

February 2025

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings

The Billerica Historical Society has continued our activities during this cold winter. We had a very successful Christmas Open House in December. Thanks to all who helped to make it possible.

Our first open house of the season will be **April 13 from 1 to 4PM**. The Billerica Minuteman will be present and will be talking about Billerica's involvement in the activities of April 19, 1775.

Starting in May, our open houses will be on the **first Sunday of the month, from 1-3**.

Work continues on our latest Billerica Community Preservation grant. The outside work will resume in the Spring. The patio will be completed and the stairs leading from the side yard down to the barn basement will be built.

We are also taking orders for engraved pavers which will be installed in the new patio. Details elsewhere in the newsletter.

The restoration work in the upstairs bedroom (old library) is complete. It has now been returned to an 18th Century period room. The books have been removed. A rope bed and a trundle bed with a straw mattress and other early period pieces are now in the room. The room is now open for tours. The work in the bathroom continues.

We will be resuming our Dining to Donate dinners with one at Garrisons on **Monday, March 10, 11:00AM-Midnight**. See the flyer elsewhere in the newsletter. Michele DeParasis is planning more Dining to Donate events. These enjoyable meals have been a great fundraiser for us.

The Vintage Tea has been scheduled for **May 17, from 1-3 PM** at the Bennett Cultural Center. Mark your calendars and watch for more details.

Please take a moment to review our updated website. Rick Manley has spent much time updating the website with current data along with many photos and videos. www.billericahistory.org

Soon you will be able to view Billerica history talks given at the Senior Center. Rick Manley will be making BATV videos available on our website.

It is time to renew your membership in the Society. Please consider adding a contribution to your dues.

Regards,
John Bartlett

Fundraising

Fundraising events have helped to bring in funds to cover some of our expenses, however, much more is needed. The current and future fundraisers include:



The Memorial Garden



The Billerica Historical Society is selling personalized, engraved bricks that will enhance the walkway in our new Memorial Garden.

Donating a commemorative brick paver to be added to the new Memorial Garden in the Clara Sexton House is a great way to recognize a family or loved one, honor a veteran or first responder, remember someone close to you, or salute an organization.

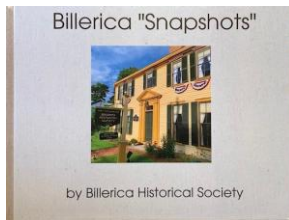
The bricks will be engraved with your personalized message and included in the pathway in our new Memorial Garden. This is an ongoing promotion. You may add additional bricks in the future. Each brick may be purchased for \$100.

Dining to Donate

Michele DeParasis is setting up dates with local restaurants to host a Dining to Donate event. When you show the appropriate flyer for the event, the restaurant will give us a percentage of the bill as a donation. This is a fun and easy way to raise funds. Our next event will be on **March 10th at Garrisons** in Billerica. Bring the flyer enclosed to Garrisons and give it to your server. Garrisons will donate 10% of your bill to the BHS. Be watching for more opportunities to support us.

"Snapshots of Billerica"

Diane Douglas assembled a Shutterfly book of "Snapshots of Billerica" for the **2124 time capsule**, capturing images of Billerica today. Copies will be printed and available for sale in the near future.



Gift Shop Sales

Nancy Sheffer has taken over managing the gift shop. We are currently selling T-shirts, replicas of period toys, plates, and historic books.

April Open House



Come join us for our first open house of 2025 on **Sunday, April 13, from 1-4 PM**. The Billerica Minutemen will assemble to share the story of the 250th anniversary of the April 19th March to Concord and Lexington. In 1775, over 100 minutemen from Billerica participated in the march to Meriam's Corner.

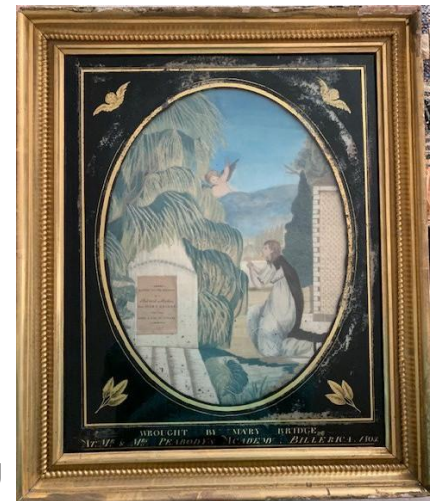
Memorial Art

Memorial paintings are pieces of art produced to memorialize and honor the memories of a person or to commemorate an event. Memorial paintings are portrait paintings of individuals who have passed away. They are used to pay respect to a deceased loved one or to memorialize historically significant events. The historical society has three lovely framed examples of memorial art. There appears to be common elements in the

images: a weeping willow branch or tree, an obelisk, an urn, an engraving honoring the deceased, and a grieving woman. Shown are three examples of memorial art on display at the Sexton House. The third was painted by a student at Mr. & Mrs. Bridge's Academy in Billerica. It demonstrates reverse painting (on the back of the glass).



Hair wreaths were popular in the Victorian Era, around the mid to late 1800's. They were usually crafted by women using hair from friends and family members. They could be a way to mourn the dead by turning a remnant of someone into a lasting memorial. Or, they could symbolize friendships and personal connections during a time when exchanging locks of hair was like friends sharing yearbook photos today.



An Ironing Board and a Sad Iron

by Jeannette Pothier

If you've ever tried to iron something without an ironing board, then you know how difficult it can be. Ironing has been a chore usually done by ladies for centuries. A Canadian by the name of John B. Porter invented the first truly portable ironing table. It was a foldable model and some had detachable press boards specifically for sleeves.



Ironing boards used high quality wood materials, making its construction stable, sturdy and durable. The mushroom shaped sponge pad is covered with premium fabric, it will not scratch your hands and the clothes, and it is easy to detach and clean. The legs, also made of wood, could close the board easily.

The board now at the Clara Sexton House was purchased about 30 years ago from an antique sale in Acton, Massachusetts, and it had about 8 layers covering it. The layers were tacked on, and some had nails, but they never removed one layer. It was good because the label was visible.

In the 1900's, a number of irons were made, and they were iron. They were called Sad Irons. Why? Sad irons get their name from an older word, sad, which means solid. They were made with thicker metal and held heat longer. Some had removable handles which was a blessing. You could have a cold handle and put it the heated iron. The weight of the sad iron held heat longer and provided the necessary heft needed to remove wrinkles and creases from the fabric. Sad irons were often triangular to make it easier to iron around buttons.



Jeannette donated a sad iron made by Downs & Co., and it has a mark of 9, that she believes to be 9 pounds. Jeannette also gifted the society with a wooden ironing board. Both are on

display in the 1920 kitchen at the house.

New Displays in the Barn Museum

There are many changes happening in the barn over the winter. Ellen Bennett Hazzard Friedman has donated many Bennett items. In 1881, Elenor Bennett established the Bennett Public Library in memory of her husband Joshua. Many of the items are photos and ephemera from the Bennett family. We already have in our collection, Elenor's wedding dress which was worn by 8 different Bennett brides. Ellen Hazzard recently donated her mother's 1935 wedding gown. Our plan to display several antique wedding gowns in the barn along with a display case of wedding related materials.

Other display cases will include such collections as:

Revolutionary War artifacts

Transportation artifacts including the Billerica Bedford Train and the Middlesex Canal

Martha Hill Sage artifacts, and others.

2025 Membership Drive

It is time to renew your membership in the historical society.

The dues are:

Senior/Student is \$25

Individual is \$30

Family is \$50



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

Patron \$100

Last year, your various contributions allowed us to work toward balancing our Sexton House operational budget and was greatly appreciated.

Monetary donations can be sent to:

Billerica Historical Society

PO Box 381

Billerica, MA 01821

New Members

Welcome to our new members:

Isaac Wright-Lichter

Lisa Foley

Judith Foley

**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 2024-2025

Officers:

President	John Bartlett
Vice President	Richard Hawes
Treasurer	Rick Manley
Secretary	Cathy Burns

Directors:

Michele DeParasis	Diane Douglas
Alec Ingraham	Mary Jones
Richard Kunicki	



Follow us on Facebook:

- Billerica Historical Society
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Upcoming Events

March 10: Dining to Donate at Garrisons

April 13: Patriots Day Open House, 1-4 PM

May 4: Open House, 1-3 PM

June 1: Open House, 1-3 PM

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 Merriam'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



Book & Gifts:

Hazen's History of Billerica

\$55.00

Sexton House Cookbook

\$3.00

Commemorative Spode Plate

\$10.00

SALE PRICE

Billerica Historical Society
PO Box 381
Billerica, MA 01821

A RARE FIND

Long ago, a house stood near the town center. Busy lives came and went. Now the house belongs to the Billerica Historical Society (Society). Thanks to Clara Sexton, who was part of the Society. When her husband, William, had passed away, Clara decided that she would give away her lovely home. She gave it to the Society.

We have loved it all these years, and we have spent time and money, mostly through grants, to fix it up.-That does not include all the work that has been done by the Society members.

Digging into the past, Richard Kunicki and Richard Hawes found rope beds in the barn attic while cleaning it out for the barn renovation which is now the museum. Rope was purchased, and the Society volunteers went to work. Rope beds were used as early as the 16th century, until the coil mattress was introduced in 1865.



We have no way of knowing who stored the rope bed and the trundle bed in the barn attic, where they collected dust for many years. Until the Society was given the house, there would be no records kept. Lucky that they also put the bed wrench with it. That is used for

tightening the rope.

What do you do today to simulate the scene as it would have been? First you put a rope on the bed and trundle the bed. Then, you need a mattress. Straw seems to be the most available product today.

We used Pillow Ticking for the mattress Keep the straw dry, to prevent mold. The original version was likely solid-colored and made of rough cotton, flax or cotton-linen twill.

To quote Ticking 101, *Ticking was developed as a sturdy, practical, canvas-like casing for mattresses and pillows. The term first appeared in the dictionary in 1649.*

The straw bale was purchased, and it was huge. when the men undertook the task of filling it, we discovered it was somewhat chopped up. It came upstairs with the most straw it could hold, and it was like the size of a ball inside the mattress cover. Long arms reached inside and pulled it more level, adding more straw. The flap nicely covered the straw, and we tied it, we put the ties at the foot of the bed to be able to reach inside to level the straw.

It feels comfortable for those who have slept on such a mattress, but nobody dared try it. We would like a donation sheet for the bottom, so the mattress does not rest on the ropes and a sheet for the top as well.

Next, we are going to research what blanket(s) we could use for the period of the bed.

The work took several months, but it is coming to show the love the members must restore the past and preserve it. The work is never done. Please come visit us when we open in the spring.

To donate, [contact us](#).

Jeannette Pothier, Member

GARRISON'S
303 BOSTON ROAD,
BILLERICA, MA
978-670-1202

DINING TO DONATE

*Present this flyer and Garrison's
will donate 10% of your meal back
to the Billerica Historical Society*

Dine-in or Take-Out
March, 10, 2025
Open daily from 11 AM - 12 PM

50/50 Raffle from 4-8

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**Billerica Historical Society
Commemorative Brick Order Form**

Donating a commemorative brick paver to be added to the Memorial Garden in the Clara Sexton House is a great way to recognize a family or loved one, honor a veteran or first responder, remember someone close to you, or salute an organization. The bricks will be engraved with your personalized message and included in the pathway in the Memorial Garden.

This is an ongoing promotion. You may add additional bricks in the future.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I would like to order: _____ 4" x 8" BRICK - \$100 (text only) - 3 lines of 16 characters each.

For multiple bricks, please complete an order form for each brick. Include your Engraved Message-three lines of 16 characters. All text is case-sensitive and centered automatically on the brick. Please use the spaces below for your message, and note that characters include letters, numbers, spaces, and punctuation.

Send the completed order form and check payable to: **Billerica Historical Society.**

Mail to: Billerica Historical Society, PO Box 381, Billerica, MA 01821

100% of your donation is tax-deductible.

DISCLAIMERS: No political or religious message content, no sexually explicit or obscene content, no derogatory messages regarding any individual or entity, and based on race, creed, religion, or sexual orientation. The Billerica Historical Society reserves the right of refusal of any order found to be inappropriate or in violation of guidelines.