

JUNE 2024

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



The Billerica Historical Society has resumed our Clara Sexton Open Houses on the first Sunday of the month from 1 to 3 pm. The Billerica Minutemen were at the April Open House. We hope that you will drop by and see the recently renovated barn and the many Billerica artifacts now on display. Many of the items retrieved from the 1923 Time Capsule are also displayed.



We are currently taking our time to collect items to be included in the new time capsule. You are welcome to help us with this endeavor. Do you have items that are significant from the past 100 years that you would like included? Do you have photos of Billerica from sometime during that period? Diane met with the Pixels photography club to propose collecting "snapshots" of what Billerica looks like now. So many of the items in that last time capsule presented "snapshots" in the form of letters, stories, essays, and photos. We would like "snapshots" of today. Would you like to help contribute to this effort? Do you want to photograph and capture "snapshots" of Billerica today? Contact Diane at SecDouglas@aol.com.

There is an essay contest going on in the high school. The students are asked to either write about Billerica 2024 or, write about what Billerica may look like in 2124.

We will be sealing the 2124 time capsule at our annual meeting on Oct. 27, 2024. Mark your calendar to join us for this event.

Be sure to visit our Gift Shop when you are at the house. New items have been purchased for the gift shop including colonial replica toys to interest the younger set. Bring your children and grandchildren in to check it out. Nancy Sheffer is now in charge of the gift shop. We also have T-shirts for sale. See the back page for more info.

Our fundraising activities have continued. Michele DeParasis has coordinated two successful Dining to Donate fundraisers this Spring; one at the Emerald Rose and a breakfast at Stelio's. She plans to have more in the near future. Diane Douglas again ran a successful Vintage Tea at Bennett Cultural Center in May. Diane gave a talk on the Time Capsule contents and brought a few items with her for



viewing. More than 70 people attended, raising over \$1,200.

Our Community Preservation proposal was approved by Town Meeting in May. We expect to start the work in July. We are restoring one of the second floor bedrooms, repairing the bathroom ceiling, installing a paver patio outside the kitchen and stairs leading from the side yard to the barn basement. Dick Hawes is again coordinating the work on this grant.

The Community Grant proposal was approved by the Select Board, but was only partially funded. The remaining funds will come from our State earmark. Rich Kunicki will use these funds to upgrade sump pumps and dehumidifiers in the Sexton House basement.



Community grant funds were also used to acquire a sign on Letchworth Ave. in N. Billerica commemorating Garden City, the first planned community in America. Rich worked with a vendor to design the sign. The Billerica DPW installed the sign. On May 25, we officially dedicated it.

Due to the rain we could not participate in Billerica Green Up/Clean Up Day on April 20. We will be cleaning up the aqueduct area in the future, weather permitting.

We continue to have successful fundraisers, but we still need your generous contributions to help pay for Sexton House operating costs. Thanks to all who have supported the Society.

Regards, John Bartlett

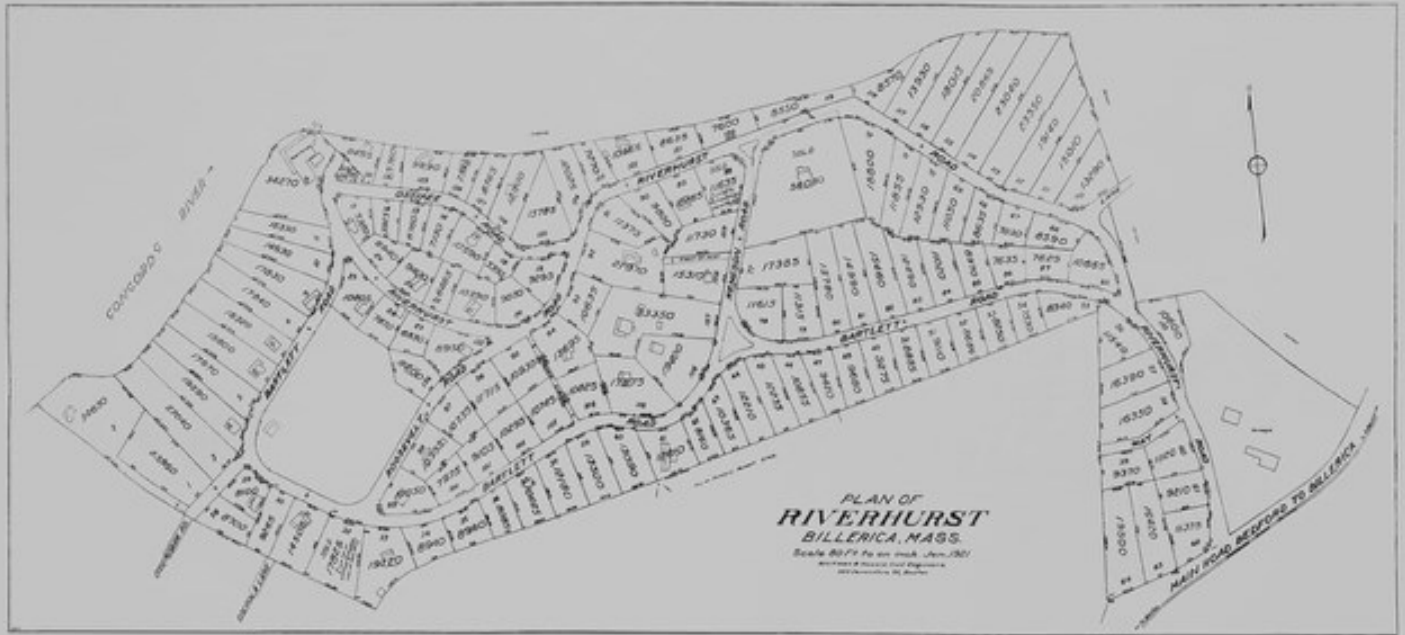
Spotlight On: Riverhurst

Over in Concord, the Sudbury and Assabet rivers join and create the Concord River. It meanders slowly for 16.3 miles to flow into the Merrimack River in Lowell. Along the way it goes by beautiful old Concord homes, farm land, natural preserve lands, and, eventually, Billerica.

Billerica was first known to the Indians. If you look you can find weirs which is proof of their fishing in the area.

In the early 1900's, people started building sum-

mer camps along the banks, no electricity or indoor plumbing, barely even bedrooms. Just a dry place to sleep and a cool river breeze. For some reason the east side of the river attracted mostly folks from the Cambridge, Somerville area. The west side was Revere and around there. For the most part, the folks were all pretty well to do. Business owners, ship captains and the like. The river offered something to do year round. Swimming, boating, fishing, skating, bonfires. One popular spot was the Riverhurst area of town. (as told by Betsy Gallagher, a long time Riverhurst resident.)



The above map shows the plans for lots that were to be for sale in Riverhurst in 1921.

The Riverhurst area is located on the Bedford side of Concord Road, immediately after route 3, and goes down to the Concord River where one can find Barrett's Landing. Today, you can still launch your kayak or canoe when you plan to enjoy the river.

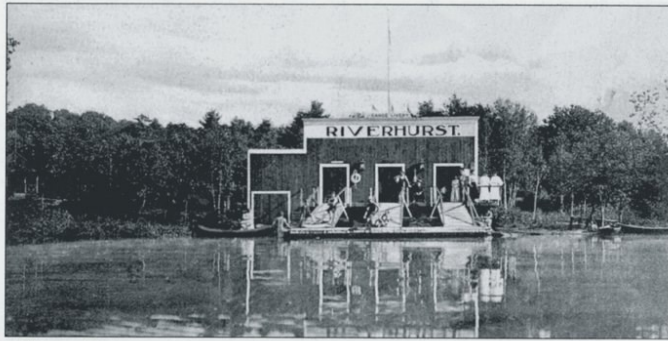


Sign at the entrance to Riverhurst
Four girls in the foreground



Bartlett's Landing as seen today.

Summer visitors attended many camps located along the river which provided social opportunities like dances, barbecues, and family fun during the summer. The area became quite a social community



THE RIVERHURST BOATHOUSE | CONCORD ROAD
PRE 1912 WAS ENLARGED BECAUSE OF POPULARITY

Riverhurst Boat House/Dance Hall

The Riverhurst dance hall was opened to a large attendance in July of 1929. It is situated right on the banks of the Concord River in the same building as the boat house, which contains a number of canoes and boats. A fine wharf is here and diving boards shoot structures for bathers. (Taken from Lowell Sun Newspaper on July 20, 1954.) The boathouse has since been destroyed.



Winters on the River

In winter, people enjoyed Riverhurst for cross country skiing, ice fishing, and ice skating on the frozen river.



Help Support the Billerica Historical Society

Please consider becoming a Preservation Patron in one of the following ways:

- Corner Stone \$1,000
- Landmark \$500
- Founders \$250
- Members \$100



Last year, your various contributions raised over \$5,000. These donations allowed us to work toward balancing our Sexton House operational budget and was greatly appreciated.

2024 Membership Drive

It is time to renew your membership in the historical society. The dues are:

- Senior is \$25
- Individual is \$30
- Family is \$50

Monetary donations can be sent to:

- Billerica Historical Society
- PO Box 381
- Billerica, MA 01821

**Clara E. Sexton Memorial
House Museum,
circa 1723
Headquarters of the
Billerica Historical Society**

36 Concord Road
Billerica, MA 01821

(978)667-7020
Billericahistory.org



BHS Officers and Board 2023-2024

Officers:

President	John Bartlett
Vice President	Richard Hawes
Treasurer	Kerry Sullivan
Secretary	Diane Douglas

Directors:

Cathy Burns	Alec Ingraham
Mary Jones	Richard Kunicki
Michele DeParasis	



Follow us on Facebook:

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Upcoming Events

June 29: Dining to Donate Fundraiser at
Kayleigh's Premium Homemade Ice Cream and
Italian Gelato

July 7: Monthly Open House, 1-3

Aug. 12: BHS at Billerica Farmer's Market

Billerica Minute Man T-shirts

The historical society is currently
selling T-shirts with the BHS logo
on the front and the list of the
minutemen who marched to Mer-
riam's Corner on April 19, 1775
on the back.

Sizes include:

Men's - Medium, Large, XL - \$20
XXL, and XXXL - \$25

Women's V-neck - Medium,
Large - \$25

To order, send request, size, number of shirts,
cost of shirts plus \$5 for shipping to:

Billerica Historical Society

PO Box 381

Billerica, MA 01821



Be Watching for:

Historical Lectures at COA

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Billerica, MA 01821