks, knee breeches and cocked hats by a real live bear. He had to manipulate his cigar with his left hand now while he tenderly nurses his right in the pocket of his jacket and the corners of his usually smiling lips are drawn in pain. It all happened this way.

John, A. C. Smith, Myron W. Houghton, Harry Lowe, Charles Reed and Joseph L. Howe went to Boston Friday for a general pow-wow and a visit to a sportsmen's fair. When they came to the bear's den, they found a couple of bear cubs. They looked so pretty in their shiny black coats that John wanted to play

with them. But the cubs had claws and teeth and when John put out his hand, one of the little fellows fastened with tooth and nail.

John looked for his companions but they had moved on. John tried to faint but that didn't work so he began to yell. It was not a prolonged yell but emphatically pronounced to relieve a man's mind but never looks well in print. A.C. Smith heard the ejaculations and recognized them. He rushed to John's assistance and saved his life.

Barbara Deschenes

West Boylston Historical Society March 4 Program

Battle of the Bulge

Wereth 11

The West Boylston Historical Society March 4 program will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II with a presentation by West Boylston resident Christian de Marcken on the Battle of the Bulge and the Wereth 11.

The Battle of the Bulge, the last major offensive of the German army in WWII from Dec. 16, 1944 to Jan. 25, 1945 through the forested Ardennes regions of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg, was the largest and bloodiest battle of the war for the U.S. 19,000 Americans were killed and more than 70,000 were wounded or missing. The Germans had 67,000-100,000 killed or missing.

Most military historians can cite the ploy used by the Germans to infiltrate American lines with English speaking Germans in U.S. uniforms. They can also recount the Malmedy massacre of 86 U.S. POWs by a German SS unit.

The presentation by de Marcken, who lived in Belgium at the time, will discuss another lesser known massacre on that same date in Wereth, Belgium. Eleven black U.S. soldiers were killed by the Germans after capture. De Marcken was born in Belgium of a U.S. father and Belgium mother, lived through the German occupation, and came to the U.S. after the war.

De Marcken is also a U.S. Army veteran and member of the Central Massachusetts Chapter of the Battle of the Bulge. He has spearheaded efforts to recognize the Wereth 11. In 2006 Battle of the Bulge and Wereth 11 memorials were dedicated at the Massachusetts Veterans Cemetery in Winchendon. Also, National Geographic Channel profiled the Wereth 11 in a documentary.

The program begins at 7 p.m. at the Historical Society's Bigelow Tavern on 65 Worcester St. Refreshments and desserts follow the presentation.
