



The Potpourri

1971 **BOYLSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM** 2020

"Preserving the Past for the Future"

SEPTEMBER 2020

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***Can You Identify
the Current Location
of this homestead?***



Answer on page 4

Curator's Corner

As we respond to the 2020 pandemic with restrictions on safe space usage and social distancing, there indeed is an abundance of new energy brewing at the Boylston Historical Society. Although we are not yet open for Public events and Museum visits, this summer local high school and college teens have been busy photographing and scanning the Objects and Archive Collections to bring us forward into a new virtual era. Maureen Flanagan, Suzanne Martiska, and Oliver Milbauer under the guidance of our curator, Nancy Filgate, have added an influx of new photographs in an effort to share our collections with researchers, historians, genealogists and townspeople of Boylston, Massachusetts. This endeavor is financially co-sponsored by the Boylston Historical Commission. A thank you to all for implementing this strategic vision!

Volunteers uncover "New Discoveries"

Creativity has certainly been at the forefront of our volunteer's efforts over these past months with the implementation of several research projects to discover Boylston's past through the lives of its residents.

A Consortium has been formed by the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, the Boylston Historical Commission and the Boylston Public Library to identify the names of 1500 individuals in photograph albums from the mid 1800's. The researchers have embarked on an exciting genealogical quest to determine more about these residents of our town and their impact on the town's development. These amazing results will be shared through the creation of Online Memorials being established for our Old Burial Ground and Pine Grove Cemetery by the Boylston Cemetery Research Project.

See: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/1840981/old-burial-ground>

See: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/91448/pine-grove-cemetery>

Director Judy Haynes has also taken to reviewing the “Mary French Scrapbook Collection”; a treasure trove of news clippings about Boylston social life, obituaries, and news events of the town from the 1800s - 1950s. Stay tuned for some very interesting historical tidbits from these scrapbooks in our upcoming newsletters!

Fred Brown continues volunteering for the Society as he works from home transcribing one-time Boylston family Prouty letters as well as uploading photograph scans from our collection to our Facebook page. Thanks Fred!

Home Work

by Fred Brown

Many photos have been put on Facebook. Photo of the Week once recorded over 3000 people reached. The *Clinton Item* publishes many on their website. Some of the most popular photos are of the reservoir being constructed and the dam after the flooding. Sawyers Mills photos are also very popular. Photos of Boylston people reach very few. Visit our Facebook page at [**BHS900**](#)

I am also transcribing many Prouty letters. The Prouty family lived on Central Street. The barn was located where the equipment shed for the golf course is located and the house just across the street. We have many more photos of the family than of any other family.

The letters are extremely difficult to transcribe. Many are written by uneducated family members. One written by a young lady in college shows an educated hand.

Most of the letters are not capitalized and have run on sentences. Spelling is poor.. For the most part the hand writing is very poor. However most that I have done are about business transactions and farming. One letter mentions a family member who was run over by a stage coach in Worcester and killed. Another one admonishes Alexander Prouty for taking up with a widow. He didn't listen to them and the marriage lasted many years. Alexander was a town official at one time.

Message from Gordon Hastings

*I looked forward to coming home to Boylston to share my book **Rocky Road to Dublin**. Since COVID 19 forced a postponement I hope that these excerpts will kindle memories of growing up in Boylston during the 1950s. I hope we can meet in person soon.*

Gordon Hastings

Boylston Consolidated School

~Memories of Days Past~

There were eight grades in the Boylston Consolidated School. Six were housed in a classic two-story white clapboard building with separate entrances for boys and girls. Two additional grades were held in an adjacent two-room pre-fabricated dark green former army barracks, transplanted there after the war. One hundred fifty children in grades one through

eight attended classes in the six classrooms. I was a member of the last class to attend the old school when it was replaced with a modern building in 1955.

Teachers, classmates and even the school bus drivers left an indelible impression on me.

“Good morning Mrs. Fuller,” I said.

The formal greeting of our school bus driver was required of every child. The Fullers’ took great pride in assuming responsibility for politeness and proper decorum among their young passengers. They were surrogate parents for all who entered their morning and afternoon domain.

The bus I rode each day was affectionately nicknamed the *Cheese Box*. It was a metal rectangle painted bright orange with black stripes along each side. It carried twenty-two children and was always maintained in pristine condition. Driving the school busses was a profession of a high calling for Mr. and Mrs. Fuller. Loring Fuller wore a white shirt, black necktie, and a black waist length jacket with a matching vest. His ever-present hat had a shiny plastic visor. His wife, Gert Fuller, wore a similar outfit and the curls of her dark hair flowed just below the visor of her hat. She wore wire rim glasses and her face was graced with a permanent dimpled smile.

Mr. Fuller drove the larger REO school bus that everyone called the *Lunch Box*. It had seating for forty-five children and we rarely saw it because it served the south end of town where there were more children of school age. There was a pecking order on the bus. The girls sat up front and the boys in the rear. The oldest boys always sat in the back rows. In the fall, apples could be plucked from a tree at a certain sharp turn when the bus crept slowly past an overhanging branch near the Coskie’s house in Straw Hollow.



**Boylston Consolidated School
Boylston Center
Built 1904**

*Students had previously
attended classes in one of the Six
District Schools located near
their homes*

[BHSM Photograph Collection]

Fire! Fire, the school’s on fire!

Myron Garfield, the school custodian, ran from the building into the circular drive. I didn’t believe it until I saw black smoke billowing from the boy’s entrance.

“We have to make sure everyone’s out,” Emmet Fink said.

He crushed his cigarette with his foot and motioned to Marion Clark and Palmina Quintillio who were standing nearby on bus duty. They ran through the front entrance calling out, “Fire everyone outside!”

The fire trucks arrived. First came the Boylston volunteers with the old Diamond T tanker and the Model A Ford hose truck. The Boylston Volunteer Firemen, all men who worked at various jobs in town, entered the school with their hoses.

“Here come the trucks from Shrewsbury, must be bad,” Libbey said.

Libbey inherently knew of such things. He loved trucks and had never seen so many fire trucks in one place. The Boylston firemen wore their regular clothes but the neighboring Shrewsbury firemen were all dressed in swell uniforms with proper fire hats, boots and jackets. Soon it seemed like the whole town had turned out to watch the school burn down. Some even seemed disappointed as the firemen brought the blaze under control.

“The busses are lined up on School Street follow me,” Mr. Fink said.

We all piled into the Lunch Box with talk of the fire turning into a cacophony. Loring Fuller reminded us all to sit down. The conversation continued at the supper table that night. Libbey had come home with me for the weekend and we were all sitting at the kitchen table.

“Miss Clark’s Classroom got the worst of it,” Dad said.

Myron Garfield had told his nephew Ralph that the blaze began below her classroom near the coal fired boiler room. No one knew how it started.

“I bet Fink threw his cigarette butt in the trash,” Libbey said

Watch for more fascinating stories about “Growing Up in Boylston” from Gordon in our next Newsletter!

Answer

***Can You Identify
the Current Location
of this homestead?***



246 Central Street

Single family home built in 1726 by Daniel Hastings on Settlers Lot #41 which had been purchased from Caleb Rice. This is said to be one of the oldest homes of Boylston. Daniel and his wife Sarah Ball had married in Watertown and traveled to the wilderness to find land to raise a family. Daniel and Sarah had ten children. He was one of the leaders in the settlement of the North Precinct of Shrewsbury, later to be incorporated as the Town of Boylston, Massachusetts in 1786.

A Snapshot of Boylston during the Pandemic of 2020

The findings by the Historical Society online survey assessing the effects of the COVID -19 pandemic on daily life indicate an impact on work styles, stresses, family life, and overall community spirit.

Closed signs went up on the library door, schools, restaurants, churches, and any business termed non-essential. Large gatherings were not advised and those in our small town usually followed the recommendations staying at a safe distance and wearing face masks.

Essential workers: nurses, doctors, pharmacists, town employees, realtors, food preparers and grocery clerks worked with changes, wearing masks, social distancing -keeping six feet or more apart while serving those in need. Non-emergency patients and employees received service via tele-health, Face Time, or Zoom as doors were **closed** to the general public.



Residents Appreciation Signs
Photograph by Inga Milbauer

Work from Home continued for teachers meeting students via computer, conducting classes as they could, with many parents homeschooling as schools closed. Employees, who could, did their jobs from home and six months later (March – August) continue to do so.

Retirees, Students, the Unemployed and Volunteers did homework, researched via computer, exercised, enjoyed nature, gardened, read books, played video games and instruments, assembled jigsaw puzzles, watched TV, baked and cooked more, and tackled long neglected projects such as painting, fixing, cleaning, and sorting. Families lived together and stayed home to avoid spreading or receiving the virus.

Personal Benefits were enjoyed by most respondents by having more at home time, quiet time, family time, and less pressure to be somewhere or go out. Siblings are playing more with each other. Teens are talking more with parents. Respondents are enjoying seeing less traffic and not hearing airplanes. Many indicated they have learned new skills such as Zooming on computer with friends and distant family, trying new recipes, sewing masks to help others, and completing projects. Pleased to hear the environment is better off with less pollution, cleaner air and water, and more wildlife is out.



Tower Hill Safe Distancing
Photograph by Inga Milbauer

Isolation was felt by most respondents where they missed seeing extended family, friends, smiles without masks, hugs, dining out, travelling, day trips, theatre, museums, going to the spa, going to church and in-person meetings, doing my own shopping which is not recommended for those high risk with health problems or old age.

Emotional & Mental Health for many during this ‘new normal’ life is far more stressful, an emotional roller coaster from enjoying more free time to being lonely, missing friends, or thinking this will never end. Many worry and wonder if they are being careful enough or will they catch the virus, and sadly

lose family and friends. Wearing a mask all day makes talking and breathing more difficult and that causes stress. Some feel trapped and worry about those they aren't allowed to see. Several expressed concern over the widening political rift, George Floyd's death causing more focus on racial matters. Much good is also being seen with many helping to shop for high risk groups, being kind and thoughtful, ministers and priests visiting homes – outside, safely distancing.

Creative Problem Solving such as pickup of books from outside the library, curbside pickup of ordered takeout foods, exercise classes online offered by Council on Aging, Lions Club members picking up groceries for seniors and those who must stay home, stores offering online shopping. Graduations were held for individuals in yards or privately, parades in cars to celebrate safely and separately. St. Mary of the Hills painted circles in the driveway to indicate proper distancing while conducting outside services.



St Mary of the Hills Parish finds way to Safely Attend Services
Photograph by Inga Milbauer

Historical Society

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE UNDERWAY !

Make a Gift

Your support makes our mission possible.

“A gift of any amount makes an impact.”

Protect and Preserve Collections



Archival materials
Museum Displays

Support Student Programs



Student Internships
Historic District Tours

Support Public Programs



Publications
Video programs

New & Renewal Membership Application

BOYLSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

2020 – 2021

“The mission of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum is to collect and preserve the local and general history of Boylston and the genealogy of Boylston’s families; to make antiquarian collections and to ensure the continuous adequate care of the collections and their accessibility and effective use for cultural and educational purposes.”

Please mail to Boylston Historical Society & Museum, P.O. Box 459, Boylston, MA 01505

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/TOWN _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Help Preserve Boylston’s History
by renewing your BHSM membership!~
~not yet a BHSM member?~

JOIN TODAY!

Please check Membership:

INDIVIDUAL \$20 ☐

POWDER HOUSE \$100 ☐

FAMILY \$35 ☐

OLD POT \$250 ☐

DOG JACK \$50 ☐

ANGEL \$500 ☐

Other donation \$ _____

Please note if your company offers matching funds: ____

Donations are tax deductible!

THANK YOU! TAX DEDUCTIBLE memberships and donations of all sizes help BHSM to provide educational programming and to aid in the preservation of artifacts to keep Boylston’s heritage and history alive! We depend on support from individuals like you to help us fulfill our mission of educating and preserving.

Who is Who?



CONFUSED? You are not alone. There is often substantial confusion over these three types of organizations. It is important to remember that there are very distinct differences among them.

Boylston HISTORICAL COMMISSION (M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 8d)

The Historical Commission is the official agent of our municipal government responsible for community-wide historic preservation planning; additionally, at the request of the Town of Boylston; oversees the operation and management of our Historic Town Hall.

- Examples: walking tours, plaque programs, newspaper articles, lectures, newsletters, distributing inventory forms and school programs.
- Advise elected officials and other boards on historic preservation issues. Issues could include zoning changes, the re-use of municipally owned historic buildings, master planning or preservation of historic landscapes

COMMISSIONERS:

1. Bruce Filgate, chairman
2. Judith Haynes, secretary
3. Nancy Filgate, treasurer
4. David Bottom
5. Judith Bottom
6. David Cole

**Town Official Agents for
Historical Preservation &
Planning**

Boylston HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION (M.G.L. Chapter 40C)

The Historic District Commission is the review authority responsible for Regulatory Design Review (architectural features & structures) within the designated local historic district.

COMMISSIONERS:

1. Bill Manter, chairman
2. Catherine Richard
3. David Bottom
4. Judith Bottom
5. Brad Barker
6. Bruce Filgate
7. David Cole

**Review Board for
architectural changes
within historic district**

Boylston HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society is private, non-profit organization whose goal is to preserve local history through a house museum, maintaining collections and records and public programs

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

1. Timothy Houlihan, president
2. Cynthia Rup, vice president
3. Christina Stille, secretary
4. Judith Haynes, treasurer
5. Marie Phillips, director
6. Nancy Filgate, curator

**Private non-profit Group
interested in preserving
history**

MAMMOTH ABC NESTING BLOCKS

By Inga Milbauer



Photograph by Oliver Milbauer

This set of vintage alphabet blocks in our Toy Collection consists of 10 five-sided boxes which can be nestled inside each other. These wooden carved blocks are covered with colorful lithographed paper illustrations of each letter. The smallest block is a 1.5 inch square, with the letters H, I, J, K. One of the smaller blocks features an ampersand. The six larger blocks are decorated with children and animals corresponding with the letters: R depicting a rat, C a cat. Several letters refer to nursery rhymes: J with “Jack and Jill went up a hill,” and the letter L with “Mary had a little lamb.” The largest block measures 6.5”square with the letters A, B, C on three sides. The fourth side has a picture of a girl who hands blocks to a boy stacking them. These creative learning toys were made by The J.A. Crandall Company which was founded by the American inventor and toy maker Jesse Armour Crandall. He was issued several patents for rocking toys, alphabet blocks and construction toys. His design of nested wooden blocks was patented in June 1881.

The concept of alphabet blocks first appeared in 1693 in philosopher John Locke’s essay *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*: “dice and play-things, with the letters on them to teach children the alphabet by playing.” In 1837 Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel, who pioneered kindergarten, introduced geometric blocks carved from wood. He believed in “self-activity” and play as essential factors in education. Froebel devised circles, spheres and other toys – all of which he referred to as “Froebel’s gifts”– designed to stimulate learning through play activities accompanied by songs and music. “In 19th century America, these toys found their way into schools, marketed as tools to help children recognize shapes of letters before learning to read.” The Strong Museum in Rochester, New York inducted alphabet blocks into the National Toy Hall of Fame in 2003 recognizing alphabet blocks as a toy that has inspired creative play and one that enjoyed popularity over a sustained period.

Acknowledgements: Britannica, National Toy Hall of Fame, Wikipedia;



Photograph by Vicky Triolo

*Congratulations
Graduates !*

Historic Town Hall Gets a facelift

For many of us time is standing still, but not so for our Historic Town Hall, the home of our Historical Society Museum. The Boylston Historical Commission has graciously donated five new pairs of deep green shutters to adorn the building façade facing Central Street. And creativity knows no bounds with our Boylston Public Library staff and wonderful BHSM volunteers during this pandemic. BPL has provided us WIFI access, so a volunteer has downloaded our computer with all the current Windows 10 updates! Just prior to the Pandemic of 2020, public donations, both tangible and financial, had permitted our curator and many volunteers to arrange an exciting new “Hastings Museum Exhibition” which is ready for unveiling. Watch for details in our next Newsletter!

Thank You!

Board of Directors

President – Timothy Houlihan

Vice President- Cynthia Rup

Secretary-Christina Stille

Treasurer- Judith Haynes

Curator- Nancy Filgate

Marie Philips

E-mail - info@boylstonhistory.org

www.boylstonhistory.org

Check us out on Facebook! [Facebook.com/BHS900](https://www.facebook.com/BHS900)

BHSM

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