

March News

from Boylston over the Years

By Judy Haynes

March is the month named for the Roman god of war, Mars. This was considered the time of year to resume military campaigns interrupted by winter.¹ While there may have been decent weather in Rome to resume such events, New England in March can be blustery or mixed with melting snow and mud. The local campaign more likely would consist of digging out of major snow storm.

According to the *Clinton Courant*, Friday, March 17, 1916:

“One man estimated that nearly 100 Boylston people were snow bound in Worcester, March 8. Some of them were destined to remain on an electric car for five hours, as they started from Worcester about 5 o’clock and did not reach the Center until 10:15 that night.”



Winter in Boylston -1900
Clinton Road
BHSM Photograph Collection

The Women’s Christian Temperance Society was still active and met on the previous March Tuesday afternoon. One could be sure no brandy or hot toddies would be served at that meeting to warm a cold body. It was announced that a gift of John Gough’s *Platform Echoes* had been received

*“...and appreciated by many of the old heroes of the Civil War. We have men in the home, who were once drinking men. John B. Gough was the means of their reformation and now they are good Christian temperance men, the best we have in our home and think how they will enjoy reading Platform Echoes.”*²

The book has many of the well-known temperance leader’s lectures and stories. A copy of *Platform Echoes* is currently available in the Fuller Research Library at Boylston Historical Society.

The Temperance Movement in the 1800’s promoted virtues of teetotalism requesting people to sign “pledges” promising to abstain from intoxicating beverages or drink in moderation and by the 1900’s had advocated complete abstinence from the consumption of alcohol.³ Its 19th century Boylston resident, John Bartholomew Gough, was still a current topic when some 14 years later on March 13, 1930, the news announced:



“The acquisition of the Gough Estate, 100 acres, by George F. Fuller, president of the Wyman-Gordon Co.”^{4,5}

Only a year before that, March 28, 1929 New England Power had bought the homestead to enable them to straighten out their transmission lines and one can still see the power poles and lines on the hill above the New England farm house called “Hillside”. This Italianate styled estate with a large front porch and cupola was placed on the *National Register of Historic Sites* and became a *National Historic Landmark* in 1975. The Gough and adjacent Flagg properties which had been acquired by Digital Equipment Corporation were subsequently taken by the Town of Boylston under eminent domain proceedings in 1999. In 2003 the Hillside Restoration Project, Inc., a private non-profit organization, was formed to raise funds for the renovation of the Gough House. Concern arose amongst the townspeople, when by 2016, renovations were estimated at the \$1.3

¹ Old Farmer’s Almanac
² The Clinton Courant, Friday, March 17,1916
³ Wikipedia.org, Temperance Movement
⁴ Worcester Daily Telegram, March 13, 1930
⁵ Evening Gazette, March 13, 1930

million level, with a lot of work remaining to be done.⁶ The plan was revisited and the Hillside Restoration Project, Inc.’s new vision is to showcase some of the history of the 19th century mansion as well as make the Gough House an active community center with cultural and fun activities.

100th Anniversary Announced March 21, 1983

The town of Boylston has its roots in agriculture, dairy farms, and husbandry; thus, when an organization called the Grange was conceived in 1867 to speak for the farmers and to strengthen agricultural industry, it was bound to be attractive here; thus, Boylston Grange formed its own chapter on April 23, 1883.⁷

The news in March 1983 was the announcement of the celebratory plans for its 100th anniversary in April, 1983. One of their biggest annual events was a September fair which featured exhibits of handcrafts, agricultural produce, home baked goods, floral displays, and hand sewn articles.



**Special Award Winner
Grange Fair**



**Vegetable Table
Grange Fair**

As Boylston moved further away from primarily agriculture, The Grange expanded its activities to attract and keep its members with the emphasis on family and community service. Today it exists in our community as part of the Central Community Grange celebrating 150 years in 2023. For those doing the math, that’s 140 years if Boylston were still standing alone.

The Central Community Grange will host a “Meet and Greet your Local Organizations” Tuesday, May 2, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Town House. All are invited to come to learn all about the Grange and other Boylston community organizations.



**Succulent Planter Creations
Succulent Planter Making Workshop
Grange Event**

March is a time in New England when the sugar maple trees are tapped so the sap can run into buckets to be collected and boiled into maple sugar. Some of the farms in Boylston likely did produce their own maple syrup. According to the 1895 Census of Massachusetts Agricultural Products, Town of Boylston had a small percentage (0.05) listed as “Food products” and one of the items in that general category was maple sugar.⁸ The maple syrup was likely for their own home use, but a bottle of syrup may have been featured at the Grange fair.

March is an active time between winter and spring with Daylight Saving Time beginning this 2023 on March 12, St. Patrick’s Day follows on March 17, the Spring Equinox is March 20 and Ramadan at Sundown on March 22. Let’s welcome the change and look forward to a move from snow and wind to warmer temperatures and spring flowers to come.



⁶ “Gough House rising to former glory”, Telegram and Gazette, Ken Cleveland Banner Correspondent, August 21, 2016

⁷ The Voice, March 21, 1983

⁸ Census of Massachusetts – 1895, Agricultural Products and Property, p. 284

Grange Photographs, Courtesy of Central Community Grange, Brad Goodrich

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