



BELLINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PUBLISHER

CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS



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IDENTIFYING BELLINGHAM'S CULTURAL RESOURCES

As we reorganize the museum's collection, we are reviewing a list that has been established by the Commission as the town's "best" historical assets. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has a database called MACRIS, where these records are stored. <https://mhc-macris.net/>

MACRIS data are compiled from a variety of records and files maintained by the MHC including but not limited to, the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth, National Register of Historic Places nominations, State Register of Historic Places listings, and local historic district study reports. These reports include areas, buildings, burial grounds, and structures.

Bellingham has 149 items identified on the list. In this issue we will be highlighting these important historical cultural resources that are unique to Bellingham.

There are 3 areas on the list: The North Bellingham Mill District, Caryville – West Medway, and the Caryville Mill Area. It also includes the North Bellingham and Oak Hill Cemeteries, as areas. Both of these cemeteries are on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. In addition, there are 99 properties on the list including these current and former public buildings:

(continued on page 2)



Bellingham Town Hall
Mechanic Street, 1802



Former North School
Bellingham District #7
Hartford Avenue, 1855
(now a private home)



Fire Station #1
Wrentham Road, 1927



Historical Museum
Former Town Library
3 Common Street,
1930



Keough Memorial Academy
Former Bellingham High School,
Harpin Street, 1937

BELLINGHAM IN SUMMERS PAST AT SILVER LAKE

Susan C. Parenteau, in her article "Hey Days at Hoag Lake" published in *The Town of Bellingham 1719-1969* stated, "Some say the town was built around the lake while others remember it as a Disneyland of the north."

Silver Lake, once known as Hoag Lake, was once the location of cotton and saw mills. In 1898, upon the demise of the mills, the town granted a franchise license to the Milford, Attleboro and Woonsocket Railway Company to operate a rail line in Bellingham. In 1899, the railway purchased the lake and the surrounding area. The depot was located on Cross Street.

In 1900 work progressed on the construction of a 1200-seat summer theater. In the summer of 1900, a merry-go-round was set up and a bridge was built to the island.

During the early 1900's there were boat rentals, a roller skating rink and band concerts. Hiram Crooks, of the long-time Bellingham farming Crooks family, rented boats and canoes at the lake.

Top vaudeville acts from New York performed at the lake and as the years passed, a boathouse and penny arcade were built.

(continued on page 3)

IDENTIFYING BELLINGHAM'S CULTURAL RESOURCES

(continued from page 1)

There are 9 private properties and 3 cemeteries listed on the MACRIS site:



John Rockwood House
4 Hartford Avenue, 1703



Stephen Metcalf House & Barn
430 Hartford Avenue, 1777



Joseph Fairbanks House
(recently demolished)
462 Hartford Avenue, 1803



William Messenger House
23 Hartford Avenue, 1830



Lyman Holbrook House
66 Hartford Avenue, 1830



P.A. Williams House
436 Hartford Avenue, 1840



E. Fairbanks House
457 Hartford Avenue, 1840



Hixon House
237 Depot Street, 1850



P. Nashon-Kean House
454 Hartford Avenue, 1870



North Cemetery
Hartford Avenue, 1712



Oak Hill Cemetery
Hartford Avenue, 1849



Scammell Cemetery
Depot Street, c 1838

There are five other buildings listed on MACRIS:



First Baptist Church
Mechanic St, 1802



Bates & Arnold
Cotton Mill Bldg
334 Hartford Ave, 1835



St. Brendan's Church
384 Hartford Ave, 1895



North Baptist Church
365 Hartford Ave, 1907



North Baptist Parsonage
365 Hartford Ave, 1907

BELLINGHAM IN SUMMER'S PAST AT SILVER LAKE

(continued from page 1)

There were live animal acts including monkeys, lions and diving horses. Edgar K. Ray, owner of the attractions, owned King & Queen, two white horses that would dive from tower to water tanks below. Marathon dances were frequently held and the Imperial Ladies Orchestra often performed. Famous visitors included Carrie Nation & Helen Keller.

In the early 1920s the trolley system began to decline which led to fewer people visiting the lake and less revenue coming into this once beautiful resort area. By the time Hoag Lake became Silver Lake and the automobile replaced the trolleys, the beach became the lake's main attraction. Ernie Taft, the deceased former Chair of the Bellingham Historical Commission, has recorded that in 1922 there were many fires on the lake and both the theater and carousel were destroyed.



Silver Lake was purchased by the town and since 1995 has been open for recreation to the Bellingham community. The site not only includes the popular town beach, with swimming lessons and summer camp services provided by the Hockomock Area YMCA (Franklin), but since 2010 hosts the Kasper Park Playground, that includes slides, a rock-climbing wall and large tower, which offers a birds-eye-view of Silver Lake. The newest addition to Kasper Park is the Little Angels

Splashpad, which opened in 2017. Both the playground and splash pad were community fundraising efforts to revitalize this area that is so important to Bellingham families.

If you would like to learn more about Silver Lake in its heyday, please visit us when the museum reopens. The Silver Lake Association also has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SilverLakeAssociationBellingham>.

IDENTIFYING BELLINGHAM'S CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are 3 Objects & 3 Structures listed on the MACRIS site:



Soldier's Monument
Mechanic Street,
1874
(relocated to
Town Common)



Watering Trough
Mechanic Street
1904
(relocated to
Town Common)



First Baptist Meeting House
Stone Marker
7 High Street, 1912



Depot Street Bridge
over Charles River,
1829



Keystone Bridge
Old Pulaski Blvd
1835



Maple Street Bridge
over Penn Central
Railroad, 1900

As the current Commissioners review the museum collections, if warranted, additional items will be submitted to MACRIS for addition to this important statewide cultural resource database.

MUSEUM RENOVATION UPDATE & HOW YOU CAN HELP!

Last summer the Commission members, with the cooperation and encouragement of the town administration, led by Town Administrator Denis Fraine, and assisted by a cadre of volunteers, embarked on a project to update the museum facility.

Collections have been boxed for reorganization and we are slowly making progress on the project, but it is a monumental task that is taking us, as volunteers, longer than we had hoped.

We are continuing to work on reorganizing the collections to make the museum a more cohesive browsable collection of Bellingham history to tell our story. The museum will have sections with categories of history, including: schools and municipal items; farming and household artifacts; sports and recreation materials; military, public safety and civil defense items; as well as a reference library section that will feature town reports, school yearbooks, and past issues of the Crimpville Comments. Immediately upon entering will be a display case that will depict a timeline of Bellingham's founders.

Thank you to our Sponsors & Donors!

In our last issue of the Crimpville Comments we asked for community support for this project. Those funds have been used to purchase equipment, supplies and other needed items to enable us to reopen this newly renovated space. We would like to thank our sponsors and donors:

Silver Sponsors: Charlie's Tire & Service Center, In Memory of Carlton Patrick

Bronze Sponsors: Barbara & William Eltzroth, Genereaux/Ehwa Family, Claire Johns, Pauline Krajcik, Dr. Rob Alan Lawson, Wayne & Peg Nelson, Charles & Joan Olyrys, Drew Palmer, George Pincince, Patricia (Cortes) Rotatori, Marion Shangraw, Gilbert & Linda Trudeau, and Florence Remillard.

If you would like to have your name added to the list of museum sponsors, please send a check payable to the Bellingham Historical Commission Gift Fund to 3 Common Street, Bellingham, MA 02019 before September 30, 2021.

Sponsorship costs are:

Platinum \$1000 | Gold \$500 | Silver \$250 | Bronze \$100

Here are some updated photos of the collections that have been organized in the renovated space!



1891 Center School Bell is a featured item in the School Collection



Gallery Wall of Photographs and Paintings of people and events in Bellingham School History, centered by a painting of Clara Macy

IN MEMORIAM

Below is a list of Bellingham residents who passed away in 2020. Our deepest sympathy to their loved ones. The names in bold are community members who were employees or elected or appointed officials of the town. Details of their service to the town are listed at the bottom of this page.

Ambler, Lee G.	Fagan, Christopher	Mainini, Peter Michael	Sannicandro, Josephine R.
Anzalone, Arthur M.	Fash, Lillian Veronica	Maloney, Michael John	Sassi, Vicky Lyn
Balboni, Amanda	Fleurette, Joseph O., III	Manor, Susan Anne	Schneider, Robert Charles
Bellunduno, Dominic James	Gallant, Mark Dennis	Masse, Cynthia Louise	Schroeder, Roger L.
Benson, Mary E.	Galle, Henry Ovila	McElroy, James A.	Seaholm, Ray A.
Bergeron, Dorothy E.	Gamble Jr., Vincent T.	McHenry, Jason Robert	Shaw, Sophia Elizabeth
Bernier, Christopher D.	Gardner, John Edward	McLellan Jr., John A.	Sheridan, Patricia M.
Biggs, Phyllis May	Garvin, Dean Walter	Migliorini, Jandyra Alves	Simonetti, Pamela J.
Blogit, Helen M.	Gearon, Edward J.	Milliken, Kurt A.	Simpson, Margaret J.
Bolton, Keith Alan	Gillis, Dorothy Anne	Mitchell, Karen L.	Smith, Sandra J.
Borden, Josephine M.	Gladu, Robert C.	Mortarelli, Carol J.	Snook, Emerson L.
Brevik, Lisa J.	Glowka, Lillian A.	Mullin, Karen Rose	Spencer, Evelyn M.
Brothwell, Cheryl A.	Greene, Richard P.	Murphy, Rita Agnes	Stead, Janice
Bruce, John W.	Gregoire, Mary S.	Onorato, Shirley M.	Stockton, Marie M.
Burke, Maryclare	Haque, Mohammad Shahudul	O'Rourke, Joanne Marie	Sullivan, Maritza T.
Canesi, Alfred	Hastie, Dianne Marie	Palaza, Nicholas R.	Sullivan, Yvette R.
Cournoyer, Gerard Emile	Hefferman, Robert E.	Palli, Thomas A.	Taylor, Laurie C.
Creasia, Catherine Florence	Hickey, Richard	Pantera, Patricia Ann	Tellier, Eugene C.
Crooks, Marcia Ann	Holmes, Jeannette Mary	Paquette, Gail L.	Teoli, Bernice
Daigle, Rita T.	Hutchins, Mary J.	Parmenter, Pamela A.	Teter, Richard Norman
Dalpe, Nancy E.	Keough, Steven Patrick	Patch, Susan Ethel	Tieuli, Anthony J.
DeAcetis, Margaret M.	Keville, Christopher J.	Paull, William Lee	Trimm, Edward A.
Demaire, Roger A.	Knight, Silvia L.	Pelletier, Lucille D.	Truchan, Donnamarie
Deslauriers, Muriel D.	Koulopoulos, Shawn Michael	Perry, Amanda Haven	Vaillancourt, Charles J.
DeWitt, James Alexander	Ladeau, Doreen L.	Perry, Paul L.	Wagner, Dennis Ross
Donovan, Elizabeth Ann	Languirand, Lillian B.	Racine, George Joseph	Wilson, Barbara Jeanne
Dorr, Patricia A.	Lawyer, Charles A.	Riquier, Theresa A.	Wyatt, Linda Ann
Doucette, Anne B.	LeBlanc, Norman L.	Russell, Garry	Yanski, William R.
Drummond, Eleanor	Libertini, Audrey M.		
Dufresne, Antoinette	Libertini, Michael J.		
Dunn, Gleneva	Lunt, Harlan W.		
Emidy, Thomas A.	Lynch, John T.		
Ethier, John J.			

Lee G. Ambler - Town Counsel
 Maryclare Burke - Board of Library Trustees, School Librarian, Poll Worker
 Catherine Florence Creasia - Administrative Assistant to the Town Administrator
 Marcia Anne Crooks - Historical Commission
 Joseph O. Fleurette III - Housing Authority Commissioner
 Mary S. Gregoire - Poll Worker
 James A. McElroy - Selectman

PRESERVING HISTORIC BELLINGHAM

Demolition of the 218-year-old Fairbanks house in North Bellingham raised some eyebrows earlier this year. Joseph Fairbanks purchased this farm and the water power rights to build the Caryville Mill from the Metcalf family around 1813. The house remained in the Fairbanks family for 100 years. Just before it was demolished, several concerned citizens contacted the Historical Commission, but there was little that could be done to save the building at that late stage. It may come as a surprise to readers that the Bellingham Historical Commission does not have the ability to impose a “demolition delay” as our counterparts in neighboring towns do.

A demolition delay is a bylaw that requires the authority issuing a demolition permit to notify the local Historical Commission when a permit to demolish a historical building is requested. If the Commission determines that the building is historically significant, then a delay can be imposed. A demolition delay is typically between six months and one year. This delay is to allow stakeholders to explore alternatives to the demolition of a historically significant building.

The Lowell Mason House in Medfield is a good example of a demolition delay success story. Lowell Mason was a pioneering music educator and composer who was born in Medfield in 1792. The house he was born in was to be demolished by a developer who wanted to build two new homes on the site. The Medfield Historic Commission issued a one-year demolition delay which enabled a group of concerned citizens to raise money and move the house to a new location. The developer was free to build on the property and the house is being renovated to become a museum.

The town of Bellingham has an interesting history that extends for more than 300 years. We might not be as big as Boston or as famous as Lexington, but we citizens of Bellingham have played a role in every period of American history. Living in a town that is 57 years older than the United States, the 21st century citizens of Bellingham are stewards of important artifacts and historically significant places.

The Bellingham Historical Commission exists to preserve and document these artifacts and places and then use them to educate our citizens about our past and how we arrived at the present. A demolition delay bylaw in Bellingham will be a valuable tool for preserving our history and the Historical Commission will be researching the possibility of adding it to our town bylaws in the future.



**Joseph Fairbanks House, 1803
462 Hartford Avenue**

**Photo submitted to the MACRIS
database in 1999**

Date of photo , unknown



Photos of home being demolished, April 15, 2021

Photos by Michael Watson

SUMMER SWIMMING LESSONS AT SILVER LAKE AND ARCAND PARK

BY MARJORIE TURNER HOLLMAN



**Jean Holmes,
Bellingham's
Long-time
Swimming Lessons
Director**

When documenting the history of a community, it is so easy to overlook, and lose to the fog of memory essential happenings in that community, simply because we take them for granted. Thus it seems we have lost track of exactly when swim lessons began at Silver Lake in Bellingham, when they moved to Arcand Park, and other details about this important program. We are clear that Bellingham resident Jean Holmes was the driving force in keeping the swim program running for nearly forty years.

While Jean Holmes was not a native New Englander (she was born in Scotland) she had an outsized impact on many Bellingham residents with her determination to teach swimming to as many local children as she was able. Jean was a fixture at Silver Lake in the early 1980s when I met her.

Having just moved to town, I was looking for an opportunity to keep up my Red Cross water safety instructor certification (WSI). Asking around, I was directed to talk to Jean. In truth, Jean WAS the swim program in Bellingham when I met her in 1981. Lessons took place first at Silver Lake and later at Arcand Park.

Jean welcomed me to the Silver Lake swim program, and willingly entrusted to me a class of little ones, dutifully signing the required forms that allowed me to keep up my WSI certification. She kept an eye on me, but was always kind and encouraging.

After Bellingham purchased Silver Lake for the town in 1996, I asked Jean when she was going to move swim lessons back to Silver Lake. Her answer? "Never! I'm not giving up the bathroom I have at Arcand Park!"

Jean died in 2014 at the age of 81, having taught swimming lessons for at least forty years. One of the most consistent themes in notes left at her on-line obituary was the difference she had made in teaching children to swim.

But we are left with unanswered questions. What prompted the move of swimming lessons to Arcand Park? Was Jean's treasured bathroom at Arcand Park built at her request? Was it already there when lessons moved to the South Bellingham location? Jean died in 2014. Do we know when she stopped offering lessons? Do we know what prompted Jean to begin the swim program here, and what year that occurred?

We look forward to adding more details to this admittedly very sketchy description of what was an important part of our community for many years. No recollection is too trivial. Thanks in advance for your help.



**Marjorie Turner Hollman with her
grandchildren at Silver Lake**



Current photo of Silver Lake Beach

CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

Bellingham Historical Commission
3 Common Street
Bellingham MA 02019

Telephone: 508-966-5838
Email: history@bellinghamma.org
www.bellinghamma.org/historical-commission



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*Home of the
Ernest A. Taft Jr. Historical Museum*

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Crimpville Comments is mailed free to long time subscribers and is available electronically on the Commission's website, <https://www.bellinghamma.org/historical-commission>.

You can subscribe to the Commission's electronic newsletter which will link to the Crimpville Comments here: <https://bit.ly/3dwc5sf> or return the form to the right with your email address.

New subscribers to the print edition are encouraged to make a suggested \$20 annual donation to help defray the printing and mailing costs.

The Commission also has a gift fund that can accept donations from the community. As we move forward, we would appreciate your support!

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State, Zip: _____
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Bellingham Historical Commission
3 Common Street
Bellingham MA 02019