



BELLINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PUBLISHER

CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS



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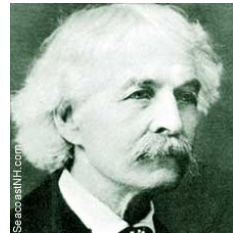
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WINTER IN BELLINGHAM, 1840s

Allow me to create a picture in your mind of Bellingham in the 1840s. The details of this picture are based on eye-witness accounts from people of Bellingham, materials from the period, and town records. Some of this picture of Bellingham, like the harsh winters, will be familiar. Other details may be surprising.

The 1840s are a time when the old folks in town still remember the American Revolution. The population of Bellingham in 1840 is only 1,055 persons, most of them living on farms. If you walk down the middle road to Hartford (Rt. 126) in the 1840s, you are walking on a sandy road past farms and water-powered mills. You see elm trees, stone walls, and barley fields.

To sharpen the image, let's imagine it is winter in Bellingham. You are walking east on the Hartford Road coming from Mendon. The road is a muddy mixture of sand and slush. Winter in Bellingham is harsh and cold. Snowstorms, blizzards, and the occasional sub-zero morning are all facts of life here. Given the harsh weather, it's not surprising that the people living here are hearty and serious. These farmers are proud of their ability to withstand the cold New England winters, "mowing their meadows to the last summer of their lives and dying conveniently in some winter month when work was slack" (Albee). Not far from Mendon, you'll pass the Albee farmhouse set amongst a barley field that is covered in deep snow. This is the home of Mr. Albee, his wife Esther (nee Thayer) and their son John who was born in 1833. Along the road you pass John's Uncle Lyman who seems to be oblivious to the cold. He is not even wearing an overcoat and is instead wearing "a long woolen frock made by his wife, and a cap of woodchuck skin. Folks said it was like to be a hard winter when he put on his overcoat" (Albee). Even the children around here are a hearty bunch. On a recent morning in the



John Albee

photo credit
seacoastnh.com

Albee house "snow sifted through the chinks in the loose shingles, making little white hillocks on the floor, and [John] found enough on [his] pillow in the morning to press into a snowball and pelt [his] sister, who slept at the other end of the attic."

For the farmers in Bellingham, winter "slack" is a time when they turn their attention away from farming the land and toward other ways of being industrious.

Further east on the Hartford Road, near Stall Brook, you'll find them working in the saw mill. In fact, the "saw mill [is] run only in winter time; the water of the mill pond was drawn off in early spring" (Albee).

Let's finish our stroll down the Hartford Road by visiting one of the homes in Bellingham on Thursday, December 25th, 1845. Even though chestnuts are roasting, there are no decorations, no gifts, nothing to indicate that it is Christmas Day! The family here, like most other families in Bellingham, are going about their normal business today. It is as if they have not noticed that it is Christmas! Even though Christmas is being celebrated further south in places like Philadelphia, Christmas is not kept as a holiday in Bellingham, or the other towns in Norfolk County. "The people [in Bellingham adhere] mainly to the Congregational and Baptist faiths" (Albee). Ignoring Christmas is a way for them to distance themselves from Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions that their Puritan forbearers had forsaken.

It will not be until the arrival of Irish Catholic laborers in about 20 –30 years that you will find Christmas celebrated in here, but that is a story for another edition of the Crimpville Comments.

WINTER IN THE 1840s (continued)

As we return to the present, you can learn more about Bellingham in the 1840s by reading John Albee's book, *Confessions of Boyhood*. John grew up to be an author and wrote books about life in Massachusetts during the middle of the 1800s. *Confessions of Boyhood* is largely set here in Bellingham during his childhood in the 1840s.

When recalling his childhood in Bellingham, he wrote that there "was no Christmas for children in Bellingham, or I should remember it as vividly as I do Fast Day, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July and Town Meeting Day".

It is here in 2021 that I will leave you, and I wish you and the people dear to you a Merry Christmas.

*Editors Note: Quotes in this article are from **Confessions of a Boyhood** by John Albee. The book is available online at www.gutenberg.org or available to borrow at the Bellingham Library.*

THE ANCIENT NEW ENGLAND FARMER By John Albee (about his Uncle Lyman)

How pleasant o'er the still autumnal vale
From his great timbered barn's wide open door
The muffled sound of his unresting flail
In rhythmic swing upon the threshing floor!

How straight their tasselled tops his corn upreared!
Straight were the rows, no weed dared raise its head;
How golden gleamed their opening sheaths well eared
Whose inner husks stuffed out his bulging bed!

Full many a field of dewy grass breast-high
His long sharp scythe ere breakfast time did lay;
Full many a hurrying shower came by,
But to the mow still faster went the hay.

To him as inward fires were ice and snow,
They urged his pulse with warm vivacious blood;
How made his furrowed cheeks in winter glow
With ruddy health and iron hardihood!

Superfluous to him was coat or vest,
Let blow hot or cold or stormiest weather;
He, as his hardy fathers, liked the best
His shirt sleeves free and brimless cap of leather.

Few were his books, his learning was but small;
He boasted not of thoughts beyond his speech;
Some few and simple maxims bounded all
That he had learned, or wished to teach.

He loved his home, his farm, his native town;
These were the walls his happy world confined;
And heaven with unaccustomed joy looked down
To see fulfilled a life itself designed.

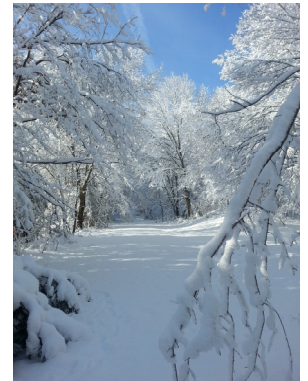
Sadly his neighbors bore him to his grave
Beneath the old perpetual mourning pine,
Where honest tears and praise they duly gave,
For all he was, the immemorial sign.

BELLINGHAM IN WINTER'S PAST

In this issue, we will be focusing on Bellingham in winter's past. The first article showed us Bellingham in the 1840s. We also have information about the 1921 Ice Storm, a personal story from Bellingham's own Rick Marcoux on the Blizzard of 1978, the story of the Lions Club's Santa Sleigh Ride, and some great holiday recipes from your Bellingham neighbors for you to try out!

Happy holidays to
you and your family
and friends
from all of us at the
Bellingham Historical
Commission.

*Snow Along the SNETT
photo credit Judy Lafond
Winter 2015/2016*



BELLINGHAM'S ICE STORM, NOVEMBER 27, 1921



The Sunday of November 27, 1921 brought Bellingham a sleet and ice storm that lasted for three days and did great damage. Trees, poles and wires were broken by the weight of the ice which accumulated in what was described in the November 1976 Crimpville Comments as “immense quantities.” Electric power and lights were cut off and traveling was extremely difficult.

The trees in this photo are the view from the home of Hilda Thayer (on the corner of 126 and 140 - Mechanic and South Main Streets) looking out onto Route 140. Just outside the fence were trolley tracks of the Milford and Woonsocket Street Railway.

The 1976 article where this story was previously shared, states, “The storm of a few years ago when the big trees in the church yard were damaged, was tame compared to this 1921 catastrophe.” Little did the authors of this 1976 memory know what was coming for Bellingham and most of the northeast in 1978!

Also included in the 1976 article was this photo of children enjoying a horse-drawn sleigh ride through Bellingham.

Enjoying the ride are from left to right: Howard Thayer, Lorraine Thayer, Fred Hunter, Donald Thayer, Alberta Wilcox, Jeanne Thayer and Lester Wilcox.

Both photos are courtesy of Hilda Thayer.



HOLIDAY RECIPES!

Recipes in this issue are from the 2010 “A Literary Feast” Cookbook, published by the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library.

CAROL MARCET'S HOLIDAY FUDGE

2 pkgs Baker's semi-sweet chocolate squares (8 squares/pkg)
One 14 oz can sweetened condensed milk

2 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans) - optional

Microwave chocolate and condensed milk in a large bowl on high for 2-3 minutes or until chocolate is almost melted. Stir in vanilla and nuts. Spread mixture into lightly greased 8" square pan. Refrigerate until firm - cut into squares.

BLIZZARD OF 1978

A FIREFIGHTER'S PERSPECTIVE

The National Weather Service forecast for Monday, February 6, 1978, had predicted blizzard snow conditions in our area. As we all know, weather forecasting in New England is difficult, and when snow failed to materialize as predicted in the early morning hours, many felt it was another local failed forecast and went to work and school as normal.

The storm was formed from an extratropical cyclone off the coast of South Carolina the day before. An Arctic cold front and a cold air mass then merged with the storm, creating the perfect conditions for a large, intense low-pressure system. Hurricane force (86-111 mph) winds and extremely heavy snow led to zero visibility on the roads. Snowfall during a typical nor'easter lasts for 6-12 hours. The Blizzard of '78 was 33 hours of heavy snow and strong winds. Historical records of snowfall totals in Massachusetts range from 24-36 inches. One source says the snowfall total in Woonsocket was 40 inches, and parts of the South Shore of Massachusetts had up to 54 inches.

All of us who lived through the storm remember our own details of the storm, but this article will document the storm from the perspective of Bellingham Firefighter Rick Marcoux. Rick, who is currently Chair of the Bellingham Historical Commission, was a 28-year-old firefighter/EMT living in town. He worked the 8 am to 6 pm shift. When he arrived for work on Monday, February 6th little did he know he would not be returning home for 5 days.

At that time Bellingham had 3 fire stations, Station 1 on Wrentham Road, Station 2 in Bellingham Center near the current Town Hall, and Station 3 on the corner of Maple Street and Hartford Avenue. A general recall of all available firefighters was made in the late afternoon so all three fire stations could be manned. A police cruiser and officer were assigned to each fire station to cut down response time to emergencies. Rick recalls sleeping in the stretcher in the back of the rescue vehicle for 5 days, and even at 28 years old, it was not comfortable. Looking back, he thinks it would have been more comfortable sleeping on the floor.

As the storm moved through the late morning that day, it was apparent that weather forecasters were more on



Snow-covered school bus at the bus barn on Douglas Drive looking toward South Main Street

target than most had believed, and the snow was piling up quickly. The snow was falling too rapidly for the plow trucks to keep up. By mid-afternoon many roads were impassable. The town's emergency management team put out a call for all residents and businesses that owned snowmobiles and 4-wheel-drive vehicles to assist in getting emergency assistance to areas that were inaccessible by rescue vehicles. In addition, these vehicles were used to transport nurses and other medical personnel to their shifts at Milford Hospital throughout the storm and its aftermath while the roads were still closed to the public.

The police and fire department were put on patrol on snowmobiles throughout town. The Fire Lieutenant at the time, Jack Ridolfi, owned a snowmobile and he and others were assigned to patrol Interstate 495 to look for stranded vehicles to ensure that there were no people stranded in their cars. Many tractor trailer drivers on 495 did not abandon their vehicles. They left their vehicles running and hunkered down in their sleeper cabs. When driving by on the snowmobiles, Rick recalls that the snow was so high their view from the snowmobile was almost on level with the window of the cabs of the tractor trailer trucks.

The fire department also helped to patrol the roads with the police. The situation reached a point that cars could not traverse the roads, and the plow trucks could not keep the roads clear. As the situation worsened, a call went out to contractors for front-end loaders that could be used to move the snow from needed areas. Fuel for these vehicles was provided by the Bellingham Highway Department.

BLIZZARD OF 1978 (continued)

Recalling that time Rick states: "It was a challenge, but with everyone having an all-in attitude, the logistics to get the job done all came together. People were fed, stranded drivers were warmed up and eventually got a ride home or to the town line to meet another police cruiser to relay the people to their homes."

The variety store in the center of town stayed open as much as possible during the storm so people in the neighborhood could walk to get whatever little food and other supplies that they had left. People were walking down the middle of North Main Street with sleds and toboggans to Larry's Package Store on North Main Street near the corner of Hartford Avenue.

On a more serious note, there were medical emergencies unrelated to the storm that had to be attended to. Rick remembers an emergency call was received that there was a woman in labor on Kennedy Road (behind St. Blaise Church). The rescue truck could only reach the intersection of Potter Drive and South Main Street. The remainder of the trip was by snowmobile and toboggan. The woman was brought from her Kennedy Road home to South Main Street by a very bumpy toboggan ride and was transported to Milford Hospital by ambulance on the one lane of South Main Street and Mendon Road that was open to traffic. This was obviously not the only medical emergency during the storm, but it was the way each of them was tended to.

In the aftermath of the storm, as things began to open, local restaurants assisted in providing meals for the police and fire personnel who were working long shifts. Rick remembers Marie's Restaurant, which was located on Mechanic Street where Walgreens is now, providing many meals for overworked, tired emergency personnel.

Schools were cancelled for the full week while recovery operations took place throughout the area. Many people were left without heat, food, water, and electricity for over a week after the storm. Overall, Bellingham weathered the storm as well as could be expected. Other areas of New England had more serious long-term impact. 54 people lost their lives, 2500 homes were seriously damaged and destroyed, extensive beach erosion occurred along the coast and many roofs collapsed from the weight of the snow.

Although radar existed for weather forecasting in the 1970s, it was still seen as a "new" technology and as previously stated, weather in New England is unpredictable. However, today most of us can open an app on our phones, look at the radar or hourly forecast and see that a storm that was predicted for early morning won't be happening until later, and make better choices about our decision to leave the house when bad weather is predicted. And, in these days of more people being given the flexibility to work from home, schools being more amenable to cancelling based on predicted bad weather, it is highly likely that fewer people would make the choice to get on the roads, eliminating the congestion that occurred in 1978.

KAREN GAVIN'S QUICK APPLE PIE

6-8 apples, peeled, cored and sliced	1 cup sugar
1 tbsp sugar	1 egg
1 tsp cinnamon	3/4 cup melted butter
1 cup flour	Nonstick cooking spray

Spray 10" deep dish pie plate with cooking spray. Fill pie plate with sliced apples. Sprinkle apples with 1 tbsp sugar and 1 tsp cinnamon. In a separate bowl, mix together flour, sugar, egg, melted butter. Spread mixture over the apples. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until brown.

MARY AMBLER'S MOTHER'S INDIAN PUDDING

1 quart milk	1/2 cup molasses
2 tbsp minute tapioca	1/2 cup sugar
2 tbsp cornmeal	1 tbsp butter
Salt	

Mix first 4 ingredients in a pan over low heat until scalding. DO NOT ALLOW TO BOIL. Remove from heat and add remaining ingredients. Stir to mix and pour into deep baking dish. Place baking dish into large baking pan with warm water to come up to the side about one inch. Bake at 300 for 2 1/2 hours. Stir twice during baking. Texture is that of a thick pudding - not cake-like. Serve with your favorite ice cream

MUSEUM RENOVATION UPDATE & HOW YOU CAN HELP!

Over the past year, 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. Upon entering there 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

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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 March 30, 2022

Sponsorship costs are:

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

BELLINGHAM LIONS CLUB ANNUAL SANTA SLEIGH RIDE



Each year, families wait with great anticipation for Bellingham's Santa Sleigh Event, a fundraiser organized by the Lion's Club. Each year Santa is escorted by members of the Club, as well as the police and fire departments, traveling around the town's neighborhoods, greeting excited boys and girls. Families are invited to donate canned goods during the event, which are then brought to the Loaves & Fishes food pantry. For a \$5 donation to the food pantry, a photographer will take pictures with Santa.

From the 2021 Sleigh Ride, from left to right, Bellingham Fire Captain John Glennon, Lions Club Members Julie St. Pierre, Santa (Andrew Porter), Quinn Roth, Bellingham Police Officer Michael Claffey, and Peter Worrest of Worrest Photography, the event photographer.

SANTA SLEIGH RIDE (continued)

Although the mission has remained the same, the event has changed over the years according to Al Renaghan, who has been with the Club since 1982.

"The first year the Club went up and down every single street in town, with the help of the police department," he said. "They stopped for dinner in the Morse's garage area and ate dinner, then would continue on from 1-9 p.m. It would take 2- ½ weekends to cover the entire town."

In those early days, there were five different Santas, one for each day it was held. Now, the event is only held on one weekend, due to a decrease in the Club's membership. Bill Bissonnette, Al Renaghan, and Bob Pouliot were the original Santas; Bill and Al are still involved with the event.

"But we are still able to able to run the event in a modified manner with specific streets and locations," Al said.

The Club still uses the original Santa's sleigh which was designed and built by Club members Dick Latreverse, Leo Remillard, and Neal Dewitt.

"They procured the materials and built it. Dick was a professional carpenter, so he had the skills to build it." Al said.

"The Fire Department now also assists during the event," Al said, helping to make it "truly a town event."

Santa's Sleigh has tubs on it where residents may deposit canned goods.

"Everything goes to the food bank to help those in town," Al said, adding that in prior years, "the Club would augment when the donations were low. "

And for the Bellingham Lions, the event is truly a "labor of love."

"Kids have run out in PJ's, moms have run out without shoes after the kids. Sirens tell the neighborhoods that Santa is coming.

"Watching the kids' faces as they see and react to Santa," Al said. "They touch my beard (which is real) and they just light up."

JANET WEBB'S CRANBERRY MEATLOAF

2 tbsp light brown sugar	1/2 green pepper, chopped
1 - 14 oz can of whole cranberry sauce	2 tsp salt
1 lb. hamburger	1/3 cup milk
1 medium onion, chopped	1 cup bread crumbs
1 large egg - beaten	1/4 tsp parsley

Spread sugar on bottom of loaf pan - cover with cranberry sauce. In a large bowl mix hamburger with remaining ingredients. Mix well. Place meat mixture over cranberry sauce in loaf pan. Bake at 350° for one hour. Place loaf pan upside down to remove from pan.

KENNETH BRIGGS' BREAD PUDDING

8-10 slices of bread	4 tbs melted butter
4 cups of milk	1/2 tsp salt
3 eggs	1 tsp vanilla
1/2 cup sugar	1/4 to 1/2 cup raisins
	Cinnamon

In a large bowl, put 8-10 slices of torn up bread. Cover bread with 4 cups of milk. In a separate bowl, beat 3 eggs with a whisk and add the butter, salt, vanilla and raisins. Add mixture to bowl of bread and milk. Pour into a loaf pan, sprinkle cinnamon over the top. Bake at 350° for 1 hour.

KATHERINE EHWA & LORRAINE GENEREUX'S GRANDMA'S HOLIDAY PUNCH

One 2 liter bottle of Sprite or 7 up	1 jar of red cherries
1 quart orange juice	1 medium orange
1 large can of Hi-C Very Berry	

Make sure your punch bowl is big enough for all of the ingredients. Pour the soda into your punch bowl. Add the orange juice, Hi-C and the contents of the jar of red cherries (buy the cherries without the pits). Slice the orange and put the orange slices in to float on the top. Stir gently.

THE CARR FAMILY'S CORN PUDDING

1 can cream-style corn	1 cup grated cheddar cheese
1 can whole kernel corn	1 pkg. Mexican style corn bread mix
3/4 cup canola oil	Dash of salt
3 eggs	

Mix all of the above together and bake at 350° uncovered in a greased casserole dish for 35-45 minutes until golden on top. This recipe comes all the way from Texas! Goes great with baked ham. You can spice it up by adding chopped pickled jalapenos or diced green chilies.

CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

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