

# ♥ HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY ♥

by Patricia Kelleher Bartram

*Although there is historical disagreement about when the sending of Valentine's Day cards came into being, they certainly began to be printed by the mid-1800s, and became commercialized in the early 1900s. According to greeting card giant Hallmark, some 145 million Valentine's Day cards are exchanged every February 14<sup>th</sup>, making it the second biggest holiday for exchanging greeting cards after Christmas!*

With Valentine's Day 2024 upon us, it should be noted that the collections of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc. (BHSM) include a sizeable variety of lovely old Valentine's Day cards exchanged by Boylstonians over the years. Some of the earliest ones date to the 1880s-90s. The oldest are part of a collection of 17 Valentine's Day cards that belonged to Mrs. Goldie Elizabeth Prouty Benson (1896-1972) and were donated to BHSM in 1984.



## Valentine's Card Collection of Goldie Elizabeth Prouty Benson

Goldie Elizabeth Prouty was born in Boylston on 23 May 1896, the daughter and only child of farmer George Homer Prouty and his wife, Nellie May Vickery. According to the 1910 Federal Census, the family was then living on the Northborough Road in Boylston, where her father was farming and her mother was working as a seamstress for a private family.



**CAMILLA ALLEN VICKERY** (grandmother), **GOLDIE PROUTY**,  
**NELLIE VICKERY PROUTY** (mother), and **LYDIA ALLEN** (great grandmother)  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*



**GOLDIE PROUTY**  
Aged 20 yrs  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*

On 28 June 1917, at the age of 21 years, Goldie married 27-year-old George Edward Benson (1889-1934), the son of William H. Benson and Cora A. Blanchard. Goldie was living at home on Central Street in Boylston at the time of her marriage, while George was a printer who was residing at 43 Forest Street in Clinton. They had declared their intentions to marry on 19 June 1917 in front of Boylston's then Town Clerk, George L. Wright.



**GEORGE EDWARD BENSON**  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*

Just prior to their marriage, on 5 June 1917, George, recorded as having a medium build, ruddy complexion, with light hair and blue eyes, and working as a printer at W. J. Coulter Press in Clinton, registered for the draft. He was called up for service on 4 December 1918. George returned from the war, and the couple lived out their married life in Clinton at the 43 Forest Street address, with Goldie keeping house and George continuing his trade as a printer. She was active in the Clinton Women's Club, of which she was chairman in 1931, and she served as president of the Clinton Hospital Guild. George, too, was active in several organizations in Clinton. They had no children.

Sadly, after a married of 17 years, George died at age 45 years on 16 September 1934 and was buried in Clinton's Woodlawn Cemetery. Goldie stayed in their home at least through 1940 and perhaps later, but by 1950 she had moved to Worcester. She died many years later, on 15 May 1972 at the age of 75 years and was buried next to her husband.



## Flowery Sentiments Expressed

Since the earliest cards date from before she was born, it is not known to whom these cards were sent or how Goldie came to own the collection.

Some of the cards in Goldie's collection, have handwritten notations, but most do not, relying instead on printed sentiments, many of which are quite flowery. These include:

*"My Wish: That Health Prosperity and peace, Thy portion long may be, Believe is now the wish of one, Who sends this gift to thee."*



Another one is even more florid:

*"Think of me, Dearst When day is sinking, In the soft embrace of twilight gray. When the starry eyes of heaven are winking, And the weary flowers their tears are drinking. As they start like gems on the moon touched spray. Let me come warm in thy thoughts at eve. As the glowing track which the sunbeams leave. When the, blushing, tremble along the deep. While stealing away to their place of sleep."*

A third gets right to the point:

*"To my valentine. Which is it to be, a loving heart with a dear little wife, Or a selfish, lonely bachelor life."*



So, if you are wondering about how to express your love for your Valentine, maybe these (and the others at BHSM) can provide some ideas!

The BHSM is open for research: Sundays, 2:00-4:00pm; Tuesdays, 9:00am-2:00pm; and Saturdays, 9:00am-12:00pm, as well as by appointment by calling (508) 869-2720 or emailing [info@boylstonhistory.org](mailto:info@boylstonhistory.org). Assistance with genealogical research is also available by appointment.

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#### **Acknowledgements**

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