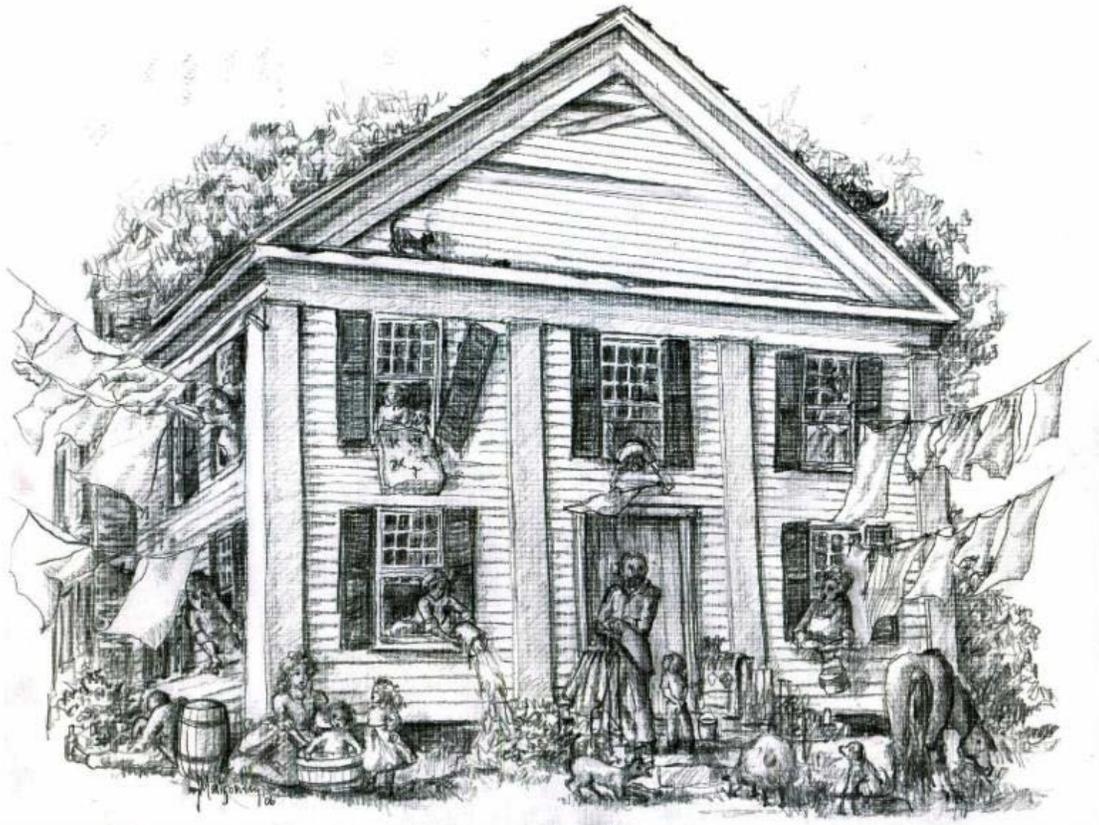


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BEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY *stories*

February 28, 2015 - Bedford Stories - Vol. 23

What if this building hadn't been preserved?



The Methodist Church imagined as tenement housing

In a February 22, 1963 interview, Edith Leonard Colgate describes how a group of residents saved an old church in Bedford and prevented it from being turned into tenement housing. She and eight others rallied to purchase and restore the building. On February 5, 1916 they incorporated and formed the Bedford Historical Society.

Do you recognize the building that was saved? It was an 1806 Methodist Church which was moved in 1837 to its current site where the first Bedford Meetinghouse once stood. As its membership dwindled, the parish realized they could no longer keep the church in operation and it was to be sold at auction. It was eventually purchased by town residents, converted into a community house and became known as Historical Hall. The complete transcript is below.

Transcript from a 1963 interview
with Edith Colgate

. . . In 1906, the Methodist Church was still being used by the Methodists but in a very short time it came to an end. (Bedford) being a very small place...any kind of a rumor spread very quickly. Soon it was known that (the church) was going to be sold at auction and that one man said he would buy it and turn it into a tenement house. People got very excited about this and decided that one of the men from the Village would go and purchase the building.

Our representative went to the auction and ... he had not been able to get the building. Someone else had gone a good deal higher than we had agreed to go in price. News spread that we had lost the building. The men in the Village got very excited about it knowing we were trying to turn (the church) into a small community house. They all went to see the purchaser and really scared the poor man to death! (They said to him) "You might as well move out of Bedford...that he was finished here, that no one would have anything to do with him again...."

They put him in such a state of terror that the next morning very early he went to see our delegate and said he was terribly sorry he had out bid him - he hadn't known what (we were) buying it for and he'd be very glad to sell it back if we would give him \$200 more than he paid for it and make that check out to the Polish Relief Fund. . . .



Historical Hall- built in 1806, preserved since 1916

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