

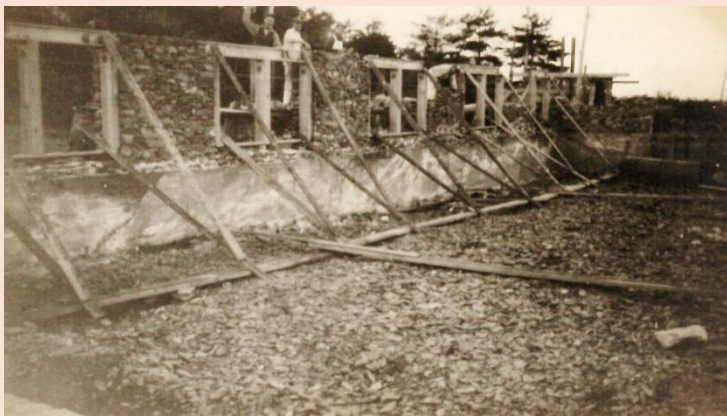
“Memories of Boylston’s Men’s Club”

By Judy Haynes

“*Memories of Boylston’s Men’s Club*” was the title of a special column in “*The Banner*” printed May 18, 2006 by William Corydon.¹ The special memories were roused when Corydon saw an article indicating that the Town House was closed and he felt “very sad.” Sadness knowing that the Town House had been the site of many events, programs, and community activities. It could not have been “closed” for long because we all know that the Town House, a building that sits next to the Boylston Fire Station is still used in 2025, and was used by various community groups for nearly 100 years, so it begs the question, “What does that have to do with the Boylston Men’s Club?”

The Town House was built originally by an organization formed on September 21, 1921 known as the Men’s Club of Boylston. “The principal objective of this group seems to have been the creation of entertainment facilities for the male population of the town.”² So they got right to the task by building a structure to secure a meeting place and entertainment venue for their club. Construction of the structure started in the summer of 1922.

The building was underway in 1922 and funded by the local male pledgers. A letter of April 5, 1923, signed by club Secretary-Treasurer Edgar B. Donaldson, who sent the letter to the building



Men's Club Members working on their new Club House
1922

Photograph of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc.

“Bond Subscribers,” he indicated that “favorable weather” meant work on the Club House would resume and those subscribers should be prepared to pay 50 per cent by May first.³ No tax or town dollars were used. Most of the work was done with manual labor by all able members, and this was an enthusiastic group despite some scoffers within the group who sang “there wasn’t no need of any building and it costs a heap too much anyway.”⁴

The work “is keeping the whole town up nights” with women preparing late suppers while the men dig and work under electric lights strung over the site.⁵ The workers made mortar and blasted rock for the foundation. Men who were doctors, lawyers, dentists, farmers, butchers, electricians, plumbers and all sorts of trades and professions by day, spent their nights working toward a common goal. It’s the “spirit that counts and the best of it all is ‘everybody’s happy.’”

Before the Men’s Club decided they needed their own structure, they met at the Town Hall, ironically called by locals at that time ‘The Town House.’ It was and is our own Historic Town Hall, now home of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc. and a place where local organizations meet. The group was so ambitious with plans for lectures, plays, and multiple programs, it pushed them to want a clubhouse of their own where a larger audience could be housed. It took nearly four years from 1922-1926 to complete and dedicate this two story



Unidentified Men of the Men's Club
“Working Nights”

Boylston Historical Society is seeking to learn the identity of any of these men. Please send identity to info@boylstonhistory.org

¹ William Corydon was 80 years old when he wrote of his memories in *The Banner*, thus he was born in 1926, the year the Men’s Club, now Town House, was dedicated.

² Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, History of Boylston 1886-1979, William O. Dupuis, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

³ Newspaper Collections, ‘*Clubs and Agencies*’, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

⁴ Mary French Scrapbook Collection, ‘*Boylston Enthusiasts Build Club Home*’, November 19, 1922, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

⁵ Ibid.

“clubhouse” with the main hall upstairs and a bowling alley and kitchen in the basement, but they did it. Much of it was finished and being used by 1923, though a news item of 1978 indicated the Town House renovations were not complete until 1924.⁶ After the Congregational Church burned during a devastating fire February 8, 1924, the Men’s Club offered the use of their facilities for worship services.⁷

Formal Dedication

It was dedicated on Tuesday June 8, 1926.⁸ The Hon. John C. Hull of Leominster, speaker of The House of Representatives, was the principal speaker and a welcome address was given by William O. Bloom, the 1922 president of the club, and a history of the club was given by Calvin H. Andrews. “The principal objective of this group seems to have been the creation of entertainment facilities for the male population of the town.”⁹



Dining at the New Men's Club

Photograph Collection of Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc.

Town Acquires Men’s Club

That same news piece by Pacek also announced that the town purchased the building for about \$4,000 in 1938. It was on May 9, 1938 at a special town meeting where a vote had been taken to see if the voters would grant a sum not to exceed \$5000 to purchase the property known as the Boylston Men’s Club from the Clinton Savings Bank, and it passed; thus in 1938 the town acquired the results of those spirited men of the 1920s who built a lasting community center.¹⁰

The town fathers of the 1930s had determined that the town needed this structure with its capacity to hold an audience of 250 or more for the variety of uses. Over the years, it has held audiences for everything from Town meetings to Boy Scout troop meetings. It has served as Boylston’s polling station, a venue for Grange meetings, annual fairs, and Memorial Day exercises, and there is even mention of Mr. Corydon’s memories of its movie nights, the list goes on and on. The remodeled Men’s Club, now known as the ‘Town House’ held the Theater Guild’s summer plays under the direction of Jane Satterthwaite the summer of 1938 with the first play “The Shining Hour.” Thus, the town continued to provide a place for various cultural and governmental activities, a building constructed with local physical labor, a labor of love and the spirit of the men of the Men’s Club had morphed from a clubhouse into the Town House for the town’s folk all to enjoy and use.

Acknowledgements:

Editor, Nancy O’Loughlin Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts.

Photograph Collection, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts.

⁶ Newspaper Collections, “Boylston Renovating Town House”, Stanley E. Pacek, Telegram, 12/6/1978, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

⁷ Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, p, 519, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

⁸ Newspaper Collections, *Boylston: Dedicate Men’s Clubhouse in Boylston Thursday Night*, unnamed newspaper, June 6, 1926. Note, ‘Thursday is likely a title mistake as an invitation to the dedication shows the date to be Tuesday, June 8, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

⁹ Filgate, Bruce, *Boylston Historical Series*, 2012, p. 516, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

¹⁰ Library Collections, Annual Reports of the Town Officers of the Town of Boylston, 1938, p.25, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.