

BEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY *stories*

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LOVE BEDFORD

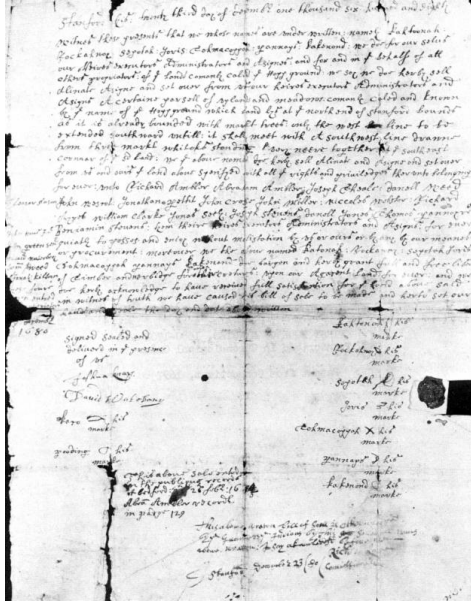
For 100 years the Historical Society has made it our mission to preserve the buildings and landmarks that give Bedford its distinctive character; to share its history; and to ensure that the Bedford we love will be part of the future for generations to come.

[We hope you enjoy this Bedford Story and that you'll contribute to its happy ending.](#)



Bedford's Three Hamlets a love story

On December 23, 1680 twenty two puritans walked up the "cart path", now known as Long Ridge Road, from Stamford, Connecticut and purchased 7,673 acres from seven Indian



Original deed for "hop ground"

chiefs. For an assortment of cloth, blankets and wampum valued at 45 pounds, 16 shillings and 6 pence, these "proprietors" became the new owners of the first purchase known as "ye Hopp Ground." At that time, it was simply a plot of land which later was named Bedford. Additional purchases made through 1723 comprise the six square miles that is Bedford today. Originally part of Connecticut, a land dispute placed Bedford in New York by royal decree in 1700. The town consists of the hamlets of Bedford, Bedford Hills and

Katonah - each with its own distinctive history.

Bedford Village is the original settlement. In March 1681, the proprietors walked back to the land they purchased the winter before. Following New England tradition, a common of about three was laid out with space for a meeting house, a burial ground and a grist mill on the Mianus River. House lots and lots for "pasture or tillage" were laid out around the common for each proprietor. The villagers were a sturdy, self-reliant group and they made all that they needed, trading with the Indians when necessary, growing crops and hunting game for food.



Village Green c.1905



The 2009 reenactment of the Burning of Bedford at the Commanding Heights

During the revolutionary war, Bedford Village lay between the British and American lines and was considered "neutral ground." However, on July 11, 1779, the entire Village, with the exception of one house, was burned by Col. Samuel Birch of the 17th Dragoons.

Today, all that stands around the original Village Green

was built in the years after the Revolution.

Bedford was the largest community in northern Westchester at this time and shared half-shire and county seat status with White Plains for much of its first 200



1787 Court House c.1900

years. The 1787 Bedford Court

House, Westchester's oldest, extant government building, is a testament to that time. The coming of the railroad in 1847 made travel easier and so in 1870, the Bedford Court House ceased to be a county court and all county business was conducted in White Plains. The railroad stop was established northwest of the Village and called "Bedford Station." Since transportation was the key to all business and commerce, growth and development shifted to the area closest to the railroad and Bedford Village remained a quiet village.



Bedford Hills Train Station with Adams Store in background

Originally known as Bedford Station, Bedford Hills grew up around the stop established there by the Penn Central Railroad. Farms had occupied the area for many years and the farmers sent their potatoes and apples by boat from Sing Sing on the Hudson, now Ossining, or

overland by wagon to New York. In 1847, the railroad came and gave the area a name of its own and a post office. The speedier delivery of milk products to the metropolis permitted the growth of profitable dairy farming. W.B. Adams built his store next to the railroad and at his suggestion, the name of the town was changed to Bedford Hills on April 1, 1910. Bedford Hills is home to the Bedford Town House, built in 1927. The New York State Women's Reformatory was established there in 1892 in the hopes of reforming young, first-time criminals. Also in Bedford Hills was the Montefiore Home of Bedford, a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients which later became the Hillcrest Home for orphaned children.

Katonah also grew up around the railroad but its most interesting history revolves around the building of the Croton Reservoir which caused the entire Town to be moved a mile south to avoid being flooded. Although several hamlets



Katonah moving c.1900

existed prior to the railroad, in 1847 when the first trains came through, people moved and settled near the old Katonah station. In 1892 ground was broken for the new dam and the villagers learned that their land would be condemned. They quickly found a new site for their village and bought back from the City of New York their homes which they planned to move to the new Village. The founding members of the Katonah Village Improvement Society were instrumental in planning the Village and in April of 1897 the first train stopped at the new Katonah station and the postmaster delivered mail there. Today, many of the houses you see along Bedford Road and the Parkway date from 1847 although the Town itself was established fifty years later.

The history and unique identity of each of these hamlets contribute to the Town's character as a whole. Bedford Village as the first settlement, Bedford Hills as the hub of railway transportation and Katonah as a planned development, moved by the necessity of progress. Bedford Village and Katonah both contain historic districts which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



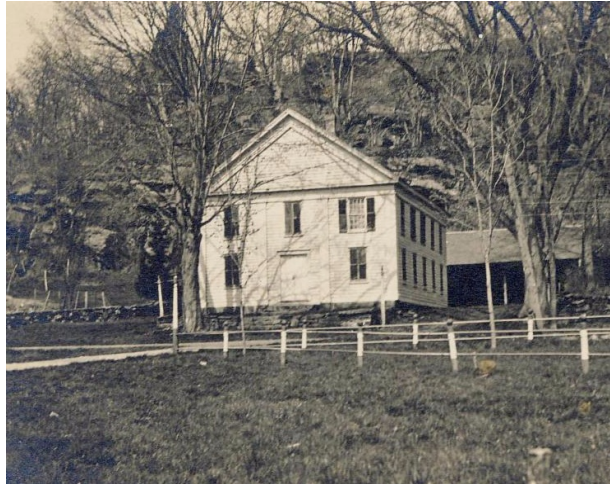
1829 School House

In 1965, the Bedford Historical Society, assisted by the Town of Bedford and the State of New York, sought to renovate the 1787 Court House which had fallen into disrepair. Within five years, the renovation was

complete and the Bedford Historical Society opened the Court Room as a site museum and moved the Bedford Museum to the second floor. The Bedford Museum had been housed at the old School House on the Village Green since 1913, just one year after the school closed due to over crowding. At that time the Historical Society returned the School House to its original purpose as a 19th century one-room school. Today, the Bedford Historical Society opens these buildings

to the public and uses them to conduct educational programs that benefit school children in Westchester.

The Bedford Historical Society is a privately funded, non-profit, educational institution. It was founded in 1916 by a group of citizens who came together in answer to Bedford Village's first preservation crisis. They purchased the old Methodist Church, now known as Historical Hall, to save it from being



Historical Hall c.1910

turned into a tenement. The Society has owned the building ever since and rents it to support the maintenance of the building. Recognizing that the serendipitous location of the railroad in Bedford Hills had preserved the original Village Green, successive boards of the Bedford Historical Society have acquired seven other buildings with the express purpose of preserving and maintaining not only the buildings themselves but the historic, colonial New England vista. In addition, the Society cares for the 1787 Court House and the Sutton Clock Tower for the benefit of the Town as well as owning two acres adjacent to the Bedford Oak, to forever protect it from encroaching development.



Footsteps in the Past education program in the Bedford Store

Much of what attracts people to Bedford and this quaint, old-fashioned Village is the result of the efforts of the Bedford Historical Society for the past 100 years. Without our effort, no one can say what might have come through rapid growth and the pressures of development in Northern Westchester. From the preservation of the

buildings around the Village Green to the education of students about early life in colonial America to the interpretation of our history and our collections in the museums, the Bedford Historical Society has been a consistent presence in the Town of Bedford. However, the expense and time required to maintain these properties and offer these programs is considerable.

To continue to protect historic buildings, to expand our educational programs and to keep the museums open, we need your help. The Bedford Historical

Society has launched a Capital Campaign to raise \$2 million to support our mission of preservation and education. Thanks to the generosity of your neighbors we have already raised \$1.9 million. [Your donation will help us reach our goal to protect, preserve and prepare for the next 100 years.](#)



*Restoration at
Lounsbury Building*

PROTECT

In the 100 years since Historical Hall was saved, the Bedford Historical Society has acquired seven additional historic properties to ensure their preservation for future generations. In addition, the Historical Society is the steward of the 1787 Court House and the Sutton Clock and Tower. With this fund we will be financially prepared to protect additional historic properties from the threat of inappropriate development, neglect or demolition.

PRESERVE

The cost of preservation is high. As the guardians of ten historic properties, we strive to meet exacting standards of historic preservation and financial responsibility. Our savings have been depleted by several recent major restoration projects and our annual income is insufficient to replenish them. This fund will address significant preservation and restoration projects in the immediate future including replacing Historical Hall's deteriorated cedar roof and restoring the Lounsbury Building's wood porch, railing and column.

PREPARE

We must reach beyond membership income and fundraisers to strengthen the Bedford Historical Society's financial base and build an endowment. This fund will ensure that the Bedford Historical Society has adequate resources in our second century of stewardship to bring these beloved buildings to life and by so doing, illuminate and inspire future generations.

A million thanks for 100 years!



PRESERVATION



CULTIVATE



PROTECT



FUTURE CHARACTER UNIQUE



PAST FOUNDERS



VILLAGE GREEN



COMMITMENT



BEDFORD MEMBERS



STEWARDSHIP



EDUCATION



PROMOTE MUSEUM



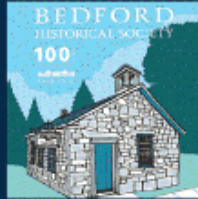
COLLECTIONS



BUILDINGS



APPRECIATION



LANDMARKS




COMMUNITY HERITAGE



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Bedford Stories is one of the many ways we bring history to life!

[Please support us as we begin our second century of stewardship and ensure that history remains a part of the future! Thank you for your support.](#)

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